

# General Conference

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## Sixty-fourth regular session

# Plenary

## Record of the First Meeting

*Held at Headquarters, Vienna, on Monday, 21 September 2020, at 10.05 a.m.<sup>1</sup>*

**Temporary President:** Mr CAMPUZANO PIÑA (Mexico)

**President:** Mr FARHANE (Morocco)

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<sup>1</sup> In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Conference decided that delegations so wishing could attend in a virtual manner using the Interprefy IT platform or make their statements by means of a pre-recorded video.

<sup>2</sup> GC(64)/19.

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## Abbreviations used in this record

2030 Agenda	Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
ABACC	Brazilian–Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials
AFRA	African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ALPS	Advanced Liquid Processing System
ARCAL	Co-operation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean
CNS	Convention on Nuclear Safety
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CPPNM	Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
CSA	comprehensive safeguards agreement
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
DPRK	Democratic People’s Republic of Korea
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GW	gigawatt
HEU	high enriched uranium
ICONS 2020	International Conference on Nuclear Security: Sustaining and Strengthening Efforts
INPRO	International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
LEU	low enriched uranium
MESA	Middle East and South Asia Group
MW	megawatt
NPP	nuclear power plant
NPP OPEX Network	COVID-19 Nuclear Power Plant Operating Experience Network
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

**Abbreviations used in this record (continued)**

NPT Review and Extension Conference	Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NPT Review Conference	Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NSF	Nuclear Security Fund
NUTEC Plastic	Nuclear Technology for Controlling Plastic Pollution
NWFZ	nuclear-weapon-free zone
PUI	Peaceful Uses Initiative
R&D	research and development
RCA	Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ReNuAL	Renovation of the Nuclear Applications Laboratories
SARS-CoV-2	severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2
SALTO	Safety Aspects of Long Term Operation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIT	sterile insect technique
SMR	small and medium sized or modular reactor
SPECT	single photon emission computed tomography
SPECT-CT	single photon emission computed tomography-computed tomography
SQP	small quantities protocol
TC	technical cooperation
TCF	Technical Cooperation Fund
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNOV	United Nations Office at Vienna
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organization
WMD	weapon of mass destruction
WWER	water cooled, water moderated power reactor
ZODIAC	Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action

## – Opening of the session

1. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT declared the sixty-fourth regular session of the General Conference open.
2. In accordance with Rule 48 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference, he invited the delegates to observe one minute of silence dedicated to prayer or meditation.

**All present rose and stood in silence for one minute.**

3. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT, noting the extraordinary circumstances in which the current session of the General Conference was taking place, expressed his appreciation to all Member States, the Director General and the Secretariat for their support and flexibility, which had made it possible to conduct the proceedings with all the necessary precautions in place and in line with host State requirements.
4. He thanked the General Conference for entrusting Mexico with the presidency at its sixty-third regular session, and his colleagues from Latin America and the Caribbean, whose invaluable support had helped to ensure the success of both the regular session of the General Conference and the special session to elect a new Director General.
5. Mexico's diplomacy was rooted in the premise that international organizations, including the United Nations, continued to be the best tool for addressing global problems. Accordingly, Mexico endeavoured to promote genuine multilateralism that, on the basis of solidarity and by attending to the structural causes, offered solutions to the major challenges the world faced: eliminating poverty, addressing human health and nutrition, tackling climate change, creating inclusive societies that coexisted in peace and harmony, achieving disarmament and peacefully resolving conflicts.
6. The world currently faced tremendous difficulties owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was inflicting economic hardship on the world's most vulnerable people and hitting employment particularly hard. In addition, it was affecting work arrangements and the organization of important conferences. While it was certain that the crisis would greatly affect the financial system, the political fallout — which might well include worrisome outbursts of nationalism, racism and xenophobia running counter to the principles of international law, human rights, inclusion and tolerance — was harder to predict.
7. It was, therefore, more important than ever to defend multilateralism and the work to promote the United Nations, the advancement of international law, and compliance with established laws and agreements. In view of its wide-ranging and important mandate to promote the peaceful use of nuclear science and technology, the Agency was a key component of the UN system. Its further aim was to meet the SDGs under the 2030 Agenda by strengthening its invaluable TC programme. Additionally, the Agency took pains to maintain the highest standards of safety and security at nuclear power facilities and in other nuclear applications throughout their entire cycle. Equally important was its central role in the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, which contributed to international peace and security. In that connection, he paid tribute to the professional and transparent work carried out by the Agency under the safeguards regime. Since it was in everyone's interest that the safeguards regime functioned fully and comprehensively, it was imperative that all Member States lent it their undivided support.
8. Turning to the issue of world health, he said that it was vital to have a more robust response in which international cooperation played a central role so as to rise to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. As universal access to any future COVID-19 vaccine had to be guaranteed, Mexico would

be following up on the draft resolution that it had tabled before the 74th session of the UN General Assembly on access to medicines, medical equipment and vaccines, with a view to promoting full and equal access to any future COVID-19 vaccine and ensuring that to all intents and purposes it was recognized as a universal public good. Since the crisis had repercussions for all of humanity, equal access would be an act of global solidarity in States' collective interest.

9. He expressed Mexico's heartfelt appreciation for the speed with which the Agency — under the leadership of the Director General and with the generous support of a group of donors — had enabled a special fund to be established with the aim of strengthening COVID-19 rapid detection capacities for Member States most in need. Moreover, the Agency was moving forward with its proposal for the ZODIAC initiative to study and better prepare for existing and future challenges posed by zoonotic diseases, in cooperation with the FAO, WHO and other international organizations.

10. Thanking the members of the General Committee, who had supported the Mexican presidency, he expressed gratitude for the indispensable assistance from the Secretary and her team. He also thanked the interpreters and translators, conference officers and administrative staff, who had ensured that the sessions of the General Conference had been a success. Lastly, he conveyed special thanks to the cleaning staff, who ensured that the conference room was spotless and infection-free.

## **1. Election of officers and appointment of the General Committee**

11. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT invited nominations for the office of President of the Conference.

12. Ms KRUGER (Namibia), speaking on behalf of the African Group, proposed Mr Farhane (Morocco).

13. Mr Farhane (Morocco) was elected President by acclamation.

14. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT congratulated the new President and wished him every success.

### **Mr Farhane (Morocco) took the Chair.**

15. The PRESIDENT expressed his deep gratitude to the African Group for its unanimous support of his candidacy and thanked all Member States for electing him as President of the sixty-fourth regular session of the General Conference.

16. The world was facing an unprecedented international situation owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, which had forced the international community to revisit its plans and redefine its goals. He was proud to have been given the opportunity as President to help the Agency fulfil its mission.

17. He expressed his appreciation to the Ambassador of Mexico, who had presided over the sixty-third regular session with consummate skill and professionalism, and to the Director General for his efforts regarding the logistical and organizational arrangements for the sixty-fourth session and the Scientific Forum on Nuclear Power and the Clean Energy Transition. He was confident that, amid difficult circumstances and exceptional challenges, the Director General's support would help make the General Conference a success in an atmosphere of positive dialogue, constructive cooperation and fruitful partnership, in keeping with the Vienna spirit.

18. The year 2020 had already been a critical juncture for the Agency. Since the Director General had assumed his position, the Agency had faced unprecedented challenges posed by the lockdown and

changes in traditional working arrangements brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the Director General had used his alertness of mind, clarity of vision and managerial skills to carry out the Agency's mandate in line with 'Atoms for Peace and Development', mobilizing new technology platforms such as webinars, videoconferences and virtual events.

19. It was thanks to the Agency's efforts to provide diverse possibilities and modern and sophisticated tools for holding virtual side events and regional meetings that it had been possible to hold the current session of the conference. The Director General deserved special recognition for his proactive leadership as part of the Agency's largest ever practical initiative to provide support to over 125 countries in the form of technical know-how and nuclear and radiological equipment for detecting COVID-19 and preventing its spread. He also thanked the Director General for launching the ZODIAC initiative, which aimed to mitigate the severity of future epidemics through the use of nuclear and nuclear-derived techniques.

20. Turning to the African region, he highlighted the support provided by the Agency to 45 African countries through TC projects relating to the implementation of national and regional projects in such areas as food and agriculture, health and nutrition, energy, nuclear knowledge development, safety, water and the environment, industrial applications and radiation technology.

21. AFRA was one example of successful cooperation between Africa and the Agency, providing a framework for African Member States to consolidate regional cooperation by strengthening the region's sustainability and self-reliance through cooperation with regional institutions and centres of excellence. During the COVID-19 pandemic, one third of African Member States had received valuable Agency assistance in the form of the provision of nuclear- and radiation-derived technology for the early detection and prevention of the disease.

22. In the area of nuclear medicine, the Agency supported African Member States in the peaceful uses of nuclear technology to provide optimum care for women with cervical cancer, which killed more than 300 000 women every year; 90% of victims lived in low- and middle-income countries. Cervical cancer was the most widespread type of cancer among women in nearly half of the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. It was for that reason that he had personally initiated a high-level virtual panel discussion to be held during the current session of the General Conference, entitled *The Role of Nuclear Technology in the Fight Against Cervical Cancer in Africa: Past Experiences and the Way Forward*. The panel would discuss the importance of promoting awareness of cervical cancer in Africa in order to draw lessons, share best practices and create practical mechanisms to foster synergies, dynamism and integration among all stakeholders to carry on the fight against the disease in the present and in the future.

23. With regard to national capacity building, the Agency supported the second phase of the ReNuAL project in view of the significant benefits that it offered for activities relating to sustainable agriculture, food security, animal health and the environment.

24. He encouraged the Agency and Member States to work together wisely, constructively and inclusively to ensure the success of the conference and to base their work on the principle of consensus as a key to the success of multilateral diplomacy.

25. Turning to procedural matters, he said that the Conference was required under Rules 34 and 40 of the Rules of Procedure to elect eight Vice-Presidents, a Chair of the Committee of the Whole and five additional members of the General Committee to constitute the General Committee of 15, which he would chair.

26. As MESA had not yet reached agreement on its candidates to serve on the General Committee, he suggested proceeding with the election of the candidates whose names were already known and

deferring the election of the other members of the Committee until the regional group in question had completed its consultations, in line with past practice. He therefore proposed that the delegates of Canada, Chile, Indonesia, Libya, Malta, Montenegro and the Philippines be elected as Vice-Presidents and that the delegates of Denmark, Poland, Slovenia, the United States of America and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela be elected as additional members of the General Committee.

27. The President's proposals were accepted.

## **5. Arrangements for the Conference** (GC(64)/12 and Add.1)

28. The PRESIDENT said that, following a series of consultations conducted by the Secretariat with Member States on the arrangements for the sixty-fourth regular session of the General Conference, on 24 July 2020 Member States had agreed by silence procedure to the arrangements contained in the annex to document GC(64)/12 so that the General Conference could pursue its work in the current circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the annex to document GC(64)/12, should the situation change at any stage before the Conference there might be a need to revise the arrangements accordingly.

29. The Director General was prepared to make the necessary arrangements to allow Member States who wished to do so to participate in the conference in a virtual manner. The Secretariat had issued Note 61 and document GC(64)/12/Add.1 containing the proposal to add a virtual segment to the General Conference. That would involve the suspension of Rules 23–25 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference and also the change in time limit on statements during the General Debate from seven minutes to three minutes.

30. He took it that the Conference wished to approve the arrangements as contained in the annex of document GC(64)/12 and Add.1.

31. It was so decided.

32. The PRESIDENT further proposed that, before receiving the General Committee's recommendation on the provisional agenda, the General Conference should suspend Rule 42 of its Rules of Procedure and proceed with consideration of items 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 — in that order — so as not to delay the start of the regular session.

33. It was so decided.

## **2. Applications for membership of the Agency** (GC(64)/15; GC(64)/16)

34. The PRESIDENT drew attention to documents GC(64)/15 and 16 containing applications for membership by the Independent State of Samoa and the Republic of Guinea respectively. The applications had been endorsed by the Board of Governors, which had also submitted two draft resolutions for adoption by the General Conference.

35. He took it that the Conference wished to adopt the two draft resolutions by acclamation.

36. It was so decided.

37. The PRESIDENT congratulated the Independent State of Samoa and the Republic of Guinea on having been approved for membership of the Agency.

### **3. Message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations**

38. Mr THATCHAICHAWALIT (Deputy Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna) read out the following message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations:

“I am pleased to address the sixty-fourth session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

“Despite the colossal challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the IAEA has pursued its work while also providing welcome support to the efforts of Member States to tackle the wide-ranging impacts of the virus.

“I commend the professionalism with which the IAEA undertakes its activities, including the verification and monitoring of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s implementation of its nuclear-related commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

“Through the implementation of safeguards agreements and additional protocols, the IAEA continues to be an essential check against the spread of nuclear weapons. The IAEA also plays an important role supporting States Parties to NWFZ treaties. I thank the IAEA for its dedication to ensuring that the safety and security of nuclear and radiation facilities and activities are maintained, including through its strong support for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and its Amendment.

“Finally, I congratulate the Agency on the successful implementation of its technical cooperation programmes in areas as diverse as health, agriculture and climate change. These continue to be of immense value to its Member States and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

“I look forward to continuing the valuable cooperation between the IAEA and the United Nations.”

### **4. Statement by the Director General**

39. The DIRECTOR GENERAL thanked the Ambassador of Mexico for the excellent manner in which he had exercised his duties over the previous year and welcomed the Ambassador of Morocco as the new President of the General Conference. He expressed his deep appreciation to Austria — and to the Chief of Protocol for her exceptional support in helping the Agency discharge its mandate during a difficult year.

40. While 2020 had been a particularly challenging year, each difficulty had redoubled the Agency’s determination to perform its duties to the best of its ability. Despite the travel restrictions in place, hundreds of nuclear facilities had been inspected to ensure that nuclear material was not being diverted

to forbidden uses, more than a thousand consignments had been sent around the world and over 120 countries had received Agency assistance.

41. The Agency's experience in fighting the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic had shown that it was not enough for it simply to support countries by delivering equipment around the world. For that reason the Agency had launched the ZODIAC initiative — to cooperate with other international organizations and national laboratories and institutions so that the world could overcome the pandemic. The Agency of the future would be at the forefront of every international effort to address global health, climate change and nuclear non-proliferation.

42. The Agency had succeeded in resolving a number of important non-proliferation issues surrounding Iran's nuclear programme, and had resumed its cooperation with and inspection activities in that country — as in the rest of the world. The Agency weathered every crisis through diplomacy and would continue to do so.

43. At the same time, the Agency was conscious of the importance of nuclear energy in achieving a decarbonized economy. His first official trip abroad as Director General had been to the 25th United Nations Climate Change conference (COP25), held in Madrid, where he had declared the Agency's readiness to contribute to efforts to tackle global warming and climate change. The Agency would provide assistance to consolidated users of nuclear energy so that they could continue using it in a safe and secure manner, and would support Member States who were embarking on nuclear programmes. He invited delegations to participate in the Scientific Forum, where some of the most reputed experts on energy matters would be discussing those important matters.

44. As it was important for the Agency to maintain its good practices, it would continue its work to refurbish and modernize the extraordinary Seibersdorf laboratory complex. The laboratories and the scientists who worked there played a key role in inspection activities and in the TC programmes, which were fundamental to most of the 172 Member States. He took the opportunity to welcome the Comoros, the Agency's newest Member State, and added that more States would be joining.

45. The Agency's activities were of equal importance for non-nuclear States, especially in food security, water resources and cancer treatment. He was pleased to note the President's particular interest in cervical cancer and in the initiative adopted by the Agency to ensure that women no longer died of a disease that was curable and no longer a major cause of death in the developed world.

46. He concluded by stating that the Agency would continue to work towards its goals on behalf of all Member States, while striving to achieve gender parity in the organization. With Member States' support, the Agency would continue exercising its role to ensure that the noble goal of 'Atoms for Peace and Development' became a reality.

## **6 Contributions to the Technical Cooperation Fund for 2021** (GC(64)/17)

47. The PRESIDENT, recalling that on 16 June 2020 the Board had recommended a figure of €89 558 000 as the target for voluntary contributions to the TCF for 2021, drew attention to the table in document GC(64)/17 showing the contribution that each Member State would need to make in order to meet its share of that target.

48. The early pledging and payment of contributions to the TCF greatly helped the Secretariat in planning the Agency's TC programmes, and all delegations in a position to do so were urged to notify

the Secretariat during the conference's current session of the contributions that their governments would be making for 2021. He was pleased to note that 33 Member States had already made their pledges to the TCF for 2021, the largest number of Member States to pledge before the opening of a General Conference session.

49. At the end of the session he would give an update on the contributions pledged and hoped to be able to report favourably on the percentage of the 2021 target figure already pledged.

## **7. General debate and Annual Report for 2019** (GC(64)/3)

50. Mr LÖFVEN (Sweden), said that the sixty-fourth regular session of the General Conference was taking place under the shadow of pressing global challenges: the pandemic, an accelerating climate crisis and mounting obstacles to global non-proliferation half a century after the NPT's entry into force. Sweden was deeply concerned about the erosion of a global treaty structure that had served the Member States well.

51. Those challenges could be addressed only through international cooperation. In playing an indispensable role, the Agency was an inspiring example of how effective international cooperation could make a tangible contribution to global peace, security and development. Member States should assure the Agency and the Director General of their full support, and reaffirm their commitment to a rules-based international order and the shared goals of multilateralism. Sweden had striven to promote those goals while chairing the Board of Governors.

52. Agency safeguards, including the additional protocol, were central to the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. While Sweden welcomed the joint statement issued in Tehran on 26 August 2020, it urged Iran to implement its safeguards obligations in a more timely manner. Sweden actively supported efforts to preserve the JCPOA, an essential part of the global non-proliferation architecture and vital for regional and international security. Iran should return to full implementation of its undertakings with regard to the Plan.

53. Sweden called on the DPRK to adhere to its international obligations and take steps towards denuclearization. Supportive of the Agency's continued preparedness to assume verification tasks in the DPRK, when appropriate, Sweden would continue to strive actively for a peaceful resolution to the situation on the Korean Peninsula.

54. Noting with appreciation the Agency's work on technology, safety and security, Sweden called for closer alignment with the 2030 Agenda. It supported the Agency's projects on water management and marine plastics and welcomed the Director General's commitment to tackling global issues, such as health and climate crises, by means of nuclear technology.

55. Sweden was providing financial support to the Agency's resolute COVID-19 response. Also in the area of health, it was a committed partner of the ISDB-IAEA Partnership Initiative for Breast and Cervical Cancer Control in Low- and Middle-Income Countries, which promoted sexual and reproductive health and rights by improving diagnosis and treatment in those countries. Sweden was convinced that, through joint efforts, the Agency would remain an excellent example of successful international cooperation.

56. Mr SALEHI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that another thread of multilateralism — the architecture of the United Nations — was in danger. It was no secret that international organizations,

including the Agency, were under political pressure from certain States. At such a critical juncture, the raison d'être of the UN system was being seriously called into question and the Agency was facing an unprecedented challenge.

57. The international community had successfully withstood the first phase of that dire ordeal: the members of the Security Council had rightly demonstrated their unwillingness to compromise what had been achieved and had rejected the intimidation tactics employed by one Member State. Specifically, 13 out of 15 members of the Security Council had unanimously rejected a resolution tabled by the USA to extend the arms embargo against Iran and had not allowed the USA — which was no longer a participant — to make use of certain mechanisms of the JCPOA to reinstate Security Council sanctions that had been lifted. Their actions set an important precedent.

58. For their part, the Agency and Iran had demonstrated the utmost vigilance in recognizing that mutual cooperation free from external influence was the only way to protect their long term interests. In the framework of the CSA and additional protocol, the Agency should demonstrate its unwillingness to compromise impartiality, independence and professionalism for the sake of short term gains. Taking that approach, the Agency and Iran had agreed to work in good faith to resolve three safeguards-related questions on the understanding that, on the basis of information available to and analysed by the Agency, there would be no further questions or requests regarding access.

59. The praiseworthy approaches taken in New York and Vienna were genuine silver linings in a gloomy political environment for multilateralism.

60. Although it seemed that the JCPOA was caught in a quasi-stalemate owing to the illegal withdrawal of the USA, there was still broad agreement in the international community that the JCPOA had been a real turning point in the history of multilateralism and was a major diplomatic achievement to be preserved. Although Iran had provided unprecedented access and shown equally unprecedented transparency in its cooperation, the Plan had regrettably been marred by the imposition of inhumane and illegal sanctions against his country's people. Against that background, the EU — and specifically the E3 — had a crucial role to play in implementing its obligations fully and effectively. The JCPOA could be preserved only if its provisions were implemented in a balanced manner by all participants. Iran had had no choice other than to adopt a step-by-step approach in implementing paragraphs 26 and 36 of the JCPOA, to restore the lost balance of the Plan.

61. Turning to nuclear security, he said that new threats had recently emanated from cyber and technological sources. In that regard, he pointed to the recent explosion at the Natanz nuclear facility, an act of sabotage. Such malicious acts must be condemned by the Agency. For its part, Iran reserved the right to protect its facilities and react to any threat as appropriate.

62. The Agency needed to take an unbiased and professional approach to the adamant refusal to adhere to Agency safeguards by the Israeli regime, a non-party to the NPT. That regime, a major source of instability and insecurity in the region and a threat to international peace and security, should abandon its WMD programme and accede to the NPT without delay or preconditions.

63. He concluded by committing Iran to cooperating with the international community to return multilateralism and diplomacy to the centre of international relations, in order to save the remnants of the UN architecture, which was being dismantled. The international community must unite in putting an end to the destructive behaviour of the current US administration in the interests of everyone.

64. Ms TURKOVIĆ (Bosnia and Herzegovina) commended the Director General on his wisdom and professional leadership in unprecedented times. Her country was deeply grateful to the Department of Technical Cooperation for its valuable assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Bosnia and Herzegovina supported the Agency's efforts to strengthen global capacity to detect, prevent and respond

to zoonotic diseases through the use of nuclear and nuclear-derived techniques under the ZODIAC project.

65. As the world struggled to overcome the unprecedented pandemic, Member States should maintain their respect for human rights, above all the right to life — the greatest achievement of modern democracies. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, that right was under threat from the proposed nuclear waste disposal site at Trgovska Gora, less than one kilometre from the country's border with Croatia. Nuclear waste was likely to leak into underground waters that drained into the river Una, posing a direct threat to the livelihoods of over 300 000 inhabitants in the north of her country. As confirmed by the State Regulatory Agency for Radiation and Nuclear Safety, the proposed site was high-risk owing to the potential threat of earthquakes, landslides and floods; it did not meet international standards regarding nuclear waste facilities. Accordingly, she appealed to the Agency to assist Croatia in finding a safe and suitable site that would not pose a threat to life or have adverse effects on the river or the adjoining national park.

66. In closing, she said that her country was fully committed to regional and international cooperation on establishing the safe and secure use of radiation and nuclear technologies — and commended the Agency in that regard.

67. Mr BROUILLETTE (United States of America) noted with satisfaction the Agency's provision of diagnostic equipment to 120 countries and territories to combat COVID-19. To that end, the USA had contributed US \$11 million.

68. The USA fully supported the Agency's important mission in promoting the use of atomic energy for peace, health and prosperity worldwide. In particular, he drew attention to the NPT Review Conference and the Conference of the Parties to the Amendment to the CPPNM, both of which would ensure that nuclear energy, science and technology would continue to support sustainable development in accordance with high safety, security and non-proliferation standards.

69. The USA particularly looked forward to hosting the International Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Power in the 21st Century in Washington DC in October 2021. His country was cooperating with the Agency to ensure the success of the event, the first of its kind to be held in the Western hemisphere.

70. The USA remained committed to addressing the threats posed by the nuclear programmes of the DPRK and Iran. Not only did it have a horrific record as the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism, Iran also had a lamentable history of cooperating in a grudging, dilatory and incomplete manner, if at all, with the Agency. Iran must do far more to ensure timely and full compliance with its safeguards obligations.

71. The USA stood ready to work towards the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the DPRK. To that end, his country urged the DPRK to participate in negotiations to ensure a brighter future for its people.

72. The USA encouraged all States yet to do so to bring into force the Agency's safeguards agreements — including a modified SQP, if applicable — which promoted high standards within the non-proliferation regime. As international cooperation between responsible nations could overcome any obstacle, the USA looked forward to continue working with the Agency and its Member States.

73. Mr ZHANG Kejian (China), noting that nuclear power had made an important contribution to energy supply diversification, environmental protection and climate change mitigation, said that his country had 48 operational nuclear power reactors and was constructing a further 13 units; four units had recently received government approval.

74. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, nuclear power generation had proven its unique advantage and great development potential in stabilizing power supplies and facilitating the return to work and resumption of production.

75. The application of nuclear technology had retained its momentum in the light of COVID-19 prevention and control measures. For example, the irradiation technique had been used to sterilize medical kits and supplies while electron beam irradiation had been used in the treatment of solid and liquid medical waste. Such applications highlighted the unique environmental, energy efficiency and safety advantages of nuclear technology while promoting awareness of its important value.

76. China had strengthened its regulatory system for nuclear security and safety, and had maintained a good safety record for both operational and unfinished NPPs. China would be arranging for the translation of a range of Agency standards and guides on nuclear safety and security, thereby contributing to the improvement of international nuclear safety and security systems.

77. The international community should unite in the vision of a shared future for humankind, jointly respond to risks and challenges and contribute to the cause outlined in the Agency's motto. It should draw on global wisdom in jointly seeking key technology breakthroughs to sustain the vitality of nuclear power and technology. For its part, the Agency should promote the role of nuclear technology in solving food, health and water resource problems, among others, and assist Member States in achieving the SDGs. In that regard, China supported the ZODIAC initiative and hoped that, through consultation with relevant stakeholders, the Agency would refine its scope.

78. China had always advocated a peaceful settlement of nuclear issues concerning the DPRK and Iran on the basis of dialogue and negotiation. The Agency should maintain its professionalism, objectivity and impartiality in continuing to constructively resolve those issues.

79. Mr LÓPEZ CHÁVARRI (Peru) thanked the Agency for providing timely and ongoing assistance to his country in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Real-time thermocyclers, reagents and personal protection equipment for use in processing samples had been sent to the National Institute of Health and distributed nationwide. In addition, COVID-19 diagnostic tests, biosafety cubicles and other supplies and laboratory equipment had been delivered to the Máxime Kuczyński Tropical Diseases Research Centre. Thanks to that support, the increased capacity for detecting SARS-CoV-2 would help to reduce infections. Peru took it that the Agency would continue its excellent work on combating the current pandemic — and others — through preventive actions such as the ZODIAC initiative.

80. Fully endorsing the objectives of the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023, in particular the promotion and development of nuclear science, technology and applications, improving nuclear safety and providing effective technical cooperation, Peru reaffirmed its commitment to the Agency's statutory objective to accelerate and broaden the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world.

81. Thanks to Agency assistance under the TC programme, Peru had made significant progress in strengthening industry, agriculture, nuclear medicine and other areas of human health. It had established a tissue bank at the National Institute of Child Health, where hundreds of burns patients were treated. Furthermore, it continued to work closely with the Agency on improving the yields of indigenous crops like quinoa and potatoes, which were staples for Andean highland dwellers. In addition, initiatives for improving coffee production had been launched. In cooperation with the Agency, Peru had identified new areas where nuclear technology could be applied in line with important national priorities: hydrology, climate change and the study of glaciers.

82. Two major cooperation initiatives would enable Peru to become a regional provider of skills and knowledge: the designation of the National Agrarian University La Molina as an IAEA Collaborating

Centre for grain treatment to ensure food security, and that of the National Training Service for the Construction Industry as a subregional reference centre for the inspection of civilian structures, which would enhance Peru's role in supporting its neighbours in emergency situations.

83. Under ARCAL, hundreds of major projects had been implemented in human health, the environment and irradiation technology. Peru had ratified the second Extension Agreement — a key instrument for development in Latin America and the Caribbean — to help ensure that it remained in force.

84. As part of the first NWFZ, Peru aspired to the complete elimination and prohibition of nuclear weapons and the strengthening of the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime as part of its commitment to bolstering the NPT. It called on States to enhance the Agency's verification capabilities and welcomed the recent joint statement on providing the Agency with access to Iran's nuclear facilities. Peru urged all the original JCPOA participants to return to the path of dialogue to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

85. In the current situation, Peru was in favour of strengthening the multilateral system to promote international peace and security, cooperation and respect for human rights and international law, and also to promote the attainment of the SDGs.

86. Mr LIKHACHEV (Russian Federation) said that, in the context of the global challenge posed by COVID-19, nuclear power had proven itself as a stable, sustainable, safe and cost-effective source of energy. Throughout the crisis, the Agency had demonstrated its effective and crucial role under the leadership of the Director General. Building on its unique expertise, the Agency had promptly supplied state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment to those countries most in need, which the Russian Federation had actively supported through financial contributions.

87. The Agency had worked tirelessly to implement effective distance communication mechanisms and hold several important events, ensuring the peaceful use of nuclear technology and the fulfilment of non-proliferation obligations by Member States. The Russian Federation had consistently supported the Agency's activities in strengthening the NPT regime. As any contentious situations should be resolved through dialogue, he urged all concerned parties to spare no effort in stabilizing the situation surrounding the JCPOA.

88. Faced with the challenge of COVID-19, the Russian Federation had continued work seamlessly at all of its NPP construction sites, including abroad, where construction of over 20 power units was under way. A WWER-1200 reactor at unit 2 of Leningrad NPP-2 had become fully operational in August 2020; the power start-up at the NPP would begin later in September, with a view to its generating power in October. The construction of two power units in Kursk with the innovative standard optimized WWER design was already under way. Moreover, the Russian Federation wished to congratulate Belarus on completing the first phase of its Ostrovets NPP, having constructed a Generation 3+ WWER-1200 reactor in August 2020.

89. The commissioning of the world's first floating NPP with two smaller reactors for commercial operation in Pevek in May 2020 was a real milestone. Floating NPPs could be used in remote and hard-to-reach regions, giving them unique potential. The construction of smaller reactors could mark the beginning of a new era in the nuclear industry — he called for an update to the existing rules and regulations under the Agency's auspices. The impact of smaller capacity generation was well-known, having first been explored under the INPRO programme — which marked its 20th anniversary in 2020.

90. Also in 2020, the Russian nuclear industry was celebrating its 75th anniversary. From the outset, the industry had addressed global challenges, under the auspices of the State Atomic Energy Corporation "Rosatom", which focused on improving living standards and ensuring sustainable development.

“Rosatom” built NPPs worldwide, developed non-power applications and nuclear science, and helped other countries to master advanced technologies and establish their nuclear infrastructure.

91. The Russian Federation had designed a comprehensive nuclear science and technology development programme, to be implemented on a national scale pursuant to a presidential decree. Medium term priorities under the project included dual-component nuclear power systems, a closed fuel cycle, small and medium NPPs, plasma technologies and controlled thermonuclear fusion.

92. Existing and future challenges could definitely be solved through partnership, professionalism, trust and the non-politicization of the nuclear industry. In the belief that international cooperation, with the Agency playing a central role, would be essential in that regard, the Russian Federation could assure the Agency of its continued support.

93. Mr BOURITA (Morocco), congratulating the Ambassador of his country on his election as President of the General Conference, thanked the Member States for entrusting Morocco with the stewardship of the sixty-fourth regular session, which was taking place in a delicate and exceptional global context. Moreover, he paid tribute to the Director General for his dedication.

94. For more than nine months, the world had been facing unprecedented health, economic and social challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. That had thrown into sharp relief the international community’s limited collective capacity and preparedness to deal with the exceptional situation, which required innovative, effective and practical cooperation and coordination to limit the spread of the disease, and solidarity to mitigate its repercussions.

95. Morocco highly commended the Agency’s relentless efforts and its remarkable ability to adapt to the circumstances of the pandemic. That said, it was essential to rearrange plans and priorities and develop more effective ways of improving crisis preparedness, management and support. Particularly appreciative of the rapid assistance given to 125 Member States, including 45 African countries, Morocco thanked the Agency for providing the latest equipment for the rapid detection of SARS-CoV-2 and for organizing virtual training courses to enhance national capabilities.

96. Solidarity and South–South cooperation were not merely buzzwords but were principles that framed Morocco’s foreign policy, the foundations of which had been laid by King Mohammed VI. In April 2020, the King had announced a creative and proactive initiative to develop a framework at the level of African Heads of State to support the management of the COVID-19 health crisis. Under that initiative, Morocco had sent medical supplies and preventive equipment, manufactured locally and in accordance with WHO standards, to 20 African countries to bolster their efforts to combat the disease. After the pandemic, Morocco looked forward to holding a meeting with other African countries and the Agency to conduct a comprehensive assessment of experiences of managing all stages of the pandemic, to draw lessons and exchange best practices.

97. Morocco reaffirmed its commitment to the spirit of the NPT, a fundamental pillar of the non-proliferation regime, and the central role of the Agency in implementing its requirements.

98. Lastly, it was important to intensify efforts to modify the composition of the Board of Governors as an essential step towards strengthening governance within the Agency as provided for in the amended Article VI of the Statute, adopted 21 years earlier at the forty-third regular session of the General Conference. Whereas 113 Member States were required for the amendment’s entry into force, only 62 had accepted it. During its presidency of the General Conference, Morocco would strive to raise the support needed to bring the amendment into effect and strengthen the African presence within the Board as a core organ of the Agency.

99. Ms SOUGHAYROUN (Sudan) thanked the Agency for helping the Sudan Atomic Energy Commission to replace laboratory devices damaged during the popular revolution that had deposed the

former Government, and for its assistance in fighting COVID-19. The Sudan had the utmost confidence in the role played by the Agency in supporting the regulatory apparatus, and its provision of equipment and experts in that area had been of considerable assistance in the performance of regulatory tasks.

100. In view of its current difficult situation, the Sudan had suspended the preparation of its fourth CPF, for the period 2021–2027, due to be signed in 2021. Following broad consultations with partners and stakeholders, the priorities for that period had been identified: strengthening radiation and nuclear safety infrastructure; improving cancer screening and treatment services by expanding and upgrading the network of radiation therapy and nuclear medicine centres; strengthening food security by providing genetic mutations resistant to plagues and climatic conditions in various regions; strengthening the infrastructure relating to environmental laboratories and water resources; and expanding the use of SIT to control fruit fly and malaria-carrying mosquitoes. The Sudan had submitted a TC project for 2022–2023 based on those priorities, fully confident in the Agency’s support for the proposal, and affirmed its commitment to its obligations under the project.

101. With respect to the legal and regulatory framework, the governing body of the Sudanese Nuclear and Radiological Regulatory Authority had approved several regulations on: preparedness for and response to a nuclear or radiological emergency; the security of radiation sources; and site evaluation for nuclear installations. The Sudan was working continuously with the competent authorities with a view to signing eight international agreements on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and was committed to complying with all its obligations under the instruments that it had ratified.

102. Mr ABU BAKAR (Malaysia), noting that all countries had been affected by the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, thanked the Agency for providing rapid detection equipment and online technical assistance. Malaysia continued to take innovative approaches to the fluid situation, above all by making more use of information and communications technologies to ensure continuous regulatory compliance. It looked forward to participating in ZODIAC, including activities using nuclear technology to develop vaccines and other medical interventions.

103. Malaysia attached great importance to nuclear safety, security and safeguards — they guaranteed the peaceful use of nuclear technology while protecting people and the environment. Once enacted by Parliament, the country’s new comprehensive nuclear legislation would further strengthen existing regulatory control measures while facilitating the ratification of and accession to Agency instruments. His country looked forward to concluding a Practical Arrangement on education and training in radiation, transport and waste safety, and a partnership agreement with the Agency on establishing a loaner pool for nuclear security detection equipment as part of enhanced support for regional cooperation in the Asia and the Pacific Region.

104. Recognizing the Agency as the sole competent technical authority for independent verification of nuclear safeguards obligations, Malaysia commended the organization on its professional verification of Iran’s nuclear programme under the JCPOA. Concerned about recent developments, his country stressed the importance of adherence to the Plan by all participants.

105. As the NPT was the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime and fundamental to the goal of realizing a world free of nuclear weapons, Malaysia looked forward to a successful Review Conference taking place in due course.

106. A supporter of the TC programme, Malaysia looked forward to concluding a new CPF with the Agency.

107. The current situation had forced many events to be conducted in innovative ways, a process Malaysia was proud to be part of through its involvement in chairing the RCA. He thanked the Agency and all governments for their cooperation and positive contributions.

108. Malaysia was committed to further participation in the Agency's coordinated research activities, which acted as an effective mechanism for conducting R&D and sharing knowledge and experiences among scientists and engineers worldwide.

109. Mr NOGAYEV (Kazakhstan), reaffirming that the Agency's safeguards system was the most effective instrument for implementing the nuclear non-proliferation regime, said that, in cooperation with the Agency and other States, Kazakhstan had resolved issues related to the application of comprehensive safeguards in the country, enabling their full application in recent years.

110. Kazakhstan was, moreover, fully implementing the provisions of UN Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). In 2019, it had, for the first time, taken the chair of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, which played an important role in strengthening nuclear safety by improving export control systems for nuclear materials and technologies and facilitating their practical implementation. A party to all fundamental international treaties concerning nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of atomic energy, a year earlier Kazakhstan had become the 26th State to ratify the NPT.

111. In May 2020, the President of Kazakhstan had signed legislation on operators' civil liability for nuclear damage, in keeping with the provisions of the Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage.

112. Much work had been done on the Agency's LEU bank in Kazakhstan, which had entered into operation in December 2019. Moreover, Kazakhstan had been conducting projects to convert research reactors and dispose of HEU; in August 2020, it had completed work on diluting unirradiated HEU fuel from its pulsed graphite research reactor.

113. Kazakhstan had adopted the amendments to Articles VI and XIV.A of the Agency's Statute and hoped that the number of States required for their entry into force would be reached before long. He concluded by recalling an issue of fundamental importance for his country: despite being an active and responsible Member State since 1994, Kazakhstan was deprived of the opportunity to participate in the Agency's elected bodies.

114. Mr FEICHT (Germany), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that North Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Moldova aligned themselves with his statement.

115. The EU commended the Director General on leading the Secretariat's prompt response to the COVID-19 pandemic and encouraged continued cooperation between the Agency, WHO and FAO.

116. The EU attached great importance to the Agency's core activities on non-proliferation, nuclear energy, nuclear safety and security and technical cooperation. In particular, he highlighted the importance of gender mainstreaming and sufficient, assured and sustainable funding for its activities.

117. The EU firmly supported the full, complete and effective implementation of the NPT and its universalization.

118. The EU continued to support the JCPOA. The US withdrawal and its re-imposition of sanctions was deeply regrettable. All States should refrain from any actions that impeded the implementation of the Plan. For its part, the EU continued to uphold its commitments under the Plan, including on lifting sanctions. Gravely concerned at Iran's continued enrichment activities, which ran counter to the JCPOA, it strongly urged the country to return to full compliance without delay.

119. Still concerned about the DPRK nuclear programme, the EU urged the DPRK to take tangible steps towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization, comply with relevant Security

Council resolutions, return to the NPT and the Agency's safeguards agreements at an early date and sign and ratify the CTBT.

120. The EU called for the universalization of the Agency's safeguards agreements, the existing verification standard. The EU urged the 31 States yet to do so either to amend operative SQPs or to fully meet their obligations under their CSAs, especially States that were constructing an NPP or research reactor.

121. The EU attached the utmost importance to the global implementation of nuclear safety requirements and the continuous improvement of nuclear safety, including under the Convention on Nuclear Safety and the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management.

122. Moreover, the EU attached importance to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. It welcomed the convening of ICONS 2020 and the adoption of its Ministerial Declaration. As a major donor to the NSF, the EU supported the Agency's central role in improving the global nuclear security framework.

123. With regard to the TC programme, the EU appreciated the Agency's role in promoting the safe, secure and sustainable use of nuclear technologies for peaceful purposes. He noted with satisfaction that the Agency continued to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and support its role in climate change adaptation and mitigation.

124. Ms BLUM (Colombia) said that the Agenda for Disarmament presented by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in 2018 had been a reminder that disarmament lay at the heart of the collective security system foreseen in the UN Charter; it sought to save future generations from the scourge of war by eliminating its use as a foreign policy instrument. Colombia recognized the Agency's fundamental role in maintaining peace and international security through its inspection and verification activities and TC schemes — they encouraged non-nuclear-weapon countries to benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy to improve their development and their people's quality of life.

125. Cooperation with the Agency demonstrated the contribution multilateralism made to solving problems, especially in situations such as the current global health crisis. She conveyed the thanks of the Government and people of Colombia for the Agency's technical and financial assistance to strengthen national capacity for SARS-CoV-2 detection. The Agency had consistently supported Colombia in strengthening its regulatory framework for the safe use of nuclear and radioactive material, and developing peaceful nuclear energy applications to provide innovative solutions in health, agricultural sciences, environmental sustainability and food security — contributing to Colombia's efforts to achieve the SDGs.

126. Conscious of the Agency's role in development and technology transfer, in June 2020 Columbia had decided on a five-year extension of ARCAL, which had previously generated benefits through 70 regional cooperation projects. Her Government took an interest in the ZODIAC initiative for the early identification of zoonotic disease pathogens, confident that it would improve existing capacity for analysing such diseases and help to prevent and mitigate the impact of new pandemics.

127. Almost 15 years previously, when the Agency had received the Nobel Peace Prize, former Director General Mohamed ElBaradei had invited Member States to imagine what would happen if countries took the resources spent on war machines and invested them in promoting development. Considering that the global pandemic would cause development indicators in many countries to regress to the levels of two or three decades previously, that message remained as relevant as ever.

128. In the light of the challenging landscape, Colombia reiterated its commitment to the Agency and to multilateralism and exhorted States to use both to build consensus to advance towards a more developed, equitable and secure world.

129. Mr TOUKAN (Jordan) expressed his country's appreciation for the Agency's efforts to achieve the noble goal of accelerating and expanding the contribution of atomic energy to global peace, health and prosperity. Jordan was deeply grateful to the Agency for supporting Member States during the COVID-19 pandemic, which had triggered the largest assistance operation in the Agency's history. Its Ministry of Health had received a generous donation of three integrated RT-PCR devices for the early diagnosis of SARS-CoV-2 and support to train health staff in their use.

130. With technical cooperation from the Agency, Jordan continued to develop its nuclear power programme, most importantly through projects on the construction of an NPP, uranium mining, the strengthening of the nuclear and radiation regulatory framework and the uses of the Jordan Research and Training Reactor — along with nuclear applications in medicine, agriculture and water. In 2020, Jordan had obtained Linac and SPECT-CT devices, and other equipment, to help it develop infrastructure for water laboratories, agriculture, uranium mining, radiation therapy and nuclear medicine.

131. Turning a challenge into an opportunity, the Jordan Atomic Energy Commission had used the research and training reactor to supply radioiodine ( $^{131}\text{I}$ ) for cancer therapy, as it could not be imported owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, and had used its gamma irradiation facility to sterilize medical consumables and pharmaceutical materials used in the medical sector and to irradiate certain foodstuffs.

132. Affirming its commitment to supporting the disarmament and non-proliferation regime and the peaceful applications of atomic energy for the benefit of countries and peoples around the world, Jordan would continue to support efforts to establish a zone free from nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East.

133. Mr JACQ (France) noted with appreciation the adaptability shown by the Director General and the Secretariat, which had enabled the Agency to manage the COVID-19 crisis and continue its crucial activities. The economic impact of the health crisis called for extensive recovery plans to meet ambitious climate and environmental goals; France had adopted a €30 billion recovery plan over three years aimed at decarbonizing key sectors in its ecological transition, including energy. In its plan, France had affirmed its support for nuclear energy, including through the launch of the NUWARD SMR project, and its focus on generating 'clean' hydrogen. He therefore encouraged the Agency to draw on its expertise and participate fully in discussions on the clean energy transition.

134. France recalled that the Agency's safeguards system was a pillar of the non-proliferation regime, as established by the NPT. Fully supportive of the Agency in its implementation of the JCPOA — to be preserved as a key component of non-proliferation and security — throughout the year his country had called on Iran to cooperate fully with the Agency and to return to strict compliance with all its obligations without delay. While France welcomed the statement issued on 26 August 2020 by Iran and the Agency on Iran's provision of access to inspectors under the additional protocol, the continued implementation of measures running contrary to the JCPOA was regrettable. Consequently, a very worrying and unacceptable situation had emerged. Accordingly, France called on Iran to immediately reverse all nuclear measures taken as part of its policy of withdrawing from the JCPOA.

135. In such challenging circumstances, France attached great importance to the NPT Review Conference, due in 2021. It would offer a timely opportunity to consolidate the Agency's framework for the promotion and development of the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

136. Mr MANTASHE (South Africa) reiterated his country's commitment to and strong support for the Agency's TC programme and pledged €234 000 to the TCF for 2021. South Africa would continue

to implement its CPF, which had enabled it, with the Agency's assistance, to launch four new TC projects, in agriculture, health and safety.

137. The Agency must continue to put the case for nuclear as clean energy technology, given the scientific evidence to support it. Accordingly, South Africa welcomed the choice of Nuclear Power and Clean Energy Transition as the theme for the Scientific Forum. As it embarked on a clean energy transition while expanding its power sources, South Africa continued to see an ever-increasing role for nuclear power. With a view to ensuring the country's energy security and mitigate its carbon footprint, nuclear power would continue to play a pivotal role in South Africa's energy mix.

138. In implementing its Integrated Resource Plan for 2019–2030, South Africa had already begun consultations with nuclear reactor suppliers to provide costing and schedule information and possible ownership models, through the request for information for the 2500MW programme issued in June 2020. As part of the Plan, South Africa had decided that the operational life of the Koeberg NPP must be extended by another 20 years; the necessary technical and regulatory work had begun. South Africa was grateful for the Agency's support through the SALTO missions to the Koeberg NPP; the most recent pre-mission had taken place in September 2019. Koeberg remained one of the most reliable, efficient, safe and affordable power stations on the national electricity grid.

139. Despite the logistical challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, South Africa had started to see increased access to offshore markets for the supply of medical isotopes that were critically important products to the rest of the world.

140. Another key project was the imminent upgrading of South Africa's ageing nuclear research reactor, SAFARI-1. Since establishing a ministerial task team in 2019 to develop a replacement by 2030, South Africa had already approved the project initiation report — which had recommended that SAFARI-1 be replaced with a multipurpose reactor — and the project had advanced to the pre-feasibility stage.

141. In the year that marked the 75th anniversary of the two dark days in August 1945 when the only two atomic bombs ever used had been dropped, he reiterated South Africa's unwavering and principled position that nuclear weapons and all other WMDs must be eliminated from the earth.

142. Mr INOUE (Japan) expressed his country's highest respect to the Director General for his leadership in enabling the Agency to exercise its full authority while helping to combat COVID-19. In an opportunity to further strengthen cooperation between Japan and the Agency, the Director General had been to Japan in February 2020, holding meetings with senior government officials, including former Prime Minister Abe, and visiting the Fukushima Daiichi NPP.

143. While the decommissioning of the Fukushima Daiichi NPP was making steady progress, the handling of ALPS-treated water continued to be a challenge. Following his visit to the NPP, the Director General had acknowledged the systematic and meticulous efforts made in handling the decommissioning work and stated that the two disposal options for ALPS-treated water were technically feasible and in line with international practice; the handling of that water was under deliberation, taking into consideration the recommendations of the Agency review report. With the Agency's support, Japan would continue to take every possible measure to advance its decommissioning work and provide the international community with relevant and timely information in a transparent manner.

144. The peaceful uses of nuclear energy were a cornerstone of global socioeconomic growth and contributed to the achievement of the SDGs. Japan therefore strongly supported the Director General's new initiatives — improvement of Member States' capabilities to detect COVID-19, ZODIAC and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme — which would enhance the Agency's standing in the international community. Japan had donated €4 million, through the PUI, towards the Agency's efforts to combat COVID-19 and €500 000 for the Fellowship Programme.

145. Moreover, Japan strongly supported the Agency's work on making safeguards more efficient and effective. It was fully committed to working with the international community on achieving the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of all of the DPRK's nuclear weapons and other WMDs, ballistic missiles of all ranges and related programmes and facilities, in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions. Not only must the international community unite in support of the USA–DPRK negotiations process, but it was critically important for all States to fully implement Security Council resolutions.

146. As it continued to support the JCPOA, Japan was strongly concerned about Iran's continued reduction of its commitment under the Plan but welcomed the joint statement issued by Iran and the Agency on 26 August 2020, calling upon Iran to fully cooperate with the Agency in accordance with all its nuclear obligations.

147. Mr SCHALLENBERG (Austria), noting that the current session of the General Conference was taking place in extraordinary circumstances, thanked the international family in Vienna — of which the Agency and UNOV formed the core — for rising to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and for the great flexibility that had been shown to ensure that services continued to be provided.

148. The current session of the General Conference was of particular significance, 75 years after the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Commemorative events worldwide had served as reminders of the devastating humanitarian consequences of such weapons; the international community must ensure that they were never used again. No longer a theoretical issue, disarmament was increasingly relevant in a climate of growing proliferation pressures. Countering such pressures required greater mutual trust and transparency, which was why Austria set such store by the strategic talks between the USA and the Russian Federation. Pleased to continue hosting them, his country hoped that they would help to advance a joint commitment to arms control and to complete nuclear disarmament, an objective already enshrined in the NPT. Moreover, the TPNW was only a couple of ratifications away from entry into force. Once it did enter into force, Austria looked forward to hosting the first meeting of States parties in Vienna, with the clear ambition and aim of laying the foundations for a world free of nuclear weapons.

149. There was undoubtedly a divergence of views on the role of nuclear power with regard to climate change. Although Austria recognized the need for compromise language, its stance on the issue remained unchanged: it did not consider nuclear power to be a sustainable way to generate electricity or fight climate change. Chernobyl and Fukushima had demonstrated the enormous risks and costs of nuclear technology for people and the environment. Yet, as long as nuclear power was still in use, the highest safety and security standards must be applied; he therefore offered assurances that Austria would continue to be actively engaged in the Agency's work.

150. Mr VAIČIŪNAS (Lithuania), commending the Director General's leadership in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, said that his country applauded the quick action taken by the Agency to ensure the continuation of its activities.

151. Seeing nuclear safety as an issue of great importance, Lithuania believed that the Agency's role in ensuring nuclear safety and radiation protection worldwide should be strengthened and the application of the Agency's standards should become a transparent requirement. It was equally important that the Agency took notice and supported proper implementation of the findings and recommendations of other international activities, such as the EU stress tests, which would lead to the highest nuclear safety standards in the world.

152. Lithuania was particularly concerned about nuclear safety in its close neighbourhood. Nuclear fuel had been loaded into the first unit of the NPP in Ostrovets, Belarus, even though essential environmental, nuclear safety and radiation protection issues had not been resolved and public

participation in decision making had not been ensured. Lithuania was gravely concerned at such an act and encouraged the international community, especially the Agency, to resolutely seek the implementation of international environmental, nuclear safety and radiation protection standards at Ostrovets and other similar sites worldwide.

153. All Contracting Parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety should transparently cooperate in providing each other with all relevant information and answers to the issues raised. Moreover, all Contracting Parties, especially embarking countries, should address all nuclear safety issues in a proper and timely manner despite the postponement of the Eighth Review Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety.

154. Lithuania supported international efforts towards full, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Until then, sanctions must remain in place and be fully implemented.

155. Lithuania encouraged Iran to return to indisputable compliance with the NPT and other relevant agreements in a complete and verifiable manner.

156. The Agency's work played a crucial role in ensuring nuclear safety, radiation protection and security worldwide, all of which were especially important in the current circumstances. Lithuania expected the Agency to play its decisive role so that nuclear safety standards were implemented in full.

157. Mr AL-SABAH (Kuwait), expressing his country's condolences to the families of victims of the COVID-19 pandemic, said that it stood ready to cooperate with the Agency and Member States in support of all constructive initiatives and programmes to harness the atom for peace. Kuwait would therefore be allocating US \$300,000 of its contributions to the PUI in support of ZODIAC.

158. Although all States had the right to produce, develop and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes within the framework of the NPT, the risk of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other WMDs compromised international peace and security, especially in view of current challenges and tensions; dialogue was therefore crucial.

159. Kuwait greatly valued the Agency's comprehensive safeguards system and supported its universal application. His country had followed with concern the developments regarding Iran's safeguards agreement with the Agency. It was vital to complete the agreed measures in order to settle all outstanding questions and enable the Agency to provide credible assurances of the absence of undeclared nuclear materials and activities in Iran, to ensure that the country remained a non-nuclear-weapon State.

160. Kuwait was committed to the establishment of a zone free from nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East, pursuant to the resolution adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and the outcomes of the 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences. It was crucial that Israel accede to the NPT, especially because it was the only non-party in the region, and place all its facilities under the Agency's comprehensive safeguards system.

161. Welcoming the holding of the first Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, Kuwait looked forward to the second conference, to be held in 2021 under its presidency, and hoped that all States concerned would participate.

162. Mr O'REGAN (Canada) emphasized his country's commitment to non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear technology, recalling that it was the 50th anniversary of the NPT. The global COVID-19 pandemic was a reminder of the importance of nuclear technology in powering communities, growing economies and serving essential public health functions. The Agency had stepped up to the challenge presented by COVID-19, most notably by assisting with the expansion of COVID-19 testing

capabilities in Member States. Canada had contributed \$5 million of funding for that purpose and many other countries had also made generous donations.

163. Canada was placing clean energy and sustainable growth at the heart of its plans for achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Nuclear energy would play an important role in those plans as a proven and reliable source of non-emitting energy. As there was no credible path to net zero emissions without nuclear energy, Canada was investing \$26 billion to extend the life of its nuclear energy fleet and would soon be releasing an SMR action plan. His country would continue to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes with an unwavering commitment to safety and security. The President of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission — the Chair of the Commission on Safety Standards — was calling on Member States to analyse responses to the pandemic in order to assess potential implications for the Agency's safety standards.

164. Full implementation of nuclear safeguards, which built confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of nuclear activities, was no less essential than at the entry into force of the NPT in 1970. Continued efforts to address past and ongoing proliferation concerns, in Iran, Syria and the DPRK, were therefore central to preserving international peace and security; the Agency continued to be instrumental in upholding NPT goals and principles. Future collaboration was needed to assess priorities and provide technical assistance to Member States while balancing implementation challenges and financial constraints.

165. The Director General's successful efforts to host ICONS 2020 in a virtual manner earlier in the year demonstrated how the Agency would need to be adaptable in the future implementation of its mandate. Despite the challenges ahead, Canada was committed to ensuring that the Agency could deliver with regard to safe, secure and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Its mandate was ever more important thanks to the expanding role of nuclear technology in satisfying global energy demands and in addressing urgent global challenges such as climate change. Safe, reliable, responsible and non-emitting nuclear power must be a part of the future.

166. Ms DRÁBOVÁ (Czech Republic) commended the Director General and the Secretariat on their swift action to ensure the continuity of the Agency's wide-ranging and valuable activities and the assistance provided to Member States in such challenging times. The Czech Republic appreciated the availability of peer-to-peer information sharing platforms, such as the COVID-19 NPP OPEX Network — which had provided essential information on COVID-19-related mitigating measures and the impact on NPP performance.

167. The COVID-19 outbreak had led to the regrettable postponement or cancellation of important events, including the Eighth Review Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety. As President of that meeting, she encouraged all Contracting Parties to continue their engagement under the convention and assured them that the rescheduled meeting would remain an opportunity for in-depth technical discussion.

168. Recognizing that the accessibility of the Agency's technical expertise was greatly beneficial, the Czech Republic had been pleased to host the first safety review mission since the beginning of the pandemic.

169. Mr HAAVISTO (Finland), noting that the COVID-19 pandemic had been a stress test for all international organizations, said that the Agency had successfully ensured continuity in all of its activities. Safeguards inspections had continued seamlessly, even in challenging environments, and Finland had supported the Agency in the provision of practical assistance to Member States in combatting COVID-19. The preceding months had strengthened his country's trust in the Agency as an effective multilateral organization, bolstered by its dedicated and professional staff. Finland strongly supported the Director General's goal of achieving gender parity in the organization.

170. Since the Agency played a central role in nuclear non-proliferation, maintaining the integrity of the Agency's safeguards system was essential. Finland was fully behind all efforts to preserve and ensure full implementation of the JCPOA, which remained crucial for regional and international security, and highly valued the Agency's verification role.

171. As the first country to build a geological repository for spent nuclear fuel, Finland was committed to implementing the highest possible safety and security standards. His country looked forward to sharing its valuable experiences of its repository, supporting the Agency in finding safe solutions for the disposal of high level waste. As an Arctic country, Finland was concerned at the high level waste that had been dumped in the Arctic Ocean and hoped the problem would be swiftly resolved.

172. Lastly, given the importance of the NPT to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, Finland looked forward to the Agency's contribution to the forthcoming Review Conference.

173. Mr AL MAZROUEI (United Arab Emirates) commended the Director General's strong leadership, thanks to which the Agency's work had continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the Agency had made laudable efforts to respond to Member States' requests in that connection.

174. On 1 August 2020, Barakah Unit 1 had become the first nuclear power reactor in the Arab world to begin operating. That milestone had been achieved through his Government's transparent nuclear policy, coupled with the continuous efforts of national institutions and the solid support of international partners such as the Agency. His country had cooperated closely with the Agency to support the development of a national integrated nuclear infrastructure and had received 12 major review missions in areas such as nuclear safety and security, emergencies and safeguards.

175. As a State Party to all the international instruments on nuclear safety, the UAE continued to submit complete national reports and to participate actively in the review process. It stressed the need for countries undertaking wide-ranging nuclear activities to accede to and comply with the CNS. The Agency's efforts to reach a global consensus for the application of the CPPNM and the Amendment thereto and the full implementation of its provisions were to be welcomed.

176. Underscoring the importance of the additional protocol as an important complementary tool of the comprehensive safeguards system and the need for complete compliance with the Agency's verification measures to strengthen the international community's confidence in the peaceful nature of nuclear programmes, the UAE called on Iran to implement all its obligations and to cooperate fully with the Agency to address all issues concerning its nuclear activities.

177. The UAE remained committed to a strong continued partnership with the Agency, taking a responsible approach to developing its national nuclear power programme and using peaceful nuclear applications. It looked forward to further cooperation with Member States in their continued endeavours to achieve the highest standards of safety and security and fully implement safeguards.

178. Mr KOFOD (Denmark), recognizing that 2020 had been a turbulent year for the Agency and others, said that the full consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic were not yet clear. He congratulated the Director General and the Agency staff on their professional handling of the pandemic and its implications. Multilateralism and strong multilateral organizations were needed; the Agency had an important role to play and Denmark strongly supported its work across its broad mandate. He announced Denmark's recent decision to provide Lebanon with technical experts through the Agency in the aftermath of the terrible explosion in Beirut.

179. Recalling the Agency's decisive role in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and in upholding the NPT-based regime, he pledged Denmark's full support for the safeguards system and its further development. In particular, Denmark remained committed to the JCPOA, a landmark

achievement in non-proliferation, and strongly supported the Agency's work to verify and monitor Iran's implementation of its nuclear-related commitments. It had made substantial financial contributions to the Plan and urged Iran to return to full implementation. Denmark was encouraged by the recent agreement regarding Agency access to the locations it had identified.

180. Denmark was preparing the framework that would be needed for uranium extraction in Greenland; it commended the Agency on its excellent cooperation and assistance. The Danish and Greenlandic Governments were committed to ensuring that any uranium extracted in Greenland would be fully in line with the Agency's standards; that applied to safeguards, safety and security alike.

181. Thanking the Director General and the Agency's dedicated staff for their invaluable contribution to building a safer and more prosperous world, he assured them of Denmark's continued cooperation with the Agency and other Member States to advance the organization's mandate.

182. Ms MARSUDI (Indonesia) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had delayed or even derailed the prospect of peace and prosperity for generations to come and could reverse a decade of global progress in many areas. At the same time, the world had seen no significant improvement in the area of security. Against that backdrop, if the Agency was to remain relevant it must continue to carry out its mission while contributing to global efforts in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

183. The Agency must guarantee global nuclear safety, security and safeguards. To that end, it should adapt its inspection activities in response to the current restrictions on mobility without compromising the credibility of its work.

184. It had to deliver tangible benefits of peaceful uses of nuclear energy through inclusive technical cooperation — an objective Indonesia was committed to supporting, among other things through Practical Arrangements with the Agency to enhance technical cooperation among developing countries and South-South cooperation. Indonesia welcomed and supported the Agency's NUTEC Plastic initiative aimed at addressing global plastic pollution.

185. Lastly, the Agency must provide access and support for Member States to enhance their national capacity in tackling the pandemic. Her country appreciated the Agency's assistance to Member States, including Indonesia, to strengthen the capacity of their national laboratories. Agency projects such as ZODIAC were crucial in order to monitor, detect and control the emergence and re-emergence of zoonotic diseases. Despite the magnitude of the current challenges, the Agency should continue to live up to its motto, 'Atoms for Peace and Development'.

186. Mr COSTA LIMA LEITE DE ALBUQUERQUE JÚNIOR (Brazil), expressing his country's condolences to all those who had lost their lives in the current difficult times, praised the Agency for its timely assistance to Member States during the pandemic.

187. Brazil remained unwaveringly committed to nuclear power and its fundamental role in delivering a clean, safe and secure energy mix for future generations. As a consequence, Brazil was stepping up measures to create new opportunities for long term investment in nuclear energy and was paving the way for a virtuous cycle of growth centred on an open market and enhanced competition.

188. New legislation would foster private sector investment in uranium mining, fuel fabrication and nuclear power generation. Brazil's long term plan for the energy sector anticipated up to 10GW in NPPs by 2050, as part of the ongoing expansion of power generation. Brazil's third NPP remained a priority and the bidding process for its completion was under way.

189. Brazil had set up a new nuclear safety authority for regulation, inspection and safeguards activities, previously carried out by the National Nuclear Energy Commission. In its new role, the Commission would focus on R&D, expediting important projects such as a multipurpose reactor. All

those initiatives laid the groundwork for a new chapter of nuclear power expansion in Brazil. Such ambitious goals required the reinforcement of Brazil's outstanding cooperation with the Agency, including through assistance for Member States with the development of private sector partnerships.

190. Brazil commended the Agency on promptly fulfilling its safeguards obligations despite the ongoing restrictions. All planned activities had been carried out in Brazil, and in Argentina, in full collaboration with ABACC, despite the unprecedented conditions.

191. Brazil paid tribute to the Agency's credibility and professionalism under the Director General's leadership, looking forward to the increasing role it would play in promoting socioeconomic development along with global peace and security.

**The meeting rose at 1 p.m.**