

General Conference

GC(64)/OR.4

Issued: April 2021

General Distribution

Original: English

Sixty-fourth regular session

Plenary

Record of the Fourth Meeting

Held at Headquarters, Vienna, on Tuesday, 22 September 2020, at 1.05 p.m.¹

President: Ms RAYOS NATIVIDAD (Philippines)

Later: Mr ŠUKOVIĆ (Montenegro)

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¹ 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.

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Abbreviations use in this record

A/CPPNM	The Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
AFCONE	African Commission on Nuclear Energy
AFRA	African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ALMERA	Analytical Laboratories for the Measurement of Environmental Radioactivity
ARASIA	Cooperative Agreement for Arab States in Asia for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ARCAL	Regional Cooperation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean
ARTEMIS	Integrated Review Service for Radioactive Waste and Spent Fuel Management, Decommissioning and Remediation
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
EPREV	Emergency Preparedness Review
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FORO	Ibero-American Forum of Radiological and Nuclear Regulatory Agencies
ICERR	IAEA-designated International Centre based on Research Reactor
ICONS 2020	International Conference on Nuclear Security: Sustaining and Strengthening Efforts

Abbreviations use in this record (continued)

INSSP	Integrated Nuclear Security Support Plan
IPPAS	International Physical Protection Advisory Service
IT	information technology
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
Joint Convention	Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management
MOU	memorandum of understanding
New START	Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms
NPDI	Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative
NPP	nuclear power plant
NPT	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
NUTEC Plastic	Nuclear Technology for Controlling Plastic Pollution
NWFZ	nuclear-weapon-free zone
Pelindaba Treaty	African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty
RCA	Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ReNuAL	Renovation of the Nuclear Applications Laboratories
RT–PCR	reverse transcription–polymerase chain reaction
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIT	sterile insect technique
SPECT–CT	single photon emission computed tomography – computed tomography
TC	technical cooperation
TCF	Technical Cooperation Fund
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

Abbreviations use in this record (continued)

UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organization
WMD	weapon of mass destruction
ZODIAC	Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action

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

1. Mr OQUIST KELLEY (Nicaragua) said that, in addition to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, major lockdowns, a 2020 Great Depression and a second Cold War, the world faced a twenty-first century arms race: increased military spending, modernization of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems, the threat of weapons in space, and the collapse of the multilateral arms limitation regime. In 2019 military spending worldwide had totalled \$1.9 trillion — the highest since the first Cold War and the largest annual increase in a decade — and the modernization of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems, as they grew in strategic importance, was fully under way at an additional cost of more than \$2 trillion over several years. The creation of the United States Space Force in contravention of the Outer Space Treaty had led to a new, billion-dollar arms race and the threat of another sword of Damocles hanging over humanity.
2. Recent milestones in the multilateral regime's gradual collapse included the USA's withdrawals from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty — giving rise to fears of a 'first strike' attack — and from the JCPOA. Although the New START limited the use of strategic arms, there had been no progress on its renewal in February 2021, owing to the USA's insistence that China be included, which the latter had categorically refused even before the second Cold War had begun.
3. The solution to the entire nuclear Pandora's box had already been negotiated and ratified in Article VI of the NPT, according to which each of the Parties undertook to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. Humanity had the choice of implementing Article VI or continuing towards a nuclear war for which even preparations would destroy it. The cost of the current arms race would consume all of the financial oxygen needed for addressing climate change and the SDGs while withstanding current and possible future pandemics and their economic consequences.
4. Mr KOSTOV (Bulgaria) expressed his country's strong commitment to further nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, calling once again for the universalization of the NPT along with the CSA and additional protocol. Diplomacy being the only effective means to solve problems concerning Iran's nuclear programme, the JCPOA had succeeded in strengthening the NPT. The Agency played a key role in monitoring, verifying and regularly reporting on Iran's implementation of its nuclear-related commitments.
5. He welcomed the Agency's efforts to fulfil its mandate despite the COVID-19 pandemic — in particular its emergency support to his country for expanding its COVID-19 testing capacity. Bulgaria would support ZODIAC, an initiative to meet Member States' needs for a sustainable infrastructure to address similar emergencies in the future.
6. The nuclear energy sector remained a major component of his country's energy mix. In October 2019, the Bulgarian national regulator had renewed the 10-year operational licence for the Kozloduy 6 NPP, the safe operation of which was ensured thanks to the country's regulatory framework, which required sufficient staffing and spare parts. The pandemic had made additional nuclear safety and security measures necessary. In that respect, Bulgaria looked forward to engaging in discussions at the postponed Eighth Review Meeting of the CNS and the Seventh Review Meeting of the Joint Convention.

7. The TC programme was the key Agency mechanism for technology transfer and capacity building in the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology to meet Member States' needs; its funding should therefore be assured, sufficient and predictable. For its part, Bulgaria paid its annual contribution to the TCF in full and on time. In general, Bulgaria would continue to support the Agency's activities to promote international cooperation in the peaceful uses of atomic energy and application of safeguards.

8. Prince Abdullah bin Khaled bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz AL-SAUD (Saudi Arabia) thanked the Director General and the Secretariat for continuing the Agency's verification and monitoring activities during the COVID-19 pandemic and for the assistance provided to Member States. Both activities highlighted the important role that the Agency played in strengthening regulatory, scientific and technical cooperation and promoting the use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. In addition, Saudi Arabia commended the Director General on his ZODIAC initiative.

9. With the help of Agency expertise, his Government was continuing its efforts to introduce nuclear energy into the national energy mix. Human resources needed to be enhanced in order to establish a comprehensive and sustainable national energy system following Agency standards. Moreover, building the country's first NPP would require the necessary infrastructure to be set up and candidate sites to be closely examined, in line with international best practices for nuclear energy projects.

10. His Government stood by the right of countries to use nuclear energy peacefully in all domains in accordance with the NPT. A supporter of all initiatives to create NWFZs, Saudi Arabia renewed its call for the international community to facilitate the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs in the Middle East.

11. Saudi Arabia reiterated its concern at Iran's continued violation of the JPCOA and its lack of commitment to its safeguards agreement under the NPT. It hoped that the international community would assume a firm stance and take the violations relating to Iran's nuclear programme seriously.

12. His Government welcomed the joint initiative between the Islamic Development Bank and the Agency to fight breast and cervical cancer in developing countries, which further reflected the Agency's interest in using nuclear applications to serve all humanity.

13. Recalling that, at the sixty-third regular session, Saudi Arabia had pledged a donation of \$10 million for establishing a specialized nuclear security centre at Seibersdorf, he announced that the funds had been transferred. He expressed his country's appreciation of the Secretariat's efforts to start work on the centre, which would be an integral part of the Agency.

14. Mr ŠUKOVIĆ (Montenegro), noting that — in common with most Member States — his country had required assistance in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, expressed its deep gratitude for the Agency's critical help enabling Montenegro to become the first country in Europe free of the virus in the first wave and for the USA's donation of almost €250 000 for two COVID-19 kits. Suitable equipment and assistance were needed as resources were being mobilized in his country once more to combat the new wave of cases.

15. As stated in the letter from the Deputy Prime Minister to the Director General, Montenegro remained committed to future collaboration with the Agency in particular to address zoonotic diseases, beyond the comprehensive technical assistance programme already in place. Montenegro supported ZODIAC, hoping that the initiative would demonstrate that the most impactful outcomes were achieved through strong international cohesion and coordination. His country's authorities and institutions would continue to contribute to the Agency's work in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, nuclear safety and security, non-proliferation and technical cooperation.

16. Lastly, as a member of the Friends of ReNuAL, Montenegro underlined the importance of the continuous modernization of the Seibersdorf laboratories and called on others to join those efforts.

17. Mr ISTRATE (Romania) said that the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the need for global solidarity, continually testing the international community's ability to adapt its working methods. The Agency had coordinated assistance to countries in need with commendable promptness; he thanked it and the donors for equipping Romanian hospitals and specialized institutions with COVID-19 testing materials.

18. Shortly before the pandemic had taken hold, his country and Panama had jointly presided over ICONS 2020, attended by 1900 participants from 141 Member States, including 53 ministers. An important achievement had been the adoption by consensus of the ministerial declaration. Technical discussions and side events had further underlined the importance of strengthening nuclear security worldwide. He hoped that the outcome of ICONS 2020 would be reflected in the General Conference resolution on nuclear security.

19. As noted by his country's Minister of Foreign Affairs in his address to ICONS 2020, the Institute for Nuclear Research in Pitești had been designated an ICERR in two areas of activity, in further recognition of Romania's contribution to promoting the Agency's goals. He was, in addition, pleased to announce that the National Research and Development Institute for Cryogenic and Isotopic Technologies had joined the ALMERA network.

20. On the 50th anniversary of the NPT's entry into force, he reaffirmed his country's commitment to what was a fundamental pillar of the non-proliferation regime. In that spirit, all efforts had been made to adapt to the pandemic so that safeguards inspectors could enter Romanian territory.

21. Romania had achieved much in promoting the peaceful uses of the atom and effective multilateralism since serving on the Board of Governors from 2008 to 2010. In view of its more than 60 years of cooperation with the Agency and its Member States in mining, decommissioning and intermediate activities, and its support for the TC programme through voluntary contributions and regional expertise sharing, it had reapplied for a seat on the Board in order to contribute further to the Agency's mission.

22. Mr GARCÍA REYES (Guatemala) said that nuclear energy had shown how its peaceful uses could benefit industry, agriculture, the environment and medicine, and, more broadly, contribute to sustainable development and achievement of the SDGs. Stressing that all States Parties had the right to exchange personnel, material and scientific information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and the right to cooperate among themselves — in particular regarding technology — he thanked the Agency for its invaluable assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic and those Member States that had generously supported it.

23. The Agency's support to developing countries through such initiatives, including ZODIAC, would remain vital to the international community's ability to defeat the current pandemic and any future zoonotic diseases. Guatemala furthermore commended the Agency on the uninterrupted execution of its mandated verification and monitoring activities in spite of the pandemic, especially those in Iran in accordance with UN Security Council resolution 2231 (2015).

24. Guatemala called on all participants to preserve the JCPOA and to comply with all obligations arising from it. Despite the welcome progress noted in the Director General's report set out in document GOV/2020/41, the Agency's important verification and monitoring work had shown that many issues remained outstanding. He requested that the Director General keep the Board of Governors and the General Conference informed until those important issues had been definitively resolved.

25. Mr VEGA HERNÁNDEZ (Costa Rica) said that, faced with the economic, social and emotional difficulties of the current pandemic, it was time for the international community to strengthen ties of solidarity to address the situation together — developed and developing countries, those with or lacking

resources, those that had taken timely and appropriate measures and those that had not. They must all work together to find a way that allowed humanity to prevail.

26. The great challenge for States had been responding suitably to the pandemic, which required huge financial sacrifices. That shared effort had relied on contributions from organizations such as the Agency, which had acted with clarity throughout and had heeded the call of more than 100 States, including Costa Rica, by providing COVID-19 detection equipment. The response of international organizations strengthened multilateralism and highlighted it as the best vehicle for solving shared problems. He thanked the Agency — in particular its Department of Technical Cooperation for Latin America — for its rapid and effective response, and donor States, whose extrabudgetary contributions had enabled the equipment to be delivered.

27. Multilateral responses fundamentally called for a pooling of efforts and capacities. His country had therefore tabled a successful motion at the 2020 World Health Assembly to create a COVID-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP) to make all national and regional efforts to combat the pandemic — along with treatments, best practices and possibly a vaccine — universally and democratically available. As a pandemic would be defeated only thanks to global participation, he called once again on all States and the Agency to share their knowledge with the C-TAP so that the international community could jointly overcome the pandemic.

28. Implementation of NPT disarmament obligations remained incomplete: existing commitments had not been honoured and it had become urgent to strengthen the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. In order to achieve tangible results at the 2021 NPT Review Conference, the international community must work through consensus, avoiding past mistakes and meeting its obligations. Still the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, the Treaty remained important for nuclear disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

29. For its part, the TPNW bolstered the international disarmament architecture, complementing the NPT with a legal framework for implementing Article VI and strengthening the Agency's safeguards system. Moreover, it reaffirmed the safeguards standards enshrined in Article III, encouraging all States to increase their level of commitment in that regard.

30. He thanked the Division of Nuclear Security for helping Costa Rica to receive its INSSP and implementation plan in 2020, which would strengthen his country's nuclear security regime.

31. Lastly, he called once again for wider staff geographical representation and for greater use of Spanish in the Agency's work for the sake of multilingualism. Costa Rica hoped to see greater promotion of gender equality and equity policies as a key step towards achieving full implementation of SDG 5 for gender equality and empowering women and girls in science and technology.

32. Mr GÜN (Turkey) said that, as an embarking nation, his country was building its nuclear power infrastructure and was committed to working closely with the Agency to reach the highest standards in nuclear safety, security and safeguards.

33. Turkey stood ready to play an active part in the review processes relating to the CNS and to the CPPNM and the Amendment to it. ICONS 2020, successfully held by the Agency in February, had been a useful opportunity to discuss nuclear security issues. Moreover, Turkey would continue to actively contribute to the NPT review process in its national capacity and as a member of the NPDI.

34. Thanking the Agency for its close cooperation with his country, he noted that its TC programme was a key tool for achieving the SDGs. Turkey appreciated the Director General's ZODIAC initiative, which would respond to Member States' needs and help them to combat zoonotic diseases.

35. In view of the importance for regional security and stability of preserving the JCPOA, the Director General's timely visit to Iran in August 2020 in relation to safeguards issues had made a useful contribution to diplomatic dialogue. Turkey appreciated the efforts of the Director General and his colleagues in that regard.

36. Turkey was of the view that renewed momentum should be found for diplomatic negotiations with the DPRK. The DPRK's compliance with UN Security Council resolutions and its return to the NPT regime would enhance international security and, above all, would benefit its own people.

37. Mr SHOJA'AADIN (Yemen) said that his country continued to support all Agency activities, especially in the fields of radiation protection, health, agriculture and information technology. All Member States should take advantage of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy while respecting their non-proliferation obligations. The role of the CSA needed to be strengthened to ensure equality among all States in the interests of international peace and security.

38. Yemen supported the Agency's verification and monitoring work in Iran in light of UN Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), commending the Agency's commitment to implement a CSA in Iran in an independent and impartial manner. Yemen invited Iran to comply with the JPCOA and requested it to act upon the resolution adopted by the Board of Governors in June 2020³ by granting permission for suspect locations to be inspected. It also requested Iran to answer all the Agency's questions relating to those locations and to resolve any outstanding issues.

39. As work on meeting Yemen's national priorities had benefitted from the TC programme, he hoped that the TC projects would continue to be implemented. He thanked the Agency and those involved in the TC programme for their rapid work and continuous cooperation with Yemen, especially in the areas of cancer care, agriculture, livestock and information technology. The country looked forward to receiving further support.

40. While appreciative of the Agency's considerable support in establishing Yemen's first cancer centre, the country required further assistance in that important field, in view of the rise in cancer cases and the lack of capacities due to the war. He urged the Director General to give the matter particular importance in the Agency's dealings with Yemen.

41. Yemen thanked the President of ARASIA and its Secretariat for coordinating TC projects and training opportunities for the countries involved. The Agency should further ensure that projects in countries facing exceptional circumstances — such as Yemen — could continue to operate. He thanked the Director General for the assistance Yemen had received to fight COVID-19 and the countries that had donated to the programme, in particular the USA, which had funded the assistance given. As the programme had had a substantial effect on its health sector, Yemen looked forward to further help in that area.

42. Yemen endorsed all non-proliferation initiatives and the establishment of WMD-free zones, especially in the Middle East, a region fraught with instability and a sense of insecurity due to a power imbalance and the existence of nuclear activities not subject to the NPT regime. Welcoming the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, held in November 2019 in accordance with decision 73/546 adopted by the UN General Assembly, Yemen looked forward to the second session of the Conference and called for all States to participate and ensure its success.

43. Whereas all Arab States had acceded to the NPT, stressing their continued willingness to work towards establishing a WMD-free zone in the Middle East, Israel persisted in challenging the

³ GOV/2020/34

international community by refusing to accede to the NPT and submitting all of its nuclear facilities to CSAs. By rejecting all international initiatives to establish universal adherence to the NPT and nuclear disarmament in the Middle East, Israel caused instability in the region, which was sliding into a dangerous arms race.

Mr ŠUKOVIĆ (Montenegro) took the chair.

44. Mr SUVEDI (Nepal), expressing solidarity with and condolences to all affected by COVID-19, thanked the Secretariat for its efforts to hold the General Conference despite the pandemic, which he hoped would soon be overcome by collective international efforts.

45. A party or signatory to all disarmament-related international treaties and conventions, including the TPNW, Nepal had remained committed to the peaceful uses of nuclear technology, nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. Nuclear science and technology should be used only for peaceful purposes and under Agency safeguards.

46. In June 2020, Nepal had promulgated an unprecedented law governing the use and regulation of radioactive materials, further corroborating its commitment to Agency norms.

47. Since 2012 his country had benefitted from the TC programme in areas such as building national infrastructure for radiation safety, developing radiation health services, increasing animal productivity and transboundary disease control, improving crop yield for food security, education in nuclear physics and nuclear chemistry, and non-destructive testing. Nepal looked forward to further such engagements during the current session of the General Conference.

48. Keenly following the ZODIAC consultations, which had clarified Member States' and the Agency's concerns, Nepal would work closely with them within that framework to strengthen zoonotic disease preparedness and response.

49. Ms BATTUNGALAG (Mongolia) said that, despite the unprecedented challenges of national lockdowns, reduced operations and global transport limitations, the Agency been an important partner in battling the COVID-19 pandemic. Mongolia was sincerely grateful to the Member States that had made swift and generous contributions. For its part, the Agency had clearly demonstrated that it could deliver emergency support worldwide, as a shining example of international cooperation, and should continue to do so.

50. The Agency's contribution to international efforts to strengthen global capacity to detect, prevent and respond to zoonotic diseases using nuclear and nuclear-derived techniques was welcome. Accordingly, Mongolia highly appreciated the Director General's ZODIAC initiative, which it supported in the hope that implementation would start forthwith.

51. Fully committed to nuclear non-proliferation Mongolia believed that the NPT-based regime and the Agency's safeguards system were cornerstones of international security and indispensable to the sustainable development of nuclear energy. Underscoring the importance of ICONS 2020, held in Vienna in February, she said that over the years the Agency had made enormous efforts to strengthen nuclear security. Committed to meeting the obligations of its own safeguards agreement and additional protocol, Mongolia had been striving to promote and implement regulatory procedures and standards. In particular, Mongolia appreciated the Agency's continued efforts to develop and implement INSSPs to assist Member States in applying a structured and holistic approach to nuclear security improvements, including through capacity building and increased coordination.

52. Attaching crucial importance to the Agency's TC programme and its role in building competences in the safe use of nuclear technology within Member States, Mongolia encouraged the Agency to step

up its part in the implementation of the SDGs. It strongly supported the use of nuclear technologies in the main areas of sustainable development: food and agriculture, health, water resources and the environment.

53. The Agency's technical assistance had greatly boosted the development of scientific research in Mongolia, including the establishment of laboratories in the field of nuclear science and technology for peaceful purposes. As a result, Mongolia had been successfully implementing national projects in the areas of health, food and agriculture, energy, industry, science, geology and mining. Lastly, she noted that Mongolia's CPF for 2016–2021 had made a sizeable contribution to the country's socioeconomic development.

54. Ms KOIKA (Greece), praising the Secretariat's prompt initiatives to ensure that the Agency functioned without interruption despite the COVID-19 pandemic, said that her country fervently supported the Agency's pivotal role in non-proliferation, safeguards implementation, nuclear safety, nuclear security, technical cooperation and nuclear applications. The NPT remained the cornerstone of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime: all States that had not yet signed it should do so without delay.

55. Greece also fully supported the JCPOA and its preservation with a view to providing the international community with the necessary assurances of the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. In that context, she urged all countries to refrain from taking actions that hindered the Plan, calling on Iran to return to full implementation of its agreements. Her country backed the Agency in its long term mission of verifying and monitoring Iran's nuclear programme and welcomed the Director General's updates and the positive developments regarding the safeguards agreement and additional protocol in Iran.

56. Stringent implementation of the IAEA Safety Standards Series and nuclear security guidance documents was of utmost importance. In that respect, Greece encouraged all countries to request appropriate peer review missions, implement follow-up recommendations, and — in the spirit of transparency — publish the reports of those missions.

57. Greece welcomed the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme, which exemplified the Director General's commitment to promoting gender balance; the ZODIAC initiative; and the Agency's work in cancer control, especially in developing countries and in cooperation with other international organizations, and its initiatives to expand comprehensive care for women affected by cervical cancer.

58. Greece's extensive collaboration with the Agency through the Greek Atomic Energy Commission since the sixty-third regular session of the General Conference — despite the COVID-19 pandemic — had included initiatives to enhance national regulatory control over the transport of radioactive material in the Mediterranean region and in Europe. Moreover, Greek experts had assisted other Member States in drafting radiation safety regulations and policies for training in radiation, transport and waste safety.

59. Lastly, she reiterated her country's commitment to the Agency's important mission, in particular during the pandemic, and to continuing Greece's long and fruitful cooperation with the Agency.

60. Mr SALL (Senegal) expressed his country's gratitude for the Agency's provision of equipment to its health organizations and veterinary laboratories, which had bolstered his country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. With regard to new initiatives, Senegal welcomed both ZODIAC and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme.

61. Senegal had pledged to expand its cancer treatment with linear particle accelerators for radiotherapy, SPECT–CT gamma cameras for nuclear medicine, high dose rate brachytherapy units and a new cancer centre. Furthermore, the University of Dakar offered three specialist courses in radiology, nuclear medicine and radiotherapy, and was at present training doctors from several countries. His

country was, therefore, ready and willing to offer academic and clinical training in nuclear medicine and radiotherapy in French-speaking Africa, which would help to alleviate the critical shortage of qualified doctors in the region.

62. The eradication of the tsetse fly in the Niayes region using the SIT had been a success. Senegal thanked the Agency for approving its expansion into the tsetse-infested centre of the country with the creation of an insectarium to produce sterile male flies in situ.

63. Turning to nuclear security, he repeated his country's hope that the second INSSP review mission and IPPAS mission — unfortunately cancelled because of the pandemic — would take place in 2021.

64. In closing, he reaffirmed Senegal's total commitment to non-proliferation and the promotion of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. He hoped that Member States would support its candidacy for a seat on the Board of Governors.

65. Mr DÁN (Hungary), commending the Agency for continuing its work despite the restrictions of the pandemic, thanked it for its assistance in strengthening Hungary's capacity to rapidly detect COVID-19 using RT-PCR, one of the most accurate laboratory detection methods.

66. Hungary had consistently argued for every country's right to choose an energy mix suited to its own needs and capabilities. According to Hungary's energy strategy and national energy and climate plan — adopted earlier in 2020 — nuclear energy would remain a key component of a cost-effective, climate-friendly, safe and stable energy mix that would help the country to meet its environmental goals, including making 90% of its power generation carbon-neutral by 2030.

67. NPPs had clearly proven to be resilient, reliable and affordable sources of energy even during the pandemic. There had been no delay in the construction of two new NPP units for the Paks II project, being carried out in accordance with the highest international standards. In June 2020, the project licensee had submitted an implementation application to the Hungarian Atomic Energy Authority.

68. Meeting the highest safety and security requirements in existing nuclear facilities was one of Hungary's top priorities. Nuclear safety was ensured thanks to comprehensive regulations and multi-tiered, complex supporting systems and operating mechanisms.

69. Moreover, it was essential to maintain the Agency's central role in nuclear security, to which his country attached particular importance, and to provide it with the required resources. Continuing to serve as Convener of the Nuclear Security Contact Group, Hungary would be hosting the plenary meeting of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. Later in 2020, it would be co-chairing the Meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the A/CPPNM Conference.

70. Even during the pandemic, Hungary continued to lay emphasis on international cooperation and experience sharing, among other things in the framework of the TC programme. Implementation of the existing, and preparations for the following, TC cycle must continue. Hungary was also committed to receiving the EPREV follow-up, ARTEMIS and Technical Safety Review missions and hoped that they could take place despite the crisis.

71. Hungary supported the international community's aim of ensuring the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. While fully aware of the complexities of the JCPOA, Hungary backed the Agency in implementing Iran's safeguards agreement and additional protocol with dedication and impartiality, and called on Iran to fully cooperate with the Agency in clarifying all outstanding issues.

72. Mr OJEDA VIGLIONE (Uruguay), highlighting the Agency's role in developing a universal, comprehensive and verifiable non-proliferation regime, said that his country remained unwaveringly committed to global disarmament and non-proliferation. Uruguay had ratified its additional protocol and

strove to prevent the dissemination of nuclear material for non-peaceful uses or its appropriation by terrorist groups. His country supported the creation of NWFZs as a means of achieving disarmament and non-proliferation objectives. Moreover, it had ratified the TPNW — which was complementary to and consistent with the NPT — and encouraged its prompt and necessary entry into force. That said, Uruguay firmly defended the inalienable right of States to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, which was a driver of development.

73. Uruguay supported the JCPOA and the efforts to preserve the Plan, which contributed to stability in the Middle East and to international peace and security.

74. His country was grateful to the Agency, in particular the Division for Latin America and the Caribbean, for its technical assistance for dealing with the pandemic and the extrabudgetary contributions that made it possible. Hailing the launch of ZODIAC, Uruguay offered the initiative its full backing, confident that it would soon start its activities.

75. The Agency's technical cooperation was the best way to advance nuclear technology and the TCF should not have to rely on voluntary contributions; those resources must be assured and predictable. Accordingly, Uruguay also supported ARCAL, a valuable and irreplaceable instrument for regional cooperation.

76. Since taking office, the Director General had demonstrated his strong commitment to the Agency. Noting his commitment to achieving gender parity in the Agency, Uruguay applauded the launch of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme.

77. While it recognized the fundamental role played by States in nuclear safety and security, Uruguay appreciated the Agency's efforts in that regard. Moreover, it highlighted the valuable work of FORO, which promoted radiological and nuclear safety and security at the highest level throughout the Ibero-American region.

78. Mr GOJKOVIĆ (Serbia) expressed his deep appreciation to the Agency for the assistance provided to his country in the face of the unprecedented threat to public health from the outbreak and rapid spread of COVID-19. The Agency's donation of equipment for three specialized RT-PCR units, worth €227 000, had significantly strengthened Serbia's capacity to rapidly detect infection carriers. Through its provision of similar assistance to another 124 countries worldwide, the Agency had once again demonstrated its commitment to working for the benefit of all humanity. Convinced that it was only through a joint and holistic approach that the global challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic could be efficiently and permanently overcome, Serbia looked forward to participating in the ZODIAC initiative.

79. Serbia remained committed to the Agency's fundamental principles and goals relating to the safe and secure use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. It would continue to support all efforts to strengthen the efficiency of safeguards implementation in accordance with the NPT, confirming its commitment to combatting the threat of nuclear terrorism. With emphasis on the importance of the nuclear safety and security of radioactive sources, Serbia would continue contributing to the reinforcement of efficient mechanisms against illicit trafficking in nuclear material and other radiation sources by improving physical protection and controlling orphan sources.

80. Serbia intended to further strengthen its legal and regulatory framework related to nuclear and radiation safety and security in line with international standards and EU regulations. Its priorities remained the protection of public health and the environment and the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy. It would continue to fulfil all its obligations stemming from international conventions and to apply the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources, in line with the high importance it attached to those documents for enhancing the safety and security of radiation sources.

81. He concluded by affirming the great importance his country attached to the Agency's TC programme, the support of which had proved invaluable during the COVID-19 crisis. Active in a number of national, regional and international projects, Serbia was investing all its efforts in completing them successfully, despite the challenging circumstances.

82. Ms MEBARKI (Algeria) expressed her country's satisfaction with the CPF that it was working on with the Agency; it would strengthen Algeria's capacities to meet national priorities and needs. Moreover, Algeria was grateful for the Agency's cooperation in the fight against COVID-19, in particular for the testing and diagnosis equipment that it had provided to the country.

83. Algeria supported the pioneering ZODIAC project launched by the Director General at the outset of the pandemic. It would enable the Agency to respond more forcefully to the pandemic by establishing a multidisciplinary, comprehensive worldwide framework for the timely detection of pathogens causing zoonotic diseases and prevention of their spread. Algeria hoped that ZODIAC would receive sufficient funding to achieve its objectives.

84. Algeria was pleased that the Agency had prioritized assistance for Africa in the areas of food and agriculture, health and nutrition, nuclear science development and management, nuclear security, water and environment, industrial applications, and radiation technology. Having recently agreed to review AFRA, which greatly contributed to sustainable cooperation on the African continent, her country hoped that its implementation from 2019 to 2023 would lead to greater socioeconomic benefits in the States Parties. Committed to support efforts that strengthened cooperation among the States Parties to the agreement, Algeria stood ready to lend its expertise and infrastructure to assist other African countries. In addition, it welcomed the MOU signed recently between AFCONE and AFRA to strengthen technical cooperation and national capacities in Africa.

85. Deeply committed to the CTBT, in view of its contribution to strengthening international peace and security as well as nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, Algeria called for efforts to be stepped up to bring the Treaty into force, a priority that the international community had agreed upon during the 2000 NPT Review Conference, at which her country had presided.

86. Lastly, as one of the first States to sign and ratify the Pelindaba Treaty to establish an NWFZ in Africa, Algeria was firmly committed to accelerating establishment of such a zone in the Middle East, in accordance with resolutions passed by the UN Security Council and General Assembly and by the NPT Review Conferences.

87. Ms RODRÍGUEZ VEGA (Panama) said that, in such exceptional and uncertain times, the COVID-19 pandemic posed a daily challenge, which called for international cooperation. Like many States, Panama had been severely affected by the pandemic, but, thanks to the Agency's assistance through the TC programme, overseen by the Division for Latin America and the Caribbean, Panama had been better prepared to face it. In addition, the comprehensive diagnostic equipment it had received, worth €135 000, had enabled Panama to strengthen its response system. Her country supported the ZODIAC initiative, aimed at enhancing the prevention and control of future zoonotic disease pandemics.

88. As its Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs had co-chaired ICONS 2020, Panama welcomed the positive feedback on the event, which had been successfully concluded with the adoption by consensus of a ministerial declaration.

89. In early 2020, Panama had signed two important documents on technical cooperation for the following five years: its CPF and the ARCAL Extension Agreement. Moreover, Panama was involved in four national projects for the 2020–2021 cycle worth over half a million euros. Those projects were aimed at strengthening analytical capacities to identify risks in agricultural products for domestic

consumption; improving the quality of organic cocoa production; strengthening capacities to improve the quality and safety of radiotherapy, and improving national infrastructure for radiation safety.

90. Having received over €5 million for both regional and national projects, Panama thanked the Agency for its assistance over the previous decade. It reaffirmed its commitment to continue jointly promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy for global socioeconomic well-being.

91. Ms RODRIGUES COELHO (Angola) said that the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting health and socioeconomic problems had led to a humanitarian crisis calling for an unprecedented response from the international community. Recognizing its role in tackling COVID-19, Angola appreciated the Agency's assistance in providing RT-PCR equipment and supplies for detection of the virus.

92. Angola joined others in welcoming the ZODIAC initiative, which would help Member States, especially developing countries, to prevent future pandemics caused by zoonotic diseases of all kinds. Her country hoped the Agency would provide more information on the financial, organizational and human resource aspects of implementing the initiative, the technical assistance and training to be given for national laboratories, and the way ZODIAC would be coordinated with other international organizations such as the FAO and WHO.

93. With regard to the legal framework pertaining to nuclear safety and security, Angola called on the Agency to continue disseminating information and monitoring the situation in Member States. At the annual Treaty Event on 21 September 2020, it had deposited an instrument of accession to the CNS, and an instrument of accession to the CPPNM and of ratification of its Amendment.

94. Lastly, Angola reiterated its firm commitment to continue promoting the use of atoms for peace and development worldwide; in the fight against COVID-19 unity and solidarity among Member States were more necessary than ever.

95. Mr ASSAF (Lebanon) praised the Agency's fundamental role in facilitating access to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and contributing to the welfare of humanity. The COVID-19 pandemic had posed the world with unprecedented challenges, which the Agency had played a pioneering role in confronting by supplying nuclear medical equipment to several Member States—including Lebanon—fighting the spread of the disease and thereby confirming the vital benefits of nuclear technology.

96. Lebanon welcomed the Director General's ZODIAC initiative; an integrated, systematic framework for contributing to the fight against zoonotic diseases. It was important, however, that the project costs did not affect the agreed funding for TC activities.

97. Furthermore, Lebanon supported the Director General's objective of achieving a gender balance at the Agency and encouraged him to make further progress.

98. The Lebanese Atomic Energy Commission and the Agency's TC Department had continued to cooperate positively on a number of projects, workshops and capacity building programmes. The Director General's 2019 TC report showed that the Agency continued to support Lebanon's efforts to revise and update national regulations in order to better protect workers, the public and the environment from radiation.

99. Noting that the application of safeguards in the Middle East was of utmost importance, he said that the Director General's report on that matter unfortunately demonstrated his inability to fulfil his mandate in the light of resolution GC(63)/RES/13, given that all States in the region were parties to the NPT except Israel.

100. Lebanon had actively participated in the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, held in New

York in November 2019. Lebanon renewed its support for the Conference's continuation until the desired objective had been reached, calling for the involvement of all States in order to strengthen regional and international peace and security.

101. Ms SRISWASDI (Thailand), commending the Agency on its professionalism in carrying out its mandate despite the difficulties posed by COVID-19, said that the challenges of the pandemic called for solidarity, empathy and flexibility. Thanking donor countries, she expressed Thailand's appreciation of the assistance provided by the Agency to hundreds of laboratories worldwide thanks to RT-PCR, a nuclear-derived technique for detecting COVID-19. Thailand was one of the countries that had received X-ray machines and toolkits for use in the fight against the coronavirus. The Agency's dedication and efforts were testament to its central role in enabling people around the world to benefit from the peaceful applications of nuclear techniques. Moreover, Thailand supported the Director General's ZODIAC initiative and looked forward to cooperating further with the Agency on the project.

102. Noting developments in Iran, Thailand appreciated the efforts of the Director General and the Secretariat to ensure that safeguards obligations were observed. Iran and the Agency should continue working together to facilitate the organization's verification mandate in the country. Supportive of efforts to preserve the JCPOA, Thailand urged all participants to fully implement their obligations in good faith.

103. Thailand wished to see the DPRK comply fully with all UN Security Council resolutions that concerned it. It appreciated the Agency's continued efforts to monitor the DPRK's nuclear programme and its readiness to resume its verification mandate once the political environment allowed.

104. After 50 years of the NPT, the international non-proliferation regime was facing ever more complex challenges. Thailand hoped to see constructive deliberations on all pillars at the following NPT Review Conference, with a view to promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear technology and advancing commitments to general and complete disarmament. Thailand looked forward to the entry into force of the TPNW, in the belief that it and the NPT — as essential components of the global non-proliferation and disarmament regime — could work in tandem towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

105. Thailand realized the immense potential of nuclear technology for peaceful uses, having itself benefitted considerably from workshops, activities and conferences organized under the TC Programme and the RCA. Thailand commended Malaysia for conducting its duties as RCA chair with professionalism in spite of the challenges posed by COVID-19.

106. Mr SHAARAN (Afghanistan) thanked the Director General for his efforts to support Afghanistan and the other Member States during the COVID-19 emergency through the provision of personal protective equipment and diagnostic kits.

107. Despite the huge challenges related to the pandemic, in 2020 the Afghanistan National Nuclear Regulatory Authority had managed — with the Agency's support — to finalize three regulations on licensing, transportation and nuclear waste, which were about to be submitted for approval by the Ministry of Justice. The existence of a Nuclear Energy Act, the regulation of radiation protection and the approval of the regulations along with drafted guidelines would pave the way for the safe and secure use of nuclear technology for the country's sustainable development.

108. The Afghanistan Nuclear Energy Agency, the country's main implementing partner, and other national agencies had started implementing the projects defined in its CPF, signed on the margins of the sixty-third regular session of the General Conference. The projects would last until 2023 and mainly concerned radiation safety infrastructure, food and agriculture, human health and nutrition, and human capital development.

109. To ensure that policies on the peaceful use of nuclear activities in the country were effective, the executive and technical board of the Afghan Atomic Energy High Commission had been turned into an independent organization — the Afghanistan Nuclear Energy Agency. It was among the youngest governmental bodies in the country and had a low annual budget, but in 2020 its funding had almost doubled and its technical staff had increased by 20%.

110. Owing to the Soviet Union's invasion of the country and the long civil war, most of the radioactive sources used in military equipment or for medical diagnostic and therapeutic purposes were missing. To protect the environment and human safety, the Afghanistan Nuclear Energy Agency had conducted a survey in Kabul to recover those sources; a number of radioactive materials with very high radiation doses had been found among military scrap metal. Nevertheless, the survey needed to be extended across the country to ensure the safety of people and the environment, for which Afghanistan needed the full support of the Agency and other Member States.

111. The Afghan people and Government had removed the final obstacle to peace negotiations with the Taliban. Recent developments in the peace process had renewed hope for an end to the bloodshed and the establishment of lasting peace in the country. Afghanistan's main goal was to preserve the republic system and the achievements of the previous 20 years in human, women's, ethnic and religious rights and freedom of speech in order to reach permanent and sustainable peace.

112. As a State party to the NPT with a CSA, Afghanistan strongly supported the establishment of an NWFZ in the Middle East as a positive and complementary step towards achieving the objective of a nuclear-weapons-free world.

113. Mr TEGENE (Ethiopia) said that his country — a founding member of the Agency — had enhanced its cooperation with the Agency on account of its strong commitment to the peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology in the diversified development sectors. Ethiopia was working closely with the Agency through the conclusion of partnership agreements aimed at promoting and employing nuclear science and technology in its development endeavours. Ethiopia praised the Agency's firm commitment to advancing the principles enshrined in its motto 'Atoms for Peace and Development' worldwide, demonstrated by its ever-increasing partnerships and programmes with Member States.

114. As part of its continued efforts to support Member States, despite the uncertainties and difficulties arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Agency had backed the strengthening of national response capabilities aimed at control and mitigation. Ethiopia was grateful for the support received to date and looked forward to further cooperation through the ZODIAC initiative.

115. The peaceful applications of atomic energy and its associated tools had been instrumental in addressing Ethiopia's development needs in key socioeconomic sectors such as agriculture, food security, human health, water resource management, environment, manufacturing and energy.

116. With regard to technical cooperation, Ethiopia had signed a CPF for the period 2018–2023 to ensure the Agency's continued support in vital economic sectors. His country had legislative and regulatory frameworks covering all aspects of radiation and nuclear safety, security, safeguards and liability for nuclear damage. It had also put in place legal and institutional mechanisms for the registration and licensing of all nuclear safety and security-related activities.

117. As part of its commitment to establishing strong leadership at the national level, the Ethiopian Government was in the final stages of establishing an independent institution responsible for managing and strengthening cooperation with the Agency and its Member States in the peaceful applications of nuclear technology.

118. Lastly, he reiterated his country's long-standing position in favour of the total elimination of nuclear weapons and the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

119. Mr ALASHI (Libya), expressing his sincere condolences to the families of all victims of COVID-19 around the world, called on the international community to continue cooperating to combat the disease, which posed a threat to all humankind and their livelihoods. Libya thanked the Secretariat for its efforts to support Member States in that regard, including the provision of diagnostic equipment, and welcomed the ZODIAC initiative.

120. His delegation commended the excellent work of the Director General and the Secretariat over the previous year. Recalling the success of ICONS 2020, held in Vienna in February, in which his country had participated at a high level, he expressed the hope that the Secretariat would continue to hold conferences of such importance.

121. Libya paid particular attention to the Agency's TC activities, which were essential for the sustainable development of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Libya had upheld its financial commitments to the TC programme, and had begun to design projects for the current TC cycle, including identifying priority areas for TC support in line with its CPF.

122. Thanks to Agency support, Libya was successfully implementing its INSSP. Having completed 80% of a project to develop a safety system for the telecobalt unit at Tripoli Central Hospital, it had finished the technical design phase for a project to develop a nuclear and radiation safety system at the country's nuclear research centre. Despite the security situation in the south of the country, a remote safety system for uranium stores in Sabha had been finalized. In addition, a final draft of the Libyan nuclear law and its implementing regulations had been drawn up with the cooperation of Agency experts and Libyan specialists.

123. Libya sincerely appreciated the fact that the Agency took into account the conditions in the country and overcame related challenges to ensure the success of TC projects; he called for even more support in that regard. He expressed his country's thanks to the USA and the UK for their donations to fund nuclear safety projects at various nuclear and radiotherapy facilities. His delegation also looked forward to the completion of the project to establish control systems at the Tajoura Nuclear Research Center, sponsored by Argentina.

124. In 2003, Libya had announced that it was voluntarily abandoning its WMD development programme, in the belief that global peace and security were unattainable as long as such weapons existed. His country had since cooperated with the international community, reiterating its commitment to the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Moreover, Libya had acceded to all international instruments in that regard.

125. Stressing the importance of ridding all countries in the Middle East of nuclear weapons and other WMDs, without exception, he called for urgent and practical measures to be taken to that end, in order to enhance peace, security and stability in the region and worldwide. Furthermore, as all States had the inalienable right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, the barriers that prevented developing States from accessing nuclear technology and knowledge should be removed to strengthen security, stability and well-being in those countries.

126. Even in the face of the economic situation in the country, Libya had done all it could to meet its financial commitments to the Agency. Nonetheless, despite the Secretariat's efforts to increase the representation of developing countries on the Agency's staff, none of the applicants that Libya had put forward for such positions to date had been accepted.

127. Mr LE Dung (Viet Nam) said that his country appreciated the Agency's tremendous efforts and remarkable achievements in fulfilling its mission relating to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy to ensure

global safety and security, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Viet Nam was grateful to the Agency for its assistance in applying the RT–PCR technique to combat the pandemic. The Agency’s provision of support and equipment to 118 Member States, including Viet Nam, for the rapid and accurate detection of COVID-19 had contributed to efforts to address the disease.

128. Viet Nam applauded the ZODIAC and NUTEC Plastic initiatives, which demonstrated the Agency’s effective assistance in promoting the application of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes and sustainable development, especially in solving global issues. Viet Nam fully supported and cooperated with the Agency on such projects.

129. Thanks to the Agency’s important TC activities, his country had made important achievements in the application of nuclear energy in various fields, including healthcare, agriculture, industry, research, environmental protection, water resources development, response to climate change, and radiation and nuclear safety. Having participated in designing new regional and interregional projects, Viet Nam expected to be awarded six national TC projects for the 2022–2023 cycle.

130. Lastly, Viet Nam thanked the Agency’s staff for their dedication and efficiency and expressed confidence in the Director General’s ability to lead the Agency in its complex tasks with technical expertise, diplomatic skill, impartiality and determination.

131. Ms MELI DAUDEY (Malta) commended the Agency for its unrelenting efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic and thanked its safeguards inspectors for continuing their work — despite ever-changing circumstances and restrictions — on nuclear non-proliferation. The Agency should also be commended for providing aid to more than 120 Member States in order to halt the spread of the pandemic. Proud to have played its part by voluntarily contributing to the Agency’s programme for combatting COVID-19, Malta looked forward to continuing work with the Agency in its efforts to control zoonotic diseases.

132. As the main sponsor of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, Malta firmly supported the Agency’s aim to create a more inclusive workforce in the nuclear field. Her country was pleased to note that the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme would provide up to 100 female students with a scholarship and the opportunity to pursue an internship at the Agency.

133. Malta thanked the Agency for its support under the TC programme, which continued to produce tangible and important benefits in such fields as radiation therapy, cancer treatment, cultural heritage, and water treatment, as confirmed by her country’s own TC programme outcomes.

134. Malta maintained its unwavering support for the NPT, the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation regime, and called unequivocally for its universalization. Moreover, her country was proud to have recently ratified the TPNW. Still committed to the JCPOA, Malta called on all countries to refrain from taking actions that impeded its implementation. It commended the Secretariat on its professional work in verifying and monitoring Iran’s nuclear-related commitments, in particular in uncertain times.

135. Malta also called upon the DPRK to comply fully with the relevant UN Security Council and General Conference resolutions. It further called upon Syria to cooperate fully and promptly with the Agency to address all unresolved issues, and to bring an additional protocol into force without delay.

136. She concluded by echoing the appeal by Morocco to Member States that had not yet accepted the amendment to Article VI of the Statute, concerning the enlargement of the Board of Governors, to consider doing so.

The meeting rose at 3.05 p.m.