

General Conference

GC(66)/OR.7

Issued: November 2022

General Distribution

Original: English

Sixty-sixth regular session

Plenary

Record of the Seventh Meeting

Held at Headquarters, Vienna, on Thursday, 27 September 2022, at 10.30 a.m.

President: Mr CORTESE (Italy)

Contents

Item of the agenda ¹		Paragraphs
25	Examination of delegates' credentials	1–6
8	Election of Members to the Board of Governors	7–50
7	The IAEA and the COVID-19 Pandemic	51–53
–	Interim oral report by the Chair of the Committee of the Whole	54–60
9	The Agency's Financial Statements for 2021	61
11	Amendment to Article XIV.A of the Statute	62
12	Scale of assessment of Member States' contributions towards the Regular Budget for 2023	63
15	Strengthening of the Agency's technical cooperation activities	64

¹ GC(66)/17

Contents (continued)

		Paragraphs
16	Strengthening the Agency's activities related to nuclear science, technology and applications	65
–	Report on the Scientific Forum	66–68
8	Election of Members to the Board of Governors	69–87
19	Application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East	88–143

Abbreviations used in this record

COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CSA	comprehensive safeguards agreement
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NPP	nuclear power plant
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
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
NWFZ	nuclear-weapon-free zone
Pelindaba Treaty	African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty
PMO	Policy-Making Organ
Tlatelolco Treaty	Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WMDs	weapons of mass destruction
ZODIAC	Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action

25. Examination of delegates' credentials (GC(66)/23)

1. The PRESIDENT said that the General Committee had met earlier in the day as a credentials committee to examine the credentials of all delegates, as provided for in Rule 28 of the Rules of Procedure. Since that meeting of the General Committee, the Secretariat had received credentials in due form for the delegates of Colombia. After discussion, the Committee had recommended that the Conference adopt the draft resolution set out in paragraph 7 of its report in document GC(66)/23.

2. Mr ELMOLLA (Egypt) said that his country's acceptance of Israel's credentials by no means constituted recognition of the territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan Heights and the Shebaa Farms. Israel's borders were limited to those provided for in the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel.

3. Mr YAZDANI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the adoption of the report of the Credentials Committee should under no circumstances be construed as recognition by his Government of the Israeli regime.

4. Ms ABIDA (Jordan) said that under no circumstances did the acceptance of Israel's credentials constitute any change in her country's position of considering all territories occupied by Israel on 4 June 1967 to be occupied territories. Israel must withdraw from those territories, including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan Heights, and abolish all measures imposed on those areas, in accordance with international law and resolutions of international legitimacy. Israel's borders were limited to those provided for in the Jordanian–Israeli peace agreement of 1994. Furthermore, Jordan's joining of the consensus on the report and resolution on the examination of delegates' credentials in no way signified any agreement on its part that Israel's credentials applied to the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem, or to the Syrian Golan Heights.

5. The PRESIDENT took it that, with the positions and reservations expressed, the General Conference was prepared to adopt the draft resolution set out in paragraph 7 of document GC(66)/23.

6. It was so decided.

8. Election of Members to the Board of Governors (GC(66)/5 and GC(66)/22)

7. The PRESIDENT drew attention to document GC(66)/5, containing the designations of members to serve on the Board from the end of the sixty-sixth (2022) regular session until the end of the sixty-seventh (2023) regular session of the General Conference.

8. Recalling that, under Rule 83 of the Rules of Procedure, the presiding officer must indicate to the General Conference those elective places on the Board which must be filled, he referred to paragraph 2 of document GC(66)/22, which indicated, for each geographical area, the number of Member States that must be elected so as to ensure that the Board would be constituted in accordance with Article VI.A of the Statute.

9. He said that there were 11 seats to be filled: 3 for Latin America; 2 for Western Europe; 1 for Eastern Europe; 2 for Africa; 1 for the Middle East and South Asia; 1 for South East Asia and the Pacific; and 1 additional seat — the so-called ‘floating seat’ under Article VI.A.2.(b) of the Statute — which in the current year was to be filled by a Member State from the Middle East and South Asia.

10. Paragraph 3 of document GC(66)/22 listed the 24 Member States which had either been elected by the General Conference in 2021 in accordance with Article VI.A.2 of the Statute and which would therefore continue to serve on the Board until 2023, or had been designated by the Board the previous June for membership of the Board pursuant to Article VI.A.1 of the Statute for the one-year period from the end of the current session until the end of the regular session of the Conference in 2023.

11. In order to facilitate the election, delegates had been furnished with an informal note showing the results of consultations within the area groups regarding their candidates for the elective places. He stressed that the note was purely informal in character and provided information insofar as it had been made available to him and to the Secretariat.

12. He recalled that in 1989 the Conference had approved a procedure whereby no secret ballot would be held when there was agreement regarding the candidate or candidates from a particular area. Balloting would take place only in respect of those areas for which there was no agreed slate. That procedure considerably facilitated the rational use of the Conference’s time. Accordingly, Rule 79 of the Conference’s Rules of Procedure, which stipulated that elections to the Board were to be by secret ballot, must be suspended in respect of the areas for which no secret ballot would be held.

13. The PRESIDENT took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Kenya and Namibia to the two vacant seats for Africa.

14. Kenya and Namibia were duly elected.

15. The PRESIDENT took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Bulgaria to the one vacant seat for Eastern Europe.

16. Bulgaria was duly elected.

17. The PRESIDENT took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Brazil, Costa Rica and Uruguay to the three vacant seats for Latin America.

18. Brazil, Costa Rica and Uruguay were duly elected.

19. The PRESIDENT said that Denmark and Türkiye had submitted their candidatures for the two elective places to be filled for Western Europe. There being no other candidates, he took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Denmark and Türkiye to the two vacant seats for Western Europe.

20. Denmark and Türkiye were duly elected.

21. The PRESIDENT took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Singapore to the one vacant seat for South East Asia and the Pacific.

22. Singapore was duly elected.

23. The PRESIDENT said that, with regard to the one vacant elective seat for the Middle East and South Asia and the one floating seat, he had been informed that there was no consensus in the group but that two States had presented their candidatures.

24. Mr MAZUMDAR (India) said that, despite the efforts made, the group had been unable to make a positive recommendation with regard to the one elective seat for the Middle East and South Asia and the one floating seat.

25. Mr ALHAMMADI (Qatar) said that his country had been the only one to present its candidature for the regular vacant seat for the Middle East and South Asia group, having submitted a note verbale to that effect to the Secretariat on 25 September 2022. All members of the group except one had welcomed Qatar's candidacy. Thanking India for its wise leadership as chair of the group, he expressed the hope that the Member States would agree to elect his country to the Board by acclamation.

26. Prince Abdullah bin Khaled bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz AL-SAUD (Saudi Arabia) said that, on 16 August 2022, his country had presented its candidacy for election to the floating seat on the Board. He thanked the members of the Middle East and South Asia group for their efforts to achieve consensus — something that his country always sought to attain during internal discussions in the group. It was regrettable that, as in previous years, rather than showing the required flexibility and pragmatism, one State had chosen to sabotage efforts to arrive at consensus on the nomination of candidates and had attempted to impose preconditions.

27. Saudi Arabia hoped that the Member States would support the group's candidates. It looked forward to working closely with the Secretariat and other Member States to achieve the Agency's aims.

28. Speaking also on behalf of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen, he extended sincere thanks and appreciation to India for all its efforts to achieve consensus within the Middle East and South Asia group. Given the problems faced by the group in achieving consensus, efforts should be made to maintain consensus within the group's internal framework.

29. He expressed the hope that Member States would provide valuable support to Qatar and Saudi Arabia and ensure their election to the Board. The group of States would continue to support the Agency's work under the Director General and engage positively with Member States to achieve the Agency's goals and objectives. Lastly, he thanked Pakistan and Sri Lanka for supporting the candidates and for their efforts to reach consensus.

30. The PRESIDENT said that Qatar had submitted its candidature for the one elective place to be filled for the Middle East and South Asia. There being no other candidates, he took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Qatar to the one vacant seat for the Middle East and South Asia.

31. Qatar was duly elected.

32. The PRESIDENT said that Saudi Arabia had submitted its candidature for the floating seat. There being no other candidates, he took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Saudi Arabia for the floating seat.

33. Mr NAZIRI ASL (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, in accordance with Article VI of the Statute, the General Conference must elect members of the Board of Governors with due regard to the equitable representation on the Board as a whole of the members in the areas listed, which included the Middle East and South Asia. Unfortunately, there had not been a balanced representation of the countries of the Middle East and South Asia group on the Board in the past. There was therefore an urgent need to redefine the nomination process in order to ensure that countries were represented in an equitable, apolitical and non-discriminatory manner, which would improve the efficiency of the Agency and grant all members of the Middle East and South Asia group equal opportunity to be represented on the Board.

34. Iran highly appreciated the efforts of India, as the current chair of the group, to hold consultations to agree on criteria to that end. Unfortunately, those efforts had been hindered by the systematic refusal of certain delegations to engage constructively on the issue. To preserve their monopoly over seats on the Agency's PMOs, those delegations had continued to hold hostage the group's interest in ensuring fair, non-discriminatory and balanced representation on the Board. Such a short-sighted political agenda had made it impossible for the group to achieve consensus on its nominations to the Board for the next period.

35. Geopolitical groups must work on the basis of consensus when it came to candidature issues. There was urgent need to determine a nomination process within the Middle East and South Asia group that would ensure an equitable, qualitative, apolitical and non-discriminatory balance of representation on the Board. In the absence of such a process, Iran was unable to support the nomination of Saudi Arabia for membership of the Board.

36. All avenues had been explored within the Middle East and South Asia group with a view to achieving consensus. It had been proposed that agreement should be reached on methods of nomination that would allow other members of the group to be elected to the Board. Another proposal had been to hold bilateral consultations with a view to reaching agreement on allowing other members to run for election in subsequent years. All such proposals had been rejected, however.

37. He requested that the election of a member for the floating seat on the Board be put to a vote.

38. Prince Abdullah bin Khaled bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz AL-SAUD (Saudi Arabia) said that Iran was the only member of the Middle East and South Asia group that had opposed the candidatures of Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

39. The PRESIDENT said that, as there was no agreement with regard to the candidate for the floating seat, the General Conference would proceed to a vote to fill the vacancy.

40. Rules 81 and 83–85 of the Rules of Procedure, in particular Rule 84, applied in an election to fill vacant seats to the Board.

41. In accordance with Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure, election of members to the Board would be by secret ballot and there must be no nominations.

42. Under Rule 74 of the Rules of Procedure, explanations of vote would not be allowed before or after the vote.

43. The relevant provisions set out in Article XIX.A of the Statute governing voting rights of Member States applied.

44. In accordance with Rule 84 of the Rules of Procedure, there would be a single ballot for the one elective place to be filled. The ballot paper would specify the vacant place to be filled. Accordingly, each Member State that was eligible to vote would receive one ballot paper specifying the one vacant seat, to be filled by a Member State from the Middle East and South Asia group, in accordance with Article VI.A.2(a) of the Statute.

45. In accordance with Rule 70 of the Rules of Procedure, a simple majority of Member States present and voting was required.

46. Votes covered by Rule 85 of the Rules of Procedure would be deemed invalid.

47. Delegates were requested to indicate on the ballot paper their preference for the one candidate for the floating seat. Saudi Arabia was the candidate for the floating seat.

48. A vote was taken by secret ballot.

49. At the invitation of the President, Mr Garcés Burbano (Ecuador) and Mr Jenko (Slovenia) acted as tellers.

50. The PRESIDENT proposed that the meeting proceed to consideration of the Director General's report on the Agency and the COVID-19 pandemic while the votes were being counted.

7. The IAEA and the COVID-19 Pandemic (GC(66)/INF/2)

51. Mr SANTANA NUÑEZ (Cuba) expressed his country's sincere appreciation to the Division for Latin America and the Caribbean for its leadership in mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including through the provision of diagnostic and protective equipment. Thanks to the Agency's expertise, Member States had been able to develop their diagnostic and treatment capacities in the area of nuclear medicine. Cuba thanked the Director General for developing close relationships with the United Nations, specialized organizations, Member States and other stakeholders during the provision of such support. In that connection, he expressed his country's support for the ZODIAC initiative.

52. He thanked the Agency for the support that it had provided to Cuba in particular. Despite the worsening embargo imposed on the country, such support had made possible the creation of a national pandemic control strategy and a highly effective protocol, the expansion of hospital and intensive care capacities and the development of molecular biology laboratories throughout the country, staffed by highly qualified and dedicated personnel. Thanks to its national science industry and its biopharmaceutical sector, Cuba had developed five candidate vaccines. Three vaccines had ultimately been adopted for use, and more than 90% of the population had received at least one dose.

53. As stated in the report, COVID-19 remained a cause for concern at national, regional and international levels. States needed to work together to ensure that any future outbreak of a zoonotic disease did not lead to another pandemic. Cuba remained committed to working with the Agency and other States in that regard.

— Interim oral report by the Chair of the Committee of the Whole

54. Mr BENGU (South Africa), Chair of the Committee of the Whole, reported on the outcome of the Committee's deliberations on agenda items 9, 11, 12, 15 and 16.

55. Under item 9, "The Agency's Financial Statements for 2021", the Committee recommended that the Conference adopt the draft resolution set out in document GC(66)/3.

56. Under item 11, "Amendment to Article XIV.A of the Statute", the Committee recommended that the Conference adopt the decision set out in document GC(66)/L.7.

57. Under item 12, "Scale of assessment of Member States' contributions towards the Regular Budget for 2023", the Committee recommended that the Conference adopt the draft resolution appearing on page 3 of document GC(66)/11.

58. Under item 15, "Strengthening of the Agency's technical cooperation activities", the Committee recommended that the Conference adopt draft resolution A, "Strengthening the Agency's technical

cooperation activities”, and draft resolution B, “Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy”, contained in document GC(66)/L.5.

59. Under item 16, “Strengthening the Agency’s activities related to nuclear science, technology and applications”, the Committee recommended that the Conference adopt draft resolution A, “Non-power nuclear applications”, draft resolution B, “Nuclear power applications”, and draft resolution C, “Nuclear knowledge management”, set out in document GC(66)/L.6.

60. The PRESIDENT thanked the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Committee of the Whole for their work.

9. The Agency’s Financial Statements for 2021

61. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the draft resolution set out in document GC(66)/3 was adopted.

11. Amendment to Article XIV.A of the Statute

62. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the draft resolution set out in document GC(66)/L.7 was adopted.

12. Scale of assessment of Member States’ contributions towards the Regular Budget for 2023

63. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the draft resolution on page 3 of document GC(66)/11 was adopted.

15. Strengthening of the Agency’s technical cooperation activities

64. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the draft resolution set out in document GC(66)/L.5 was adopted.

16. Strengthening the Agency’s activities related to nuclear science, technology and applications

65. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the draft resolution set out in document GC(66)/L.6 was adopted.

– Report on the Scientific Forum

66. The PRESIDENT, recalling that the theme of the Scientific Forum 2022 had been “Rays of Hope: Cancer Care for All”, invited the Rapporteur of the Scientific Forum 2022, Mr Tomoaki Tamaki, to report to the General Conference.

67. Mr TAMAKI (Rapporteur of the Scientific Forum 2022) read out the report (annexed hereto).

68. The PRESIDENT thanked Mr Tamaki for the report and commended him and the Secretariat on the success of the Scientific Forum 2022.

8. Election of Members to the Board of Governors (resumed)

69. The PRESIDENT announced the result of the ballot for the floating seat.

70. In the election of one member for the floating seat, the result of the vote was as follows:

Ballot papers returned: 128

Invalid votes: 4

Abstentions: 17

Valid votes: 124

Required majority: 54

Votes obtained:

Saudi Arabia 107

71. Having obtained the required majority, Saudi Arabia was duly elected for the so-called floating seat.

72. The PRESIDENT congratulated the 11 Member States elected to the Board of Governors and recalled that, under Article VI.D of the Statute, they would hold office from the end of the current regular session of the General Conference until the end of its sixty-eighth (2024) regular session.

73. Mr VERBOVYI (Ukraine) said that the Russian Federation’s actions against and at nuclear facilities in Ukraine since 24 February 2022 represented the most severe threat of the past decade to the international nuclear safety and security regimes. Such actions by a Member State and a nuclear-weapon State constituted a glaring violation of international law, including the UN Charter and the Agency’s Statute. To date, the Russian Federation had continued arrogantly to ignore all international calls, including those outlined in two Board resolutions, to withdraw from Ukrainian nuclear facilities.

74. Such lack of commitment by a Board member was unacceptable and necessitated decisive action. The Russian Federation must be held accountable for its complete disregard of the norms of international law and, in particular, its violation of the Agency’s Statute by being suspended from its so-called ‘permanent seat’ on the Board.

75. He recalled Article XIX.B of the Statute, which stated that any member that had persistently violated the provisions of the Statute or of any agreement entered into by it pursuant to the Statute could be suspended from the exercise of the privileges and rights of membership by the General Conference

acting by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting upon recommendation by the Board. In the light of those provisions, the Agency must react appropriately to the constant violations of the Statute by one of its members.

76. Prince Abdullah bin Khaled bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz AL-SAUD (Saudi Arabia), expressing his country's appreciation to all Member States for their valuable support, said that his country would continue to engage positively with the Agency and support the Director General in fulfilling his mandate.

77. Ms KROIS (Poland) said that, while acknowledging that the decision on the designation of members to serve on the Board in 2022–2023 was based on Articles V and VI of the Agency's Statute, which stipulated that the General Conference should elect the most advanced countries in the field of nuclear technology as members of the Board, Poland profoundly regretted that the Russian Federation appeared on the list of Board members for 2022–2023, given that country's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine in gross violation of international law, including the UN Charter and the Agency's Statute. The Russian Federation had, some 200 days previously, launched a full-scale invasion against a smaller country; it was killing civilians and devastating critical infrastructure, including nuclear infrastructure; and its authorities had frequently and recently threatened to use nuclear weapons. The Russian Federation had clearly demonstrated that it did not deserve to be a member of the Board.

78. Member States had a shared responsibility to uphold the fundamental principles enshrined in the UN Charter and defend the credibility of the Agency's Statute. Board members in particular should lead by example and respect international law. It was completely unacceptable and beyond comprehension that a Member State was conducting armed attacks in and around peaceful nuclear sites in another Member State, and even going so far as to occupy its nuclear facilities, in flagrant violation of international nuclear safety and security principles and standards.

79. The Agency's Statute clearly stated that Agency membership did not entail only rights and privileges, but also obligations and responsibilities. In that regard, Poland recalled Article IV of the Statute, which required that States be able and willing to carry out the obligations of membership in the Agency, giving due consideration to their ability and willingness to act in accordance with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

80. Poland was aware of the possibility that, as envisaged in Article XIX.B of the Statute, any member which had persistently violated the provisions of the Statute could be suspended from the exercise of the privileges and rights of membership.

81. While Poland fully respected the procedure for the designation of Board members as set out in Article VI.A.1 of the Statute, Member States were likely to dissociate themselves from the decision designating the Russian Federation as a member of the Board of Governors in 2022–2023. Given that country's physical acts of aggression, which in an unprecedented breach of international law had resulted in war atrocities and crimes and had destabilized the world economy, the prestige and legitimacy of the Board would be significantly lowered. Moreover, the fact that the Board included a criminal State among its members would negatively affect the Agency's credibility in its efforts to achieve its goals, which included, among other things, conducting its activities in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations to promote peace and international cooperation, and in conformity with policies of the United Nations, furthering the establishment of safeguarded worldwide disarmament in conformity with any international agreements entered into pursuant to such policies.

82. Once again, Poland demanded that the Russian Federation immediately cease its military aggression against Ukraine and withdraw all its forces from Ukraine's territory within its internationally recognized borders. It was high time that the Russian Federation heeded the call of the international

community and complied with its obligations under the UN Charter, the Agency's Statute and the relevant Board resolutions.

83. Mr BULYCHEV (Russian Federation), noting renewed, persistent efforts to politicize the Agency's work and divert it from its statutory aims and functions, quoted Article VI.A of the Statute, which expressly stated that the outgoing Board of Governors should designate for membership on the Board the ten members most advanced in the technology of atomic energy including the production of source materials.

84. He noted that the Statute stipulated no other criteria for membership of the Board. It was regrettable that two States were trying once again to use any Agency discussion to mount baseless accusations against his country.

85. As for Ukraine, its attempts to accuse Russia of attacking nuclear facilities were simply outrageous. He reiterated that it was Ukraine that had been shelling the largest NPP in Europe for the past two or three days, attacking it with drones, multiple-launch rocket systems and cannon artillery, which was difficult to intercept, and sending in saboteurs. Ukraine had not stopped those attacks even with the arrival of the Agency mission or with the presence of Agency staff at the plant.

86. It was deeply regrettable that two countries were even prepared to use discussions of Middle Eastern issues as a vehicle for their invective against the Russian Federation and that their positions were so one-sided and politically motivated.

87. Noting that those countries appeared to have joined specific coalitions during the wars in the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, he remarked that those positions starkly demonstrated their double standards and attempts to politicize the Agency. He thanked Member States for not giving in to such provocations.

19. Application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East (GC(66)/12)

88. The PRESIDENT said that item 19 had been included in the agenda pursuant to resolution GC(65)/RES/14. The Director General had accordingly submitted the report set out in document GC(66)/12, which had also been considered by the Board of Governors the previous week. Document GC(66)/L.2 contained a draft resolution submitted by Egypt.

89. Mr ELMOLLA (Egypt) said that ridding the Middle East of nuclear weapons was crucial to the security of all States and the future of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Since the entry into force of the NPT half a century earlier, Egypt and other States conscious of the pivotal importance of the issue had striven to encourage the international community to take practical and serious steps to achieve that goal through numerous initiatives and resolutions that it had submitted to the United Nations and other international forums, and to the General Conference.

90. All those resolutions had been adopted either by consensus or by a significant majority, yet none had been implemented, owing to a lack of political will. The resulting stalemate undermined the legitimacy of the non-proliferation regime and called into question the sincerity of certain Member States which, despite professing their commitment to ridding the Middle East of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in various international forums, in reality adopted irrational positions towards genuine efforts to achieve that goal.

91. Although more than 25 years had passed since the adoption by consensus of the Resolution on the Middle East — which had served as the basis for the indefinite extension of the NPT, to which all remaining Arab States had since acceded — the international legal commitment set out in that resolution was far from being met. For the current stalemate to be overcome, Member States must work together to support the initiatives called for in the resolutions on the application of safeguards in the Middle East proposed by Egypt to the General Conference each year, which were based on agreed goals regarding universalization of the NPT and comprehensive safeguards agreements. The implementation of such initiatives would be an important step towards the establishment of a verifiable NWFZ in the Middle East and would build confidence among the international community.

92. In 2022, Egypt was again submitting to the General Conference a draft resolution on the application of safeguards in the Middle East. The text reflected the will of the international community and provided a strong basis for strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and establishing an NWFZ in the Middle East, without excluding any party. Egypt hoped that all Member States would support the draft resolution by voting for it.

93. Egypt encouraged consultations between the Director General and Member States in the region with a view to ensuring the implementation of the resolution. Egypt also expected the Secretariat to give due attention to ensuring the universalization of the comprehensive safeguards regime and the application of comprehensive safeguards to nuclear facilities in the Middle East, in particular those not subject to any verification or monitoring measures.

94. There was no justification for simply accepting the status quo. Member States had a duty to address the challenges faced and prevent any serious repercussions for international peace and security.

95. Egypt appreciated the constructive atmosphere of the discussions on the Middle East at the Tenth NPT Review Conference, held in New York in August 2022, which had demonstrated the potential for achieving tangible progress in establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East. Such a positive atmosphere should serve as clear incentive for the parties concerned to engage in genuine and constructive dialogue to achieve that aim and for the international community to enhance its efforts to that end by adopting the draft resolution presented by Egypt. If progress on the establishment of an NWFZ in the Middle East was to be achieved, the international community must make a combined effort to realize the universalization of the comprehensive safeguards regime and ensure that all nuclear facilities and activities in the Middle East were placed under comprehensive safeguards.

96. Failure to vote in favour of the resolution demonstrated a lack of respect for States' obligations to support the non-proliferation regime and for ongoing efforts in that regard. Egypt therefore hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by the greatest possible majority.

97. Mr NUSBAUM (Israel) said that, in the past, his country had joined the consensus on the General Conference resolution on application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East, reflecting a shared vision for regional stability and security. Since 2006, however, the text of the resolution had departed from the spirit of consensus, and its sponsors had refrained from genuine and unconditional dialogue with Israel and other parties. The language of the draft resolution currently under discussion implied that adherence to the NPT was a means of enhancing peace and security in the Middle East. Such a concept was inherently flawed as it did not take regional realities into account. While Israel had repeatedly expressed its commitment to the non-proliferation regime, four States in the region — Iran, Iraq, Libya and Syria — had failed to comply with their obligations under the NPT. Violations included the development of clandestine nuclear weapon programmes and the covert construction of a military nuclear reactor in Syria. Accordingly, while Israel shared the vision articulated by the draft resolution, the lack of a solid foundation for adherence to agreements in the region, coupled with an absence of

mutual recognition and trust, led to the conclusion that the text lacked the required balance, given the regional circumstances.

98. Israel attached high importance to the non-proliferation regime and shared its goals. Nevertheless, the geopolitical situation in the Middle East clearly demonstrated that the NPT did not provide a remedy for the unique security challenges of the region, especially considering the repeated violations of the NPT by several States Parties. Accession to the NPT was not a goal in and of itself. Calls for universal accession to the NPT must also be judged against the views held by some in the region concerning the State of Israel, the existence of which was not recognized by several Arab States, and the position of Iran, which had openly and explicitly called for Israel's destruction.

99. Lessons learned from other regions had shown that a regional security framework could stem only from the shared political will of all regional parties to engage directly with one another and to take into consideration the security concerns of each and every State on the basis of consensus. A comprehensive and durable peace in the Middle East and full compliance by all States of the region with their non-proliferation obligations were prerequisites for the establishment of a zone free of all WMDs. The current regrettable situation in the Middle East and the manifold threats, conventional and non-conventional alike, justified Israel's approach.

100. Referring to statements regarding an anti-Israeli initiative imported from New York, he noted that his country's views on the matter had been clearly expressed in the relevant UN forums. It was a waste of time to discuss the issue simply to appease Iran, Syria and their allies and to afford them relief from discussion of the many open cases related to their non-compliance. With regard to the empty seat awaiting Israel referred to by certain countries, it was ironic that those same countries refused to use Israel's official name or recognize its right to exist as a nation.

101. The winds of change had begun to blow in the region, and Israel hoped that the day would come when the Arab Group as a whole recognized the benefits of promoting peace and direct dialogue with Israel on regional security concerns and eliminating conflict in the region. The draft resolution on the table should therefore be uncontroversial rather than disputable. Until the current situation changed, Israel was obliged to vote against paragraph 2 of the draft resolution and to abstain on the draft resolution as a whole; he accordingly requested that separate votes be taken on paragraph 2 and on the draft resolution as a whole.

102. Mr SHAHYAROV (Azerbaijan), speaking on behalf of NAM, welcomed the report set out in document GC(66)/12 and said that NAM was committed to its principled position on the application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East.

103. He said that NAM strongly believed that stability could not be achieved in a region where a continuing massive imbalance in military capabilities, in particular owing to the possession of nuclear weapons, allowed one party to threaten its neighbours and others in the region. In its conviction that the establishment of an NWFZ in the Middle East would be a positive step towards global nuclear disarmament, NAM reiterated its support for the establishment of such a zone in accordance with the relevant UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. Moreover, NAM remained convinced that the effective and efficient application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East promoted greater confidence among States in the region. Achieving the universality of comprehensive Agency safeguards in the Middle East was the first practical step towards building confidence and was necessary for establishing an NWFZ in that region.

104. NAM welcomed the conclusion by those of its members that were parties to the NPT of CSAs with the Agency as non-nuclear-weapon States and noted that all States of the Middle East region except Israel were parties to the NPT and had undertaken to accept comprehensive Agency safeguards. It

highlighted the accession of Palestine as a State Party to the NPT in February 2015 and welcomed the signing in June 2019 of a CSA between Palestine, as a non-nuclear-weapon State, and the Agency.

105. NAM regretted Israel's continued insistence that Agency safeguards could not be addressed in isolation from the regional peace process. There was no automatic sequence which linked the application of comprehensive safeguards to all nuclear activities in the Middle East with the prior conclusion of a peace settlement, and the former would, in fact, contribute to the latter.

106. NAM noted with regret that the Director General had not been able to make further progress in fulfilling his mandate pursuant to resolution GC(65)/RES/14 regarding the application of comprehensive Agency safeguards covering all nuclear activities in the Middle East. All Member States should work together to reverse that unacceptable situation. NAM urged all Member States to participate actively in promoting the universality of comprehensive Agency safeguards in the Middle East region in particular.

107. NAM noted that the Director General would continue consultations in accordance with his mandate regarding the early application of comprehensive Agency safeguards to all nuclear activities in the Middle East region. It welcomed his efforts to encourage the development and consideration of new ideas and approaches that could help in that regard, requesting that he continue to brief Member States regularly on such efforts.

108. Recalling the decision reached by consensus in the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference on the convening, in 2012, of a conference on the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs, NAM State Parties to the NPT reiterated their profound disappointment that the 2010 Action Plan had not been implemented, as that ran counter to the letter and spirit of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, which constituted the original terms of reference for establishing the zone, and violated the collective agreement reached at the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

109. NAM States Parties to the NPT regretted that, despite intensive consultations, at the 2015 NPT Review Conference it had not been possible to reach agreement on the draft Final Document, a failure which could have a negative impact on the NPT regime.

110. NAM requested that the Director General continue his efforts and consultations with all Member States on arrangements conducive to the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs in the Middle East.

111. NAM again welcomed the convening of the 2019 and 2021 sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction, in accordance with General Assembly decision 73/546, in addition to the conference's Political Declaration. It looked forward to the third session of the conference, under the presidency of Lebanon, and called upon all States of the region, without exception, to participate actively in the conference, negotiate in good faith and bring to a conclusion a legally binding treaty on the establishment of the zone. NAM had appreciated the participation of the Agency in the first two sessions, including through the presentation of a background paper, and requested that the Director General participate in the third session as mandated by the decision of the General Assembly.

112. NAM stressed that the Resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference and other decisions on the subject adopted within the context of the Review Conferences would remain valid until the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East was achieved. Implementation of General Assembly decision 73/546 (2018) was without prejudice to the validity of the resolution and decisions and should not be construed as their replacement.

113. Lastly, noting that NAM was fully committed to cooperating with the Director General and supporting his efforts to implement resolution GC(65)/RES/14, he said that NAM expected all other Member States to do likewise.

114. Mr ELMOLLA (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, said that all countries in the Middle East region, apart from Israel, were party to the NPT and had concluded CSAs. Efforts to universalize those two instruments, which represented the legal standard of Agency safeguards according to its Statute, therefore needed to be consolidated.

115. The Group welcomed the entry into force of the CSA signed between Palestine and the Agency, which reflected Palestine's commitment to all legal frameworks relating to the NPT.

116. The Group regretted that no progress had been made on the implementation of resolution GC(65)/RES/14, despite its adoption by a majority vote. The Agency must do more to implement that resolution, including through additional consultations, in order to break the deadlock on the establishment of an NWFZ in the Middle East. It was not enough to continue holding technical discussions on reports on the matter. Such action would support the non-proliferation regime and would be consistent with the outcomes of NPT Review Conferences, in particular the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, which had laid the legal foundations for the indefinite extension of the NPT.

117. The Group welcomed the successful outcomes of the second 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 2021 under Kuwait's able presidency, in particular the adoption of the Conference's rules of procedure and a decision to establish an unofficial intersessional working committee.

118. Given the relevance of the conference to the Agency's mandated verification and monitoring work, the Group thanked the Agency for participating in the session as an observer and for providing the requested documents. It commended those States that had supported and participated in the first two sessions of the conference and conveyed special thanks to the Russian Federation and the UK as two of the three NPT depository States and sponsors of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, and to China and France, which had attended as nuclear-weapon States.

119. The Group urged those States that had been invited but had not attended — the remaining sponsor of the 1995 resolution and the remaining States in the region — to reconsider their positions and take part in the future sessions of the conference. The conference process had demonstrated that it did not exclude, isolate or impose conditions and restrictions on any State in the region, especially as consensus had been adopted as the only method of decision-making.

120. The Group looked forward to the next session, under Lebanon's presidency, with the active participation of all co-sponsors of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East and the launch of objective discussions on drafting a treaty on the establishment of a zone free from nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East with the participation of all States in the region.

121. Almost 25 years since the adoption of the 1995 Resolution, the conference had marked the first practical step in reviving the process for establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East. It was therefore important to capitalize on the opportunity, especially in view of the failure by the Tenth NPT Review Conference to reach agreement on a final document. The General Assembly decision 73/546 providing for the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction had joined the library of reference documents on the topic, alongside the outcome documents of the 2000 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences.

122. The Arab Group hoped that the progress made at the conference would further attainment of the results expected from the next NPT review cycle. It called on the Agency to continue supporting the

conference, in line with the General Assembly decision. It requested the Director General to report on the results of the conference in future reports on the application of safeguards in the Middle East.

123. Mr HUSSEN (Iraq) recalled that General Conference resolution GC(65)/RES/14 affirmed the urgent need for all States in the Middle East to accept the application of full-scope Agency safeguards to all their nuclear activities as an important means of building confidence within the region and as a step towards enhanced peace and security in the context of the establishment of a zone free from nuclear weapons and all other WMDs.

124. He said that, in that connection, Iraq welcomed the entry into force of Palestine's CSA, which reflected Palestine's commitment to all legal frameworks in relation to the NPT.

125. All States in the region were party to the NPT and had concluded CSAs — except for the Israeli entity, which maintained its claim that the safeguards system and NPT were insufficient to guarantee security and that Agency safeguards and other security issues could not be addressed in isolation from efforts to establish the conditions for regional stability. Such claims represented an intentional effort to hinder the establishment of a much needed NWFZ in the Middle East.

126. His delegation had hoped that progress would be made in implementing resolution GC(65)/RES/14 and held on to that hope, especially as the resolution had been adopted by a majority vote. Iraq called for greater efforts to be made and further talks to be held to implement the resolution. His country called on the three depository States of the NPT, and the international community as a whole, to take the necessary steps to implement all resolutions on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs in the Middle East, in particular those adopted by the NPT Review Conference in 1995 — forming the legal framework for the indefinite extension of the Treaty — and the outcomes of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, which included a road map and principles for moving towards the establishment of such a zone.

127. Iraq praised the efforts already made to hold the second session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction in 2021. Iraq had participated, alongside other States in the region, but the Israeli entity had continued to make excuses for remaining outside the non-proliferation regime. Affirming its support for Lebanon's presidency of the forthcoming third session, Iraq looked forward to the participation of all relevant parties in the region. Lastly, he reiterated his country's support for the efforts of the Secretariat and the Director General to exercise the mandate given to them by the General Conference.

128. Mr MOLEKANE (South Africa) said that, as a State Party to the Pelindaba Treaty establishing the African continent as an NWFZ, his country was a strong proponent of creating a worldwide NWFZ, as that was the only way of achieving the ultimate goal of both the NPT and the TPNW: the elimination of those evil weapons.

129. The 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference had adopted a firm and unequivocal resolution calling on States in the Middle East to take practical steps towards the establishment in the region of a zone free of WMDs and nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. South Africa recalled that the resolution, the objectives of which were yet to be realized, had been sponsored by some States present at the General Conference, some of which had since abandoned their responsibilities in that regard.

130. South Africa had consistently supported that important resolution, which represented an indispensable step towards the advancement of non-proliferation in the Middle East region and the world. While appreciating the positive actions taken by the States of the region in holding two sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, South Africa regretted that not all States of the region had participated

in those sessions. It was also regrettable that the nuclear programmes of some States in the region remained outside the NPT.

131. His country therefore called on Israel to become a State Party to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State, subject its nuclear programme to the scrutiny of the safeguards regime by signing and ratifying a CSA and an additional protocol, and accede to the TPNW, which declared nuclear weapons illegal. He also called on the sponsors of the 1995 Resolution to honour their commitments and support the region in the establishment of an NWFZ. Such an approach would mark significant progress towards the establishment and maintenance of peace and security in the Middle East and the world and the achievement of the enduring aspiration of establishing a zone free of WMDs in the Middle East.

132. Reiterating his country's longstanding position that global peace and security could be achieved only with the total elimination of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs, he said that South Africa looked forward to the next session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction and hoped that all States would participate.

133. Mr SANTANA NUÑEZ (Cuba) said that his country had supported the establishment of NWFZs in various regions as part of efforts to revitalize the nuclear non-proliferation regime and achieve the goal of nuclear disarmament. Latin America and the Caribbean had been the first densely populated area in the world to be declared an NWFZ, pursuant to the Tlatelolco Treaty. The establishment of internationally recognized NWFZs strengthened international peace and security and the non-proliferation regime and made an important contribution to achieving nuclear disarmament.

134. Cuba supported the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East, in line with the will of the international community and the provisions of various resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and the General Conference. In addition to furthering the goal of nuclear disarmament, the establishment of such a zone would be a crucial step in the peace process in the region.

135. Israel — the only country in the region that had not acceded to, and had not even announced its intention to accede to, the NPT — must relinquish its nuclear weapons, accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State and submit all its nuclear facilities to comprehensive Agency safeguards, unconditionally and without delay, in line with the calls of the international community.

136. Mr USTINOV (Russian Federation), repeating the statement made by his country before the Board, given the importance of the topic and the broader platform of the General Conference, said that his country continued to support the creation of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs and held firmly to the view that the Resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and contained in document NPT/CONF.1995/32 remained valid until all its goals and objectives were achieved in full.

137. It was regrettable that tangible progress towards that aim had to date remained elusive. His country was, however, unwavering in its support of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, which was effectively the only practical mechanism for implementing the 1995 Resolution. It therefore welcomed the important and far-reaching outcomes of the two sessions held in New York in 2019 and 2021.

138. The Russian Federation equally welcomed the establishment of a working committee, which had already met twice, working intersessionally to maintain momentum and generate substantive issues for discussions at subsequent Conference sessions. That was sure to have a positive effect on future outcomes — in particular, the drafting of a future agreement on a zone free of WMDs, towards which the participants had already begun to make gradual progress.

139. The next step in that direction would come at the Conference's third session in November 2022. The Russian Federation had gratefully accepted the invitation to participate once again as an observer to the Conference and hoped that all States in the region, without exception, could gather at one table, along with all observers. In that context, it was very prudent to leave seating in place at the conference for Israel and the USA, which continued to remain outside the process.

140. In his country's view, Israel should perhaps reconsider its negative, suspicious attitude towards that forum by no longer distancing itself from important processes in its own region and consider the possibility of joining the conference initially as an observer. Far from imposing the idea of a zone free of WMDs, Conference participants were working to find mutually acceptable decisions through dialogue. All decisions at the Conference, whether substantive or procedural, were adopted by consensus, thereby giving each participant a right of veto.

141. As a co-sponsor of the 1995 Resolution, the USA had a particular responsibility to contribute to ensuring stability in the Middle East region. In that regard, the Russian Federation therefore urged the USA finally to reconsider its position on the Conference.

142. His country counted on the Conference continuing to serve as a platform for Middle Eastern neighbours to take shared control of their region's fate — which they alone had the power to do — in the highly sensitive area of WMD non-proliferation. The Russian Federation would continue to assist in creating favourable conditions for making progress towards the establishment of a zone free of WMDs in the Middle East.

143. For that reason, the Russian Federation fully supported the draft resolution on the Middle East proposed by Egypt at the current session of the General Conference.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.