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President: Ms MARKOVIC (Sweden)

Later: Mr CORTESE (Italy)

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The composition of delegations attending the session is given in document GC(66)/INF/14

¹ GC(66)/17

Abbreviations used in this record

CSA	comprehensive safeguards agreement
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
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
PMO	Policy-Making Organs
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WMDs	weapons of mass destruction

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

1. Ms PEÑA ARAQUE (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said 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 that goal and was necessary for establishing an NWFZ in the region.
2. In that respect, Venezuela expressed regret that no further progress had been made in fulfilling the Director General's mandate under resolution GC(65)/RES/14 concerning the application of comprehensive Agency safeguards to all nuclear activities in the Middle East. Her country considered that establishing an NWFZ was a positive step towards global nuclear disarmament, and reiterated its support for the creation of such a zone, pursuant to the Resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.
3. At a number of international forums, Venezuela had stressed the urgent need for Israel to accede immediately to the NPT, place its nuclear facilities under Agency safeguards in order to dispel any existing doubt about its nuclear programme, and contribute to the establishment of an NWFZ in the Middle East.
4. Her country highlighted the importance of the 2019 Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, in which all States in the region, except Israel, had participated and had demonstrated a willingness to reach an agreement. Venezuela hoped that Israel would participate in the third session in November 2022.
5. Venezuela welcomed the intention of the Member States participating in the conference to commit to developing a legally binding treaty to establish — in accordance with the relevant international resolutions and working with all States in an open and inclusive manner — a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by the States of the region.
6. Venezuela concluded by stressing that the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, together with other decisions adopted at NPT Review Conferences, remained valid until a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs had been established.
7. Mr ROUZBAHANI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, despite the Agency's continued efforts, it was deeply regrettable that after so many years, there had been no progress on either the implementation of full-scope Agency safeguards or the development of a model safeguards agreement as necessary steps towards the establishment of an NWFZ in the Middle East, in line with resolution GC(65)/14.
8. As indicated in the Director General's report, the Israeli regime was the only non-party to the NPT in the region and it categorically refused, on the pretext of so-called security concerns, to apply comprehensive Agency safeguards. To condition accession to the NPT on the establishment of a specific environment was inadmissible. It was deplorable that a single non-party to the NPT, supported by certain nuclear-weapons States, was blocking progress and taking the NPT hostage for its own political agenda.
9. The issue of the universality of the NPT, and specifically nuclear weapon capabilities in the Middle East, should be addressed without prejudice. His country believed that overlooking such an

important issue directly affected regional and international peace and stability. It challenged the established global arms-control norms and architecture and damaged the credibility and viability of the Agency and its safeguards regime. Iran stressed that the continued and dangerous presence of unsafeguarded nuclear facilities and activities of the Israeli regime could no longer be ignored.

10. That regime's acquisition of a clandestine nuclear capability, in complete disregard of international law, posed an ongoing serious threat to the security and stability of the region and the world. The situation also provided a compelling reason for the States in the region to seek the establishment of an NWFZ in the Middle East, which was part and parcel of the 1995 agreement on the unlimited extension of the NPT.

11. The Agency played a distinct role in implementing decisions and resolutions of the General Conference. It should continue working on the basis of its reference documents and decisions taken by the PMOs in order to prevent its mandates from being affected by any political circumstances.

12. It was unfortunate that the issues mentioned had prevented the Director General from making progress in fulfilling his mandate. Iran concurred with NAM that the efficient and effective implementation of Agency safeguards throughout the Middle East was the first step towards building confidence among Member States in that region. The Agency was strongly expected to intensify its efforts and take firm measures to implement safeguards throughout the Middle East, as requested in resolution GC(65)/14, and to provide Member States with independent and impartial assessments on the application of those safeguards.

13. Mr SUMBARJO (Indonesia) said that his country was appreciative of the tireless efforts by the States in the Middle East to achieve the universal application of Agency comprehensive safeguards in the region. It was regrettable that resolution GC(65)/RES/14 could not be fully implemented, the Director General having as yet been unable to make further progress in fulfilling his mandate thereunder regarding the application of those safeguards covering all nuclear activities in the region of the Middle East.

14. Noting that the Director General would continue his consultations in accordance with his mandate regarding the early application of comprehensive Agency safeguards to all nuclear activities in the Middle East region, Indonesia urged all countries in that region to participate actively in the consultations so as to bring about the universality of those safeguards, to which they must adhere unconditionally. A Middle East free of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs constituted a key element in the ongoing effort to ensure the security and stability of the region and was therefore vital to achieve.

15. The PRESIDENT recalled that Israel had requested that a separate vote be taken on paragraph 2 of the draft resolution set out in document GC(66)/L.2.

16. At the request of Egypt, a roll-call vote was taken.

17. Afghanistan, having been drawn by lot by the President, was called upon to vote first.

18. The result of the vote was as follows:

In favour: Albania, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Holy See, Honduras, Hungary, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan,

Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Türkiye, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Zimbabwe.

Against: Israel

Abstaining: Canada, Fiji, India, Jamaica, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Togo, United States of America.

19. There were 115 votes in favour and 1 against, with 9 abstentions. Paragraph 2 of the draft resolution was adopted.

20. Mr SUBRAMANIAN (India), speaking in explanation of vote, said that his delegation had abstained because it believed that paragraph 2 of the draft resolution contained elements that were extraneous to the Agency.

21. The PRESIDENT noted that Israel had requested a vote on the whole of the draft resolution contained in document GC(66)/L.2.

22. At the request of Egypt, a roll-call vote was taken.

23. Namibia, having been drawn by lot by the President, was called upon to vote first.

24. The result of the vote was as follows:

In favour: Albania, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Eswatini, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Holy See, Honduras, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Abstaining: Canada, Fiji, Israel, Jamaica, Nigeria, Togo, United States of America.

25. There were 117 votes in favour and none against, with 7 abstentions. The draft resolution was adopted.

Mr Cortese (Italy), President, took the Chair.

26. Ms KITSELL (United Kingdom), speaking in explanation of vote also on behalf of France and Germany, said that all three countries had supported the resolution in the same spirit as at previous sessions. They viewed it exclusively in the context of the NPT and the Agency. The word “relevant” in paragraph 3 clearly related solely to the application of safeguards, in line with the title of the resolution. France, Germany and the UK continued to support efforts to promote a Middle East free of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs and their delivery systems.

27. Ms CHANG (United States of America), speaking in explanation of vote, said that her country continued to support many of the goals outlined in the resolution, in particular the long-term goal of a Middle East free of WMDs and their delivery systems, along with comprehensive and durable regional peace. The USA was committed to working with the States in the region in their pursuit of that important goal in an inclusive, consensus-based manner that took into account the legitimate regional security concerns of all those States. The USA strongly endorsed a number of key elements in the resolution, including the importance of confidence- and security-building measures, the need for adherence by States of the region to existing non-proliferation obligations, and the necessity of pursuing those goals in the context of broader regional peace efforts.

28. The USA welcomed the resolution’s recognition of the importance of Agency safeguards as a tool for verifying the exclusively peaceful nature of nuclear activities in the region. With the significant expansion of nuclear energy in that region, the additional protocol was an essential tool for States to demonstrate a commitment to the strongest non-proliferation standards and to provide the international community with important assurances regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities. The USA encouraged all States in the region that had not yet done so to sign and bring into force an additional protocol without further delay and encouraged the three States that had not yet done so to modify or rescind, as appropriate, their outdated SQPs. The USA urged all States in the region to cooperate fully and in a timely manner with the Agency in fulfilling their obligations under their CSA.

29. For many years, the General Conference resolution on safeguards in the Middle East had been adopted by consensus pursuant to a mutually agreed approach among States in the region. Unfortunately, that approach had been abandoned in recent years in favour of the submission of a draft resolution that could not command regional consensus and was pursued alongside a divisive and politically motivated agenda item aimed at isolating one State in the region. The USA urged the sponsors of the resolution to re-engage with their regional neighbours to return to a consensus-based approach to such issues so that they could be addressed in a more collaborative and productive manner.

30. Mr ELMOLLA (Egypt) called on the States that had abstained in the vote to reconsider their positions in 2023. They should stand on the right side of history in support of the world’s conscience and the collective will of the international community to achieve the lofty goals and concepts laid out in the resolution and to shape a new reality in the Middle East.

31. The PRESIDENT said that note had been duly taken of all comments made under the item.

20. Israeli nuclear capabilities (GC(66)/1/Add.1, GC(66)/14)

32. The PRESIDENT, introducing the item, said that it had been included in the agenda at the request of Lebanon on behalf of Arab States that were members of the Agency. It was covered by an explanatory memorandum contained in document GC(66)/1/Add.1 and by document GC(66)/14.

33. Mr AKHUNDOV (Azerbaijan), speaking on behalf of NAM, said that the Group 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.

34. NAM welcomed the fact that its member States that were parties to the NPT had concluded CSAs with the Agency as non-nuclear-weapon States and noted that all States of the Middle East region except for Israel were parties to the NPT and had undertaken to accept comprehensive Agency safeguards.

35. 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.

36. NAM noted with concern that the selective approach to the issue of nuclear capabilities in the Middle East had undermined the viability of the Agency's safeguards regime and had resulted in the continued and dangerous presence of Israeli nuclear facilities and activities that were not subject to comprehensive Agency safeguards, despite repeated calls on Israel to sign a CSA.

37. NAM expressed great concern regarding the acquisition of nuclear capability by Israel, which posed a serious and continuing threat to the security of its neighbouring and other States, and regarding the continuing provision of access for Israeli scientists to the nuclear facilities of one nuclear-weapon State.

38. All Member States should cooperate to rectify that unacceptable situation and achieve the universality of comprehensive Agency safeguards in the Middle East, first of all by implementing resolution GC(53/RES/17).

39. NAM regretted Israel's continued insistence that Agency safeguards could not be addressed in isolation from the regional peace process. The Group emphasized that there was no automatic sequence linking the application of comprehensive safeguards to all nuclear activities in the Middle East to the prior conclusion of a peace settlement. The former would, in fact, contribute to the latter.

40. NAM reiterated its call for the total and complete prohibition of the transfer of all nuclear-related equipment, information, material and facilities, resources or devices and the extension of assistance in the nuclear-related scientific or technological fields to Israel.

41. Referring to Israel's previous communications on the matter to the effect that it valued the non-proliferation regime, acknowledged its importance and had, over the years, demonstrated a responsible policy of restraint in the nuclear realm, NAM noted with regret that the official records of the Agency were testimony to the contrary. NAM recalled the various resolutions adopted by the General Conference before 1994 regarding South Africa's nuclear capabilities in which it had recalled UN General Assembly resolutions concerning relations between Israel and South Africa and military and nuclear collaboration with South Africa, which had strongly condemned the extensive collaboration between Israel and the then racist regime of South Africa, especially in the military and nuclear fields, in defiance of UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

42. Mr ELMOLLA (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, recalled that, in September 2009, the General Conference had adopted a resolution² on Israeli nuclear capabilities, calling on Israel to accede to the NPT and place all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive Agency safeguards and expressing deep concern about Israeli nuclear capabilities completely outside the non-proliferation regime.

43. The Final Document of the 2000 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences had emphasized the importance of Israel's accession to the NPT and of embarking on a process leading to full implementation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East. The 2010 Review Conference had decided to call on the UN Secretary-General and the sponsors of the 1995 Resolution, in consultation with the States of the region, to convene a conference in 2012 on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs. The Group regretted the failure to convene the conference in 2012 and the failure of the convening parties to fulfil the mandate under the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. The international community ought to shoulder its responsibilities and abide by its obligation to rid the world — and the Middle East region in particular — of nuclear weapons and other WMDs.

44. The Group was of the view that further international efforts to implement the 1995 Resolution must not be allowed to fail. Having served as the basis for the indefinite extension of the NPT, the resolution would remain in effect until its objectives had been achieved.

45. Despite immense efforts by its President, the 2015 NPT Review Conference had failed to reach consensus on its draft final document owing to the objection of three States that had supported Israel's efforts to remain outside the nuclear non-proliferation regime. It had therefore been impossible to review and build on the implementation of obligations during the previous review cycles.

46. Seeking to make progress at the 2022 NPT Review Conference, the Arab Group had demonstrated considerable flexibility in order to reach consensus, especially with regard to the Middle East issue. The Review Conference would have adopted consensus language on that matter had it not been prevented from adopting a final document for other reasons. Regrettably, that failure continued to set back international efforts to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs.

47. Israel's harmful nuclear practices had been a source of concern for many States, notably those in the region, and had been discussed in many international bodies over the preceding decades. Moreover, a long list of resolutions calling on Israel to accede to the NPT had been adopted by various international organizations. Israel categorically refused to implement those resolutions, preferring to downplay the importance of the NPT by labelling it as ineffective in the Middle East. Israel's failure to accede to the NPT threatened regional peace and security, especially as its development of nuclear weapons had been acknowledged by numerous Israeli officials and mentioned in a number of international reports on the subject.

48. Despite constantly asserting that a comprehensive Middle East peace was a prerequisite for the establishment of an NWFZ in the region, Israel persistently undermined peace efforts, pursuing policies and practices hostile to Arab States and peoples and continuing to occupy their territories. The Group's concern over Israel's possession of nuclear weapons was heightened by the latter's failure to exercise self-restraint and by its use of indiscriminate force against unarmed civilians, as recently witnessed in the occupied Palestinian territories.

49. The Group believed that peace efforts were served by any initiative to establish an NWFZ in the Middle East, in particular the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, the second session of which had taken place in

² GC(53)/RES/17

New York from 29 November to 3 December 2021. Israel's claims concerning such positive initiatives were but an attempt to impose a new order of priorities enabling it to remain outside the NPT indefinitely. Action to prevent nuclear proliferation in the Middle East was a core task assigned to the Agency and a fundamental obligation, bearing in mind the nuclear threat that Israel posed not only to security and stability in the Middle East but also to international peace and security.

50. The Group regretted that some Member States, including nuclear-weapon States, continued to contradict their publicly stated positions and to disregard the principle of the universality of the NPT, in particular at the General Conference and in the Board, when it came to Israeli nuclear capabilities and unsafeguarded nuclear facilities, thereby clearly demonstrating their double standards. The Group continued to request that the item concerning Israeli nuclear capabilities remain on the agenda of the PMOs.

51. Mr AZZAM (Lebanon) said that the item's inclusion yet again on the agenda of the General Conference was the natural consequence of a regional anomaly, namely that Israel's nuclear capabilities remained outside any international legal or regulatory framework.

52. Lebanon noted with profound concern that Israel was the only non-party to the NPT in the Middle East, making its nuclear capabilities a destabilizing factor in the region. States committed to achieving stability in the region should realize that sustainable peace and security depended on Israel's accession to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon party and placement of all its nuclear facilities and activities under the Agency's safeguards system, in accordance with international resolutions, in particular resolution GC(53)/RES/17 of 2009 and UN Security Council resolution 487 (1981).

53. The goal of ridding the Middle East of nuclear weapons had been endorsed by the international community through a number of international resolutions, in particular those of the 1995, 2000 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences. Israel's resistance aimed at protecting its nuclear capabilities remained, however, as the main obstacle to that goal. Consequently, through its decision 73/546, the UN General Assembly had established a parallel process, in the form of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East zone free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, to achieve the goal.

54. Lebanon would preside over the third session of the conference in New York, in November 2022, and called on all concerned States within the region and beyond to assume their responsibilities and engage in the process in order to rid the region of all WMDs so as to bolster regional and international security and peace. Until that goal was achieved, Israel's nuclear capabilities would remain a source of deep concern for the region and the world, and the item would need to remain on the General Conference's agenda for the sake of non-proliferation and regional security.

55. Mr ALFASSAM (Kuwait) said that his country attached great importance to the NPT and the application of Agency safeguards to all nuclear activities and facilities in the Middle East and stressed that the Agency was the only authority mandated to verify the peaceful nature of nuclear programmes, in line with NPT obligations. The universalization of comprehensive safeguards and the establishment of an NWFZ in the Middle East would have a direct impact on the region's stability and would contribute to international peace and security.

56. The resolution adopted annually by the General Conference on the application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East affirmed the urgent need for all States in the Middle East to forthwith accept the application of full-scope Agency safeguards to all their nuclear activities. The Director General's reports on the subject also stated each year that all States in the region except for Israel were parties to the NPT and had undertaken to accept comprehensive Agency safeguards.

57. Discussions in the Agency's PMOs focused on the importance of strengthening all aspects of the nuclear safety and security environment and of enhancing the Agency's ability to fulfil its verification

mandate and apply the safeguards regime effectively and efficiently. During those discussions, Kuwait was astounded that the risks stemming from Israeli nuclear capabilities continued to be ignored.

58. Unfortunately, notwithstanding the ratification of the NPT by all States in the region and their implementation of CSAs, Israel continued to reject any initiatives, or take any serious steps, towards enabling the Agency to apply comprehensive safeguards throughout the Middle East, which would pave the way for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs. Israel's nuclear programme undermined the region's safety and security, exacerbated existing tensions and flagrantly violated many international resolutions adopted in various forums.

59. He underscored the importance of achieving tangible progress in the implementation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, which was an integral part of the indefinite extension of the NPT. Kuwait was also fully committed to the conclusions of the 1995, 2000 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences.

60. Expressing disappointment that the 2015 and 2022 Review Conferences had been unable to find consensus on a final document, he noted that the efforts by Arab States had culminated in the adoption of UN General Assembly decision 73/546 on convening a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs, as a process conducted in parallel with — not instead of — the implementation of the outcomes of the 2010 Review Conference. As president of the current session of that conference, Kuwait affirmed its full commitment to working with the concerned States to establish such a zone and looked forward to building on progress at the third session, to be held under the presidency of Lebanon, in November 2022.

61. Kuwait called upon the international community to shoulder its responsibilities and to urge Israel to accede to the NPT and place all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive Agency safeguards. It also requested that the item concerning Israeli nuclear capabilities be kept under discussion within the Agency's PMOs

62. Mr HUSSEN (Iraq) said that, as his Government had stated in international disarmament forums, double standards were practised when applying the principles underpinning the non-proliferation regime to the Middle East. Although the NPT was the cornerstone of the regime, the Israeli entity was alone in the region in not acceding to it — and was allowed to remain so with impunity. The 2015 NPT Review Conference had failed to reach consensus on its draft final document owing to the objection of three States that had supported the Israeli entity's efforts to remain outside the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

63. Iraq urged the international community to shoulder its moral and political responsibility to prevail upon the Israeli entity to accede to the NPT so that it would be required to apply the Agency's comprehensive safeguards and enable the Agency to verify and inspect all its nuclear activities. The Israeli entity's accession would be the first step towards confidence-building — a goal demanded by the Israeli entity itself — in order to advance the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs in the Middle East.

64. A Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs was vital for regional security and stability. It was equally vital to convene further 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 the 2010 NPT Review Conference Action Plan and the resolution adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. To do so would have positive effects, in political and security terms, on the region.

65. Iraq praised the efforts already made towards establishing such a zone, in particular at the second session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and

Other Weapons of Mass Destruction. Iraq had participated, whereas the Israeli entity had continued to make excuses for remaining outside the non-proliferation regime. Affirming its support for Lebanon's presidency of the upcoming third session, Iraq looked forward to the participation of all relevant parties therein.

66. Given the clear justification, Iraq requested that the item remain on the agenda of the Agency's PMOs and that the international community, through its various forums, assume its moral and professional responsibility to implement paragraph 5 of UN Security Council resolution 487 (1981), calling on the Israeli entity to place all its nuclear facilities under the comprehensive safeguards system.

67. Mr ELMOLLA (Egypt) said that his country set much store by the goals of non-proliferation and the universalization of the CSA, the fundamental legal instrument underpinning the Agency's work on verifying the peaceful nature of nuclear materials and facilities.

68. Israel's refusal to accede to the NPT and place all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive Agency safeguards undermined efforts to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East, especially as the other States in the region had acceded to the NPT and had concluded CSAs. The lack of progress towards the universalization of the comprehensive safeguards system, in particular in the Middle East, was disappointing. Efforts must be stepped up — maintaining the status quo would harm the credibility of the non-proliferation regime.

69. In view of the support provided by the Agency for development of the safeguards system, Egypt had hoped that the Agency would give similar priority to the universalization of the comprehensive safeguards system before considering that of the additional protocol. It made little sense to prioritize a complementary, voluntary agreement over the fundamental agreement constituting the cornerstone of the safeguards system. The implementation of that system was a confidence-building measure in the Middle East and an important step towards the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the region.

70. In exchange for approving the indefinite extension of the NPT, participants in the 1995 NPT Review Conference had adopted, by consensus, a resolution calling for the Middle East to be rid of nuclear weapons and other WMDs. Although Egypt and other Arab States had striven to implement that resolution, no significant progress had been made owing to unjustified resistance. Nevertheless, the persistent efforts of the Arab States to establish an NWFZ in the Middle East had led to a pivotal development, namely the holding of the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction in New York in 2019. The second session had been held successfully in 2021, with constructive outcomes that would drive forward efforts to establish the NWFZ.

71. Expressing its appreciation to all the parties that had participated in and contributed to the success of the second session of the conference, Egypt noted that the places of the two States that had not attended had been left empty to symbolize that their invitation still stood. Egypt urged Israel to reconsider its position and participate in the third session of the conference, under the presidency of Lebanon. It would be an important opportunity for holding the direct dialogue always called for by Israel and for addressing all relevant concerns through an inclusive process over which all parties had ownership.

72. The prospects for achieving tangible progress in the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs had been reflected in the positive and constructive atmosphere at the Tenth NPT Review Conference held in New York in August 2022, providing a clear incentive for the concerned parties to engage in serious and constructive dialogue to attain that goal. Committed to continuing its vigorous efforts in that regard, Egypt stressed that the establishment of an NWFZ required

combined international efforts to universalize the comprehensive safeguards system, apply it to all nuclear activities in the Middle East and bolster the credibility of the non-proliferation regime.

73. Mr ROUZBAHANI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, regrettably, the NPT was far from being universalized, which posed a serious danger to the integrity and credibility of the arms control and disarmament architecture. Considering the increasingly complex dynamics within international relations, where extreme nationalist factors were rising up above established international preferences, Iran believed that it was imperative for all to maintain multilateralism in the interests of humanity as a whole.

74. All States in the Middle East except for the Israeli regime were parties to the NPT and had signed a CSA. The Israeli regime's clandestine nuclear capability, acquired in complete defiance of international law, was a continuing, serious threat to the security and stability of the region and the rest of the world.

75. All development of any sort of nuclear explosive device should be a cause for alarm and be condemned promptly and without any prejudice or discrimination. Iran reiterated that the Israeli regime's swift and unconditional accession to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State — as called for by various NPT Review Conferences — and the placement of all its nuclear materials, activities and installations under Agency comprehensive safeguards were the only steps that could remedy the current nuclear crisis in the Middle East.

76. Iran underlined that nuclear weapons posed the most serious threat to security worldwide — including in the Middle East — and ignoring the facts on the ground in the region did nothing to counter that threat. There should be zero tolerance for the Israeli regime's development of sophisticated WMDs.

77. The international community must apply sustained pressure on the Israeli regime to accede to the NPT promptly and unconditionally as a non-nuclear-weapon State and to place all of its nuclear activities and installations under Agency comprehensive safeguards.

78. Mr AKTIPIIS (United States of America) said that his country regretted that the item had once again been included on the agenda. Israel had not violated any agreements with the Agency and was a substantial contributor to the Agency's work.

79. While it welcomed the Arab Group's decision not to submit a resolution on Israeli nuclear capabilities, the USA regretted that there continued to be contentious discussions on the issue at the Agency. The politicized debate under the item was counterproductive to the shared goal of a Middle East free of WMDs and their delivery systems, as it served only to divert limited time and energy from the important technical work of the General Conference and seemed increasingly detached from regional, political and security realities. The USA encouraged the States concerned to engage directly with neighbours in an inclusive and cooperative manner to address regional security concerns.

80. Mr SANTANA NUÑEZ (Cuba) welcomed the Arab Group's initiative to include the item on the agenda of the General Conference once more. It was a sensitive subject with serious implications for regional and international peace and security.

81. He reaffirmed his country's support for the prompt establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs, which would contribute significantly to the peace and security of all the peoples of the region.

82. Israel remained the only country in the Middle East not to have acceded to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State, despite the international community's repeated calls for it to do so. Such inaction posed a serious obstacle to creating a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the

Middle East. The establishment of such a zone would represent a considerable step towards nuclear disarmament and contribute to the peace process in the region. Compliance with all General Conference resolutions on that subject was also essential.

83. Transforming the Middle East into a zone of peace and security for all required genuine political will, the elimination of double standards in nuclear-related matters, the rejection of the indulgent attitude towards Israel shown by a number of States, and unanimous insistence on the destruction of Israel's nuclear arsenal, under international supervision.

84. Mr KHADDOUR (Syrian Arab Republic) said that Israel had secretly been strengthening its nuclear military capabilities, away from international oversight, for decades. Certain States in the West had provided Israel with the weapons-producing Negev Nuclear Research Center, along with the nuclear technology and materials required for it to gain possession of a massive arsenal of nuclear warheads and their means of delivery. It was regrettable that several Member States — primarily the USA — flagrantly applied double standards during discussions of non-proliferation, defending Israel in every way and turning a blind eye to its expanding nuclear capabilities while ensuring that it remained beyond the sphere of international accountability.

85. UN Security Council resolution 487 (1981) called on Israel urgently to place its nuclear facilities under Agency safeguards, while the Agency's General Conference resolution GC(53)/RES/17 called on Israel to accede to the NPT and place all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive Agency safeguards. Israel had persistently ignored those calls.

86. Israel — which continued to possess nuclear capabilities while remaining outside the NPT and the safeguards system — posed a serious threat to the non-proliferation regime. Its rejection of all initiatives to establish an NWFZ in the Middle East and its continued refusal to place all its nuclear facilities under Agency safeguards undermined regional and international security and stability. Israel was therefore in no position whatsoever to make accusations of non-compliance with the NPT.

87. It was time for the international community to set aside its policy of condoning Israel's hostile and dangerous practices and to take a clear decision and serious practical steps to compel Israel to accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State and to subject all its nuclear facilities, unconditionally and unreservedly, to Agency inspection. Syria requested that the item remain on the agenda of the PMO meetings.

88. Mr FIRDAUSY (Indonesia) said that his country subscribed to the view that the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation was complete disarmament under irreversible, strict and effective international control. Furthermore, efforts to achieve nuclear non-proliferation must go hand in hand with those for nuclear disarmament. The universality of the NPT was of paramount importance in that regard.

89. Indonesia strongly supported the inclusive and constructive efforts towards the speedy establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East, in accordance with UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. The establishment of such a zone would enhance peace and stability in the region and contribute to the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons.

90. Indonesia believed that looking the other way while a country developed nuclear weapon capabilities outside the NPT and kept its nuclear material and facilities outside the Agency's comprehensive safeguards regime was tantamount to betrayal of the commitment to nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the establishment of an NWFZ in the Middle East. It also endangered peace and stability in the region.

91. Ms KITSELL (United Kingdom), welcoming the absence of a resolution on Israel's nuclear capabilities at the current session of the General Conference, said that her country remained disappointed that the issue had again been included in the agenda, as it was a divisive political matter that should not affect the work of a technical organization such as the Agency. The UK remained fully committed to the establishment of a zone free of all WMDs and their delivery systems in the Middle East and had long held the view that all processes relating to such a zone should be based on consensus and be freely arrived at by all the States of the region.

92. Mr ŠRÁMEK (Czech Republic), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that it noted the Arab States' decision not to table a resolution on Israeli nuclear capabilities at the current session of the General Conference but was disappointed that the divisive issue had again been included on the agenda. The European Union remained convinced that a consensus approach, as set out in the action plan adopted at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, was the only way to make progress towards the implementation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East.

93. Mr NUSBAUM (Israel) said that it was extremely regrettable that the item was repeatedly raised by the Arab States at the General Conference; the issue was completely unrelated to the agenda of the General Conference and beyond the scope of the Agency's mandate. It politicized the Agency to a significant extent, undermined its professional integrity and diverted attention away from the real problems and challenges faced by the Agency and the non-proliferation regime. It was also regrettable that, instead of uniting forces against Iranian nuclear threats and hypocrisy and addressing the continuing nuclear safety and security challenges, some States were still invoking such an agenda item.

94. By rejecting unconstructive and politically biased draft resolutions under the agenda item in the past, Member States had reaffirmed their position that politically motivated initiatives aimed at singling out any Member State had no place at the General Conference and that direct dialogue among States in the region was the only way to progress where security or arms control arrangements were genuinely sought. That outcome should also send a clear message to the sponsors of the draft resolution that the only way to advance regional security in the Middle East was through direct dialogue and consensus among all States of the region.

95. Trust and confidence were essential building blocks of regional security, which would not be achieved by avoiding the challenges that lay ahead and by opting instead to single out Israel for political reasons. While a draft resolution had not been tabled under the agenda item at the current session, Israel regretted the inclusion of the item on the General Conference's agenda once again at the Arab Group's request.

96. Israel wished to live in a safe, secure and peaceful region and believed that its neighbours shared that vision. The path to safety and security could not be paved with contentious resolutions and active denunciations of Israel. His country called on the Arab Group to honour the will of Member States, cease its obstructive behaviour and refrain from requesting inclusion of the item on the agenda of future sessions of the General Conference.

97. Regrettably, certain representatives had again referred to another anti-Israeli initiative that had been imported from New York. Israel's well-known position, as elaborated in relevant UN forums, was that it was a waste of time to discuss that matter, whether within the Agency or elsewhere, simply to appease Iran, Syria and their allies by diverting attention away from the many open cases of non-compliance in their regard. With the winds of change already starting to spread in the region, Israel hoped that the whole Arab Group would one day realize the benefit of promoting peace and engaging in direct dialogue with Israel on regional security matters and other relevant concerns to create a Middle East free of conflict.

98. The PRESIDENT said that note had been duly taken of all comments made under the item.

18. Implementation of the NPT safeguards agreement between the Agency and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (GC(66)/16)

99. The PRESIDENT drew attention to a draft resolution set out in document GC (66) L.3, which had been submitted on the item by Canada on behalf of a group of Member States, and to amendments presented by China, as contained in document GC (66)/L.4.

100. Mr LULASHNYK (Canada), introducing the draft resolution, said that, following its circulation, it was being presented on behalf of 57 Member States.

101. In negotiating the draft resolution, the DPRK Core Group had sought to build on the text contained in resolution GC(65)/RES/13, which the General Conference had adopted by consensus at its sixty-fifth regular session. As in preceding years, the Core Group believed that it was important to include factual updates consistent with the content of the Director General's latest report, which made it clear that the DPRK's nuclear activities remained a cause for serious concern. In the words of the Director General, those activities were "deeply troubling" and a clear violation of relevant UN Security Council resolutions. It was therefore important for the General Conference to send the DPRK a strong and united message that reflected the significance of the facts on the ground.

102. In drafting the text, the Core Group had been committed to a transparent process to ensure that a consensus resolution could again be adopted by the General Conference, as had been the case for many years. The Group had sought to respond to the perspectives of delegations in previous years by circulating an earlier working draft among regional groups, listening carefully to the feedback received and tabling a draft early during the General Conference to allow for its proper consideration by all delegations.

103. The Core Group was of the view that the amendments formally tabled by one delegation fell outside the scope of the draft, which was focused on safeguards in the context of the DPRK's nuclear programme. As such, the proposed amendments took Member States away from a consensus resolution.

104. The international community must continue to send a united message to the DPRK that it could not have the status of a nuclear-weapon State and must return to cooperation with the Agency in implementing its safeguards obligations.

105. Calling for the tabled draft resolution to be adopted by consensus and without amendments, the Core Group urged all delegations to oppose efforts to distract from consideration of the important safeguards and non-proliferation issue with divisive matters that were being addressed elsewhere in the Conference.

106. Mr WANG Chang (China) said that important consultations on the draft resolution were continuing.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.