

Twenty-first meeting of the Council
Abu Dhabi, 25-26 May 2021

DRAFT REPORT

OF THE TWENTY-FIRST MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

OF THE INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY

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**Draft Report of the twenty-first meeting of the Council
of the International Renewable Energy Agency**

1. The twenty-first meeting of the Council of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) was held in a virtual format from Abu Dhabi on 25-26 May 2021. The meeting was attended by 18 Council members: Algeria, Colombia, Denmark, El Salvador, Germany, India, Japan, Kenya, Norway, Republic of Korea, Saint Lucia, Switzerland, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, and Zimbabwe, as well as 8 alternates: Canada, China, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Italy Tuvalu and Uruguay. Also, in attendance were delegations of 72 other IRENA Members and 5 other countries.

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the meeting

2. The Chair of the twentieth meeting of the Council of IRENA, Burkina Faso represented by H.E. Mr Bashir Ismael Ouedraogo, opened the meeting and expressed his solidarity with Members and the people of the world impacted by the global pandemic. He congratulated IRENA for the *World Energy Transitions Outlook* and noted the collective action of Members to accelerate momentum towards the energy transition at national, regional, and global levels. H.E. Mr Ouedraogo emphasised the need to continue to strive for international cooperation to ensure an inclusive system that inspires and empowers everyone, with the geopolitics of the energy transition necessitating concerted action and mutual support, ideals upon which IRENA was established. He thanked Members for their support and endorsement of the Global High-Level Forum on Energy Transition at the Council meeting last year, and subsequent adoption by the eleventh Assembly.

3. H.E. Mr Ouedraogo highlighted the strengthened resolve and encouraged Members to continue to strive towards the shared vision of a sustainable, inclusive, resilient, just, and prosperous world that leaves no one behind. He thanked Members for their trust in the Chair and Vice-Chair to guide the deliberations of the Council in 2020 and expressed his confidence that Council members will continue to make great strides in advancing this shared goal. He expressed his appreciation to the Director-General and the Secretariat for continuing to facilitate the work of the Governing Bodies despite the challenging circumstances.

Agenda Item 2: Organisation of work

a. Election of officials

4. The Council elected by acclamation Japan, represented by H.E. Mr Washio Eiichiro, as Chair, and Zimbabwe, represented by Dr Gloria Magombo, as Vice-Chair of the twenty-first meeting of the Council.

5. Upon the proposal by the Chair, Norway, represented by H.E. Mr Sten Arne Rosnes, was appointed as Rapporteur of the twenty-first meeting of the Council.

6. The Chair, H.E. Mr Washio Eiichiro, expressed his gratitude to the Director-General and the outgoing Chair and Vice-Chair. He noted the encouraging plans towards achieving net-zero emissions in the coming decades, with 30 countries aiming to achieve this goal, representing 70% of global GDP and emissions. H.E. Mr Washio remarked on the forthcoming meetings - G7 in June and the G20 and COP 26 - and he explained that the goals of the Paris Agreement are dependent on the implementation of accelerated energy transitions and highlighted the necessity

to urgently create pathways to mobilise the policies, funds, and innovations to enable environmental, social and transparent governance, secure stable mineral resources, and manage the used solar panel waste in the future.

7. The Director-General expressed his appreciation to the Chair, Vice-Chair, Rapporteur and the host country, as well as to Burkina Faso and Malaysia, as the respective outgoing Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council and congratulated Japan's State Minister for Foreign Affairs as the new Chair of the twenty-first meeting of Council and the Secretary for Energy and Power Development of Zimbabwe as Vice Chair. He extended a warm welcome to over 340 representatives from 98 countries and the European Union and gave a special welcome to the newest Member, Kyrgyzstan, and noted that the National Congress of Honduras recently ratified the IRENA Statute and Honduras will soon become the 165th Member of IRENA. The Director-General referred to the impact of the pandemic with the most vulnerable being hit the hardest and explained that COVID-19 further deepened inequalities and exposed vulnerabilities of the existing system, highlighting the realisation that the world needs unified efforts to transform economic, social and international systems by design, as opposed to by disaster. He underlined that an energy transition based on renewables serves as an indispensable tool to change the technology pathway to make energy cleaner, more accessible, and more democratic thus permeating through the economy and creating millions of jobs and industrial opportunities for shared prosperity whilst also providing many solutions for the inevitable complexity of the transition towards a resilient and more equitable world.

8. He relayed that IRENA's efforts to deliver the knowledge, evidence, and technical support to the transition to renewable energy promotes a holistic approach on the promise of renewables for universal access, energy security, and climate change through a just and inclusive process to achieve resilience and equity. The Director-General declared that the renewed commitment to energy transition and growth, in recognition of the wide impact on economies and societies, attracts the most conservative players to embrace IRENA's pathway for the energy future which has resulted in the success of a mainstream vision with IRENA's message amplified through the near 165 Members and the impact of activities reflected in forward-looking policymaking and accelerated deployment of renewables.

9. The Director-General reflected that Members have reached a new beginning where outdated rhetoric is no longer an issue, allowing for a focus on solutions to transform the energy system that is deeply embedded in today's economy. He expressed that IRENA, as the centre of excellence, remains acutely aware of complexities and diverse abilities and needs amongst its global membership, which decisions in the programmatic and strategic direction must reflect, bearing in mind the restrictions of time and the ten-year limit to achieve the Sustainable Development Agenda and shift to a 1.5-degree pathway in accordance with the Paris Agreement. With reference to IRENA's report on *Post-COVID Recovery: An Agenda for Resilience, Development and Equality*, published in 2020, the Director-General stressed the importance of aligning the short-term action with medium and long-term priorities.

10. Dr Gloria Magombo expressed her appreciation to Council members for electing her to serve as Vice-Chair. She shared the national commitments and developments of Zimbabwe, which presently has 44% access to modern energy, and highlighted that their recently launched renewable energy policy seeks to increase the share of renewables by attracting the participation of investors. The Vice-Chair expressed her appreciation for the work of IRENA on linking various countries and economies at varying levels under the shared vision of accelerating renewables deployment and aiming for zero emissions by 2050 and stressed Zimbabwe's commitment towards a better economy and energy mix that is increasingly driven by efficient systems.

b. Adoption of the agenda (C/21/L.1)

11. The Chair, Japan represented by Mr Koyama Masaomi, Director, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, introduced the 'Provisional Agenda' (C/21/L.1) and described the procedure to ensure all interventions are heard should any technical difficulties be encountered.

12. **The Council considered and adopted the Agenda for its twenty-first meeting (C/21/1).**

Agenda Item 3: Progress Report of the Director-General on the Implementation of the Work Programme and Budget for 2020-2021 (C/21/2)

13. The Chair proposed to consolidate discussions on Agenda Item 3 on the Progress Report of the Director-General on the Implementation of the Work Programme and Budget for 2020-2021, Agenda Item 4 on the Preliminary Framework for the Work Programme and Budget for 2022-2023 and Agenda Item 5 on the Note by the Director-General on the Medium-term Strategy 2023-2027, given the interconnected nature of the items.

14. The Director-General reflected on developments since the adoption of the current Work Programme noting the impact of the pandemic. He underlined the pressing need to act on climate change. IRENA's World Energy Transitions Outlook (WETO) - a preview released at the Berlin Energy Transition Dialogue in March – shows a pathway for a 1.5-degree future with the help of various technology options. Referring to WETO, he also stressed that the realisation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the shift toward decarbonised energy systems in 2050 depend on whether action is taken now.

15. The Director-General highlighted that a multitude of socio-economic and environmental drivers had placed renewables at the centre of the global discourse, and their deployment has been propelled by development needs and the climate emergency. He stressed the resilience of renewables was clearly demonstrated during the slump in energy demand in 2020, as, unlike other sectors, renewable capacity additions reached record levels. He referred to the annual Renewable Capacity Statistics, published in April, that showed that 260 gigawatts (GW) were added, 90% of which solar and wind, accounting for over 80% of all new capacity added globally, dwarfing the additions from fossil fuels and nuclear.

16. Referring to the uneven progress across regions and countries, the Director-General emphasised IRENA's determination to implement programmatic activities, despite the pandemic, with the utmost consideration for their relevance, timeliness and impact. He also noted that the Agency adapted its work methods so that it can continue to support countries and regions under the current circumstances.

17. The Director-General stressed the high importance of this year for energy, with the United Nations Secretary General's High-level Dialogue on Energy in September 2021 as a critical political moment. IRENA is co-leading the energy transition theme along with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP), ensuring that IRENA's long-standing direction of the energy transition becomes a shared roadmap following the Dialogue. He also referred to the close engagement with the United Kingdom, which prioritised energy in the climate action strategy under its Presidency of the Conference of the Parties (COP), including through the COP26 Energy Transitions Council.

18. Reiterating that IRENA's renewables-centric pathway is now mainstream, and its pioneering work on socioeconomics is attracting new followers, the Director-General stressed that the global energy discourse is increasingly aligned with the foundational vision of IRENA's Members. To remain agile, IRENA ensures its analytical and empirical work is accessible and policy-relevant, and the engagement with countries, the private sector and other stakeholders continues to grow to allow knowledge to be translated into national and regional plans and strategies, enabling frameworks and investments. In addition, he stressed that IRENA's Collaborative Frameworks are evolving into inclusive platforms on topics of shared interest and, with Members' guidance, IRENA will continue to evolve and grow this model of cooperation.

19. The Director-General concluded his remarks by thanking Members for their support to the implementation of the Work Programme and their timely contributions to IRENA's core budget and generous voluntary contributions.

20. Mr Dolf Gielen, Director of the IRENA Innovation and Technology Centre (IITC), underscored that despite the pandemic, IRENA has progressed on delivering the Work Programme and Budget in the area of innovation and technology. Referring to analytical products, he noted the release of WETO and other products in the area of regional and country analysis, supplemented by studies on technology progress and innovation outlooks. IRENA is collaborating with various partners for the development of reports.

21. Mr Gielen also referred to new tools such as the platform for urban renewable energy planning and the 48 virtual events organised, attracting more than 5,000 participants. Regarding capacity building, he highlighted that the African Union's Development Agency had chosen IRENA's SPLAT model as the official modelling tool for the development of the continent's master plan. He referred to four upcoming events, namely (1) the High-level Ministerial event with Luxembourg on 18 June 2021; (2) the event with the World Economic Forum on cooperation between the public and private sector on the enabling frameworks for hydrogen on 10 June; (3) another event with the World Economic Forum on industrial net zero emission strategies in mid-June; and (4) the Long-term Energy Scenarios Conference on 10 June. Mr Gielen concluded by mentioning the cooperation agreements signed or under way with government, organisations, and the private sector.

22. Ms Rabia Ferroukhi, Director of Knowledge, Policy and Finance Centre (KPFC), underlined that supporting evidence-based decision-making is a key priority for IRENA. To this end, the Agency continued to track development in several areas such as renewables deployment and the *Tracking SDG7: The Energy Progress Report 2021*, to be released soon. She underscored that IRENA has continued to serve as the hub for renewable energy data and provided targeted support to countries on designing policy frameworks and planning and developing projects. Ms Ferroukhi referred to the upcoming release of the revamped Global Atlas that will feature updated databases and additional functionalities, enhancing its user-friendliness. In terms of support to policymakers, she highlighted that WETO will include dedicated chapters on policy recommendations and financing.

23. Ms Ferroukhi also mentioned the upcoming release of an analysis of new power systems designed to support the energy transition; policies to accelerate the uptake of sustainable bioenergy; options to support emerging technologies such as green hydrogen; and the socio-economic impacts of the energy transition. She emphasised that the COVID crisis exposed the vulnerabilities of the socio-economic structures and underlined the critical role of IRENA's analysis of jobs, leveraging local capacities and related educational and skills requirement in supporting domestic economic and industrial development and maximising benefits for the energy transition. To this end, IRENA will deepen work on the promotion of just and inclusive energy transitions in regions and countries, to benefit from the opportunities and address misalignments. The new

Collaborative Framework on Just and Inclusive Energy Transitions will provide space to identify priority areas, concrete actions and foster international collaboration. Ms Ferroukhi highlighted IRENA's efforts to engage with the broader energy community and offer platforms to promote the energy transition, such as the annual IRENA Public-Private Dialogue and technical webinars.

24. Mr Gurbuz Gonul, Director of Country Engagement and Partnerships (CEP), provided a snapshot of IRENA's country support in designing and implementing energy transition commitments for stronger climate action. He noted that the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) reflect the increasingly ambitious and far-reaching energy transition commitments of IRENA Members. Mr. Gonul stressed that IRENA has progressively engaged with 69 countries, through 109 activities to support the enhancement and implementation of the energy component of NDCs. He noted that Bhutan, Lebanon, the Dominican Republic, Grenada and Papua New Guinea among others have submitted revised NDCs, acknowledging IRENA's support to the process.

25. Mr Gonul referred also to the recent launch of several country-specific Renewable Readiness Assessments (RRAs) and the ones under way. He highlighted that IRENA continued promoting renewables-based decentralised solutions to power rural healthcare facilities in Sub-Saharan Africa as well as agri-food value chains that are important for the mountain communities of the Hindukush – Himalayas region. Mr. Gonul also referred to seven regional Energy-Climate Dialogues, jointly organised with the UK COP26 Presidency and regional partners.

26. Mr Ahmed Badr, Acting Director of Project Facilitation and Support (PFS), presented a summary of activities stating that IRENA and the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD) will renew cooperation soon. He emphasised that the new facility would align with IRENA's global energy transition mandate and leverage the convening power of IRENA through an integrated project facilitation approach. Mr. Badr stated that the new facility aims at mobilising USD 1 billion from partners, starting with ADFD, and attracting an additional USD 2 billion from co-blended finance, to construct at least 1.5 GW of renewable generation and storage capacities.

27. Mr Badr highlighted the Climate Investment Platform (CIP), a partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF) designed to increase capital mobilisation and renewable impact-investing in developing countries. Mr. Badr underlined that IRENA's is supporting renewable energy project developers looking for financial and technical assistance and reported that to date, CIP has attracted over 218 projects and 250 registered partners. Mr. Badr stated that overall, IRENA has supported 33 projects, which is equivalent to approximately 470 megawatts (MW) in capacity and USD 1.1 billion mobilized once the matchmaking process is completed. He underlined that the total GHG emission reduction is expected to be 5 million ton of CO₂e equivalent once the 33 projects have been implemented. He explained that to date, IRENA has introduced 12 projects to CIP partners and 7 have already expressed interest to fund.

28. Mr Badr added that IRENA's is also working with the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (SACREEE) to train 32 small and medium enterprises in Southern Africa and 20 finance sector officials, to successfully prepare, develop and finance renewable energy projects.

29. Ms Elizabeth Press, Director of Planning and Programme Support (PPS), elaborated on IRENA's role in the preparatory process for the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Dialogue on Energy, to be held in September 2021. She explained that there are five tracks spanning from energy access to finance and investments; IRENA is contributing to all but is co-leading energy transition with UNEP and UNESCAP. Ms. Press informed that the co-leads just finalised the relevant chapter for the Secretary-General's report, one of the Dialogue's outcomes,

and positioned WETO findings as a shared vision for action until 2030. She then referred to the Ministerial meetings to be held the week of 21 June, with the one on energy transition taking place on 23 June. She added that another outcome of the Dialogue will be the Energy Compacts – voluntary commitments to accelerated action by 2030.

30. Ms Press also referred to IRENA's extensive collaboration with the COP26 Presidency and contribution to the developments in the climate action space. She stated that IRENA continues to lead the Global Action Energy Group of the Marrakesh Partnership and is member of the Energy Transition Council, convened by the United Kingdom, comprising a few international organisations. The Energy Transition Council provides targeted support to focus countries, heavily relying on coal, on the run-up to COP26. Ms. Press highlighted that the process entails country and regional dialogues and noted that the UK will convene a Ministerial meeting on 13 July to take stock and set the stage for COP 26.

31. Mr Aboubacar Toure, Director of Administration and Management Services (AMS), pointed out that the core budget implementation rate, as of 15 April 2020, was at 80%. He noted that with such implementation rate as of 15 April 2021, IRENA is on track to reach 100% delivery of its budget by the end of the year. He added that expenditures for governing body meetings have been lower due to the pandemic but partially offset by the increase on health and safety expenditure and the upgrade required to support virtual convening. In 2020, 96% of core assessed contributions had been received, amounting to USD 20.7 million. Mr. Toure continued that during 2021, 31% of core assessed contributions had been received to date and an additional USD 1.8 million is expected to be received in the coming weeks.

32. Mr Toure stressed the challenges posed by the pandemic to human resources and restrictions on travel. He underscored that the Agency quickly adapted to the new normal and developed new working processes such as remote onboarding, teleworking and telecommuting, among others. He continued that during 2020, IRENA announced 66 vacancies for which 9,800 applications were received. Mr Toure stated that currently 49% of the core staff are women.

33. The Chair of the Programme and Strategy Committee (PSC), Samoa, represented by H.E. Ms Perina Sila, Permanent Representative to IRENA presented the outcome of the Committee meeting held on 18 May 2021, as contained in document C/21/CRP/1 (Annex 2).

34. Delegations expressed their appreciation for the implementation of the Work Programme and Budget for 2020-2021, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis. A delegation encouraged IRENA to utilise the best practices learned from the pandemic, such as holding meetings virtually, to maximise resource use and help reduce emissions.

35. Delegations welcomed the Progress Report and one delegation encouraged IRENA to assess the most effective tools that countries would need to commit to reach net zero by 2050 and also to develop plans to build momentum towards COP26.

36. Some delegations congratulated IRENA for promoting gender balance in the Secretariat and another stressed the strong alignment between the decarbonisation of the economy and efforts to advance gender equality, empower indigenous people, improve access to affordable energy and create economic opportunities in communities. A delegation highlighted the importance of the green energy transition for gender equality on the nexus between sustainable energy, sustainable food systems and climate.

37. Some delegations stressed that programmatic work on the interlinkages between sectors, such as Energy Transition and Food Systems for Sustainable Development help the decarbonisation process.

38. Several delegations applauded IRENA for its continued global leadership on renewable energy and energy transitions worldwide and for the development of concrete and accessible tools to implement the energy transition.

39. Delegations appreciated IRENA's analytical work and welcomed the preview of the World Energy Transitions Outlook and were looking forward to the full report, and one commended the Renewable Capacity Statistics report.

40. Some delegations welcomed the regional approach of IRENA regarding renewable energy systems and welcomed the development of Regional Energy Transition Outlooks. A delegation thanked IRENA for the *Renewable Energy Action in Colombia* report and IRENA's support for Renewable Energy in Latin America and the Caribbean (RELAC) initiative.

41. Some delegations underlined that the pandemic demonstrated the resilience and central role of the renewable energy sector. Delegations emphasised that green recovery is an opportunity to build back better and link recovery to net-zero long term and resilient development pathways and stressed IRENA's central role in the process. A delegation underlined the need for small islands to select the most appropriate renewable energy solutions to achieve their climate targets based on their capabilities and specificities, especially while recovering from the COVID-19 crisis, to realise maximum economic potential.

42. Delegations shared respective activities, plans and strategies for energy transitions, including increasing the share of renewables in their energy mix, ensuring access to energy and clean cooking, decarbonising the transport sector, improving energy efficiency, promoting investments regulatory and tax frameworks and lowering and potentially abolishing the renewable energy surcharge through the use of revenues from carbon pricing.

43. Some delegations appreciated IRENA's growing attention on accelerating clean technology innovation and called for international cooperation to promote their deployment, reduce costs and increase investment to speed up their commercialisation, especially in emerging and developing economies.

44. A delegation confirmed that shedding light on the untapped potential of renewables, such as offshore solutions from solar, wind and tidal wave energy, is on the agenda of the G20 Presidency, and underlined the importance of adopting policies that facilitate green technologies. The delegation also emphasised that WETO is an excellent basis to guide post-COVID sustainable recovery plans and green energy solutions spending. In addition, the delegation encouraged G20 Members sitting in the IRENA Council to support the G20 Presidency and looked forward to the flagship document of the G20 Presidency that is prepared by IRENA.

45. Delegations congratulated IRENA for its role in the United Nations High-level Dialogue on Energy as a co-lead of the Energy Transition theme and highlighted their role in the process.

46. Delegations stressed that hydrogen could make a significant contribution to the energy transition process and in particular to the decarbonisation of the power, heating, transportation and industrial sectors. A delegation also drew attention to the upcoming International Conference on Hydrogen in 2021. Delegations shared their plans to formulate a national hydrogen strategy, and a delegation expressed its commitment to the promotion of international cooperation towards the establishment of a global hydrogen society.

47. Delegations underlined the key challenge of accessing climate finance, particularly for developing countries, welcomed IRENA's work with the Climate Investment Platform and encouraged IRENA to enhance collaboration and coordination between the public and private sectors.

48. Delegations underlined the importance of the Collaborative Frameworks in sharing best practices and expanding knowledge on some of the most pressing challenges facing the clean energy sector. Delegations also commended IRENA's recognition of the importance of enhancing peer to peer collaboration and exchanging national experiences, challenges and solutions.

49. Two delegations encouraged other Members to participate in the Collaborative Frameworks including in the Collaborative Framework on the Geopolitics of the Energy Transformation to achieve regional balance. A delegation called on the Collaborative Framework on the Geopolitics of Energy Transformation to dive deeper into the issues of sustainable supply chains for the minerals and metals that are required for batteries and renewable technologies.

50. Delegations welcomed the recent establishment of the new Collaborative Framework on Just and Inclusive Energy Transitions and underlined the importance of ensuring that no one is left behind. A delegation expressed its commitment to participate in the Collaborative Framework on Green Hydrogen and another delegation welcomed the development of the report on the Geopolitics of Hydrogen economy.

51. Two delegations welcomed IRENA's engagement with the private sector, including with the oil and gas industry, to enable them to accelerate their decarbonisation efforts. A delegation pointed out examples of technology compatibility between oil and gas and renewable energy, which are promising for future energy production and encouraged IRENA to follow developments in this area. Some delegations welcomed the White Paper on 'Oil Companies and the Energy Transition' and a delegation called on the Coalition for Action to expand its work to large industrial users.

52. Delegations underlined that the climate crisis requires unprecedented global cooperation and the importance of IRENA's engagement and contribution in the process. Delegations shared their climate action strategies and the targets of achieving carbon neutrality by 2040, 2045, or 2050. A delegation looked forward to the outcome of COP26 and another referred to the work of the COP26 Energy Transition Council to facilitate the transition to clean power in developing countries and IRENA's role in supporting this crucial work. A delegation drew attention to the P4G Seoul Summit and its importance in increasing momentum to implement the Paris Agreement.

55. The Council took note of the Progress Report of the Director-General on the Implementation of the Work Programme and Budget for 2020-2021, contained in document C/21/2.

Agenda Item 4: Preliminary Framework for the Work Programme and Budget for 2022-2023 (C/21/3)

56. The Director-General introduced the Preliminary Framework for the Work Programme and Budget for 2022-2023, as contained in document C/21/3. He highlighted that the Framework will guide the development of the Work Programme and Budget in the coming months and set the stage for the Agency's development in the next phase, given that the current Medium-term Strategy will come to an end in 2022, half-way through the next programmatic cycle. He explained that IRENA is considering the work in the coming biennium through the lens of the current situation caused by the pandemic. The Director-General recognised that the transformation of the global energy system has risen to the forefront of the agenda and stressed that the world is at a critical juncture, and how it emerges from this crisis will define the shared future. He underlined the need for rapid progress in the coming decade, which calls for the rapid deployment of available solutions as it will determine the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and a possibility for a 1.5-degree world.

57. The Director-General emphasised that technology avenues are clear and that IRENA's renewables-centric pathway that was until recently considered progressive or even unrealistic is now mainstream. He underlined the common recognition that investment in efficiency, renewables and related infrastructure is a no-regret option and that while innovation must continue to ensure that technology avenues are more efficient, more widespread, and more integrated, there is no reason to wait. He then called for translating ambitious targets into effective policy and regulatory frameworks. The Director-General pointed out that although renewable technologies have progressed in the power sector and technology avenues have crystallised, end-use, such as direct heat, buildings, and transport are in flux and much remains to be done. He explained that investment in a comprehensive transformation involves not just a mix of technologies but also a policy package to put them in place and optimise their economic and social impact.

58. The Director-General highlighted that IRENA's Theory of Change will be guided by the pathway outlined in WETO and embedded in the Medium-term Strategy's pillars. He explained that WETO will remain a living framework, refined and updated on an annual basis, which will help to focus programmatic activities in the short term, while ensuring they contribute to the global commitments enshrined in the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. He continued that programmatic activities would continue to span the analytical, empirical, and country support, underpinned by partnerships and collaborative arrangements and will be measured by their impact on real-life and added value at the local, regional, and global levels. The Director-General added that WETO will be translated into programmatic activities that continue to fill knowledge gaps, shape the steps for just and inclusive transitions and drive investment at scale.

59. He stressed that the priority in the coming period is to translate WETO into regional strategies and frameworks for investment. To this end, IRENA will pursue Regional Energy Transition Outlooks (RETOs) to provide coherent technology, policy and socio-economic frameworks for impactful investment that creates jobs, industrial value additions, and inclusive, resilient and healthy societies. He added that IRENA will contribute to the realisation of a just, inclusive and systemic transition, a topic of high relevance for policy makers. Drawing from the Agency's accumulated 10 years of work on these issues, IRENA is optimally positioned to lead the global discourse and support countries and regions with practical, well-developed tools. He also stressed the need to intensify efforts to channel investment toward resilient, renewables-based systems, be innovative and courageous, and bring along incumbents, such as oil and gas companies, who have the means to invest and need to reinvent themselves for a sustainable future.

60. The Director-General referred to the feedback received by Members requesting IRENA to continue to play a leading role in the transformation of the global energy system, in line with its renewables-centric mandate. He emphasised that through the work as a Centre of Excellence for Energy Transformation, IRENA will continue to produce flagship analytical and empirical products that shape the global energy discourse and provide policy makers with the necessary tools to navigate this complex period. He added that WETO will remain a core analytical product, supported by several other flagship analyses, including statistics, costs, jobs, and innovation.

61. He stressed that IRENA will remain a strong voice of renewables as countries advance their energy strategies and promote holistic policy making that considers a range of technology, economic and social elements. He emphasised that IRENA's work on the just and inclusive transition will remain a centrepiece, along with the established focus on gender, cities and rural communities, and will continue to build on the streams of work that complete the energy transition picture, such as geopolitics. In addition, IRENA will continue enhancing its communication and outreach strategy.

62. The Director-General underscored that the facilitation of effective collaboration has always been a cornerstone of IRENA's work, which will continue in the next biennium. To this end,

IRENA will foster collaboration with Members and extensive partnerships with the private sector, international organisations and others. Platforms such as the Collaborative Frameworks are excellent examples of IRENA's commitment to acting as a network hub.

63. He added that IRENA will continue to provide high quality support to countries in their energy transitions with concrete, objective and practical advice, especially targeting LDCs and SIDS, including with the implementation of their NDCs. Building on the work to date, IRENA will refine the project facilitation support towards creating a pipeline of projects and matchmake them with implementing and financing partners. Here, the Climate Investment Platform will play a central role, along with the new platform IRENA is developing in cooperation with ADFD.

64. The Director-General underlined that the energy transition's agenda is extensive, so IRENA must continue to set itself apart with clarity of message, responsiveness to country needs and an open door for all who wish to be a part of the effort. He stressed the need to be effective in influencing policy and scaling up investment to accelerate the deployment of renewables and be a leading voice for an energy transition that is just and inclusive, in a world where disparities and gaps continue to widen. In closing, he stressed the importance of the coming programmatic period for the energy transitions worldwide as it presents an opportunity to make a lasting impact in the global energy transition, with forward-looking strategies, high ambition, and bold achievements.

65. The Chair of the Programme and Strategy Committee (PSC), Samoa, represented by H.E. Ms Perina Sila, reported on the Committee's consideration of the Preliminary Framework from the Committee meeting held on 18 May 2021, as contained in document C/21/CRP/1 (Annex 2).

66. Delegations welcomed the Preliminary Framework for the Work Programme and Budget 2022-2023 (UAE) and expressed interest in participating in its development. A Member welcomed the plans for the programme to stay rooted in the Medium-term Strategy and its four pillars.

67. Delegations suggested that IRENA should consider the following areas of work:
- step-up work to improve energy access and productivity, particularly in the context of post-COVID recovery efforts.
 - continue to explore ways for the organisation to be a catalyst for global action
 - strengthen its role as the global voice of energy transition through strategic partnerships and cooperation and by promoting innovative technology solutions and policy guidance
 - continue working on statistical abilities and data analysis and improve its energy models and the granularity of analysis down to regional or even country level, including socio-economic factors
 - look at renewable energy solutions holistically, provide guidance on their environmental impact and pave the way for a transparent discussion on the circular economy of the renewable energy sector.
 - expand its focus towards the integration of renewable energy into the grid and geothermal development.
 - explore green mining operations and planning for recycling and re-use as part of a broader conversation of building a circular economy for batteries and renewable technologies
 - support country efforts to establish green technologies and enhance the role of renewable energy sources within the current power system through advice on correct design and development of pilot projects; identification of possible investors; and support of business plans to attract investors
 - strengthen the transfer of technology, best practices and financial contributions towards emerging economies, considering the Agency's global membership, in partnership with private and public financial institutions

- showcase the multiple socio-economic benefits of deploying renewables and promote the energy transition and decarbonisation of all sectors, especially of the end-use industries such as heat, buildings and transport
- consider the nexus between energy and food as one of the priority areas for the successful achievement of the SDGS and climate goals
- shift some of the focus towards education as it is the basis for an all-inclusive development process
- explore energy solutions for urban settings
- be part of the discussion to define standards and tools for Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) to achieve high ESG ratings and promote the use of renewable energy in the private sector
- establish a renewable energy corridor in the Middle East to promote regional cooperation, exchange of knowledge and experience, and use the capacity and potential of the countries. This can be achieved through the creation of a good platform for more cooperation between countries through the development of joint projects and granting loans
- produce fewer but more impactful reports and update the most relevant reports, with a focus on policies to align short and long-term objectives
- collect the results of each Member annually to build a global dashboard of renewables progress. This table could supplement the data already available and allow members to communicate on their achievements.

68. The Council took note of the Preliminary Framework for the Work Programme and Budget for 2022-2023, contained in document C/21/3.

Agenda Item 5: Note by the Director-General on the Medium-term Strategy 2023-2027 (C/21/9)

69. The Director-General introduced the Note on the Medium-term Strategy 2023-2027 contained in document C/21/9. He explained that the current Strategy will come to an end in 2022, half-way through the upcoming programmatic cycle and highlighted that by the end of the next strategic cycle in 2027, the world will have a clear picture on whether SDG7 will be achieved – and by extension, the 2030 Agenda. He stressed that by then, it will also be evident whether the renewables-based energy transition is progressing at the necessary pace for a 1.5-degree world.

70. The Director-General stated that IRENA was created with the objectives of sustainable development and transition to a low-carbon economy, aligned with the current priorities. He reiterated that IRENA is a tool in Members' hands - the only global energy Agency, free from legacy mandates and complex bureaucracies. He also underscored that the pandemic, a forewarning of the climate crisis, demonstrated the interconnected nature of the world and calls for long-term thinking and building back differently to address past failings, seize present opportunities and shape a resilient and more equitable future.

71. He highlighted that through the current MTS, IRENA was given the mandate to play a leading role in the transformation of the global energy system that propelled the Agency's relevance and authority in the global energy landscape. He pointed out that the current context differs from that of 2018 as renewable energy has since become truly mainstream, with the most conservative energy players now recognising its central role. The Director-General underlined that an increasing number of entities are entering the space, which calls for assessing and leveraging IRENA's comparative advantage to ensure its unique advantages are utilised for the benefit of all.

72. The Director-General expressed the deep conviction that only with active Member involvement will IRENA remain impactful and consequential. He stated his support for the creation of the MTS Working Team as an additional tool to support the development of the MTS

over the coming 18 months, thanked the Members that have expressed interest in participating in the Working Team and stressing its open-ended nature, encouraged more Members to contribute to its discussions.

73. Ms. Press provided more details on the work of the Medium-term Strategy Working Team. She noted that in 2017, consultations had taken place on the elaboration of the previous MTS through the first Working Team. The Working Team will provide an informal setting to convene between Council meetings to discuss in-depth issues of high strategic relevance for the Agency. Consultations will take place in an open, inclusive, and flexible manner. She added that previously, the Working Team met on the margins of different meetings – this time around, due to current circumstances, meetings will first be held virtually and may be held in-person if the situation allows. Ms. Press explained that the Working Team will replicate the working methods of the Collaborative Frameworks as they are well-established mechanisms, resonating with Members. The meetings will be closed but allow for flexibility to invite special guests upon Members' request.

74. The Chair of the Programme and Strategy Committee (PSC), Samoa, represented by H.E. Ms Perina Sila, reported on the Committee's consideration of the Medium-term Strategy 2023-2027 from the Committee meeting held on 18 May 2021, as contained in document C/21/CRP/1 (Annex 2).

75. Delegations welcomed the establishment of the Working Team for the development of the upcoming Medium-term Strategy and expressed their interest to participate in it.

76. Delegations suggested that the next Medium-term Strategy should consider:

- IRENA's strengths, the internationally recognised excellence of its team and universal membership, constituting its added value compared to other international organisations, but also its close partnership with others, especially with regional agencies and the private sector
- keep strengthening its position as the centre of excellence and knowledge hubby fully harnessing its expertise and comparative advantage in analysing the socio-economic, health-related, environmental, geopolitical challenges and benefits of the energy transition, among others
- offer countries and regions support and advice on enabling frameworks, adapted to their situation, considering economic aspects and the broader social and equity issues
- continue its research and publications, such as its groundbreaking WETO, to provide a clear vision of new integrated and resilient energy systems
- continue to work with Members to develop methods to remove obstacles to the deployment of renewable energy and provide advice on practical applications and policies on all matters relating to renewable energy in line with global climate objectives and according to their needs and their respective situations
- support the widespread accelerated deployment of renewable power heating, cooling, and transport and related infrastructure investments around the world
- reinforce the abilities of countries to develop technologies and benefit from the efficient deployment and transfer of knowledge and technology according to their needs
- facilitate the financing of renewables
- continue to promote cooperation between Members and enable peer to peer exchanges
- enable cooperation between countries to promote the implementation of the Paris Agreement

77. The Council took note of the Note by the Director-General on the Medium-term Strategy 2023-2027, contained in document C/21/9.

Agenda Item 6: Report on Programmatic Discussion on The Energy Transition and Food Systems for Sustainable Development (C/21/BN/1)

78. The Vice-Chair, Dr Gloria Magombo, Secretary for Energy and Power Development of Zimbabwe reported on the outcome of the Programmatic Discussion on the Energy Transition and Food Systems for Sustainable Development that took place on 24 May 2021.

79. Dr Magombo informed that the discussions highlighted the role of renewable energy for improving food production, processing, storage and distribution, shared experiences on successful deployment of renewable energy to provide reliable and clean energy in food and water sectors, and included the perspectives of representatives from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), agricultural agencies, as well as academic and research institutions. She conveyed that Members expressed their eagerness for increased involvement with IRENA and called for the Agency to lead the work on the scaling up of renewable energy in the discussion on the food-water-energy nexus context through both country engagement and analytical work.

80. Dr Magombo listed the five key points to enable policy frameworks and strong intersectoral oversight in support of the widespread adoption of renewable energy in the food sector which includes incentivising renewable energy applications in food systems as well as its integration in national strategies associated with food, water and agriculture. She noted that the relevance of renewable energy in food systems was stressed as a means for post-pandemic recovery and improved climate resilience, including NDC implementation. She mentioned that vital cross-sector cooperation is critical for success for the scalability and wide utilisation of renewable energy in food systems to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure alignment with existing needs and priorities, and noted the importance of international cooperation to accelerate the deployment of renewables in the food sector, to help share experiences and best practices and to secure joint financing options. Ms Magombo emphasised the need for cooperation between different ministries on ongoing programmes with the necessity for the adoption of renewable energy solutions to be tailored to specific needs of farming and food producing communities and suited for smaller farm holdings to ensure that the benefits trickle down, particularly to the marginalised communities. Finally, she noted that renewable energy is an optimal solution for the sustainable enhancement of food value chains, with energy efficiency interventions on machinery in food value chains ensuring even greater yield and income gains.

81. The Director-General advised that IRENA's increasing engagement on the energy-food nexus at the regional level translates knowledge into action and prioritises this issue through strategic and institutional partnerships, and that the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between IRENA and the Food and Agriculture Organization will amplify the impact of the nexus, particularly in the context of the UN Secretary General's Food Systems Summit. He noted that multi-stakeholder discussions help to inform implementation and identify priority action areas on which cross-sectoral partnership can emerge and that it is necessary to collectively support the creation of enabling conditions and mobilise investment to address urgent needs to realise countries' ambition.

82. Ms Rabia Ferroukhi, Director of the Knowledge, Policy and Finance Centre (KPFC) and Mr Gurbuz Gonul, Director and Country Engagement and Partnerships (CEP) provided a context setting presentation to set the tone of the ensuing panel discussion highlighting IRENA's engagement and on-going works in the energy-food nexus. The presentation was followed by keynote addresses from Dr Pema Gyamtsho and Ms Ismahane Elouafi.

83. Dr Pema Gyamtsho, Director-General of ICIMOD, explained the mission of the Centre to protect the physical environment of the mountains and to improve the socioeconomic wellbeing of the residents by bridging science with policy and practice. He described the efforts in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region which supports the livelihoods of 240 million people directly and another 1.6 billion people living downstream, and which is considered a rich trove of biological and cultural

diversity yet remains one of the most neglected and impoverished areas that is also most vulnerable to climate change impacts.

84. Ms Ismahane Elouafi, Chief Scientist of the FAO, reported that energy is needed for every stage of the food systems cycle as well as the implementation of agriculture innovations. The present use of energy in food system transformation needs to be significantly improved given current dependence on fossil fuels and uneven distribution of energy.

84. Following the two keynote addresses and the presentation from the Secretariat, the session included a panel discussion moderated by H.E. Mr Kandeh Yumkella of Sierra Leone. The panel discussion was kicked off by Mr Madhusudhan Adhikari, Executive Director of the Alternative Energy Promotion Centre, who outlined the energy access challenges faced by Nepal due to natural and geographical elements and he explained Nepal's policies and support mechanisms for the development of the renewables market, including a dedicated subsidy policy for various sources of renewable energy.

85. H.E. Dr Nawal Al-Hosany, Permanent Representative of the UAE to IRENA, highlighted the UAE's priority to ensure food security, which the ongoing pandemic has reinforced. She emphasised the UAE's commitment to support international engagement in this regard and informed that the UAE, along with the Netherlands and Jordan, will Co-host the Water-Energy-Food Nexus Summit during the Dubai Expo, which will coincide with the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (ADSW).

86. Dr Geir Oddsson, Director of Natural Resources, Climate and the Environment at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation of Iceland, informed that almost all electricity in his country is derived from domestically produced renewable resources, with more than two-thirds of that energy coming from geothermal sources. He explained that Iceland continues to develop geothermal energy for food production and processing, and is currently focusing on organised development of circular economy industrial ecosystems or industrial products, which is believed to be one of the most successful ways to maximise the value of production and make the fullest possible use of energy resources.

87. Dr Yifru Tafesse, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Ethiopian Agriculture Transformation Agency (ATA), informed that over the last year, the ATA has strengthened collaboration with stakeholders including the Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy, Columbia University and the Rockefeller Foundation to increase focus on the energy aspect of the agricultural system. Emphasising the importance of enhancing linkages of all actors on the ground, he outlined a number of initiatives bringing together smallholder farmers, the horticultural sector and the private sector, supported by government and international partners.

88. Dr Yongping Zhai, Energy Sector Group Chief at the Asian Development Bank (ADB), reported that renewable energy projects account for about half of ADB's USD 5 billion annual lending in Asia, with increased investment in rural off-grid systems being foreseen in line with ADB's Strategy 2030. In this regard, he outlined three factors of consideration for support: an agricultural anchor load, a business model including private sector support to run the system and provide equity, and rural community participation.

89. Ms Huda Jaffer, Director of the SELCO Foundation, emphasised the need for a stronger nexus approach linking energy to agricultural planning and organisation across the value chain, and institutionalising energy efficiency, clean energy inputs, as well as greener built environments across these different agricultural planning processes. Highlighting key takeaways for governments from the grassroots perspective, she outlined the need to incentivise systems combining solar water pumps with efficient usage of water to derive effective yields as well as climate and disaster related benefits, encourage energy efficiency in post-harvest processing appliances resulting in cost reductions and increased investment in innovative systems, channel infrastructure finance towards

agri-cold storage development specifically for small and marginal farmers, and create enabling environments and financing mechanisms for entrepreneurship in both energy and technology supply.

90. Mr Eduardo Perez, Geothermal Lead at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, highlighted the global prioritisation of food security to provide a holistic end-to-end solution towards reducing food wastage and its associated effects on greenhouse gas emissions as well as promoting local economies and improving living conditions. He explained that these considerations underpin the policies in Mexico to generate opportunities and mitigate migration, which is a challenge faced by most developing nations. Emphasising the enormous challenge that ensuring a continuous food supply presents to the agri-food sector due to increased production on climate change, he underlined the importance of productive strategies to minimise these negative impacts, and explained that Mexico has accelerated deployment of geothermal energy to generate value-added products, employment, education and the necessary services, which is a model that may be exported to any developing economy.

91. Ms Rabia Ferroukhi reiterated that the energy and food systems are entwined and interact with all aspects of society and the economy, with food systems consuming about 30% of the world's energy and energy related activities accounting for about a third of emissions from food systems. She explained that the agricultural sector supports the livelihoods of over 2.5 billion people and is three times more effective at reducing poverty as other sectors, for which access to affordable, reliable and modern energy is needed to enable growth and can improve productivity and use, reduce losses, increase incomes with energy advances in clean cooking technology and will strengthen resilience to climate impacts with integrated food energy systems being important sources of sustainable bioenergy. She summarised that the energy transition will directly impact and be supported by the food systems and vice versa which is the reason a joint approach is important to manage the interlinkages and achieve food and energy security whilst simultaneously advancing climate and sustainability goals.

92. Ms Ferroukhi advised that the ecosystem must address cross-sector policies, financing for end users and enterprises, energy efficient technologies, training and capacity building, as well as market linkages with partnerships, gender, and knowledge exchanges being the crosscutting elements. She explained that IRENA's holistic view of the energy transition linkages of renewables with other sectors and across societies and economies are being explored, and she explained that as part of the workstream on bridging the knowledge gap IRENA plans to launch a brief on the ecosystem needed to strengthen links between distributed renewables and livelihood sectors such as agriculture. She announced that IRENA and FAO will launch a joint report at the UN Food Systems Summit on scaling up renewable energy adoption in the agriculture sector. She noted that IRENA provides insight into specific technology applications covering solar irrigation, geothermal and sustainable bioenergy, assesses the benefits of renewables in the agricultural sector by measuring impacts on jobs, incomes, gender, food security, and the environment, and also addresses the data and statistics gap that exists particularly for the energy-food nexus solutions. Ms Ferroukhi noted that IRENA carries out regional and national agri-value chain assessments and engages local partners to accelerate deployment, along with the provision of action oriented platforms to build capacity and facilitate the exchange of lessons and best practice between stakeholders across the sectors.

93. Mr Gurbuz Gonul shared insights from IRENA's country and region-specific work and demonstrated the ways in which the Agency is leveraging its holistic approach and partnerships to mobilise action on the ground. He noted that the promotion of renewable energy solutions in cross-sectoral setting is linked to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals, including promoting food security and livelihoods, improving availability and quality of essential social services such as healthcare, and fostering local business opportunities. He outlined that IRENA's efforts are channelled through three workstreams implemented at the global, regional,

and country levels with support of local renewable energy entrepreneurs in West and Southern Africa as the first workstream to which technical assistance, capacity building and mentorship on improving business practices of enterprises and access to affordable finance are provided. He announced the expansion into additional countries, including Mali and Cameroon, of IRENA's pilot promotion programme of renewable solutions to power rural healthcare facilities in Sub-Saharan Africa and he announced IRENA's close collaboration with the World Health Organization and other partners to provide advocacy and taught leadership to this important issue.

94. Mr Gonul highlighted IRENA's flagship off-grid renewables event, the International OffGrid Renewable Energy Conference and Exhibition (IOREC), that offers a global platform to share experiences and best practices to shape future work in this field, and informed that IRENA continues to collaborate with key regional and development partners to conduct activities. In this regard, he drew attention to the workstream focusing on enhancing livelihoods in the Kush Himalayas region with renewables, jointly undertaken with ICIMOD and SELCO Foundation, where preliminary findings and collated feedback were shared for the compilation of the assessment report, due for publication in the third quarter of 2021, containing detailed techno-financial analysis to inform policymakers and guide project developers and stakeholders to effectively deploy solutions. He described the geothermal energy applications in food systems workstream, in cooperation with practitioners from the Global Geothermal Alliance, and noted that the subsequent report from the initial practitioner discussions a few years ago addressed several key success factors for geothermal agri-foods projects, such as handling of resources in geothermal heat, integrating geothermal developments with industrial rural development plants, and the development of practical experience and necessary skill sets for emerging markets. Mr Gonul noted that IRENA is presently developing a practical guidebook for policymakers to raise awareness on feasible geothermal solutions for the agri-food sector, which will be complemented by a series of capacity-building activities in East Africa and Latin America.

95. Delegations noted the Secretariat's efforts and highlighted that the nexus between food and energy should be a key priority area of IRENA's future work as such efforts support the energy transition overall and the decarbonisation of all economic sectors. Two delegations noted the need for new food systems technologies for the rising population and associated urbanisation and urban agriculture needs, as well as the use of food waste as a source of bioenergy. Two delegations emphasised the necessity for decentralised solutions for energy smart food and agriculture programmes.

96. H.E. Mr Yumkella provided a recap of the interventions and mentioned the need for energy solutions to enhance agricultural productivity and efficiency and the simultaneous need for agricultural systems to drive energy solutions, waste to energy solutions, and to spread renewable energy in rural areas. He mentioned that agriculture can be an important embodiment to make mini grids and other solutions profitable and allow investors to scale up their investments. He noted that the complexity of the water-energy-food nexus requires an ecosystem approach with the help of IRENA, FAO, SELCO and others for planning, data analysis and the exploration of linkage to international markets, as well as financing for energy efficient agriculture technologies. He also noted the need for such technologies for women and relayed the gender dimension of such technologies considering that 60-80% of food production and value addition in Africa is done by women.

97. The Director-General reflected that the commitment of net zero by the G7 and many countries has mainstreamed IRENA's vision of the energy systems of the future and advised on the importance of the scenario, in which numbers result from models, through which an understanding can be ascertained on what may happen and where, and what preparation is needed to succeed. He summarised that the discussions clearly demonstrated that human beings are what count in the scenario models, and emphasised that the many interconnections among the energy

system that are being built with the different sectors—in this case the agriculture and food sector, the public sector, the private companies, the markets—highlight the importance of building key numbers for the future while working with the people and the representatives of governments across the world.

98. The Director-General noted that discussions on this key topic aid adaptation to challenges and accelerate progress towards a global solution to the new ways for the world, for which a tailored approach is needed to assure a clean energy system that takes into account the respective circumstances of each country. He commended the support for the inclusion of private companies and stakeholders in the Collaborative Frameworks as they connect IRENA's models with reality and serve to collectively achieve the global endeavour towards a clean energy system.

99. The Council took note of the Report on Programmatic Discussion on The Energy Transition and Food Systems for Sustainable Development, contained in document C/21/BN/1.

Agenda Item 7: Reports on Collaborative Frameworks

100. The Chair requested the Facilitators to report to the Council on the outcome of the virtual meetings of the Collaborative Frameworks on 'Enhancing the Dialogue on High Shares of Renewables in Energy Systems', 'Geopolitics of Energy Transformation', 'Green Hydrogen', 'Hydropower' and 'Ocean Energy/Offshore Renewables'.

Collaborative Framework on Ocean Energy/Offshore Renewables

101. The Co-facilitator, H.E. Mr Nicola Lener, Permanent Representative of Italy to IRENA and Ambassador of Italy to the UAE, recounted that the Collaborative Framework was established at the Members' request and reported that two meetings were conducted in 2020 with more than 40 delegations and industry representatives, where priority areas of cooperation were defined, and Tonga and Italy were designated as Co-facilitators for a period of one year with the option of a one-year extension.

102. He reported that over the past six months IRENA arranged a number of activities that support the achievement of the goals set by the Collaborative Framework and gave reference to IRENA's reports on the role of offshore renewables and fostering a global blue economy, and the report on the latest innovation trends in ocean energy. He further reported that in recognition of the role of IRENA and the Collaborative Framework in a global context, the Italian presidency of the G20 has commissioned IRENA with the development of a report that outlines the elements for a recommended G20 Action Agenda to accelerate the deployment of offshore renewables worldwide. He declared that IRENA presented the preliminary findings of the new offshore renewables study to the G20 Energy Working Group last April and that the G20 presidency organised an event on offshore renewables with IRENA which provided new insights on the strategy to foster the deployment of technologies in alignment with net zero carbon targets. He conveyed his appreciation for the Collaborative Framework on Ocean Energy/Offshore Renewables as a platform to share good practices and highlighted the contribution of IRENA's work in this regard towards making the Agency a global authoritative voice in the field based on robust data and analysis.

103. He announced that the next meeting of the Collaborative Framework, scheduled for 8 June 2021, will benefit from the participation of private sector representatives and relevant international organisations, and that the main items on the agenda were established as the input from the Collaborative Framework into the G20 Action Agenda, as well as the approaches to foster regional

collaboration for offshore renewables in emerging markets. He further announced that the High-level meeting of the Collaborative Framework in the context of the UN Ocean Conference is being considered depending on the new dates defined by the UN for the conference, which was postponed due to the pandemic. He thanked Members for their active involvement in the Collaborative Framework and invited those not yet involved to participate and benefit from this unique platform to advance in the achievement of the blue economy, climate change imperatives, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Collaborative Framework on Enhancing the Dialogue on High Shares of Renewables in Energy Systems

104. The Co-facilitator, H.E. Mr Alvaro Ceriani, Permanent Representative to IRENA and Ambassador of Uruguay to the UAE, reported that two consultative meetings held last year established the objectives, scope and implementation approach of the Collaborative Framework where it was agreed that pilot-phase should focus on three workstreams: cross-border interconnections to promote cross-border trade of renewable electricity; the optimisation of energy systems operation with high penetration of variable renewable energy in energy systems; and the reinforcement of energy system planning through effective use of long-term energy scenarios. He reported that Uruguay and Canada were designated as Co-facilitators in the second consultative meeting.

105. He announced that on 5 May 2021, the Collaborative Framework held its third meeting—attended by 120 participants from 52 Members and States in Accession—which was dedicated to cross-border interconnections and had an emphasis on opportunities and challenges associated with interconnection schemes to effectively contribute to a larger intake of renewable energy sources in a technically feasible and cost-competitive way, whereupon successful examples of renewables driving cross-border schemes in the Central Asia/South Asia Interconnection Project (CASA-1000) and the West African Power Pool (WAPP) were presented. He noted that the Collaborative Framework highlighted that cross-border interconnection of power systems offers significant opportunities to deal with variability on renewable generation outputs and grid stability issues whilst enabling improved optimisation of the development of renewable power generation infrastructure and also, that the cross-border interconnections clear the path for deeper regional integration of electricity systems and help establish regional markets where renewable electricity can be transported more readily within a balancing area. He noted that the positive role of renewables-based cross-border interconnections was highlighted in strengthening energy security while underscoring the need for comprehensive policy and regulatory frameworks such as grid cost and balancing instruments, and the socioeconomic benefits arising from investment and trade. H.E. Mr Ceriani further announced that two additional thematic meetings were planned in 2021 to elicit discussion and dialogue on the remaining two workstreams, energy system operation and energy system planning.

Collaborative Framework on the Geopolitics of Energy Transformation

106. H.E. Mr Ernst Peter Fischer, Permanent Representative to IRENA and Ambassador of Germany to the UAE, Co-Facilitator of the Collaborative Framework on Geopolitics of Energy Transformation together with the UAE, stated that at the October meeting, Members agreed that the in-depth analysis of the geopolitics of hydrogen economy and the climate-security nexus would be prioritised for the first year of the Framework's work. He underlined that green hydrogen has emerged as one of the critical solutions in the global energy transformation and is positioned as a key enabler of deep decarbonisation of the global energy system and enjoys a significant political attention. Hydrogen is thus receiving unprecedented business momentum with oil majors revealing plans to make significant investments in hydrogen in the coming decade.

107. H.E. Mr Fischer explained that according to IRENA's WETO, hydrogen has the potential to supply 12% of global energy by 2050, Referring to IRENA's third meeting of the Collaborative Framework on the Geopolitics of Energy Transformation on 4 May, he stated that the meeting's focus was on the geopolitical implications of the evolving global hydrogen economy. The meeting was attended by close to 90 participants, including Member representatives from 36 countries and academic figures from across the energy and foreign policy disciplines.

108. He then shared some of the key issues that emerged from the discussion: (1) hydrogen is an essential ingredient for a successful decarbonisation process but it is still in the early stages and there are still many unknowns; (2) IRENA should undertake more analytical work on the topic as well as facilitate dialogue between geopolitical experts, technical experts and economists to get their input and insights; (3) international cooperation has the potential to mitigate risks and maximise opportunities; (4) hydrogen could help pave the way to more symmetrical energy trading relations in the world, create new trading relations and markets and in the process also redraw the global map of energy trade.

109. H.E. Mr Fischer stated that the discussion will feed into the Geopolitics of Hydrogen Economy report that will be launched at the Twelfth IRENA Assembly in January 2022. He explained that the report will provide a deeper understanding of the geopolitical consequences of hydrogen deployment and the rise of hydrogen economies as well as assess and present policy considerations to help governments navigate this transition. In conclusion, he encouraged more representatives and experts from developing countries to join in and participate to ensure all perspectives from all angles are heard and that issues affecting all countries are identified and examined.

Collaborative Framework on Green Hydrogen

110. The Co-facilitator, the Director of the Directorate-General for Energy of the European Commission represented by Mr Alessandro Polito, Policy Officer reported on the status and planned activities of the Collaborative Framework, established at the request of Members at the tenth session of the Assembly. He informed that the third meeting of the Collaborative Framework was held in a virtual format on 17 May 2021, co-facilitated by the European Commission and Morocco and was attended by over 100 participants from 50 Members and States in Accession. He highlighted that the meeting had two items on the agenda: to identify the infrastructure needs for global trade; and to discuss best practices, share lessons learned, and drivers to develop green hydrogen.

111. He announced that discussions focused on four key pillars: uncertainties on costs and performance of large-scale technology with more research, development, and demonstration needed; standards and certification for infrastructure and facilities with the development and implementation of the same rules across borders to harmonise trade and cross-learning from experiences worldwide in tandem with a high safety performance; infrastructure financing and mechanisms to ensure that the capital invested is recovered; as well as the simultaneous creation of hydrogen demand and an open market recognition of the premium that stakeholders are willing to pay for a sustainable product like green hydrogen. He highlighted that there was Member support for the Collaborative Framework and its role in facilitating much needed communication and dialogue around the work to develop the trade of green hydrogen as efficiently as possible and to foster partnerships, and noted that Members recognised decarbonisation, sector coupling, energy system integration, energy security partnerships, and economic growth to be amongst the drivers to pursue hydrogen.

112. He declared that the next meeting of the Collaborative Framework, scheduled for 10 June 2021, will continue to focus on the same topics as part of the working group led by IRENA under the Accelerating Hydrogen Initiative of the World Economic Forum and will have an emphasis on the challenges and enabling measures from the perspective of the private sector. He announced that IRENA will support the European Commission, together with GIZ, on the hydrogen trade with an initiative to plan a series of regional dialogues around the world to present the methodology for the International Framework for Green Hydrogen Production and Trade. He suggested that IRENA can organise other similar regional workshops under the umbrella of the Collaborative Framework on Green Hydrogen. He noted that the progress achieved throughout the year will contribute to a High-level meeting presently under consideration for COP 26 for the potential of a UN compact on green hydrogen.

Collaborative Framework on Hydropower

113. The Co-facilitator, Ms Laura Lizano, Director, Ministry of Energy and Environment of Costa Rica, reported that the Collaborative Framework held two virtual meetings in 2020 which effectively established the Collaborative Framework and defined its general guiding principles and proposed modalities. She explained that during these meetings, the thematic scope of the Collaborative Framework was also broadly defined, and Costa Rica and Switzerland were designated as Co-facilitators for an initial period of one year starting in 2021. She reported that on 3 May 2021 the third meeting took place in a virtual format and was attended by 39 delegations and over 100 participants, including representatives of the International Hydropower Association (IHA), and that the meeting's main objective was to raise awareness amongst members on the most pressing hydropower related issues which will also be addressed in the San Jose Declaration on Sustainable Hydropower, an initiative from IHA and Costa Rica which seeks to place sustainable hydropower as an essential element in tackling climate change. She declared that another objective established was to identify members willing to take the lead on specific topics, and to build momentum towards a High-level event which would take place during the World Hydropower Congress in September 2021.

114. She recounted that IRENA provided a summary of its latest findings on hydropower needs, the IHA presented its plan for the launch of the San Jose Declaration on Sustainable Hydropower during the World Hydropower Congress, and China, Indonesia, Turkey, United States of America and Uruguay shared their experiences and expertise on the topics. She announced that China volunteered to act as a champion on the topic of pump storage hydropower and that Ghana and Italy expressed their eagerness to actively support IRENA and contribute to the Collaborative Framework on Hydropower by sharing knowledge through potential working groups.

115. She thanked Members for their active involvement in the Collaborative Framework, invited further involvement from other Members, and informed of plans to host a High-level meeting on the Collaborative Framework on Hydropower in September during the World Hydropower Congress which is hosted by Costa Rica and the IHA with the objective to build political momentum around key issues in the hydropower agenda and create synergies with the San Jose Declaration.

Collaborative Framework on Just and Inclusive Energy Transitions

116. The Co-facilitator, Ms Anna Shpitsberg, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Transformation of the United States of America, reported on the first meeting of the Collaborative Framework, attended by 97 participants from 53 countries and the European Union wherein USA and South Africa were designated as Co-facilitators for up to two years.

117. She recounted that countries shared national experiences and challenges that can inform the design of the framework as well as national programs seeking to address different dimensions of just and inclusive transitions. She highlighted that there was consensus amongst participants on the value of enhancing knowledge exchange to mobilise strong international cooperation, with Members recognising that IRENA provides a global and inclusive platform that is of particular value to this effort. She stated that Members emphasised several possible focus areas for the Collaborative Framework, including creating communicable storylines to explain the complexity of issues that must be considered in the transition, ensuring the conversation and activities include the continuing need to overcome energy poverty in both developing and developed countries, designing solutions that focus on value creation, high-quality decent jobs, and equitable benefit sharing across groups, identifying economic alternatives for fossil fuel workers and communities, assessing future skill requirements and raising awareness about the opportunities offered by the energy transition and addressing any geographic and skillset misalignment as well as the impact on wages from a shift in technologies and fields. She added that Members also emphasised the importance of addressing the needs and priorities of women, the youth, indigenous people, people with disabilities, and marginalised groups, ensuring public participation and harnessing circular economy approaches.

118. Ms Shpitsberg summarised that there was broad agreement overall on the need for holistic and integrated policy approaches and structural policies to reap the economic, social, and employment benefits of the energy transition whilst addressing challenges in the form of misalignments in finance, labour markets, power systems, and the energy sector itself. She further informed that participants adopted general principles and modalities that will provide the foundation for the Collaborative Framework. She advised that the Collaborative Framework plans to circulate the proceedings of the meeting to all Members to enable further discussions on narrowing the scope of possible activities, with the aim being to maximise impact and to convene a follow-up meeting in the third quarter of 2021.

119. Delegations commended and acknowledged the work of the Collaborative Frameworks and noted that their evolving role provides a platform for Members to work in partnership as they contribute to international cooperation by sharing experiences and knowledge, and they expressed their satisfaction for the successful participation of Members and invited further participation to ensure regional balance.

120. The Council took note of the Reports on the Collaborative Frameworks.

Agenda Item 8: Administrative and Institutional matters

121. The Chair, Japan represented by Mr Kikuchi Nobuyuki, Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, introduced the agenda of the second day of the meeting.

122. The Chair of the Administration and Finance Committee (AFC), Ms Anna Shpitsberg of the United States of America, presented the outcome of the AFC meeting as contained in C/21/CRP/2. She recounted the discussions at the AFC meeting in which the Director-General introduced his Report on Staff Tenure Policy as contained in document C/21/4, on which one delegation expressed support to remove the tenure policy for General Service staff and others expressed reservations about the proposal on tenure for Professional and higher level staff. She conveyed that delegations noted that the proposal on the tenure policy should not result in an increase in contributions from Members and requested further information on budgetary implications for Members resulting from the proposal for both General Service and Professional staff based on the current scale of contributions.

123. She stated that in line with the recommendation made by a delegation, the Director-General suggested that an open-ended working group be created to work with the Secretariat on issues related to Professional staff with a view towards presenting a proposal at the next Council meeting. She announced that Members requested an annual update of human resource trends be provided, including the timing of staff turnover and number of staff members leaving before reaching the maximum tenure period, and highlighted that a delegation requested that the Secretariat establish processes to ensure smooth transitions when staff leave to reduce the risk of loss of knowledge and expertise.

124. The Chair of the AFC reported that the Director-General introduced his Report on the Activities of the Internal Audit Office and Internal Audit Recommendations and Actions Taken as contained in document C/21/6 whereafter a delegation commented on a follow-up recommendation noted from the twentieth meeting of the Council on currency exchange losses due to the transfer of payroll to the euro personal bank accounts of staff members at the Bonn office and emphasised that the currency exchange losses should not be disproportionately transferred from the Agency to IRENA staff members. She announced that the AFC considered the report and decided to submit it to the Council for its consideration.

125. She reported that the Secretariat introduced the Audited Financial Statements of IRENA for 2020 as contained in document C/21/5, the 2020 Annual Report of the Provident Fund Management Board on Operation of the Staff Provident Fund of IRENA as contained in document C/21/7, and the Report of the Director - General on Proposed Membership of the Arbitration Panel as contained in document C/21/8, whereafter the AFC took note of the reports and decided to submit them to the Council.

126. The Council took note of the report of the Chair of the Administration and Finance Committee.

a. Report of the Director-General – Staff Tenure Policy (C/21/4)

127. The Director-General introduced his report on Staff Tenure Policy and noted the provision of a financial analysis and the holistic adjustment of current provisions on staff tenure. He emphasised that the essential need for IRENA's success as a centre of excellence is to be as competitive as other international organisations in efforts to recruit and retain staff and to maintain a healthy mix of institutional knowledge with an influx of talent.

128. He highlighted the excellence of staff performance during the pandemic in ensuring the continued implementation of the work programme and commended staff for their dedication and resilience. He highlighted that the tenure policy was last considered in 2017 and explained that as the energy transition is now at the forefront globally, the retention of high skilled capacity is important, but that IRENA already has several limitations, including limited career opportunities due to its small size and contract uncertainty due to the high dependence on voluntary contributions.

129. The Director-General expressed his understanding that Members agree to remove the tenure policy for General Service staff with more time being needed to consider the proposal for Professional staff, on which IRENA will assist Members to develop an optimal way forward to protect the Agency's interests while positioning it as an employer of choice.

130. Mr Aboubacar Toure, Director of Administration and Management Services (AMS), outlined the new proposals. He reported that an in-depth analysis, as requested at the twentieth meeting of the Council, concluded that the current regulation and provision of length of service made the Agency vulnerable to the loss of valuable institutional knowledge and competent personnel, whilst

it continues to broaden the nature of its work and deepens its engagement with Members to strengthen its position as the intergovernmental organisation for the energy transition and principal platform for international cooperation on renewable energy. He explained that the proposal presented takes into account the views expressed by Members and ensures an alignment of staff conditions with other international organisations by excluding the length of service tenure for all General Service staff and establishing a retirement age of sixty-five for all General Service staff. He presented the financial comparison analysis from 2021 to 2031 based on current versus proposed scenario, and detailed that under the current scenario the total cost for General Service staff will amount to USD 45.4 million as all General Service staff currently serving the Agency will have reached the tenure limit over the next ten years, and that under the proposed scenario the total cost would amount to USD 47.7 million. He noted that the combined analysis indicates an additional amount of USD 2.3 million for General Service staff, which reflects the cost of retaining highly skilled General Service staff with proven track records and experience as well as institutional memory and avoids the cost of relocating and the introduction time for the new incumbent. He highlighted that by removing the tenure for General Service staff IRENA will align its tenure policy for General Service staff with that of other international organisations.

131. Mr Aboubacar Touré explained that the proposal for flexibility on additional extensions for Professional staff, either through an exceptional extension not exceeding three years or an open-ended appointment after a minimum of five years' service, as well as for the discretionary authority provided to the Director-General in extending a staff member's term for four years to be extended to staff recruited after January 2017, is the result of observations from the comparative analysis on the agency conditions of service with those applied by other tenure organisations. He advised that the proposal is associated with an estimated cost of USD 182 million as opposed to the present scenario which costs USD 185.5 million, equating to a USD 4.2 million saving. He informed that the cost-benefit analysis of the investment needed for General Service staff combined with the savings from the Professional staff proposal results in a saving of USD 1.9 million.

132. Delegations acknowledged that staff are IRENA's most important asset and expressed that IRENA should have the capacity to attract and retain staff to maintain traction and they welcomed more discussion through the proposed establishment of an open-ended working group. One delegation suggested the proposal on extension of Professional staff was acceptable on the basis that such extensions are well documented, and one delegation expressed interest to be part of the open-ended working group. One delegation mentioned that the decision on the tenure policy for Professional staff should ensure staggered turnover so that the proper functioning of the Agency remains uninterrupted.

133. Two delegations requested further developments on human resources and another encouraged IRENA to prioritise the implementation of a process to manage and retain staff knowledge and expertise. A delegation reiterated their request for a clear picture on the budgetary implications of the proposal for both General Service and Professional staff on the assessed contributions of Members, as reported by the Chair of the AFC.

134. In response to the interventions, the Director-General noted that there is no objection for lifting the tenure for General Service staff and that the discussion on Professional staff is not mature enough to make a fully informed decision, for which the establishment of an open-ended working group chaired by one of the IRENA Members was suggested, with the Secretariat serving and fully supporting the working group through the supply of data, to enable a proposal to be prepared for the next Council meeting, towards a decision at the next session of the Assembly.

135. The Chair invited the Vice-Chair, Dr Gloria Magombo of Zimbabwe to work closely with the Secretariat and inform the Membership accordingly on the arrangements for the discussions of the open-ended working group.

136. **The Council agreed with the proposal from the Director-General to create an open-ended group on the tenure policy of Professional staff, to be guided by Members and facilitated by Zimbabwe.**

137. **The Council took note and supported the proposal to lift the tenure policy for General Service staff with a view to making a recommendation to the twelfth Assembly on the matter.**

b. Audited Financial Statements of IRENA for 2020 (C/21/5)

138. Mr Aboubacar Toure, Director of AMS submitted the Audited Financial Statements of IRENA for 2020 with the Report of the External Auditor to the Council for its consideration. He explained that the statements cover the period 1 January to 31 December 2020 and were prepared in compliance with the financial regulations and procedures of IRENA in accordance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS).

139. He noted that the Agency's External Auditor, Deloitte & Touche, submitted an unqualified audit opinion, confirming that the financial statements represent fairly in all material respects, the financial position of the Agency at the end of 2020, and that its financial performance and its cash flows were in line with applicable financial rules and regulations and procedures, and in accordance with the IPSAS.

140. He reported that 98.2% of the budget in 2020 was utilised and Members paid 92.8% of their assessed contributions. He noted a financial statement surplus of USD 8 million in 2020 with a cash surplus of USD 1.1 million as reflected in note 18 of the financial statements. He informed the Council that the External Auditor did not raise any new audit recommendations and that there are currently no outstanding audit recommendations.

141. **The Council took note of the Audited Financial Statements of IRENA for 2020, as contained in C/21/5, and decided to submit it to the Assembly for consideration.**

c. Report of the Director-General – Activities of the Internal Audit Office, and Internal Audit Recommendations and Actions Taken (C/21/6)

142. The Director-General presented his Report on the Activities of the Internal Audit Office (IAO) and Internal Audit Recommendations and Actions Taken. He explained that the report covers the period from 5 October 2020 to 25 April 2021 and that the Internal Audit Recommendations are provided for continuous improvement on systems and procedures in the quest to enhance internal controls of the Agency's operations, reduce cost, and ascertain the extent to which system and practice adhere to existing policies and procedures.

143. He noted that the IAO finalised a review of the Human Resource (HR) Policy Manual to ensure that processes and controls are designed and operating effectively to periodically review and update the HR Policy Manual, and that the current version is aligned to the various HR directives released throughout the years 2015 to 2019. He further noted that the key recommendations on this audit area, along with actions taken by management, are outlined within the document (C/21/6) with studies of implementation of the other recommendations to be reported at the twenty-second meeting of the Council. He announced that the IAO performed inspection and verification procedures on the year-end physical count of fixed assets as conducted by the inventory team at IRENA Headquarters and the Bonn office.

144. The Director-General declared that he received the Annual Audit Report from the IAO pursuant to section VIII of the Internal Audit Charter, and that the IAO submitted a Comprehensive Report to the External Auditor for audit recommendations and management actions on audit activities over 2020 in accordance with article 11.4 (c) of the Financial Regulations and Financial Procedures, and noted that the IAO has followed up on six internal audit recommendations resulting from the audit conducted on payroll, dependency benefits, and education grants which has been reported to the past Council. He declared that two recommendations were fully implemented and the remaining four are currently under implementation.

145. The Council took note of the Report of the Director-General – Activities of the Internal Audit Office, and Internal Audit Recommendations and Actions Taken, as contained in C/21/6, and decided to submit it to the Assembly for consideration.

d. 2020 Annual Report of the Provident Fund Management Board on Operations of the Staff Provident Fund of IRENA (C/21/7)

146. Mr Moez Charfeddine, Chair of the Provident Fund Management Board, introduced the report for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2020. He noted that the performance of the Fund was formally reviewed each quarter by the Management Board with Zurich LLC as the administrator of the Fund. He reported that the investment from mandatory contributions during the year resulted in a net gain of USD 1.4 million and that the performance of the Fund was closely monitored by the Board in light of the extreme volatility associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. He noted that the conservative nature of the fund has served well during these volatile times and no changes to the portfolio mix were made.

147. Mr Charfeddine further reported that the 2020 Financial Statement of the Staff Provident Fund was audited by the External Auditor of the Agency, Deloitte & Touche and informed Members that the external auditor rendered an unqualified audit opinion confirming that the financial statement represented fairly in all material respects, the financial position of the Staff Provident Fund. He conveyed that there were 150 participants in the Provident Fund and the total net assets of the Provident Fund were valued at USD 21.5 million as of 31 December 2020.

148. The Council took note of the 2020 Annual Report of the Provident Fund Management Board on Operations of the Staff Provident Fund of IRENA, as contained in C/21/7, and decided to submit it to the Assembly for consideration.

e. Report of the Director-General on Proposed Membership of the Arbitration Panel (C/21/8)

149. Ms Jonela Kita, IRENA Legal Advisor, presented the report to the Council and recalled that the Assembly considered the administration of internal justice at IRENA and adopted IRENA's Provisional Arbitration Rules at its third session. She explained that Rule 7 of the Arbitration Rules sets out the process to be followed for the appointment of the arbitrators and envisages that the Council shall approve at least five arbitrators to be appointed, from at least six qualified candidates communicated by the Director-General, for a renewable two-year term.

150. She announced that the Council appointed six members at its seventeenth meeting – Ms Antigoni Axenidou, Ms Jan Beagle, Ms Rosemary McCreery, Mr Francis Ssekandi, Mr Dayendra Sena Wijewardane, and Mr Ralph Zacklin. She clarified that with the exception of Ms Antigoni Axenidou, the other five arbitrators have confirmed their willingness to continue to serve as members of the Arbitration Panel for a further two-year term. She elaborated that the Director-General, in consultation with the Staff Representative Body, recommends to the Council

the renewal of the appointment of the five arbitrators approved by the Council at its seventeenth meeting. She advised that taking into account Ms Axenidou's lack of availability, and following consultations with the Staff Representative Body, the Director-General further proposes the inclusion of two new arbitrators, namely Mr Alberic Kacou and Ms Maritza Struyvenberg. She informed that the CVs of all seven arbitrators were made available in advance to Members on the REmember platform.

151. Ms Kita informed the Council that the two new proposed arbitrators have high-level, relevant experience in relation to employment matters and rich international knowledge.

152. One delegation emphasised the importance of geographical balance amongst panel members.

153. The Council took note of the Report of the Director-General on Proposed Membership of the Arbitration Panel, as contained in C/21/8, and approved the seven candidates to the Arbitration Panel for a two-year term from 19 August 2021 to 18 August 2023.

f. Ethics Advisory Board

i. Terms of Reference for the Ethics Advisory Board

154. The Chair of the Ethics Advisory Board, UAE represented by H.E. Dr Nawal Al-Hosany, Permanent Representative to IRENA, presented the report of the Board's activities and findings of the review of the terms of reference. She advised that the Assembly at its second session adopted the Policy on Ethics and Conflicts of Interest for IRENA contained in document A/2/13 which has since been implemented and incorporated in the Staff Regulations and Rules through the adoption of the Code of Conduct. She informed that the Policy calls for the establishment of an Ethics Advisory Board, and that the Assembly adopted the Terms of Reference for the Ethics Advisory Board, contained in document A/3/17, at its third session wherein the Ethics Advisory Board reports annually to the Council, including on the number of consultations with the Director-General and the Ethics Officer in the reporting year, whilst ensuring that appropriate safeguards for protecting individual confidentiality and due process rights are in place. She noted that the Ethics Advisory Board should also conduct an assessment every four years of the Terms of Reference, the Policy on Ethics, and Conflict of Interest, and the Board's activities and make recommendations to the Council for consideration and appropriate action. She reflected that Antigua and Barbuda, Germany, and the United Arab Emirates were appointed as members of the Ethics Advisory Board for a two-year term at the seventeenth meeting of the council with the United Arab Emirates selected as Chair.

155. H.E. Dr Al-Hosany informed the Council that throughout its two-year term, the Board was not called upon to assess an ethics matter, nor did it need to hold any consultations with the Director-General and/or the Ethics Officer. She noted that accordingly, to date, the Terms of Reference have not been tested and no issue or concern that would need to be addressed has been identified. She explained that the Ethics Advisory Board has not received any related request since it was established in January 2013, and that the Board has not identified any concerns regarding the operations of the Policy on Ethics and Conflict of Interest. She declared that the Ethics Advisory Board recommends that the Council consider the present report and defers the assessment of its Terms of Reference and the Policy on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for another period of four years, to the twenty-ninth meeting of the Council in 2025.

156. The Council took note of the oral Report of the Chair of the Ethics Advisory Board and the review of the Terms of Reference for the Ethics Advisory Board and approved the recommendation to defer the assessment of the Terms of Reference for the Ethics Advisory Board and the Policy on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for a period of four years.

ii. Appointment of the Ethics Advisory Board

157. The Chair advised that in order to facilitate the appointment of the Board members, the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Council invited Members that have been elected to the Council for a two-year term to submit their expressions of interest to serve as one of the three members of the Ethics Advisory Board and he announced that Algeria, Germany and the United Arab Emirates expressed their interest.

158. The Council appointed Algeria, Germany, and the United Arab Emirates as members of the Ethics Advisory Board for a two-year term from 2021 to 2023.

159. The Chair thanked the outgoing members of the Board and welcomed the new Board members from Algeria, Germany and the United Arab Emirates and he invited the Director-General, the Ethics Officer of IRENA, and the Ethics Advisory Board to jointly work together as and when necessary.

g. Committee Membership and Chairmanship

160. The Chair noted the expiration of the current term of members of the AFC and PSC and informed that on 20 April 2021 the Chair and the Vice-Chair invited expressions of interest from Members to serve on these Committees by 5 May 2021, whereby geographical distribution was taken into account to ensure effective participation of developing and developed countries. He recalled that the two Committees were encouraged by the Assembly and the Council to conduct their formal business in an open and participatory manner by providing all Members of the Agency with the opportunity to participate equally in all Committee activities.

161. The Chair announced the proposal for the membership of the Administration and Finance Committee (AFC) from 2021-2023 as Antigua and Barbuda, China, Egypt, Germany, Maldives, Nigeria, Poland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the United States of America. He informed that Maldives expressed interest to serve as the Chair and Germany expressed interest to be Vice-Chair of the AFC.

162. The Chair announced the proposal for the membership of the Programme and Strategy Committee (PSC) from 2021-2023 as Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Kenya, United Arab Emirates, and the United States of America. He informed that the United States of America expressed interest to serve as Chair and Algeria expressed interest to be Vice-Chair of the PSC.

163. The Council agreed and appointed Antigua and Barbuda, China, Egypt, Germany, Maldives, Nigeria, Poland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the United States of America as members of the Administration and Finance Committee.

164. The Council agreed and appointed Maldives as Chair and Germany as Vice-Chair of the Administration and Finance Committee.

165. The Council agreed and appointed Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Kenya, United Arab Emirates, and the United States of America as members of the Programme and Strategy Committee.

166. The Council agreed and appointed the United States of America as Chair and Algeria as Vice Chair of the Programme and Strategy Committee.

167. The Chair congratulated the new members of the Committees and thanked the outgoing members for their insightful and constructive discussions, as well as for the valuable feedback and guidance in the implementation of the work of the Agency and formulation of its Work Programme.

168. The Chair thanked the outgoing Chairs of the AFC and PSC, the United States of America and Samoa respectively, for their able and efficient chairmanship.

Agenda Item 9: Arrangements for the twenty-second meeting of the Council

169. The Chair noted the Secretariat's proposal to hold the twenty-second meeting of the Council on 26-27 October 2021 in Abu Dhabi, with the associated meetings of the subsidiary organs scheduled for 25 October 2021. The Chair further noted that the dates and format of the meeting are subject to change depending on the evolution of the global circumstances and measures associated with the pandemic.

170. The Director-General expressed his gratitude to Members for their continuous engagement, support, and active participation in the virtual meetings since March 2020 when it was decided in consultation with Members to suspend all physical meetings at the IRENA premises in Abu Dhabi, Bonn and New York. He also expressed his appreciation to the President, Chairs, and the Bureaux of the Assembly and the Council, the subsidiary organs, and the Co-facilitators of the Collaborative Frameworks for their leadership and flexibility throughout this period. He assured Members that IRENA will continue to monitor developments and measures associated with the pandemic in the coming months and explore safe options for convening the upcoming Governing Body Meetings in person or in hybrid form whilst also working with the Membership to assess suitable options and outline a potential plan and format of the upcoming meetings in due course.

171. Delegations endorsed the proposal for the present Chair and Vice-Chair, Japan and Zimbabwe respectively, to continue in this capacity for the twenty-second meeting of the Council, to which the Chair and Vice-Chair duly accepted.

172. The Council took note and agreed that the twenty second meeting of the Council will take place on 26-27 October 2021, with meetings of subsidiary organs of the Council scheduled on 25 October 2021. The Council also took note that in light of the evolution of global circumstances and the measures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the agreed dates and format of the twenty second meeting of the Council may be subject to change.

173. The Council agreed to consider the proposed dates for its meetings in 2022 at the twenty-second meeting of the Council.

174. The Council took note and designated Japan as Chair, and Zimbabwe as Vice-Chair, of the twenty-second meeting of the Council.

Agenda Item 10: Any other business

175. H.E. Dr Nawal Al-Hosany advised that the United Arab Emirates and Samoa were invited by the Assembly to ensure that the Membership is informed of timelines regarding all processes related to the selection, appointment or renewal of the IRENA Director-General and she advised that should the Director-General seek a renewal of his appointment for a further term he should make it known at the Assembly session that marks his third year in office, which will coincide with the twelfth session of the Assembly that will take place in January 2022. She declared that the UAE

and Samoa remain committed to working with the Council and the Secretariat in preparing an information document for the upcoming Council, outlining the process as well as the timelines and necessary administrative steps related to this process.

Agenda Item 11: Closing of the meeting

176. In his closing remarks the Director-General thanked Members for their meaningful engagement in the discussions and appreciated their guidance on all Council issues. He thanked the IRENA team for all their work in organising a successful meeting.

177. The Director-General highlighted that the deliberations emphasised that concrete and lasting solutions are needed in this trying time, and for IRENA to continue to build on the expertise and experience accumulated over the last ten years for which the Agency will continue to refine and tailor programmatic activities to the needs and priorities of the Membership. He declared that IRENA heard the call from Members to be assertive in leading the global energy transition and that the Agency will continue to be inclusive and open for collaboration and informed that it is through the clarity and timelessness of work that relevance and impact on policymaking will be determined. He concluded that a brighter future can be built and that the opportunity to start investing in resilience, shared prosperity and planetary health should be embraced.

178. The Chair, H.E. Mr Washio Eiichiro, expressed his honour to guide deliberations and exchange views in an open and constructive manner throughout the individual items on the agenda and thanked Members for their commitment to advancing renewable energy initiatives, noting that these will undoubtedly be vital for present and future generations. He extended his gratitude to the Director-General, the Secretariat, Vice-Chair, the Rapporteur and the UAE as host country, for the support in making this session of the Council a success.

179. The Chair declared the twenty-first meeting of Council closed.

Twenty-first meeting of the Council
Abu Dhabi, 25-26 May 2021

Agenda

1. **Opening of the meeting**
2. **Organisation of work**
 - a. Election of officials
 - b. Adoption of the agenda
3. **Progress Report of the Director-General on the Implementation of the Work Programme and Budget for 2020-2021**
4. **Preliminary Framework for the Work Programme and Budget for 2022-2023**
5. **Note by the Director-General on the Medium-term Strategy 2023-2027**
6. **Report on Programmatic Discussion on The Energy Transition and Food Systems for Sustainable Development**
7. **Reports on Collaborative Frameworks**
8. **Administrative and institutional matters**
 - a. Report of the Director-General – Staff Tenure Policy
 - b. Audited Financial Statements of IRENA for 2020
 - c. Report of the Director-General – Activities of the Internal Audit Office, and Internal Audit Recommendations and Actions Taken
 - d. 2020 Annual Report of the Provident Fund Management Board on Operations of the Staff Provident Fund of IRENA
 - e. Report of the Director-General on Proposed Membership of the Arbitration Panel
 - f. Ethics Advisory Board
 - i. Terms of Reference for the Ethics Advisory Board
 - ii. Appointment of the Ethics Advisory Board
 - g. Committee Membership and Chairmanship
9. **Arrangements for the twenty-second meeting of the Council**
10. **Any other business**
11. **Closing of the meeting**

Twenty-first meeting of the Council
Abu Dhabi, 25-26 May 2021

Context: Pursuant to decision C/3/DC/3, the Programme and Strategy Committee (hereafter “PSC” or “Committee”) met on 18 May 2021. It reflected and focused discussions around the Progress Report of the Director-General on the Implementation of the Work Programme and Budget for 2020-2021, the Preliminary Framework for the Work Programme and Budget for 2022-2023, and the Note by the Director-General on the Medium-term Strategy 2023-2027.

Outcome: A set of views and comments captured by the Chair in her summary below to be presented to the Council at its meeting on 25 and 26 May 2021.

Chair’s Summary of the outcome of the Programme and Strategy Committee Meeting

1. Progress Report of the Director-General on the Implementation of the Work Programme and Budget for 2020-2021

The Secretariat briefed participants on the implementation of the Work Programme and Budget for 2020-2021. Participants offered the following views and comments:

- The PSC welcomed the progress made in the implementation of programmatic activities and the resilience of the Agency in adapting its working methods despite the global challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The PSC commended the Agency for its leadership in advancing energy transitions and emphasised the importance of this work in enabling countries to expand their renewable energy deployment and realise their climate goals.
- The PSC welcomed the Agency’s efforts for greater engagement of Members in its work and stressed the need for focused collaboration and effective partnerships to reduce emissions and promote clean growth, thereby increasing global clean energy innovation investment and employment.
- Participants welcomed the establishment of the Collaborative Framework on Just and Inclusive Energy Transitions and called on the Collaborative Framework on the Geopolitics of Energy Transformation to dive deeper into the issue of sustainable supply chains for the minerals and metals required for batteries and renewable technologies.
- Participants stressed the need to continue meaningful action towards decarbonisation across multiple sectors in the post-pandemic period, focusing on hard-to-abate sectors.

- Participants commended the work undertaken through the Climate Investment Platform to abate carbon emissions as an excellent example of how the Agency's work is linked to transformation on the ground.
- The PSC called for increasing IRENA's administrative transparency, emphasised the importance of monitoring and evaluation in assessing the impact of the Agency's work and noted the progress made in the establishment of the system.

2. Preliminary Framework for the Work Programme and Budget for 2022-2023

The Director-General introduced the Preliminary Framework for the Work Programme and Budget for 2022-2023. Participants offered the following views and comments:

- The PSC emphasised that IRENA is well positioned to lead the transformation of the global energy system and assist countries to set up their net zero targets, and noted the importance of focusing on the Agency's comparative advantages and related use of resources.
- The PSC welcomed the programmatic priorities for the next biennium, including the regional focus, just and inclusive transition and scaling-up investment, and noted the importance of linkages of energy transition with sectors such as education, and regions including the energy transition of African countries.
- Participants encouraged the continuation of IRENA's valuable work on the inter-linkages between renewables and the planning and implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- The PSC encouraged IRENA to give equal consideration to all renewables, contribute to the promotion of renewables-based pathways and clean energy technologies, especially for hard-to-abate sectors, and facilitate the coupling of hydrogen supplying and demanding countries.
- The PSC noted the need to accelerate the large-scale deployment of renewable energy projects and called on the Agency to facilitate and support the process.
- The PSC called for more analysis to be undertaken on Smart Cities, and the activities and investments required to promote energy efficiency and resilience.
- The PSC welcomed the Agency's efforts for a greater engagement of Members in its work, including through the establishment of Collaborative Frameworks, and emphasised that such an approach is key to effective multilateralism that delivers results.
- The PSC emphasised the importance of close and efficient cooperation with other international energy organisations and welcomed IRENA's efforts to engage the private sector, in particular the fossil fuel industry.
- The PSC noted the progress in strengthening communication and outreach and stressed the critical importance of continuous efforts in this regard.

3. Note by the Director-General on the Medium-term Strategy 2023-2027

The Director-General introduced the Note on the Medium-term Strategy 2023-2027. Participants offered the following views and comments:

- The PSC welcomed the grounding of the Medium-term Strategy 2023-2027 in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement and the envisaged establishment of the MTS Working Team.
- The PSC called for increased focus on the acceleration of renewables-based energy transitions to achieve carbon neutrality and emphasised the centrality of a just and inclusive process. It called for analyses of regional and national approaches to better identify and provide the required support.
- The PSC underlined the importance of international collaboration and partnerships and called on the Agency to provide support and facilitate networking and the building of value chains.
- The PSC noted the importance of IRENA's work on the geopolitics of energy transformation in analysing the emerging dynamics and helping to deter potential tensions.
- The PSC stressed the need to identify ways to catalyse and accelerate access to modern and clean cooking to ensure that no one is left behind.
- The PSC underscored the role of technical innovation in the success of energy transitions and called for focusing on solutions for hard-to-decarbonise sectors, respective technologies, and business-friendly conditions, favouring private investments.
- The Chair proposed, and the PSC agreed, to request the Council Chair, in close cooperation with Secretariat, to propose co-facilitators of the MTS Working Team. In this context, the Chair also proposed to extend the deadline for the submission of interest to participate in the Working Team to Friday, 4 June 2021.

Twenty-first meeting of the Council
Abu Dhabi, 25-26 May 2021

Context: Pursuant to decision C/3/DC/3, the Administration and Finance Committee (hereafter “AFC” or “Committee”) met on 19 May 2021. It reviewed matters related to Staff Tenure Policy, Audited Financial Statements of IRENA for 2020, Activities of the Internal Audit Office, and Internal Audit Recommendations and Actions Taken, 2020 Annual Report of the Provident Fund Management Board on Operations of the Staff Provident Fund of IRENA and Proposed Membership of the Arbitration Panel.

Outcome: A set of views and comments captured by the Chair in her summary below to be presented to the Council at its meeting on 26 May 2021.

Chair’s Summary of the outcome of the Administration and Finance Committee Meeting

The following comments and recommendations were made:

1. Report of the Director-General – Staff Tenure Policy

- The Director-General introduced the ‘Report of the Director-General – Staff Tenure Policy’, contained in document C/21/4. He noted that, as recommended at the twentieth meeting of the Council, the report provides a comprehensive financial analysis of the proposal to exclude General Service staff from the present tenure policy. The report also presents a proposal for the Director-General to be given flexibility to grant additional appointment extensions to staff at the Professional level and above under specific circumstances, with a detailed analysis of the resulting costs savings.
- The Director-General stated that the current policy as it stands makes the Agency vulnerable to losing valuable institutional knowledge and its ability to attract, develop and retain competent personnel. He pointed out that the proposal ensures alignment of the Agency’s staff conditions of service with other international organisations and positions the Agency as the employer of choice in the field of renewables, energy and climate.
- Participants welcomed the opportunity to continue the discussion on staff tenure policy and one delegation expressed support for removing the tenure policy for General Service staff members. However, participants expressed reservations with regard to the second proposal, reiterating the value of the tenure policy in terms of attracting new expertise and talent.
- Participants also requested further information on the budgetary implications for Members resulting from the proposal (for both General Service and Professional Staff), based on the current scale of contributions and noted the need not to increase contributions from member states.
- A participant requested an annual update of human resources trends be provided, including information on staff turnover and number of staff members leaving before reaching the maximum tenure period.
- One participant noted that knowledge management and retention of expertise are essential in an organisation and requested the Secretariat to establish processes to ensure smooth transition when staff leave to reduce the risk of loss of knowledge and expertise.

- The Director-General noted the points raised by the three participants and further noted that as there were no interventions from other participants it could suggest no strong disagreement with all the proposals in the report.
- The Director General noted that the discussion on General Service staff is concluded and suggested that an open-ended group be created to work with the Secretariat, to further discuss the issues raised and implications of the proposal as related to Professional staff, with a view towards presenting a proposal at the next Council meeting.
- The Chair of the AFC concluded that the information presented by the Secretariat has been helpful in gaining a better understanding of the issues but expressed the view that more time is needed to discuss the Secretariat's proposal, including at the next Council meeting, and to distinguish the discussion on General service staff from Professional staff.
- The AFC took note of the presentation and report and decided to submit the report to the Council for its consideration.

2. Audited Financial Statements of IRENA for 2020

- The Secretariat introduced the 'Audited Financial Statements of IRENA for 2020', contained in document C/21/5, and informed that no external audit recommendations were made for this period.
- The AFC took note of the report and decided to submit it to the Council.

3. Internal Audit Recommendations and Actions Taken

- The Director-General introduced the 'Report of the Director-General on the Activities of the Internal Audit Office, and Internal Audit Recommendations and Actions Taken' as contained in document C/21/6.
- One participant commented on a follow-up recommendation, which had been raised during the twentieth meeting of the Council, relevant to the currency exchange losses that might result due to the transfer of payroll to the "Euro" personal bank accounts of staff members at the Bonn office. The participant recognised the risk of the currency exchange losses as noted in the past Council meeting and highlighted that the currency exchange losses should not be disproportionately transferred from the Agency to IRENA staff members.
- The AFC took note of the report and decided to submit it to the Council for its consideration.

4. 2020 Annual Report of the Provident Fund Management Board on Operations of the Staff Provident Fund of IRENA

- The Secretariat introduced the '2020 Annual Report of the Provident Fund Management Board on Operations of the Staff Provident Fund of IRENA', contained in document C/21/7.
- The AFC took note of the report and decided to submit it to the Council.

5. Report of the Director-General on Proposed Membership of the Arbitration Panel

- The Secretariat presented the 'Report of the Director-General on Proposed Membership of the Arbitration Panel', contained in document C/21/8.
- The AFC took note of the report and decided to submit it to the Council.

Twenty-first meeting of the Council
Abu Dhabi, 25-26 May 2021

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