

**REPORT
OF THE NINETEENTH MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
OF THE INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY**

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Report of the nineteenth meeting of the Council of the International Renewable Energy Agency

1. The nineteenth meeting of the Council of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) was held in a virtual format on 3 November 2020. The meeting was attended by 19 Council members: Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Belgium, Burkina Faso, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Malaysia, Mexico, Mozambique, New Zealand, Philippines, Switzerland, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, and the United States of America; as well as nine alternates: Argentina, China, El Salvador, Japan, Nigeria, Republic of Korea, Spain, Turkey and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Also, in attendance were delegations of 62 other IRENA Members and 5 other countries.

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the meeting

2. The Chair of the eighteenth meeting of the Council of IRENA, Luxembourg represented by Mr Guy Lentz, opened the meeting, and offered condolences to Austria on the events in Vienna. He extended his gratitude to the Director-General and the Secretariat for the continuous assistance provided to him whilst presiding as Chair. Mr Lentz advised that members continue to actively engage in IRENA activities. He suggested that IRENA considers implementing the creative method of virtual communication and discussion post-COVID-19 pandemic, as such innovative methods would contribute to the reduction of the carbon footprint.

3. Mr. Lentz recalled the comparative advantage of sustainable energy over fossil fuels with nobody being left behind. He noted that the resilience of renewables proved a remarkable key to vulnerabilities that were highlighted by the pandemic and he noted that the long-term energy transition investment will play a crucial role in the 2020-2023 recovery phase, with an accelerated plan adding employment growth potential of 5.5 million new jobs further strengthening the business cases for renewable energy with solar energy being the current leader in terms of competitiveness worldwide. He remarked that investment in our collective future towards inclusive resilient economies and societies will offer the opportunity to make a difference for the world, its people, and the future generations.

Agenda Item 2: Organisation of work

a. Election of officials

4. The Council elected by acclamation Burkina Faso, represented by H.E. Mr Bashir Ismael Ouedraogo, Minister of Energy as Chair, and Malaysia, represented by Mr Asdirhyme Abdul Rasib, Senior Undersecretary of the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, as Vice-Chair of the nineteenth meeting of the Council.

5. Upon the proposal by the Chair, Cyprus, represented by H.E. Mr Yannis Michaelides, was appointed as Rapporteur of the nineteenth meeting of the Council.

6. In his opening remarks the Chair reflected on international solidarity and sympathy with Vienna, conveying his sincere condolences. He expressed his appreciation with IRENA and its agencies to continue the shared commitment in moving forward during the pandemic through the continued engagement and discussion. The Chair thanked the Director-General and chairs of the committee meetings. He provided a brief overview of the present situation in Burkina Faso with 25% of the population now having access to electricity compared to 5% initially. He noted there is wide recognition that the recovery of the pandemic must be green with SDG's demanding strong international collaboration as renewable energy is the most affordable solution for countries charting the path to reduce energy imports and with IRENA's guiding leadership such a momentum will persevere.

7. The Director-General expressed his appreciation to the Chair, Vice-Chair, Rapporteur and the host country, as well as to Mr Guy Lentz as the outgoing chair of IRENA Council, Mr. Conrod Hunte as the Vice Chair and congratulated the Minister of Energy of Burkina Faso as the new Chair of the nineteenth and twentieth meeting of Council and the Malaysia as Vice Chair. The Director-General noted that 350 delegates representing 100 countries and the European Union were present for the nineteenth meeting and he extended a special welcome to Dominica, whose membership increases the number of IRENA Members to 162, and to San Marino as a new State in Accession from 31 November 2020. On the subject of the pandemic, the Director-General noted that full impacts on the loss of life and economic downturn yet to be seen as the pandemic continues to rage around the world thus rendering the urgency of energy transition even more apparent. He advised that remaining vigilant is necessary to realise the agenda for sustainable development with strategic and ambitious policies with IRENA being a unique organisation to lead such efforts. He concluded that feedback and guidance from IRENA members is welcome.

8. The Vice Chair expressed his gratitude to the members of the Council for their trust. He mentioned the post recovery report to design economic recovery and extended his appreciation to the Director-General and his team for driving the agenda globally and ensured his continued support. He presented a brief overview on Malaysia's renewable energy policy stating that since 2009 energy has increased to 2,700 MW vis 20% of totally installed capacity and that Malaysia are examining new areas of economic growth with 1GW of solar energy being announced as part of the recovery which will harness an investment of USA \$1bln, creating 12,000 new jobs.

b. Adoption of the agenda (C/19/1)

9. The Chair introduced the 'Provisional Agenda' (C/19/L.1).

10. The Council considered and adopted the Agenda for its nineteenth meeting (C/19/1) including the proposal to defer agenda item 4 Administrative and Institutional matters to the twentieth meeting, as proposed in the Note to the Chair-Designate of the nineteenth Council (ST/EN2020O/17663 dated 9 September 2020).

Agenda Item 3: Progress Report of the Director-General on the Implementation of the Work Programme and Budget for 2020-2021

11. The Chair referred to the Progress Report of the Director-General on the Implementation of the Work Programme and Budget for 2020-2021 as presented by the Director-General in July 2020 (C/19/2).

Agenda Item 4: Administrative and institutional matters

12. The chair noted that no objection was raised regarding the postponement of agenda item 4 to the twentieth meeting of the Council 3-4 November - immediately following the closure of the nineteenth meeting.

Agenda Item 5: Arrangements for the twentieth meeting of the Council

13. Noting Rule 16 of the Rules of Procedure on the designation of Chair and Vice Chair and following a proposal made by Members, the Council considered and approved the continuation of the present Chair, Burkina Faso and Vice Chair, Malaysia for the twentieth meeting of the Council.

Agenda Item 6: Any other business

14. The Chair received no requests from Members on any other business.

Agenda Item 7: Closing of the meeting

15. The Chair expressed his appreciation to the Director-General, Vice Chair, Rapporteur, Council Members, delegations, the Chairs of Committees, and the interpreters.

16. The Chair declared the nineteenth meeting of the Council closed.

Nineteenth meeting of the Council
Abu Dhabi, 3 November 2020

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. **Administrative and institutional matters¹**
 - a. Report of the Director-General – Staff Tenure Policy
 - b. Audited Financial Statements of IRENA for 2019
 - c. 2019 Annual Report of the Provident Fund Management Board on Operations of the Staff Provident Fund of IRENA
 - d. Report of the Director-General – Activities of the Internal Audit Office, and Internal Audit Recommendations and Actions Taken
 - e. Report of the Chair of the Ethics Advisory Board
 - f. Note of the Chair of the 19th Council – Review of the Procedure on the Selection and Appointment of the Director-General
5. **Arrangements for the twentieth meeting of the Council**
6. **Any other business**
7. **Closing of the meeting**

¹ The Council will be invited to defer agenda item 4 - Administrative and institutional matters, as per the proposal contained in the [Note](#) by Chair-Designate of the nineteenth Council ST/EN/2020/O/17663 of 9 September 2020.

REPORT
OF THE TWENTIETH MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
OF THE INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY

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Annex 4	List of Participants	C/20/INF/3	

Report of the twentieth meeting of the Council of the International Renewable Energy Agency

1. The twentieth meeting of the Council of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) was held on a virtual platform from Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, from 3 to 4 November 2020. The meeting was attended by 19 Council members: Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Belgium, Burkina Faso, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Malaysia, Mexico, Mozambique, New Zealand, Philippines, Switzerland, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, and the United States of America; as well as nine alternates: Argentina, China, El Salvador, Japan, Nigeria, Republic of Korea, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Also, in attendance were delegations of 62 other IRENA Members and 5 other countries.

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the meeting

2. The Chair of the nineteenth meeting of the Council of IRENA, Burkina Faso represented by H.E. Mr Bachir Ismael Ouedraogo, opened the meeting and described the procedure to ensure that all interventions are heard, should any technical difficulties on the virtual platform be encountered by intervening Members. He informed that no queries were received by Members on the dedicated chat room that was open from 18 October to 2 November 2020 to give Members the opportunity to ask questions and raise other matters for clarification as needed, prior to the Council meetings.

Agenda Item 2: Organisation of work

a. Election of officials

3. **The Council elected by acclamation Burkina Faso, represented by H.E. Mr Bachir Ismael Ouedraogo, as Chair, and Malaysia, represented by Mr Asdirhyme Abdul Rasib, as Vice-Chair of the twentieth meeting of the Council.**

4. **On a proposal by the Chair, Cyprus, represented by H.E. Mr Yannis Michaelides, was appointed as Rapporteur of the twentieth meeting of the Council.**

b. Adoption of the agenda (C/20/1)

5. The Chair introduced the 'Provisional Agenda' (C/20/L.1) and noted the inclusion of the item on Administrative and Institutional matters as deferred at the nineteenth meeting.

6. **The Council considered and adopted the Agenda for its twentieth meeting (C/20/1).**

c. Report of the nineteenth meeting of the Council (C/19/SR/L.1)

7. The Chair reiterated that the proposal, as contained in the Note by the Chair-designate of the nineteenth Council (ST/EN/2020/O/17663 dated 9 September 2020), on the draft report of the nineteenth meeting of the Council being circulated with the draft report of the twentieth meeting of the Council, was approved by the Council via a silent procedure.

8. **The Council took note of the arrangements on the circulation of the draft report of the nineteenth meeting of the Council, to be contained in document C/19/SR/L.1.**

Agenda Item 3: Annual Report of the Director-General on the Implementation of the Work Programme and Budget for 2020-2021 (C/20/2)

9. To allow for reflections on the Agency's strategy, the Chair proposed the inclusion, in the presentation by the Secretariat and interventions by Members, of Agenda Item 3 on the Annual Report of the Director-General on the Implementation of the Work Programme and Budget for 2020-2021 and Agenda Item 8 on Medium-term Strategy 2018-2022 (MTS) - Mid-term Evaluation.

10. The Director-General reflected on the challenges faced in implementing the current Work Programme and Budget, long-standing plans, strategies and inceptions due to the pandemic, and highlighted that renewables endured the global challenges with greater ease than other energy sectors, and even outperformed them, thus remaining the technology of choice during the downturn. He provided the example of Europe, where the renewable share in total power generation was 41% in the first quarter of 2020 while coal usage was down by 29%, thus injecting increased confidence in the renewables-based system.

11. He underscored that 2020 has also exposed existing vulnerabilities and inequalities. As the *'Tracking SDG7: The Energy Progress Report (2020)'*, prepared by IRENA in collaboration with the International Energy Agency (IEA), UN Statistics Division, World Health Organisation (WHO), and World Bank, shows, as of 2018, about 800 million people still lack access to electricity and 2.8 billion people lack access to clean cooking technologies. He observed that the decrease in growth of energy intensity demands more effort, stating that although investment and support for the least developed countries (LDCs) has doubled, only a few countries enjoy increased support due to funds being unequally distributed. Noting that governments are making consequential decisions on recovery measures, he referred to IRENA's report on *'Post-COVID recovery: An agenda for resilience, development and equality'*, published in June 2020, which contains strategies linking the short-term response to the pandemic to the medium and long-term goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement. He informed that an annual investment of USD 2 trillion in renewables, innovation, infrastructure, and energy efficiency over the next three years would result in 5.5 million new jobs and would boost GDP by an average of 1%. He thus emphasised the need for a broader structural shift in building resilient economies and societies.

12. The Director-General alluded to data from IRENA's *'Renewable Energy Statistics 2020'* report to show that the energy transition is already under way. He mentioned that last year 72% of the newly installed capacity came from renewables, and statistics for 2010-2019 demonstrate that one-third of installed total capacity came from renewables, with capacity having increased two-fold to 2,500 GW. This was mainly due to the long-standing policies in place and the falling cost of renewables resulting from the strong business case of technologies enabled by progress policies and strategies. The Director-General indicated that renewables may become more competitive methods to produce energy. He rationalised that replacing 100 GW of existing coal plants has the potential to save USD 23 billion per year and yield a USD 900 billion investment. He further estimated that the 105 million jobs associated with renewable energy in 2019 will increase in the years ahead and explained that investing in renewables and other energy transition-related technologies creates almost three times more jobs than fossil fuels per USD 1 million of expenditure.

13. The Director-General highlighted that IRENA is working with over 65 countries to support their respective transitions and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) to encourage ambitious climate strategies for the upcoming COP 26. IRENA is also focussing on promoting investment in project facilitation to allow the full implementation of the Climate Investment Platform (CIP). He highlighted the Collaborative Frameworks, established following the request by the IRENA Assembly at its tenth session, as avenues to enhance Members' engagement and instil a sense of ownership in the processes and activities of the Agency. He announced that members of the Collaborative Frameworks have recently agreed on guiding principles to facilitate collaboration and engagement with the private sector.

14. The Director-General also referred to the external evaluation the Agency recently underwent as legislated in the Medium-term Strategy (MTS) and was pleased with the feedback received as it indicated that the IRENA mission remains highly relevant and is making excellent progress. He also expressed his gratitude to Members for the provision of timely resources to the core budget and thanked Denmark, Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway, Saudi Arabia, and the Walloon and Flanders Regions of Belgium for their voluntary contributions in support of programmatic work.

15. Mr Dolf Gielen, Director of the IRENA Innovation and Technology Centre (IITC), presented a summary of the IRENA *‘Reaching Zero with Renewables’* report. Whilst he acknowledged that more countries have announced net zero carbon and energy transition objectives, he noted the need for a power sector transformation and zero carbon solutions for end-use sectors such as buildings, industry and transport. He explained that the report details seven key sectors accounting for 38% of CO₂ emissions, provides technology solutions and areas for action as well as further analysis on the opportunity for indirect electrification with green hydrogen produced from renewable power. He reiterated that the decarbonisation outlook for these sectors has positively changed in recent years, with the growing consensus for emission reduction and declining cost of renewables. The assessment of decarbonisation options showed that renewables can play a key role in the decarbonisation options for 2050 with 54% economic abatement potential.

16. Mr Gielen also highlighted the 42 innovation and technology events held since the tenth session of the Assembly, gathering a total of 20,000 participants. He announced that the third IRENA Innovation Week, held virtually on 5-8 October 2020 under the theme ‘Renewable solutions for transport and industry’, had tripled in attendance compared to the previous edition in 2018, with speakers from 35 countries and participants from 1,250 organisations. Mr Gielen summarised the five conclusions from the discussions as follows: (1) a general consensus on the need for deep decarbonisation across all sectors; (2) growth in the recognition for cost-effective renewable solutions in industry and transport; (3) increasingly clear transition pathways; (4) the need for enabling conditions, including standards and infrastructure; and (5) the need for new policies to be in place, such as pricing of externalities and closer collaboration on international sectoral agreements. Mr Gielen concluded by reiterating that IRENA continues to explore decarbonisation options, which include direct electrification and green hydrogen, as per the respective Collaborative Framework’s report.

17. Ms Rabia Ferroukhi, Director of Knowledge, Policy and Finance Centre (KPFC), presented two areas of the enabling framework to support the energy transition, namely, the deployment policies that are required to support the transition, and energy system enabling measures. Ms Ferroukhi noted that the key policy highlights of deployment and integration of renewables into the system included greater depth on activities around policy design for target setting and auctions that also supports country requests and NDC reviews. She announced that a joint report entitled *‘Renewable Energy Policies in a Time of Transition: Heating and Cooling’* by IRENA, the IEA and REN21 will be launched at the *Policy Talks* series in November, on the best practice and policies in the sector. She advised that in parallel, work continues on examining organisational structures of power systems to address potential challenges countries face when increasing the share of renewables. Among the broader enabling measures linked to the deployment and integrating policies, she highlighted the importance of the IRENA expanded Resource Potential Assessment and Site-Specific Project Analysis for Solar and Wind in the Arab Region and countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. She noted that the Global Atlas is presently being reviewed with enhanced collection and analysis of resource maps.

18. On finance measures, Ms Ferroukhi announced that the *‘Global Landscape of Renewable Energy Finance’* report will be published in due course and this report, together with a closer analysis of financial measures such as green bonds, sovereign guarantees and de-risking measures can help crowd-in the much-needed additional project financing. She underscored the increased

collaboration with experts and multi-stakeholders, including the Coalition for Action's working group on hydrogen, heating, and cooling and the Coalition's 'Call for Action' in response to the pandemic, and its positive impact on activities. She announced that, in lieu of the traditional annual Policy Day, four *Policy Talks* on the above topics are scheduled to take place in November and December 2020, in which Members' insight and guidance will be appreciated.

19. Mr Gurbuz Gonul, Director of Country Engagement and Partnerships (CEP), highlighted the progress made in two programmatic areas since the beginning of the biennium. He announced that, whilst working with the NDC Partnership and UNDP under the Climate Promise Initiative, IRENA focussed on the enhancement and implementation of the energy component of NDCs to integrate more ambitious renewable energy deployment targets and improve NDC quality for more effective implementation. He provided examples of IRENA's NDC support activities such as strengthening of data collection and management systems, provision of long-term perspectives on country-specific, feasible decarbonisation options for consuming sectors, as well as helping countries create frameworks that are more conducive to renewable energy investments whilst facilitating access to project finance. He highlighted that IRENA pursued progressive outreach around the globe, with the present NDC engagement reaching over 65 countries, 20 of which are Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and 16 are Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

20. Mr Gonul reported on the efforts made to promote renewable energy solutions in a cross-sectoral setting to contribute to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He explained that IRENA's work on renewable energy for healthcare identified renewable-based decentralised solutions to power primary health centres in rural areas and proved pertinent considering the on-going pandemic. He reported on the assessment of the overall energy needs of the rural health centres in Burkina Faso, and on the identification of energy gaps for the recommendation of robust renewable-based delivery models, resulting in a blueprint of renewable systems design for health clinics that would enable the application of solutions to the country's larger rural healthcare network. He confirmed that IRENA is presently assessing decentralised renewable energy solutions in selected high-value food chains for the livelihoods of the mountain communities in the Hindu Kush Himalayas to identify specific energy interventions that add value to the agri-food chains and inform policy makers and project stakeholders to deploy solutions effectively.

21. Mr Ahmed Badr, Acting Director of Project Facilitation and Support (PFS), presented a summary of activities stating that all project facilitation activities are focused on bankability enhancement, pertaining analytical work to prepare for implementation and investors' readiness. Particularly, the activities of PFS concentrate on the upstream support for achieving the goal of linking climate finance with investment-ready projects, on the provision of technical support, and the preparation of bankable project concept notes. He noted that PFS responds to direct requests from Members, as well as projects in collaboration with UNDP's Climate Promise and the Climate Investment Platform.

22. Mr Badr announced the future plan to design a new demand-driven facility responsive to country efforts to achieve the NDCs and SDGs, pandemic recovery initiatives and funding challenges, and to increase private sector participation in renewable energy, whilst also following the inclusive approach by supporting the preparation of small, medium and/or large-scale projects in document preparation. He elaborated that this purpose-driven project would enable project preparation by facilitating access to a broader set of new financial products such as de-risking guarantees, as well as through the provision of technical assistance for project preparation, support and upstream stage. He noted that the new facility will be configured to drive digital platforms for project transactions, communication, and other associated digital platforms.

23. Mr Bruce Neese, Director of Administration and Management Services (AMS), presented the highlights of the implementation of the 2020-2021 core budget as of 31 October 2020. He indicated that the overall utilisation rate is 38%, a slight decrease due to the impact of the pandemic on the meetings now being virtual and travel being curtailed. He highlighted the core assessed contributions status for the year 2020, noting that as of 31 October 2020, USD 20.4 million has been received, which is an increase in the rate from 2019 and equated to 92% of assessed contributions. Mr Neese reported that challenges were encountered in recruitment due to the pandemic, resulting in 17 core posts under recruitment, 71 posts filled and 5 vacant, and that as of 31 October 2020, the gender composition of posts filled was 50% female.

24. The Chair of the Programme and Strategy Committee (PSC), Samoa, represented by H.E. Ms Perina Sila, presented the outcome of the Committee meeting held on 26 October 2020, as contained in document C/20/CRP/1 (Annex 2).

25. The Chair of the Administration and Finance Committee (AFC), the United States of America, represented by Mr Griffin Thompson, presented the outcome of the Committee meeting held on 28 October 2020, as contained in document C/20/CRP/2 (Annex 3).

26. Delegations expressed their appreciation for the implementation of the Work Programme and Budget for 2020-2021, and the flexibility and adaptation shown in terms of working methods to achieve this considering the pandemic, and congratulated IRENA for undertaking an external review of its Medium-term Strategy.

27. Some delegations noted the need to direct efforts to a greener recovery and to guide policy and decision-makers towards green stimulus packages and thanked the Agency for the publication of the *'Global Renewables Outlook: Energy Transformation 2050'*, and the *'Post-COVID recovery: An agenda for resilience, development and equality'* reports.

28. Delegations also appreciated IRENA's analytical work on renewables provided in the 30 innovation briefs on enabling technologies, business models, market design, and system operations relating to the power system, the *'Renewable Energy and Jobs – Annual Review 2020'*, *'Renewable Energy Statistics 2020'*, *'Reaching Zero with Renewables'*, and *'Measuring the socio-economics of transition: Focus on jobs'* reports, and the Renewables Readiness Assessments.

29. Delegations shared their respective status plans and commitments in renewable energy deployment. One delegation highlighted the need for an immense increase in mining to enable the energy transition as renewable energy technologies demand significant amounts of critical minerals. Concern was expressed for developing countries' inability to acquire technologies and calls were made for the topography and needs of countries to be taken into account, when setting policies and scaling up capacity building. One delegation suggested that IRENA act as a knowledge hub, transferring technical policy and financial knowledge.

30. A delegation confirmed that clean energy will have a role during the country's upcoming G20 Presidency, as well as in the context of COP 26, to highlight the close nexus between climate and energy in promoting innovation and sustainable recovery in a post-COVID scenario, and called for the creation of a forum focused on the socio-economic benefits of the clean energy transition to build political momentum. The delegation also underlined the importance of the water-food-energy nexus as well as of the health-energy nexus. One delegation stressed the importance of access to energy for healthcare facilities. Another delegation called for broadening the scope of discussions on the energy transition beyond electricity, and considering other uses such as clean cooking.

31. Delegations noted that green hydrogen is a key element of a successful energy transition and shared their current and upcoming national green hydrogen strategies and expertise in the field. One delegation requested that serious consideration be given to maximising renewable energy resources for other uses such as energy storage, hydrogen, and thermal energy production for various industries and sectors. Delegations also looked forward to subsequent editions of the ‘*Hydrogen: A renewable energy perspective*’ and ‘*Renewable Energy Policies in a Time of Transition: Heating and Cooling*’ reports.

32. Delegations stated that they were looking forward to the reports on ‘*Mobilising institutional capital for renewable energy*’ and ‘*Global Landscape of Renewable Energy Finance*’. Several delegations encouraged IRENA to continue its work in the field of finance and de-risking, underlining that ambitious policy measures are needed to drive the agenda forward and to facilitate private sector investment in innovation. Delegations also supported calls to temporarily restructure, adjust or put a moratorium on existing financial arrangements in an effort to reduce the stifling pressure on servicing their debt obligations, with one delegation calling for new, innovative approaches to sources of funding in the form of grants. Delegations mentioned the challenges encountered by developing countries to access green funds, which requires solicitous attention particularly in the de-risking of projects, and one delegation highlighted the need to explore a method of packaging small off-grid systems, including clean cooking, to enable international financial support. One delegation highlighted the need to focus on the geostrategic aspects of the energy transition to enable decision-makers to better understand the opportunities and challenges affecting current and future energy markets.

33. Delegations acknowledged the work done on integrated project facilitation and the Climate Investment Platform (CIP), and further acknowledged the CIP as a tool to build bridges between various actors in the renewable energy market, expressing support for the platform’s anticipated outcomes, such as Investment Forums. One delegation was reassured by the CIP’s focus on small to medium scale investments and the attention given to those previously identified through the IRENA/ADFD Facility’s last cycle and suggested that the Secretariat consider hosting a virtual forum amongst experts in this field to explore a collaborative approach to help address constraints due to COVID-related restrictions. Two delegations called for more efforts to raise awareness around the CIP and for the CIP to become more transparent and easily accessible to potential investors and collaborators. One delegation encouraged more effort to ensure the achievement of NDCs and SDGs through the provision of IRENA’s expertise, including through the CIP. One delegation stressed that CIP should be a useful tool for investment and announced that it has shared information about the platform with domestic companies.

34. Delegations commended IRENA for organising Collaborative Frameworks around issues of great importance and underlined the significance of Member cooperation. Delegations welcomed the establishment of Collaborative Frameworks on Hydropower, Green Hydrogen, Ocean Energy/Offshore Renewables, Enhancing the Dialogue on High Shares of Renewables in Energy Systems and the Geopolitics of Energy Transformation. One delegation called for the establishment of a Collaborative Framework on the promotion of sustainable education. Furthermore, delegations encouraged the Agency to work in partnership with other international agencies such as the IEA. Delegations also encouraged IRENA to increase collaboration with the private sector and welcomed the participation of the private sector in the Collaborative Frameworks.

35. The Director-General welcomed the reference to leverage the Agency’s near-universal membership and strengthen its leading role in the global energy transition and he reiterated that ownership of IRENA’s work belongs to its membership. Noting the interventions made, he expressed appreciation for the impressive commitments and remarkable progress displayed by Members. He also acknowledged Austria’s approaching membership in 2021. The Director-General thanked Members for their continued engagement in the Agency’s activities and

highlighted their key role in the progress of IRENA as an agile, modern and effective intergovernmental organisation. He further thanked the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council and Chairs of the PSC and AFC.

36. The Council took note of the Annual Report of the Director-General on the Implementation of the Work Programme and Budget for 2020-2021, contained in document C/20/2, and decided to submit it to the Assembly for its consideration.

Agenda Item 4: Report on Programmatic Discussion 1 – Accelerating the Energy Transition through Integrated Project Facilitation Support (C/20/CRP/3)

37. The Chair referenced the virtual meeting of the Programmatic Discussion held on 19 October 2020, and referred the Council to the Summary Report, as contained in document C/20/CRP/3.

38. Mr Asdirhyme Abdul Rasib, Vice-Chair, conveyed that the discussion focused on Members' experience and needs in developing bankable projects, facilitating access to finance and on the role of IRENA in further supporting countries to ensure project facilitation. He informed the Council that the Director-General presented an overview of project facilitation services that IRENA has developed to support countries with their energy transition. This included the CIP, through which IRENA will lead on risk mitigation and match-making initiatives by supporting countries to articulate their energy targets and reduce emissions from the energy sector, including the collation and analysis of energy data in developing viable investment plans. He relayed that a presentation delivered by the Secretariat outlined global investment trends in renewable energy and the challenges of the investment gap in meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement.

39. Mr Abdul Rasib emphasised that continued efforts are required for the mobilisation and effective deployment of renewables to achieve the energy transition, implement climate objectives, and deliver jobs and economic growth. Noting the challenges of limited capacity, risk aversion, lack of access to resource assessment, barriers to scalability and structural issues relating to policy and regulation, he detailed the work of IRENA's new Project Facilitation and Support division. He noted that the new Division is integrated within the CIP initiative to systematically and coherently address barriers to the achievement of a steady pipeline of investor-ready and scalable projects. Mr Abdul Rasib reflected that Members acknowledged the importance of investment in green recovery and welcomed IRENA's efforts in accelerating the energy transition and mobilising action through the CIP, with Members indicating a preference for IRENA to focus on project facilitation as opposed to implementation. He noted that Members encouraged IRENA to focus on pre- and post-implementation phases, which include simplifying project development and preparation processes as well as enhancing project longevity, durability and sustainability, and involving local and regional financial institutions in the Agency's project facilitation work.

40. Mr Abdul Rasib noted that Members welcomed the establishment of partnerships with various organisations and suggested that IRENA continue to focus on individual realities to adequately address energy security and access issues on the ground. He noted Members' advice for IRENA to clearly identify the unique roles that large multilateral and smaller-sized institutions may play in this regard. He informed that Members discussed the challenges of developing countries in the context of the pandemic and that IRENA was requested to consider loan moratoriums to accommodate COVID-related project delays in these countries. He relayed that Members commended IRENA on the timely nature of its project facilitation services and requested that such efforts be continued with more targeted facilitation tailored to the different needs of Members. He concluded that Members supported the possibility of IRENA using its convening power to spearhead the discussion and implementation of energy transition initiatives on the international stage and welcomed further discussions to identify a way forward to support this important initiative.

41. **The Council took note of the Report on Programmatic Discussion 1 – Accelerating the Energy Transition through Integrated Project Facilitation Support, contained in document C/20/CRP/3.**

Agenda Item 5. Report on Programmatic Discussion 2 – Energy transition policies to maximise socio-economic benefits (C/20/CRP/4)

42. The Chair reported on the main issues of the Programmatic Discussion held in a virtual setting on 21 October 2020, and referred the Council to the Summary Report, as contained in document C/20/CRP/4.

43. The Chair conveyed that the discussion focussed on Member's experiences regarding renewable energy deployment and socio-economic value creation and on the role that IRENA can play in further supporting Members, particularly in the context of the pandemic. He noted that the presentation by the Secretariat highlighted the recent report on *'Post-COVID Recovery: An agenda for resilience, development and equality'*, outlining that an ambitious energy transition based on accelerated uptake of renewables and energy efficiency, and improved energy access would bring immense socio-economic benefits. The associated GDP and welfare gains would signal a recovery. The Chair relayed that several Members confirmed the high employment potential of renewable energy and the important contributions of the sector to economic recovery. He noted that the presentation emphasised that effective deployment policies must be linked to energy system integration policies. Broader enabling policies, including industrial and just transition policies as well as labour markets and social protection policies, are crucial to avoid and address potential misalignments. This holistic policy framework must be tailored to the needs of each region and country.

44. The Chair highlighted that the pandemic revealed the resilience, value creation and competitiveness of renewables compared to the conventional energy sector, and that its application for productive use has been critical in this period to support remote health facilities and agricultural processes. He noted that Members confirmed the high employment potential of renewables and the important contribution to the sector and broad economic recovery. He referred to Members' insights into pandemic response measures to ensure continued value creation, and the increased ambition among some Members to promote a green recovery. The Chair mentioned that Members additionally underscored the pivotal role of IRENA in energy transition policies and the socio-economic benefits of the energy transition and noted the increased global interest in IRENA's workstream and the need to further ensure effective communication on the comprehensive benefits of the energy transition to a broader audience.

45. The Chair mentioned that Members also underlined the crucial role of international cooperation for effective post-COVID recovery, the need for recovery packages to support the energy transition and be aligned with global climate objectives, and the need to maintain global momentum for this cause, which requires global leadership and commitment. He expressed that Members supported the establishment of a vision-building forum for Members to discuss their collective aspiration on the energy transition.

46. **The Council took note of the Report on Programmatic Discussion 2 – Energy transition policies to maximise socio-economic benefits, contained in document C/20/CRP/4.**

Agenda Item 6: Reports on Collaborative Frameworks

47. 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’.

48. The Facilitator of the Collaborative Framework on Enhancing the Dialogue on High Shares of Renewables in Energy Systems, H.E. Mr Alvaro Ceriani, Permanent Representative to IRENA and Ambassador of Uruguay to the UAE, explained that the Collaborative Framework was established in response to the need of Members facing similar challenges due to high shares of renewables in their systems, and of Members promoting more accelerated penetration of renewable energy technologies, with the objective being to facilitate peer-to-peer collaboration, knowledge exchange and dissemination of best practices. He announced that the initial meeting took place in July 2020 with 81 participants from 40 Members and States in Accession, who agreed to form a specific workstream around six focus areas—energy markets and regulations, energy system planning, energy system operation, gross sectoral strategies, cross-border interconnection, and systemic innovation—to enable exchanges of best practices and discussion on potential strategies to address challenges in these areas.

49. Ambassador Ceriani indicated that the second meeting in October 2020 had 130 participants from 57 Members and States in Accession, with eight key stakeholders from relevant international and regional organisations and industry associations providing their perspectives on the objectives and scope of the Framework, with a focus on stakeholder engagement in implementation of the Framework. He advised that agreement was reached in this meeting on the governance structure of the Framework, with Uruguay and Canada designated as Co-Facilitators for one year with the possibility of an additional year extension. He noted that the agreement on the pilot phase of the Framework will focus on three workstreams—energy system planning, energy system operation and cross-border interconnections—and will include participation of public and private practitioners to determine a detailed scope of activities, develop workstream operational plans and ensure that the operational scope of each workstream is aligned and synergised with other Agency activities under the biennium Work Programme and Budget.

50. H.E. Dr Nawal Al-Hosany, Permanent Representative of the UAE to IRENA, Co-Facilitator of the Collaborative Framework on Geopolitics of Energy Transformation together with Germany, referred to the Global Commission Report of 2019 as the root of the Framework, with the further developments since its launch at the ninth Assembly having renewed interest in the fast-changing geopolitical dynamics of the energy transformation and underling the need for more understanding through greater focus on analysis and broad engagement. She announced that the Framework met in June and October 2020 and agreed on the modalities and workplan, with Members calling for deeper analytical work and consideration of policy options. She also indicated that Germany and UAE were designated as Co-Facilitators for one year.

51. Dr Nawal reported that Members acknowledged that a swift energy transformation is needed to strengthen security and energy dependence, improve economic and social resilience, food and water security, and enhance sustainability and equity in the onslaught of the pandemic and economic downturn, and that Members stressed IRENA’s unique position to lead this work. She announced that the Framework’s initial topics are geopolitics of hydrogen and the climate-security energy nexus and advised that the Collaborative Framework is open to all committed Members, with IRENA maintaining a leadership role and leveraging the expertise of the membership in a flexible structure to allow for broad stakeholder participation.

52. Mr Hans van Steen, Director on Renewables, Research, Innovation and Energy Efficiency at the European Commission, Facilitator of the Collaborative Framework on Green Hydrogen, explained that the Framework was established by IRENA in response to a request from Members at the tenth session of the Assembly to reflect on the potential of hydrogen from renewables and its relevance under different national energy contexts. He mentioned that Members underlined the recent rapid developments, shared how they envision each country's role from a global perspective as well as called on IRENA to continue its work on hydrogen from renewable power. He also underlined the central role of hydrogen in replacing fossil fuels and fossil fuel feedstocks in a variety of energy systems applications.

53. Mr van Steen referred to the need for increased international cooperation and knowledge exchange amongst countries to coordinate actions to scale up green hydrogen production, trading and use, including through synergies with existing initiatives and organisations. He reported that at the first meetings of the Framework, held in June 2020, consisting of 73 participants from 33 Members and States in Accession, Members welcomed the timing of the creation of the Framework, given the momentum for green hydrogen developments and scale up. He relayed Members' reference to IRENA's unique role in gathering developed and developing countries, and the demand for the establishment of a global knowledge database for green hydrogen, as well as a channel with existing hydrogen initiatives and relevant actors. He stated that Members recalled the need to define cross-border standards and regulatory frameworks, build financial support and highlight environmental safety and social acceptance.

54. Mr van Steen informed that the second meeting of the Framework gathered 147 participants from 65 Members and States in Accession and noted the attendance of the International Partnership for Hydrogen and Fuel Cells in the Economy (IPHE) and the Hydrogen Council, which presented their work and the ways they contribute to and benefit from the Framework. He informed that the principles and modalities of the Framework were discussed and noted that the European Commission and Morocco were appointed as Co-Facilitators for one year and that it was agreed that the next meeting in 2021 should examine concrete actions and the definition of the first working groups, depending on the availability of resources and possibilities of Members to contribute to the work of the specific working groups. He concluded by noting the linkages in the workstreams of the Framework and the European Commission, mentioning that the European Commission issued the EU green hydrogen strategy in July and sees green hydrogen as a very promising avenue to further increase the share of renewable energy in the energy system.

55. The Facilitator of the Collaborative Framework on Hydropower H.E. Mr Jean-Christophe Füg, Head of International Energy Affairs at the Federal Department of Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications of Switzerland, , explained that the Framework was established by IRENA in response to the request by Members at the tenth session of the Assembly to expand the work on hydropower and facilitate targeted and tailored collaboration on the opportunities and challenges of continued deployment of hydropower technologies. He underlined IRENA's unique position to bring together developed and developing countries to establish a dialogue among them, especially given the untapped potential of hydropower in developing countries. He noted the Director-General's agreement that the Collaborative Framework should aim to create synergies with other existing initiatives.

56. H.E. Mr Füg reported that in the first virtual meeting of the Framework in June 2020, with 82 participants from 39 countries, Members unanimously agreed to establish the Framework and defined a thematic scope. Members also called for the Framework to ensure synergies with other existing hydropower initiatives and organisations and to include other stakeholders such as NGOs, IGOs, private actors and industry associations. He reported that the second meeting in September 2020 was attended by 49 delegations and almost 100 participants, including 5 stakeholder participants, with the International Hydropower Association and the World Bank delivering a presentation on the status of hydropower, their work in that field, and their potential role as part

of the Framework. He relayed that at the second meeting, Members had reached an agreement on the general guiding principles for the Framework as well as the proposed modalities on participation, facilitation, internal working groups and reporting. He further informed that Members designated Costa Rica and Switzerland as Co-Facilitators for a period of one year, with the possibility of an additional one-year extension. He confirmed that Members agreed that a ministerial or high-level meeting of the Framework may be held as necessary in the context of the work of the Assembly, or annually preceding or post-Assembly as mandated by and in the context of the work of the Assembly. He informed that Members also agreed that the next meeting of the Framework should take place in the first quarter of 2021 to examine concrete actions and the definition of the first working groups, depending on the availability of resources and of Members to contribute to the work of the specific working groups.

57. H.E. Mr Akau'ola, Permanent Representative of IRENA and Ambassador of Tonga to the UAE, Facilitator of the Collaborative Framework on Ocean Energy/Offshore Renewables, explained that the Framework includes offshore and floating wind technology, wave, tidal, ocean thermal conversion and salinity gradient technologies and floating solar photovoltaics. He noted IRENA's unique position to establish a dialogue around these topics and the Agency's commitment to the promotion of continued deployment of offshore renewables - a renewable source of energy that potentially could meet four times the current global electricity demand, foster a blue economy and deliver socioeconomic benefits to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and coastal areas, which are some of the most vulnerable to climate change. He reported that at the first meeting, held in June 2020 with 88 participants from 38 Members and States in Accession, Members unanimously established the Framework and invited the inclusion of other stakeholders, such as NGOs, international organisations, private sector and industry associations. He noted the definition of a thematic scope focused on exchange of knowledge and experience on topics such as marine spatial planning, collaborative research and development programmes, coupling offshore renewables with power-to-x technologies, grid integration for offshore generation, and ocean energy and floating offshore wind roadmaps focusing on developing countries and SIDS.

58. Ambassador Akau'ola reported that the second meeting, held in October 2020 with 40 delegations and 69 participants, included five stakeholder participants, with the Global Wind Energy Council and Ocean Energy Europe presenting the status of offshore wind and ocean energy technologies as well as their potential contribution to the Framework. He conveyed that Tonga and Italy were designated as Co-Facilitators for one year with the possibility of a one-year extension, that the guiding principles and proposed modalities on participation, facilitation, internal working groups, reporting and high-level meetings - to be held annually and as necessary in the context of the Assembly - were all agreed upon, and that the next meeting in 2021 will focus on the concrete actions and definition of the first working groups depending on the availability of resources and of Members to contribute to the work of the specific working groups.

59. The establishment and facilitation of the Collaborative Frameworks were commended by delegations some of whom expressed an interest in participating in the Collaborative Frameworks on Enhancing the Dialogue on High Shares of Renewables in Energy Systems, Green Hydrogen, Hydropower, and Geopolitics of Energy Transformation.

60. The Director-General expressed his appreciation for the support and work on the Collaborative Frameworks as an efficient method to promote and disseminate the results of analyses worldwide whilst strengthening continuous efforts between the Agency, its Members and their specific activities.

61. The Council took note of the reports on the Collaborative Frameworks, the guiding principles and modalities of each of the Collaborative Frameworks and the recommendation for the Programme and Strategy Committee to consider the work on the Collaborative Frameworks at its meetings.

Agenda Item 7: Administrative and Institutional matters

62. The Chair of the Administrative and Finance Committee (AFC), the United States of America, presented the outcome of the Administrative and Finance Committee Meeting as contained in document C/20/CRP/2 (Annex 3).

(i) Report of the Chair of the Advisory Committee of the IRENA/ADFD Project Facility (C/20/4)

63. The Chair of the Advisory Committee of the IRENA/ADFD Project Facility, Mr Mike Allen, Special Envoy for Renewable Energy from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand, briefed the Council on the report, which marked the closing of the work on the selection process of the IRENA/ADFD Project Facility, as contained in document (C/20/4). He stated that the Chair's report includes reference to the assessment report, which captured the lessons learned from the selection process of the IRENA/ADFD Project Facility over the last seven cycles and aimed to promote partnership, facilitate funding for climate resilience measures and assist with the achievement of SDGs.

64. He emphasised that the report serves as a final reflection on the process through the use of historical data, surveys, and interviews with stakeholders from the seventh cycle and draws out lessons learned to inform future finance initiatives, ensure just inclusion, and scale up renewable energy deployment in developing countries.

65. He noted that a summary of the progress of projects was also included in the report and that the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD) and IRENA continued to engage with 26 of the selected projects to advance them to completion, with two projects having started power generation in 2019. He also reported that several projects moved forward in 2020, despite a slow-down of activities due to the pandemic, with seven projects under construction of which five are expected to start providing electricity in 2020, with the remaining projects being at the tendering, procurement or loan agreement processing stage. He stated that IRENA continues to work closely with ADFD to facilitate communications between the project proponents and ADFD to help advance projects. He mentioned that, due to the pandemic, on-site appraisals were replaced by virtual appraisals and that an enhanced digital platform has enabled the monitoring and tracking of projects to continue and be regularly reported on.

66. Mr Allen thanked the Advisory Committee and experts from the seventh cycle for their reflections on the Facility during the meeting that took place in August 2020 and expressed his gratitude to the IRENA Secretariat and ADFD colleagues.

67. The Director-General extended his gratitude to the Chair of the Advisory Committee for his report, guidance, and work on the Facility and recognised the strong support of the UAE, the ADFD, the IRENA Membership as well as the IRENA Secretariat to the IRENA/ADFD Project Facility. He emphasised that over 600 projects were evaluated by experts, and that by the seventh annual selection cycle of the Facility, the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development fully committed USD 350 million to the selected projects with over USD 60 million from other funding sources, including governments, development funds, and the private sector, resulting in the mobilisation of over USD 900 million.

68. The Director-General noted that the 26 selected projects advancing to implementation are expected to benefit over 3.5 million people with the project portfolio delivering 183 MW of renewable power and 50 MW of terminal power, resulting in the creation of over 85,000 temporary and permanent jobs. He highlighted that IRENA continues work to monitor, follow-up and track projects and their impacts and informed that the lessons learned from the Facility are being built

upon to design a future initiative. The Director-General announced the intention to scale-up activities in partnership with the ADFD and international financial institutions to help all Members reach the Paris Agreement targets within the decade. He also indicated that the launch of the new project facility, including other multilateral and financial institutions, is expected at the eleventh session of the Assembly in 2021.

69. The UAE, represented by H.E. Dr Nawal Al-Hosany, Permanent Representative to IRENA, thanked the Advisory Committee and the panel of experts for their excellent work, and explained that the smooth-running of the IRENA/ADFD Project Facility, having evolved over the years, was due to the excellent guidance and work from the Advisory Committee and the input from the experts. H.E. Dr Nawal conveyed that the Facility enabled the selection of strong projects in a very timely manner with an efficient project screening process in place. She noted that the UAE is pleased that the Facility has become a foundation to the CIP together with other successful tools of IRENA and informed that different options to continue this partnership are currently being explored.

70. One delegation pointed out that the large number of project proposals submitted for consideration demonstrates the important role of the Facility in the introduction of renewables to developing countries, congratulated the countries in which 26 projects were selected and thanked the Chair of the Advisory Committee, the membership, IRENA and ADFD for supporting the programme.

71. The Chair complemented Mr Allen and the Advisory Committee for their outstanding work and achievement.

72. The Council took note of the Report of the Chair of the Advisory Committee of the IRENA/ADFD Project Facility, contained in document C/20/4, and decided to submit it to the Assembly for its consideration.

(ii) Matters relating to Audit Activities of IRENA

- Report of the Director-General – Activities of the Internal Audit Office, and Internal Audit Recommendations and Actions Taken (C/19/6; C/20/7)

73. The Director-General introduced the reports C/19/6 and C/20/7 to the Council and explained that the audit practices were carried out in an independent and objective manner in accordance with the international standard for the professional practice of internal auditing promulgated by the Institute of Internal Auditors. He noted that internal audit recommendations were provided for the continuous improvement of systems and procedures to enhance internal controls over the Agency's operations, reduce costs, and uncertainty, to ensure the system and practice were in compliance with the existing policies and procedures.

74. He informed that the Internal Audit Office finalised the audit on payroll, dependents' benefits, and education grants in accordance with the Work Programme and Budget 2018-2019 and advised that the six key recommendations along with comments from the management were outlined in document C/20/7, with the status of implementation of the recommendations to be reported at the twenty-first meeting of the Council. He noted also that the Internal Audit Office completed the assessment of the IRENA Office in Bonn on verification, recording, and the right of fixed assets associated with the move to the new premises for which a note to file was issued in November 2019, with the assets and records consequently updated on the Markaz-ERP-Application.

75. The Director-General explained that the Internal Audit Office observed the year-end physical count of fixed assets as conducted by the inventory team at IRENA Headquarters and that, in compliance with the Internal Audit Charter, the annual audit report from the internal audit office was received and that the comprehensive audit report was submitted to the external auditor for the year ending 31 December 2019. He advised that he received and approved the audit plan of the Internal Audit Office for the Work Programme and Budget 2020-2021. He declared that disposal memos on obsolete assets at IRENA Headquarters and at the Bonn Office are currently being finalised, and that the Internal Audit Office followed up on the recording of newly purchased assets of the Bonn Office in the year 2020 in accordance with the audit plan for the Work Programme and Budget 2020-2021. He noted that follow-up actions on the external audit recommendations were taken although there were no additional audit recommendations by the external auditor for 2019.

76. The Chair of the Administrative and Finance Committee (AFC), Mr Thompson, referred to the Report of the Director-General on the Activities of the Internal Audit Office and Internal Audit Recommendations (C19/6 and C/20/7) and he conveyed that in response to a query from one participant of the AFC on the possibility of IRENA's new recruits from 2021 opening US Dollar bank accounts—to receive salaries, in view of currency exchange losses on the transfer of payroll to EURO accounts for the Bonn Office—the Secretariat explained that the current practice of transferring the Euro equivalent to European bank accounts was standard practice with any exchange gains or losses being considered as business costs. He advised that the AFC took note of the report and decided to submit it to the Council.

77. 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 documents C/19/6 and C/20/7.

- Audited Financial Statements of IRENA for 2019 (C/19/4)

78. The Director of Administration and Management Services (AMS), Mr Bruce Neese presented the Audited Financial Statements of IRENA for 2019 as contained in C/19/4, including the report of the external auditor and clarified that the external auditor submitted an unqualified audit opinion confirming the financial statements fairly and wholly represent the financial position of the Agency at the end of 2019. He noted that IRENA's financial performance and its cashflows were in line with applicable financial regulations and procedures and in accordance with international public sector accounting standards. He informed the Council that the external auditor did not raise any new audit recommendations and that no external audit recommendations are outstanding.

79. The Chair of the Administrative and Finance Committee (AFC), Mr Thompson, referred to the Audited Financial Statements Report (C/19/4) and noted that no external audit recommendations were made for that period and that consistent improvement in the financial position of the Agency was noted by one participant. He advised that the AFC took note of the report and decided to submit it to the Council.

80. The Council took note of the Audited Financial Statements of IRENA for 2019, contained in document C/19/4, and decided to submit it to the Assembly for its consideration.

- Report of the Director-General on the Selection of the External Auditor (C/20/5)

81. The Director of Administration and Management Services (AMS), Mr Neese presented the Report of the Director-General on the Selection of the External Auditor as contained in C/20/5. He explained that the report was in accordance with IRENA financial regulation 12.8 on External

Audit that specifies that the arrangements for annual audits should take into account the international nature of the Agency and ensure an open and competitive bidding process for the selection of the external auditor, and detailed the external audit and selection process of the external auditor and the results of the technical financial proposals.

82. The Chair of the Administrative and Finance Committee (AFC), Mr Thompson, informed that the AFC took note of the Report of the Director-General on the Selection of External Auditor report as contained in document C/20/5 and decided to submit it to the Council.

The Council took note of the Report of the Director-General on the Selection of the External Auditor, contained in document C/20/5, and decided to submit it to the Assembly for its consideration.

- Report of the Director-General on the Indicative IRENA Scale of Contributions for 2021 (C/20/6)

83. The Director of Administration and Management Services (AMS), Mr Neese introduced the Report of the Director-General on the Indicative IRENA Scale of Contributions for 2021 as contained in C/20/6 and summarised that no additional countries had joined the Agency between January 2020 and 31 October 2020, and that the indicative IRENA scale of contributions for 2021 therefore reflects the same IRENA Membership as per 2020. He advised that the scale of contribution would be adjusted if additional Members join the Agency before the eleventh session of the Assembly. He also noted that as per decision A/10/DC/1, the latest approved UN scale of assessments shall be used starting from the Work Programme and Budget 2022-2023 for the calculation of Members' contributions.

84. The Chair of the Administrative and Finance Committee (AFC), Mr Thompson, advised that the AFC took note of the Report of the Director-General: Indicative IRENA Scale of Contributions for 2021 as contained in document C/20/6 and decided to submit it to the Council.

85. The Council took note of the Report of the Director-General on the Indicative IRENA Scale of Contributions for 2021, contained in document C/20/6, and decided to submit it to the Assembly for its consideration.

(iii) Staff Provident Fund

- 2019 Annual Report of the Provident Fund Management Board on Operations of the Staff Provident Fund of IRENA (C/19/5)

86. The 2019 Chair of the Provident Fund Management Board, Mr Neese introduced the report and summarised the activities of the Provident Fund Management Board and the financial statements of the Provident Fund for the period from 1 to 31 December 2019, as contained in C/19/5. He noted that the investments from mandatory contributions resulted in a net gain of USD 1.5 million and that the Staff Provident Fund Management Board engaged Mercer LLC to conduct during 2019 a review of the Staff Provident Fund performance since its inception. He also noted that the review found that the five-year performance of the fund was broadly in line with relevant benchmarks. He informed the Council that the external auditor, Deloitte and Touche, rendered an unqualified audit opinion that confirmed the financial statements fairly and wholly represent the financial position of the Staff Provident Fund.

87. The Chair of the Administrative and Finance Committee (AFC), Mr Thompson, advised that the AFC took note of the Annual Report of the Provident Fund Management Board on Operations of the Staff Provident Fund of IRENA as contained in document C/19/5 and decided to submit it to the Council.

88. The Council took note of the 2019 Annual Report of the Provident Fund Management Board on Operations of the Staff Provident Fund of IRENA, contained in document C/19/5, and decided to submit it to the Assembly for its consideration.

- Appointment of Management Board members

89. The Chair of the twentieth meeting of the Council advised that representatives from Germany and the United Arab Emirates expressed availability to represent IRENA Members on the management board for the forthcoming two-year term 2021-2022.

90. The Council took note of proposed representatives of Germany and the United Arab Emirates as members of the Management Board and decided to submit the proposal to the Assembly for its consideration.

(iv) Report of the Director-General on the Status of Collection of Assessed Contributions and Advances to the Working Capital Fund (C/20/INF/2)

91. The Director of Administration and Management Services (AMS), Mr Neese, presented the report as contained in C/20/INF/2, and noted that it contains a complete status of contributions, with Annex 1 Status of Contributions of Members of the Agency as of 1 January 2020, and Annex 2 Status of Contributions of Members whose arrears reached or exceeded the amount of their contributions for the two preceding years.

92. The Chair of the Administrative and Finance Committee (AFC), Mr Griffin Thompson, advised that the AFC took note of the Report of the Director-General on the Status of Collection of Assessed Contributions and Advances to the Working Capital Fund as contained in document C/20/INF/2 and decided to submit it to the Council.

93. The Council took note of the Report of the Director-General on the Status of Collection of Assessed Contributions and Advances to the Working Capital Fund as contained in document C/20/INF/2 and decided to submit it to the Assembly for its consideration.

(v) Matters relating to Human Resources

- Report of the Director-General – Staff Tenure Policy (C/19/3)

94. The Director-General presented the report as recommended at the eighteenth session of the Council and approved by the tenth session of the Assembly. He summarised that the report addressed the implications of the proposal to exclude General Services Staff from the present tenure policy, including the number of staff affected, their role, and the costs associated with the exclusion, and addressed the further review of the option of re-hiring ex-IRENA staff. He noted that the report presented the pros and cons of excluding General Services Staff from the present Tenure Policy in terms of projected cost, number of staff affected, and their roles with comparable information on tenure policies of other organisations, adding that any change in policies should ensure that IRENA staff are not placed in an inferior position to other tenured organisations. He also informed the Council that the practices of re-hiring ex-staff in other tenured organisations were reviewed and concluded that there is no clear, consistent approach to the re-hiring of former staff amongst such organisations. He proposed the consideration of a period of break in service to enable relevant ex-staff members to acquire adequate additional knowledge, expertise, advanced education certification and/or meaningful experience in the relevant field.

95. The Director of Administration and Management Services (AMS), Mr Bruce Neese referred to specifics in the report and noted that the number of staff affected by the tenure policy at current staffing levels are 27 core funded Professional Staff and 13 non-core funded General Service Staff. He explained that the General Service Staff roles comprised of 82% administrative and technical assistance with the remaining 18% being communications, protocol and governance assistance. Mr Neese highlighted that the proposal's associated cost implications over the period 2020-2030 to exclude General Service Staff from the present Tenure Policy are USD 2 million to USD 2.4 million depending on whether applied to only core funded posts, or core and non-core funded posts, with costs potentially increasing further if staff would work beyond the age of 65.

96. The Chair of the Administrative and Finance Committee (AFC), Mr Thompson, referred to the Report of the Director-General Staff Tenure Policy as contained in document C/19/3 and advised that several participants of the AFC expressed support to consider the proposal to lift the tenure policy for General Service Staff members of IRENA. The suggested four-year period of break in service prior to rehire was also considered, as well as a request for further details on the topic including a detailed analysis on cost savings and differentiation of core and non-core General Service Staff. He voiced his recommendation to the Committee that further consideration on this item be considered and discussed at the twenty-first meeting of the Council. He advised that the AFC took note of the report and decided to submit it to the Council.

97. Several delegations supported the consideration of the suggested four-year break in service for ex-Professional Staff as well as the proposal to exclude General Service Staff from the current Tenure Policy, while expressing concern on the creation of different categories of staff within IRENA, thus placing the fundamental qualities of equality and parity of treatment in jeopardy. One delegation appealed for another solution and proposed a neutral comprehensive evaluation of the staff regulation by the AFC to align the staff regulation with IRENA's unmet needs and to consider contract extensions and the facilitation of secondments from other organisations working on similar topics. Another delegation referred to AFC discussions and requested further information on the final process of the Tenure Policy.

98. In his response to the interventions by Members, the Director-General raised the importance of Professional and General Service Staff being treated as in other organisations. He noted the recommendations and comments and recalled the conclusion of the Chair of the AFC that further consideration and decision would be sought at the next meeting of the Council which would take into account the concerns raised and the requested documentation.

99. The Council took note of the Report of the Director-General – Staff Tenure Policy, contained in document C/19/3, and agreed to recommend to the Assembly further consideration of the matter at the twenty-first meeting of the Council following the provision of further details and the preparation of an in-depth cost analysis.

- Report of the Director-General on Secondment of Personnel (C/20/9)

100. The Director of Administration and Management Services (AMS), Mr Neese, introduced the report as an update on the implementation of the secondment and loan arrangements during the period from September 2018 to September 2020 and elaborated on the two types of arrangements approved by the Assembly as contained in document A/2/9. He explained that the first arrangement was where an individual who is employed by a government, public sector entity, or an international organisation was selected for a vacant position and appointed as a staff member for the Agency and at the end of the secondment period, this individual returns to the entity that released them, and advised that one such arrangement was made pursuant to an agreement between IRENA and the Republic of Korea. Mr Neese described that the second arrangement was where an IRENA Member made a voluntary contribution to IRENA covering the costs

related to the appointment of a Staff member, typically a Junior Professional Officer for which one staff was appointed, during the reporting period, under an agreement between IRENA and the Republic of Korea. He further informed the Council that, in accordance with Assembly decision contained in document A/2/DC/5, seven loan arrangements were concluded with six IRENA Members during the reporting period, with two individuals currently serving in different positions. He highlighted that during the period under review, the participation of several interns in IRENA's work had been supported by the Republic of Korea. Mr Neese thanked all governments who contributed to the successful implementation of this decision.

101. The Chair of the Administrative and Finance Committee (AFC), Mr Thompson informed that the AFC took note of the Report of the Director-General: Secondment of Personnel contained in document C/20/8 and decided to submit it all to the Council.

102. The Council took note of the Report of the Director-General: Secondment of Personnel, contained in document C/20/8, and decided to submit it to the Assembly for its consideration.

(vi) Matters relating to Ethics

- Report of the Chair of the Ethics Advisory Board (EAB)

103. The Chair of the Ethics Advisory Board, H.E. Dr Nawal Al-Hosany from the United Arab Emirates, noted that during the present reporting period the Ethics Advisory Board was not called upon to assist on any ethics matters and there was no requirement for any consultations with the Director-General or the Ethics Officer. She advised that the EAB would continue, as needed, to work with the Director-General and the Ethics Officer of IRENA whilst ensuring that appropriate safeguards for protecting individual confidentiality and due process rights are in place.

104. The Council took note of the Report of the Chair of the Ethics Advisory Board.

- Report of the Ethics Officer on the Implementation of the Policy on Ethics and Conflict of Interest (C/20/9)

105. The Ethics Officer of IRENA, Ms Jelena Barnes, introduced the report and informed the Council on the implementation of the Policy from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020 wherein all 28 covered individuals complied with the requirement to complete the disclosure of interest form for the 2019 filing cycle, during which, upon review, no actual or apparent conflict of interest was revealed. She informed the Council that as of 1 November 2020, 94% of staff had completed the online Ethics and Integrity course, with all newly appointed staff completing the course as part of their standard induction process. Ms Barnes explained that whilst confidential guidance was provided to staff on questions of ethics, there were no reports received during the reporting period requesting protection against retaliation and that no other issues emerged requiring consultation with the EAB.

106. The Council took note of the Report of the Ethics Officer on the Implementation of the Policy on Ethics and Conflict of Interest as contained in document C/20/9 and decided to submit it to the Assembly for its consideration.

(vii) Note of the Chair of the 19th Council – Review of the Procedure on the Selection and Appointment of the Director-General of IRENA (C/19/7)

107. The Chair introduced the note and advised that the recommendations within the future-facing document focus on assessing best practices in other organisations, consideration of technology enhancement with an emphasis on the electronic voting process, additional measures to further streamline future processes, and the preparation of a document on the assessment process.

108. Several delegations welcomed the assessment of the appointment procedure to increase its efficiency and some delegations stressed that it should be underpinned by full transparency, fairness, inclusiveness, and the unbiased interest of Members.

109. Three delegations reflected on the need to inspire more female candidates and, two delegations voiced their interest to work with the Secretariat on following up on the recommendations and preparing a document. One delegation called for exploring options to operationalise the procedures presented in document A/5/5 in order to enhance efficiency, including in relation to communication aspects, timelines, and mapping out of a comprehensive set of steps. The timelines can assist the planning and inform the membership of the steps. Information technology enhancement should be considered for the selection and voting process.

110. The Council took note of the Note of the Chair of the 19th Council – Review of the Procedure on the Selection and Appointment of the Director-General of IRENA, as contained in document C/19/7, and of the offer made by the UAE and Samoa to engage with the Secretariat in fulfilling the recommendations outlined in document C/19/7, and decided to submit it to the Assembly for its consideration.

(viii) Note of the Director-General – Interpretation of the “Competent authority of the Member” for the purpose of issuance of credentials for participation in the meetings of the Assembly (C/20/11)

111. Ms Jonela Kita, IRENA Legal Advisor, presented a summary of the note in which she explained that the need for the interpretation of the ‘competent authority’ to issue credentials for the participation of Members’ representatives at the meetings of the Assembly has arisen due to the lack of specific guidance in this regard in the Rules of Procedure. She also noted that invalid credentials issued by non-competent authorities may preclude the representatives of the Members from effectively participating in the sessions of the Assembly and in the decision-making and voting processes. Ms Kita explained that the Secretariat’s proposal on the interpretation of the competent authority was seeking to balance IRENA’s current practice with the provision of flexibility to the Members to determine the authority that in their view would be competent to issue the credentials pursuant to their national laws.

112. Ms Kita summarised that consistent with the current practice, the proposal is for the default interpretation of the ‘competent authority’ to mean either the Head of State, the Head of Government, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, or an official with full powers signed by the Head of State, Head of Government, or Minister of Foreign Affairs. She noted that a Member may be able to designate a different competent authority for the issuance of the credentials if preferred, subject to the submission of an official designation letter to the IRENA Secretariat, which should be issued by either the Head of State, Head of Government, Minister of Foreign Affairs or an official with full powers signed by the Head of State, Head of Government, or the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

113. Ms Kita noted that this approach aims to address the observations provided by some Members in the past that pursuant to their national laws, Ministries and/or institutions other than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would be responsible for the activities within IRENA’s mandate. Furthermore, she pointed out that this approach would be more appropriate for such institutions to issue the credentials for their representative’s participation at the Assembly session to ensure that the national authorities responsible for the matters falling within IRENA’s mandate are adequately represented and informed of the matters discussed at the Assembly. Ms Kita further noted that this approach could also contribute to increased participation and meaningful engagement and enhance further the cooperation between Members and the Secretariat.

114. The Chair informed the Council that the recommendations being proposed seek to confirm the current practice whilst simultaneously providing flexibility to Members to determine the competent authority for the issuance of credentials.

115. One delegation mentioned that the issuing of credentials is a long but recurrent and predictable process and suggested that before the process is made more complex, Members should consider the burden on IRENA, the Credentials Committee, and its image, and underlined that credentials for participation should be issued by the authorities at the highest level.

116. The Council took note of the Note of the Director-General – Interpretation of the “Competent authority of the Member” for the purpose of issuance of credentials for participation in the meetings of the Assembly, as contained in document C/20/11, and decided to submit it to the Assembly for its consideration.

(ix) Update by regional facilitators on nominations for 2021-2022 Council membership

117. The Chair informed that the two-year term of the current members of the Council will end as of 31 December 2020 and that the Assembly, at its eleventh session, will decide on the composition of the IRENA Council for 2021-2022. He noted that Uganda, as President of the tenth session of the Assembly, invited Members to express their interest in Council membership by 31 March 2020 to prepare for the upcoming Council elections in January 2021. He declared that Uganda, along with the Vice-Presidents of the tenth Assembly, Burkina Faso, El Salvador, Luxembourg and Samoa, agreed to facilitate discussions among the four regional groups prior to the eleventh Assembly in January 2021.

118. Burkina Faso announced that for the Africa Group, expressions of interest for nomination as Council members for 2021-2022 have been received from Algeria, Benin, Egypt, Kenya, Somalia and Zimbabwe, with Nigeria having expressed interest in serving as an alternate. The regional facilitator stated that all Members of the regional group would be duly informed once consensus was reached on the slate of nominations of Council Members and alternates for the Africa Group, and that the finalised agreement would be presented prior to the eleventh session of the Assembly.

119. Samoa announced that the Asia and the Pacific Regional Group had reached a consensus on the slate of nominations for 2021-2022, and was submitting the candidacies of India, Japan, Republic of Korea, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates and Vanuatu as Council members, and China and Tuvalu serving as alternates.

120. Luxembourg announced that the Europe and Others Group had reached a consensus on the slate of nominations for 2021-2022, and was submitting the candidacies of Denmark, Germany, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom and United States of America as Council members in 2021, with Canada, Cyprus and Italy nominated as alternates. The regional facilitator further announced the candidacies of Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Norway and United States of America being submitted as Council members in 2022, with Switzerland, Turkey and United Kingdom nominated as alternates.

121. El Salvador announced that as of 31 March 2020, five Members presented their candidacies, namely Colombia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Saint Lucia and Uruguay. Currently, Saint Lucia is the sole solid candidate, while the Dominican Republic withdrew its candidacy in favour of El Salvador, considering both countries represent Central America. Hence, the slate of nominations for the Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Group is expected to be finalised

by 14 December 2020 and all Members of the regional group as well as the President of the tenth Assembly would be duly informed of the finalised agreement.

122. The Council took note of the update by regional facilitators on nominations for 2021-2022 Council membership and agreed to submit the slate of nominations for the Asia and the Pacific and Europe and Others regional groups to the Assembly for its consideration.

(x) Note by the Secretariat – Membership of the Administration and Finance Committee (AFC) and of the Programme and Strategy Committee (PSC) (C/20/10)

123. In its capacity as Chair of the eighteenth meeting of the Council, Luxembourg, represented by Mr Guy Lentz, explained that due to the growth in membership since the inception of the Agency and increased interest in the work of the AFC and PSC, the Council at its eighteenth meeting considered expanding the number of Committee members to above the current limit of ten, including the appointment of alternates. He noted that following considerations on the matter at the eighteenth meeting of the Council, the Secretariat was requested to conduct a general analysis of options for adjustment in Committee membership, including the implication of expanding such memberships. He summarised that one aspect stressed was maintaining an open-ended format allowing participation by all interested Members in the meetings of those two Committees, which are not decisional. He noted, however, that the shift to a virtual mode of working due to the pandemic has impacted the manner in which Governing Body meetings are convened and he therefore advised the Council to maintain the status quo of the current membership of ten members for each of the two Committees, whilst simultaneously assessing new methods of operation, including convening future meetings of the Committees in a virtual mode.

124. One delegation expressed agreement on the advice to maintain the status quo of the present membership of ten members each per Committee as it would allow for better functioning and an agile decision-making process, adding that the open nature of participation at meetings to all IRENA Members compensates for the limited number of Committee members. Two delegations mentioned that they are open to exploring new ways of enhancing representation on the Council and its Committees, and one delegation encouraged the use of virtual meeting formats beyond the pandemic as it would promote easy participation, inclusivity, transparency, and reduce costs.

125. The Council took note of the Note by the Secretariat – Membership of the Administration and Finance Committee (AFC) and of the Programme and Strategy Committee (PSC), contained in document C/20/10, and agreed to maintain the status quo of the current membership.

Agenda Item 8: Medium-term Strategy 2018-2022 (MTS) – Mid-term Evaluation (C/20/3)

126. Ms Elizabeth Press, Director of Planning and Programme Support (PPS) provided an overview of the evaluation of the Medium-term Strategy and recalled that the external review was mandated by the Assembly at its eighth session in January 2018 to assess progress in the implementation to date of the Medium-term Strategy to enable further adjustments if needed. She noted that the evaluation was conducted by an independent consultancy as specialists in monitoring evaluation and organisational developments and that they were selected through a competitive procurement process.

127. Ms Press advised that the evaluators had full access to information and data that IRENA collated within the Agency and that limitations posed by the pandemic were overcome through the use of a virtual process with 50 IRENA Members, 39 external stakeholders and 76 IRENA

personnel providing feedback to the survey and an additional 26 individual interviews with Members and external stakeholders. She further noted that the evaluation concluded that IRENA is on target to achieve the objectives of the MTS with the findings demonstrating that the Agency is perceived to be impactful and its work is credible and in demand.

128. Ms Press emphasised that the evaluation reflected IRENA's key traits—the ability to adapt, be responsive and inclusive—prove advantageous. She noted that the evaluation conceded that a global mandate contributes to IRENA's unique legitimacy in the energy landscape and its leading role in energy transition. She advised that continued collaboration with the evaluation team would obtain detailed input and expertise considering that although the impact of the pandemic was difficult to ascertain, given the nature of the Agency's work, the monitoring system under development would enhance external reporting and an informed decision-making process.

129. The Chair of the Programme and Strategy Committee (PSC), H.E. Ms Perina Sila, Permanent Representative of Samoa to IRENA, relayed that the findings of the external evaluation highlighting the mission and structure of the MTS for 2018-2022 remains valid and would effectively guide the programmatic implementation of the Agency's work until the end of 2022. She conveyed that the PSC emphasised IRENA is well-positioned to lead the transformation and noted the importance of focusing on comparative advantages and related use of resources. Ms Sila informed that the Committee also noted the importance of monitoring and evaluation when assessing the impact of IRENA's work and the progress made in establishing the system and announced that the PSC had agreed to the creation of a Working Team, comprising interested Members, to guide and support the preparation of the MTS for 2023-2027.

130. The Director-General emphasised the responsibility to define priorities for greater impact and maximum benefit to IRENA's global Membership and referred to the importance of the external evaluation as envisaged in the Medium-Term Strategy with the feedback highlighting progress and the essential relevance of the Agency's mission.

131. IRENA's commitment to the energy transition, the facilitation of dialogue and the effective international partnerships was acknowledged by delegates, one of whom expressed their appreciation of the openness in conducting the mid-term evaluation to provide feedback on progress and insights on how to increase impact.

132. The Council took note of the Medium-term Strategy 2018-2022 (MTS) – Mid-term Evaluation, contained in document C/20/3, and agreed to submit the proposed recommendations for consideration by the Assembly, at its eleventh session, including the creation of a working team comprising interested Members to guide and support the development of the Medium-term Strategy 2023-2027.

Agenda Item 9: Arrangements for the eleventh session of the Assembly (C/20/12)

133. The Director-General reminded the Council that IRENA Members agreed to convene the eleventh session of the Assembly, for the first time on a virtual platform, on 18-21 January 2021, with related meetings to be held virtually the week prior, on 13 and 14 January. Noting that the energy transition is at the heart of the wider recovery as governments address the social and economic impacts of the pandemic and its profound and long-term ramifications, he informed that the eleventh Assembly would be held under the theme of 'COVID-19: Energy Transition' to reflect these unexpected times and to put the energy transition at the heart of the wider recovery.

134. The Director-General highlighted that the timing of the eleventh session of the Assembly provides the opportunity to focus on how renewables will continue to further accelerate the energy transition and what IRENA can do to support Members in promoting stimulus and recovery packages that facilitate the shift to sustainable, decarbonised economies and resilient societies. He also underlined the need for a coherent approach to the energy transition.

135. He announced that on the week preceding the Assembly, a number of stakeholder meetings will be held. The sixth IRENA Legislators Forum will be held on 13 January 2021 to take an in-depth look at challenges parliamentarians are facing on the road towards a sustainable energy future. He also mentioned that as part of IRENA's commitment to strengthen outreach, the Public-Private Dialogue will be held on 14 January 2021 to discuss opportunities to accelerate an equitable, resilient and sustainable recovery from the pandemic. The second IRENA Youth Forum will be held on the same day to hear the voice of youth on how to promote a just energy transition. The Director-General further proposed that 18 January 2021, the opening day of the eleventh session of the Assembly, be designated as the World Energy Transition Day to hear higher-level statements, including from the President of the Assembly, the Host Country and other dignitaries. The Agency will also present the Annual Report on the Implementation of the Work Programme and Budget for 2020-2021. He proposed an extension to the meeting times on 18-21 January from 6:00pm to 6:30pm Abu Dhabi time to allow interventions from as many Heads of State and Ministers as possible, as high-level participation is expected. He also informed that four Ministerial meetings will take place: two meetings will be held on 19 January, with one focusing on National Energy Planning and Implementation for Fostering Energy Transition and the other on Scaling Up Finance for Renewables. Another two meetings will be organised on 20 January, one meeting on Driving the Agenda for Energising Healthcare and a second on Renewables and Pathway to Carbon Neutrality - Innovation, Green Hydrogen and Socioeconomic Policies. The Director-General indicated that a high level of participation is expected at the upcoming Assembly.

136. He announced that on 21 January, the Assembly will hear reports on the outcomes of the Ministerial meetings as well as the High-level Dialogue on Pandemic Response and Recovery and Africa's Energy Transformation, convened with the African Union in May 2020, and the High-level Dialogue on Accelerating Energy Transition in SIDS to Stimulate Post Pandemic Recovery, convened with the SIDS Alliance in June 2020. He advised that following these reports, the Assembly will consider administrative and institutional matters and other mandates.

137. In view of mobilising political momentum and fostering a collective discussion on the path towards the rapid acceleration and deployment of renewables, the Chair proposed the establishment of an open-ended global High-level Forum on Energy Transition. The Chair explained that as the pandemic has stressed the urgency for universal access to energy, the Council's endorsement of this proposal would strengthen collective aspiration. To this end, the Chair proposed to work with Uganda as the outgoing President of the Assembly and Spain as the incoming President of the Assembly to make a joint proposal to the eleventh Assembly on this matter and he welcomed the opinion of Members on this initiative.

138. Delegations supported the arrangements for the eleventh session of the Assembly and endorsed the proposal to establish an open-ended global High-level Forum on Energy Transition. One delegation highlighted the urgency in promoting clean cooking technologies and requested that the discussion on the energy transition is broadened to include as many energies as possible and small energy systems. One delegation underlined that IRENA is well-suited to provide support on how to mobilise opportunities in renewables to maximise socio-economic benefits, expressed interest to facilitate the discussion on this topic and presented the recently announced national plan for economic transformation and resilience to future shocks. One delegation underlined that the topics of the four Ministerial meetings would be fully aligned with the country's upcoming G20 Presidency in 2021 and would help deepen the synergies and collaboration with the Agency.

This delegation also proposed convening a high-level event on offshore renewables and ocean energy in line with the priorities of the upcoming G20 Presidency, noting that more financial resources are needed to update costs and fast-track the development of less mature technologies. One delegation announced the country's plan to hold a high-level political meeting in Spring 2021 to discuss a joint effort to maximise progress towards clean energy systems and informed that further details will be forthcoming.

139. The Director-General welcomed Members' support for the proposed arrangements for the eleventh Assembly as well as the Council's endorsement of the Chair's proposal. The Chair advised that he would consult Uganda, as the President of the tenth Assembly and Spain, as the President-designate of the eleventh Assembly in the preparation of the proposal on the open-ended global High-level Forum to be presented to the eleventh session of the Assembly, and declared that he would work with the Director-General and the Secretariat to ensure an inclusive process moving forward, with Members continuing to be fully informed of the matter.

140. The Council took note of the arrangements for the eleventh session of the Assembly (C/20/12) and endorsed the proposal to establish an open-ended global High-level Forum on Energy Transition.

Agenda Item 10: Arrangements for the twenty-first meeting of the Council

141. The Chair noted the proposal for the twenty-first meeting of the Council to be held on 25 and 26 May 2021 in Abu Dhabi, with the meetings of the subsidiary organs of the Council scheduled for 24 May 2021. He advised that changes to the schedule would be submitted to the Council for approval, bearing in mind that the dates and format of the meetings were subject to change depending on measures associated with the pandemic.

142. The Chair noted the proposal for the twenty-second meeting of the Council be held on 26 and 27 October 2021, with the meetings of the subsidiary organs of the Council scheduled for 25 October 2021, noting that the schedule was subject to final determination by the Council at its twenty-first meeting.

143. One delegation mentioned that a COP26-associated Ministerial outreach event on environmental and climate issues in Africa is scheduled for 25-26 October 2021 and suggested that the dates of the twenty-second meeting of the Council be amended if possible.

144. The Council took note of the arrangements for the twenty-first meeting of the Council.

Agenda Item 11: Any other business

145. The United Arab Emirates proposed the establishment of an "International Renewables Day" and encouraged IRENA, with the support of its Members, to present this proposal to the United Nations for adoption as it would strengthen efforts to raise awareness of the lack of access to clean energy for many people, despite the exponential growth in the renewable energy sector. The delegation further explained that the designation of a dedicated day to renewable energy would provide a platform to highlight the benefits of renewables and further the achievement of SDGs, extend the discussion to all levels of society, reaffirm the global renewable energy agenda, drive global consensus that renewables have a positive impact on people's lives, and enhance the much-needed international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy and help achieve a low emission economy.

146. **The Council took note of the proposal to establish an “International Renewables Day”.**

Agenda Item 12: Closing of the meeting

147. In his closing remarks, the Director-General thanked Members for their active participation and feedback, and the clarity of their guidance during what was IRENA’s first virtual governing body meeting, noting that the energy transition remains high on the agenda despite the obstacles created by the pandemic. He underlined that only through concerted cooperation and regular interaction could a lasting change be established and highlighted the importance of providing an inclusive high-level platform to drive the energy transition. The Director-General affirmed his commitment to continue pursuing dialogue in cooperation with as many stakeholders as possible whilst relying on the active engagement and support of Members.

148. He expressed his gratitude to the Chair and Vice-Chair, as well as the Chairs of the Committees for their leadership and effective steering of discussions. The Director-General delivered an earnest commendation to Mr Bruce Neese as he would be retiring from IRENA and acknowledged his work as an exemplary senior official.

149. The Chair thanked the Vice-Chair, Rapporteur, Council members and delegations for their valuable input and contribution, the Chairs of Committees for the support, and for the recommendations and guidance provided by Members. He acknowledged the steadfast commitment and leadership of the Director-General and the work of the Secretariat, and he expressed his appreciation to the interpreters and technical staff supporting the platform. He stated that the encouraging progress being made to date could be further accelerated with the help of multilateral collaboration and institutions such as IRENA. He conveyed his gratitude for the Council’s endorsement to establish the open-ended global High-level Forum on Energy Transition at the Assembly and welcomed the prospect of the Energy Transition Day on the first day of the Assembly. He expressed his confidence that together, Members will emerge from this challenging time with stronger, greener, and more resilient economies, realise the shared goal of achieving the energy transition and create a better world for current and future generations.

150. **The Chair declared the twentieth meeting of the Council closed.**

Twentieth meeting of the Council
 Abu Dhabi, 3-4 November 2020

Agenda

- 1. Opening of the meeting**
- 2. Organisation of work**
 - a. Election of officials
 - b. Adoption of the agenda
 - c. Report of the nineteenth meeting of the Council
- 3. Annual Report of the Director-General on the Implementation of the Work Programme and Budget for 2020-2021**
- 4. Report on Programmatic Discussion 1:** Energy transition policies to maximise socio-economic benefits
- 5. Report on Programmatic Discussion 2:** Accelerating the energy transition through integrated project facilitation support
- 6. Reports on Collaborative Frameworks**
- 7. Administrative and Institutional matters**
 - (i) Report of the Chair of the Advisory Committee of the IRENA/ADFD Project Facility
 - (ii) Matters relating to Audit Activities of IRENA
 - Report of the Director-General - Activities of the Internal Audit Office, and Internal Audit Recommendations and Actions Taken *
 - Audited Financial Statements of IRENA for 2019 *
 - Report of the Director-General - Selection of the External Auditor
 - Report of the Director-General - Indicative IRENA Scale of Contributions for 2021
 - (iii) Staff Provident Fund
 - 2019 Annual Report of the Provident Fund Management Board on Operations of the Staff Provident Fund of IRENA *
 - Appointment of Management Board members
 - (iv) Report of the Director-General - Status of Collection of Assessed Contributions and Advances to the Working Capital Fund
 - (v) Matters relating to Human Resources
 - Report of the Director-General - Staff Tenure Policy *
 - Report of the Director-General - Secondment of Personnel
 - (vi) Matters relating to Ethics
 - Report of the Chair of the Ethics Advisory Board *
 - Report of the Ethics Officer on the Implementation of the Policy on Ethics and Conflict of Interest
 - (vii) Note of the Chair of the 19th Council - Review of the Procedure on the Selection and Appointment of the Director-General *

- (viii) Note by the Director-General - Interpretation of 'competent authority of the Member'
- (ix) Update by regional facilitators on nominations for 2021-2022 Council membership
- (x) Note by the Secretariat – Membership of the Administration and Finance Committee (AFC) and of the Programme and Strategy Committee (PSC)

8. Medium-term Strategy 2018-2022 (MTS) - Mid-term Evaluation

9. Arrangements for the eleventh session of the Assembly

10. Arrangements for the twenty-first meeting of the Council

11. Any other business

12. Closing of the meeting

Twentieth meeting of the Council
Abu Dhabi, 3-4 November 2020

Context: Pursuant to decision C/3/DC/3, the Programme and Strategy Committee (hereafter “PSC” or “Committee”) met on 26 October 2020. It reflected on the implementation of the Work Programme and Budget for 2020-2021 and focused on discussions around the Annual Report of the Director-General on the Implementation of the Work Programme and Budget for 2020-2021 and the Mid-term Evaluation of the Medium-term Strategy 2018-2022.

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 3 and 4 November 2020.

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

1. Annual 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 tremendous progress made in the implementation of programmatic activities and for the resiliency of the Agency in adapting its working methods during this challenging period due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The PSC commended the Agency for its leadership in advancing energy transitions and emphasized the importance of this work in aligning the recovery measures with the long-term Sustainable Development Goals and Paris Agreement agenda.
- The PSC noted the importance of linking energy transitions with other sectors, including health, and highlighted the need to engage with different levels of policy making, including at the local levels.
- Participants stressed that investment in the energy transition remains a high priority, including by the private sector, and encouraged the Agency to use its comparative advantage in this area of activity.
- The PSC welcomed the Agency’s efforts for a greater engagement of Members in its work, including through the establishment of Collaborative Frameworks, and emphasized that such an approach is key to effective multilateralism that delivers results.
- The PSC noted the importance of investment and efforts to attract private finance.
- Participants noted the progress in strengthening communication and outreach and encouraged continuous efforts in this regard.

2. Medium-term Strategy 2018-2022 (MTS) - Mid-term Evaluation

The Director-General introduced the Medium-term Strategy 2018-2022 (MTS) - Mid-term Evaluation. Participants offered the following views and comments:

- The PSC welcomed the findings of the Mid-term Evaluation, noting that the mission and objectives of the current Medium-term Strategy remain valid and can effectively guide the programmatic implementation for the remainder of its duration until the end of 2022.
- The PSC also commended Members and others who participated in the mid-term evaluation to enable a meaningful process and balanced findings.
- The PSC emphasized that IRENA is well positioned to lead the transformation of the global energy system and noted the importance of focusing on the Agency's comparative advantages and related use of resources.
- Participants emphasized 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.
- The Chair proposed, and the PSC agreed to repeat the process used for the development of the current MTS, which would include the creation of a Working Team, comprising interested Members, to guide and support the preparation of the MTS 2023-2028.

Twentieth meeting of the Council
 Abu Dhabi, 3-4 November 2020

Context: Pursuant to decision C/3/DC/3, the Administration and Finance Committee (hereafter “AFC” or “Committee”) met on 28 October 2020. It reviewed matters related to the Annual Report of the Director-General on the implementation of the Work Programme and Budget for 2020-2021, Staff Tenure Policy, Secondment of Personnel, Audited Financial Statements of IRENA for 2019 and Status of Implementation of external audit recommendations, Selection of the External Auditor, Indicative IRENA Scale of Contributions for 2021, Status of Collection of Assessed Contributions and Advances to the Working Capital Fund, 2019 Annual Report of the Provident Fund Management Board on Operations of the Staff Provident Fund of IRENA, Activities of the Internal Audit Office, and Internal Audit Recommendations and Actions Taken.

Outcome: A set of views and comments captured by the Chair in his summary below to be presented to the Council at its meeting on 3 and 4 November 2020.

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

The following comments and recommendations were made:

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

- The Director-General introduced the ‘Annual Report of the Director-General on the Implementation of the Work Programme and Budget for 2020-2021’, contained in document C/20/2. The Secretariat provided an overview of Finance and Human Resources Sections in the Annual Report.
- One participant raised a question on the status of pending recruitments and whether these vacant positions will be filled or if recruitments will be delayed until the pandemic eases.
- The Director-General confirmed that all visas were blocked for a certain period of time; however, restrictions have been reduced and based on recent discussions with the Host Country, issuance of visas has resumed for certain categories of the workforce, and onboarding of certain positions will commence. The Secretariat further stated that recruitment processes continued throughout this period but onboarding of staff was adversely affected by COVID regulations.
- The Chair of the AFC encouraged the Secretariat to reflect on lessons learnt and modalities adopted during the pandemic and to consider which of these could be continued in the future.
- One participant requested an analysis of the impact of the pandemic on projects and financial resources of the Agency noting that such an analysis could be useful in the future.
- The Secretariat confirmed that the impact of the pandemic is reflected in the Annual Report already presented and noted that whilst there was an adverse impact on travel and meetings, this did not significantly affect the quality of Agency’s support to its Members.
- The AFC took note of the report and decided to submit it to the Council.

2. Staff Tenure Policy

- The Director-General introduced the ‘Report of the Director-General - Staff Tenure Policy’, contained in document C/19/3. He noted that the report, as recommended at the eighteenth meeting of the Council and approved at the tenth session of the IRENA Assembly, addresses the implications of the proposal to exclude General Services staff from the present tenure policy, including the number of staff affected, their roles, and the costs associated with the exclusion. As requested by the Assembly at its tenth session, the report also includes a further review of the option for rehiring of ex-IRENA staff.
- The Director-General noted that there is no clear and consistent approach to rehiring former staff among the tenure organisations reviewed, though it is expected that rehiring staff should bring new knowledge and expertise to the organisation. To allow staff to obtain new skills or academic qualifications, a four-year break in service was suggested prior to rehire.
- Several participants expressed support for the four-year break in service prior to rehire of ex-IRENA staff members and endorsed lifting the tenure policy for General Services staff members. They requested further information in this regard, including detailed analysis on cost savings and the differentiation of core and non-core General Services staff.
- The Secretariat provided further details on the factors considered for the cost analysis for the tenure report and agreed that cost savings can be assessed in further depth.
- The Chair of the AFC suggested that following the interventions and comments, this be given further consideration at the twenty-first meeting of the Council.
- The AFC took note of the presentation and report and decided to submit the report to the Council for its consideration.

3. Secondment of Personnel

- The Secretariat introduced the ‘Report of the Director-General – Secondment of Personnel’, contained in document C/20/8.
- The AFC took note of the report and decided to submit it to the Council.

4. Audited Financial Statements of IRENA for 2019 and Status of Implementation of External Audit Recommendations

- The Secretariat introduced the ‘Audited Financial Statements of IRENA for 2019’, contained in document C/19/4, and informed that no external audit recommendations were made for this period.
- One participant welcomed the report of Annual Financial Statements and noted the consistent improvement in the financial position of the Agency.
- The AFC took note of the report and decided to submit it to the Council.

5. Selection of the External Auditor

- The Secretariat introduced the ‘Report of the Director-General Selection of the External Auditor’ as contained in document C/20/5.
- The AFC took note of the report and decided to submit it to the Council.

6. Indicative Scale of contributions for 2021

- The Secretariat introduced the ‘Report of the Director-General Indicative IRENA Scale of Contributions for 2021’ as contained in document C/20/6.
- The AFC took note of the report and decided to submit it to the Council.

7. Status of Collection of Assessed Contributions

- The Secretariat introduced the ‘Report of the Director-General on the Status of Collection of Assessed Contributions and Advances to the Working Capital Fund’ as contained in document C/20/INF/2.
- The AFC took note of the report and decided to submit it to the Council.

8. 2019 Annual Report of the Provident Fund Management Board on Operations of the Staff Provident Fund of IRENA

- The Secretariat introduced the ‘2019 Annual Report of the Provident Fund Management Board on Operations of the Staff Provident Fund of IRENA’, contained in document C/19/5.
- The AFC took note of the report and decided to submit it to the Council

9. 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 documents C/19/6 and C/20/7.
- One participant commented on one recommendation 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 queried whether it would be easy for the newly-hired staff members from 2021 onward to open a “USD” bank account to receive their salaries and stated that this should be taken into account before a decision is made.
- The Secretariat explained that the current practice of transferring EUR equivalent to staff with EUR bank accounts has always been the practice of the Agency since inception and does result in either exchange gains or losses for the Agency. The relevant currency exchange losses of USD 30,000, incurred in the year 2020, are considered part of the cost of business.
- The AFC considered the report and decided to submit it to the Council for its consideration.

Nineteenth and twentieth meeting of the Council
Abu Dhabi, 3-4 November 2020

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