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International Atomic Energy Agency

Statement

74th World Health Assembly

Agenda item 17. Public health emergencies: preparedness and response.

17.1 COVID-19 response

Read by: Ms. Najat Mokhtar, Deputy Director General of the Department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications

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The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical importance of international cooperation during a global crisis. The IAEA is proud to work with WHO and be part of the UN Crisis Management Team.

The IAEA has a longstanding experience in assisting countries in tackling animal and zoonotic diseases such as Avian influenza, Ebola, MERS and Zika. In response to the COVID-19, the IAEA activated its biggest cooperation project in its history. With the support of Member States, the IAEA has assisted 286 laboratories in 128 countries and territories around the world. The IAEA assistance included the provision of equipment and materials, as well as technical advice and guidance to individual laboratories, the issuance of guidelines and standard operating procedures, and the delivery of targeted webinar series in different UN languages.

The experience with the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the scientific and infrastructure gaps among countries to have a coordinated response to deal with the outbreaks of zoonotic diseases. The IAEA ZODIAC, the Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action Project is launched to contribute to enhancing the global preparedness by strengthening the capacities of countries in using nuclear and nuclear derived techniques.

Stemming from the IAEA's longstanding experience and by the recognition that many countries still do not have the basic infrastructure to detect zoonotic diseases, the IAEA's ZODIAC initiative aims, among others, to enable countries to access to training, equipment, expertise for the implementation of detection and diagnostic techniques; being

part of a global network of national laboratories to conduct coordinated actions to develop their research capabilities, etc. The ZODIAC ultimately aims to enable laboratories to produce quality information for science-based decision making by the country as well as the international community.

The IAEA looks forward to continuing our close collaboration with all the stake holders in this endeavor.

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