

Opening Statement by Ambassador Tebogo Seokolo, Permanent Representative and Governor of South Africa to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on the occasion of the 58th session of the General Conference of the IAEA

Participants, guests and the Director-General of the IAEA, good morning.

This year again we have the participation of many Ministers and senior officials from Member States. I welcome them all to this session of the General Conference and, at the same time, I would like to note that this high level participation enhances the standing of the IAEA as the foremost forum for international cooperation in the peaceful and safe use of nuclear energy.

Distinguished Delegates,

This conference takes place at a poignant time in the international development discourse. We are on the eve of the intergovernmental process to agree on the Post-2015 Development agenda. The challenges of extreme poverty, inequality and unemployment remain acute, especially in the developing countries. The IAEA is therefore uniquely placed to play a significant role in supporting Member States efforts to use nuclear technology for socio-economic development. *Indeed the Agency has contributed positively in this regard but a lot more can still be done.*

Through its nuclear applications laboratories in Seibersdorf, the Agency continues to provide the much needed support to Member States in such areas as food and agriculture, water management, human health and environmental protection. However as we all correctly observed during the previous conference, the Seibersdorf Laboratories will not be able to discharge these vital services to Member States in their current condition. It is for this reason that we welcome the Agency's strategy to renovate these laboratories, pursuant to the General Conference resolution adopted in 2013. We particularly welcome the fact that the renovation strategy encompasses all the important elements including the bio-safety animal laboratory. In this regard, we wish to thank all

Member States who have pledged additional resources for the ReNuAI project and appeal to others to do so.

The question of resources for technical cooperation has been one of the challenges that have confronted us for many years. Last year, the General Conference called for the establishment of a working group to look at the financing for the Agency including making the resources for technical cooperation sufficient, assured and predictable. We welcome the fact that the working group has produced a consensual document containing a set of recommendations that we believe will assist us to respond to this challenge. This is not an issue that should divide Member States, for we all share a common vision of creating a world that is just and equitable.

Distinguished Delegates,

Energy Security remains one of the key objectives of all Governments across the globe. Nuclear energy constitutes an integral part of most countries energy mix, especially in developing countries. Notwithstanding the Fukushima Daiichi Accident, the global trends indicate that nuclear technology remains safe, clean and economically viable. According to the Director-General's report entitled "*International Status and Prospects for Nuclear Power 2014*", there are 72 nuclear power reactors that are under construction and 38 of which are located in the developing countries. The report further notes that there are 33 countries that have expressed an interest in introducing nuclear power. All these trends indicate that the demands for the services of the Agency will continue to increase.

As we promote the use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, we must continue to give the necessary assurances to our people that due attention is given to issues of safety and security. In this regard, we are looking forward to the finalization of the Fukushima Daiichi Accident report in order to draw the appropriate lessons and make the necessary adjustments. Similarly, we are looking forward to the 2016 Nuclear Security Ministerial Conference. This Conference will again reaffirm the essential responsibility and the centrality of the Agency in the international nuclear security architecture.

Distinguished Delegates,

The issue of safeguards implementation in the Islamic Republic of Iran has been with us for some time. Since our last conference, we have noted significant positive developments between Iran and the international community. As we all know, negotiations to resolve the current and past issues related to the Iranian nuclear programme are unfolding in two tracks: one track between Iran and the P5 +1 in the context of the Joint Plan of Action (JPA) and the other one, between Iran and the IAEA, in the context of the Framework for Cooperation. During the course of this year, we have received periodic updates on the implementation of the Framework for Cooperation between the Agency and Iran. We also welcome the High-Level meeting between the Director-General of the IAEA and the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, His Excellency, Dr Hassan Rouhani. We would like to encourage all the parties to remain resolute and deploy their best efforts in resolving this issue in a peaceful manner.

Strengthening the implementation of safeguards in an efficient and effective manner is an objective we all share. In the past seven months, we have had seven technical briefings by the Secretariat on the State Level Concept (SLC). These culminated in the publication by the Director-General of the Agency, of a Supplementary Document pursuant to last year's General Conference resolution. In the Supplementary Document the DG makes an assurance that the State Level Concept will be implemented within the existing legal frameworks between the Agency and the respective Member States and that safeguards implementation will be drawn purely on an objective criterion. We further welcome the DG's undertaking to continue to submit periodic reports to Member States on the implementation of safeguards measures.

Distinguished Delegates,

Previous IAEA General Conferences have made clear pronouncements on the establishment of a *Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and All Other Weapons of Mass Destruction*. Indeed the application of a full-scope Agency safeguards to all nuclear activities in the region will constitute an important confidence building measure

amongst all States in the region and a step in enhancing peace and security in the Middle East.

As I conclude, I wish to extend my country's profound gratitude for the honour bestowed on us on behalf of the African Group to preside over the 57th session of the General Conference. I particularly wish to thank you for the person support that you accorded my predecessor Ambassador Xolisa Mabhongo who so skillfully steered the proceedings of the 57th session to a successful outcome. Ambassador Mabhongo is with us here today in a different capacity and I am sure I speak on your behalf when I give him a special welcome to this session.

I thank you.