



STATEMENT BY THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DELIVERED BY

MINISTER OF ENERGY, MS TINA JOEMAT – PETTERSSON, MP

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

58TH SESSION OF THE

INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA)

GENERAL CONFERENCE

VIENNA

22TH TO 26TH SEPTEMBER 2014

Director General,
Honourable Ministers and Heads of Delegations,
Distinguished delegates,
Mr President,

At the outset, allow me on behalf of the South African Government to congratulate you on the occasion of your election as the President of the 58th General Conference.

Let me also extend my congratulations and welcome to the Union of Comores, Republic of Djibouti, Co-operative Republic of Guyana and the Republic of Vanuatu on their admission as new members to the Agency.

Mr President,

South Africa is committed to the achievement and maintenance of a world free of nuclear weapons and therefore remains committed to the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* which forms the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime. The obligations under the Treaty were entered into on the basis of the historical bargain between the nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear-weapon States in terms of which the former undertook to eliminate their nuclear weapons based on the reciprocal undertaking by the latter not to pursue the nuclear weapons option.

We look forward to the 2015 NPT Review Conference where we will have the opportunity to review implementation of all undertakings made in the context of the Treaty and its review process, and to build on these undertakings in a concrete way.

Our vision of a nuclear weapons free world is informed by the unacceptable humanitarian consequences of a nuclear weapon detonation, whether by design or accident. In this regard, we would like to take the opportunity to express our support and appreciation for the next *Conference on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons* which Austria will host later this year.

Mr President,

Of course, the inalienable right to the peaceful utilization of nuclear energy as set out in Article IV [four] of the NPT is an essential objective of the Treaty and the basis for our work here at the Agency. We have consistently cautioned against any decision that would amount to a reinterpretation of or restriction on this inalienable right. We believe that each country's choices and decisions in the field of peaceful uses in conformity with the provisions of the Treaty should be respected.

Access to electricity generated by clean energy sources remains one of the most pressing issues concerning sustainable development for the future. The challenge ahead of us is to address sustainably the increasing energy demand and solve some of the problems faced by the world but especially the developing nations. To that effect, my Country remains committed to nuclear energy, as an integral part of a sustainable energy mix while mitigating the risks of climate change.

As you will be aware, South Africa will be embarking on a significant expansion of our nuclear power generating capacity. Important milestones have already been reached in finalizing various strategies to strengthen our institutional capacity. Our *Integrated Resource Plan* makes provision for the procurement of an additional 9 600 MW of nuclear power capacity to be commissioned as from 2023. An energy security cabinet sub-committee is providing oversight, coordination and high level decisions on the entire energy mix, including the nuclear build

programme. A major priority is the training and development of human resources to fully support and master all aspects related to the nuclear power programme and industry. We look forward to developing and maintaining the necessary skills through cooperation with international partners, notably the Agency.

Mr President,

South Africa attaches great importance to the Technical Cooperation programme of the Agency and commends the IAEA for its support for this programme. The programme contributes towards the utilisation of nuclear technology in support of sustainable socio-economic growth not only in South Africa, but also throughout our Continent.

I am pleased to report that we are participating in a project to recover orphan sources through the *Mobile Hot Cell* missions in cooperation with IAEA. To date, missions have been undertaken in Countries such as the Sudan, Tanzania, Uruguay, the Philippines and Costa Rica. Good progress has also been made on the *Sterile Insect Technique* project. The First Coordination Meeting for the new Tsetse Project will be held at the Agricultural Research Council, Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute, during the week of 10-11 November 2014.

South Africa would like to convey its gratitude for the continued support from the Agency on the establishment of the neutron beamline facilities at the SAFARI-1 Research Reactor. This will contribute to a significant increase in the research outputs at the South African Nuclear Energy Cooperation and other external users.

Mr President and distinguished delegates,

It is vitally important that we make nuclear power as safe as possible as we continue to rely on it as part of our energy mix. In this regard, South Africa welcomes the Agency's continued efforts to strengthen the global nuclear safety framework and the support it provides to nuclear safety infrastructure development in Member States that are introducing nuclear power or expanding their existing programmes.

In light of the Fukushima Daiichi accident, safety re-assessments revealed no major shortcomings in the safety of our Koeberg nuclear power plant and SAFARI -1 research reactor. However, a number of modifications and operating procedures were identified to further improve safety, including additional studies beyond the current design basis. South Africa continues to engage internationally on lessons learned from the Fukushima Daiichi accident and looks forward to the Agency's final report on the accident.

South Africa appreciates the *Operational Safety Review Team* missions conducted in 2011 and 2013 at the Koeberg nuclear power plant and the *Integrated Safety Assessment of Research Reactors* conducted at the SAFARI-1 research reactor in 2013. In February 2014, my Country welcomed an IAEA *Emergency Preparedness Review* expert Mission. This independent review identified good practices and provided recommendations to address the areas requiring further attention. Consequently our *National Nuclear Disaster Management Plan* will be amended accordingly in 2015.

A peer review conducted in 2014 by the *World Association of Nuclear Operators* at the Koeberg nuclear power plant showed significant improvement since the previous review in 2011. I am also pleased to announce that during the 2013/14 financial year, Koeberg nuclear power plant broke a number of its own performance records. Further, an

initiative to replace the steam generators of the two units at Koeberg nuclear power plant is underway.

South Africa attaches importance towards international and regional cooperation to enhance information sharing in the fields of nuclear applications, safeguards, safety and security. In this regard South Africa continues to participate in various IAEA safety committees, technical meetings and regional workshops. South Africa's nuclear regulator and our nuclear operators also continue to contribute to the work of international organisations in their respective fields.

Mr President,

I am pleased to report that since the previous General Conference, South Africa established a *National Radioactive Waste Disposal Institute* that is responsible for the management and disposal of all forms of radioactive waste on a national basis. One of the major tasks that lies ahead for the Institute will be to design and construct new radioactive waste interim storage and disposal facilities. The Institute will be leading a site selection planning process to identify suitable geological sites in the country for the location of these facilities.

Mr President,

South Africa believes that we should remain vigilant of the nuclear security risks inherent in the continued existence of nuclear weapons, in addition to those posed by nuclear terrorism, the illicit nuclear network and criminal acts, as well as the use of nuclear or other radioactive material for malicious acts. In addressing these risks, South Africa remains committed to a multilateral approach, with the Agency playing a central role to promote nuclear security through a co-operative approach in the relevant multilateral organisations.

We therefore welcome the nuclear security conference which the Agency is planning for 2016 and pledge our full cooperation with the Agency and fellow Member States as we build on the sound foundation of the 2013 conference.

At the 2012 General Conference, we reported on our intention to establish a national nuclear forensics capability at the South African Nuclear Energy Corporation. I am pleased to report that the national nuclear forensics capability has now been established. We also recently upgraded some of our facilities in line with the IAEA security guidelines.

I am pleased to report that South Africa in collaboration with the IAEA will host an *“International Training Course on Nuclear material Accounting and Control for nuclear security at Facilities”* in South Africa in November 2014.

Mr President,

The safeguards system contributes to mutual confidence in the peaceful nature of a State's nuclear activities and the absence of undeclared nuclear activities or material. This greatly facilitates the transfer of nuclear technology and the use of nuclear energy to the benefit of developing countries. My delegation reiterates its confidence in the IAEA as the only internationally recognized competent authority responsible for verifying and assuring compliance with safeguards agreements of Member States.

South Africa has consistently and in various fora expressed support for measures that strengthen the safeguards system with a view to bolster efforts to address the challenge posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Starting with the existing safeguards instruments, we continue to encourage those States that have yet to adopt *Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements*, to do so as a matter of priority. My delegation also takes note of the increase in the number of States with additional protocol agreements, and would like to commend the Government of India for entering into force its additional protocol in July 2014.

We also urge the States who have not yet done so, to conclude and enter in force the Additional Protocol, which is an important voluntary measure to build global confidence and to provide credible assurances regarding the peaceful uses of nuclear technology.

South Africa welcomes the discussions on the *State-level Concept*, since the previous General Conference which culminated in the publication of the Supplementary Document. In particular, we note the assurance provided by the Director General in his statement to the Board that the *State-Level Concept* does not, and will not, entail the introduction of additional rights or obligations on the part of Member States or the Agency, nor does it involve any modification in existing rights and obligations.

We underscore the importance of maintaining an impartial and objective approach in the implementation of the Agency's safeguards.

Mr President,

South Africa attaches importance to the work done by Agency's Nuclear Application laboratories. This is an important element of the Agency's efforts in fields such as agriculture, human health and water. The laboratories celebrated their 50th anniversary in 2012. It is indisputable that new facilities and equipment are urgently required if the Agency is to continue contributing nuclear technologies for peaceful purposes.

South Africa welcomes the progress made since the adoption the 2012 GC resolution on the modernization of the laboratories. We call on all Member States to support the renovation of the Seibersdorf Laboratories to assure that the Agency can continue to meet the needs of its Member States in future.

Mr President,

South Africa continues to be a leading supplier of critical radioactive isotopes to the global radio-pharmaceutical Industry. One of the many radioisotopes products supplied by South Africa is the Molybdenum-99 which we export to over 60 countries.

In conjunction with other partners, South Africa has played a leading role in ensuring continuous supply of this critical radioisotope particularly during recent outages in other Molybdenum producing countries. We remain committed to the global initiative to reduce the use of High Enriched Uranium where it is economically and technically feasible.

Mr President,

South Africa reiterates its firm conviction that *Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones* play an important role in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

In this context, the Pelindaba Treaty, that establishes the *African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone*, is an African success story and is a reflection that as a region, we are able to work together to achieve our common security objectives.

The Treaty provides for the establishment of the *African Commission on Nuclear Energy* whose role inter alia includes the promotion of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy under IAEA safeguards and ensures that radioactive wastes are not dumped within the zone of application of our treaty. I am pleased to report that the process is nearing conclusion and that we are finalising the host country agreement.

Mr President,

South Africa has always prioritized open communication to build confidence on the safe and secure operation of our nuclear facilities. Communication is also aimed at demystifying nuclear energy and conveying to our population the many benefits derived from the use of nuclear energy. We hold regular meetings with communities adjacent to our nuclear facilities to inform and receive feedback from them. In addition we have a range of social responsibility programmes including support for education initiatives.

In conclusion, Mr President, South Africa will continue to participate actively in the work of the IAEA and will contribute to the strengthening and the enhancement of the role of this important Agency.

With these remarks, my delegation looks forward to working with other delegations to ensure a successful Conference.

I thank you.