

**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY MR A.T. CHIKONDO,
SENIOR PRINCIPAL DIRECTOR OFFICE OF THE
PRESIDENT AND CABINET OF THE REPUBLIC OF
ZIMBABWE: 60TH REGULAR SESSION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA)
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Mr President,

May I start by joining previous speakers in congratulating you on your election to steer the work of the 60th Session of the IAEA General Conference. I wish to pledge my delegation's active participation, full support to, and co-operation with you towards the successful discharge of your mandate.

Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate the IAEA on its 60th anniversary. Indeed these have been 60 remarkable years for all the member states.

May I further take this opportunity to welcome the new members who are now part of the IAEA family.

Mr President,

Zimbabwe attaches great importance to the mandate and work of the IAEA, in particular to the multi-faceted assistance and support that the Agency continues to offer to the country, and indeed to other Member States. Zimbabwe became a member of the IAEA in 1986; and its collaboration with the Agency has evolved from strength to strength in such areas as health in particular radiotherapy and cancer management; animal disease control and tsetse-fly eradication; radiation and nuclear safety; crop breeding as well as energy planning and capacity building. In all these spheres of co-operation, the practical assistance and support of the Agency has contributed immensely to improved livelihoods and general well-being of the Zimbabwean citizens.

Zimbabwe has drafted the Country Programme Framework 2016-2020 which is being reviewed by the IAEA technical teams. Zimbabwe expects to have signed this CPF by the end of 2016. The focus for this period will be to align the Technical Cooperation (TC) activities to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as Zimbabwe's economic development blue print, the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (Zim Asset). Nuclear techniques can be harnessed to assist the attainment of some of the SDGs especially those related to agriculture productivity, human health, access to clean sources of water as well as energy.

As an agro-based economy, Zimbabwe is grateful to, and appreciative of, the assistance rendered by the IAEA during the 2015-2016 programming cycle. In particular, the Crop Breeding Institute received support in executing two projects, one national and another regional. The National TC project is a joint project between the Crop Breeding Institute (CBI) and Chemistry and Soils Research Institute (CBI) of the Department of Research and Specialist Services (DR&SS).

The objective of the project is to use a farmers' participatory approach in which multi-location evaluation trials of 14 advanced, elite mutant lines is in progress. Two cowpea mutant lines have been selected for distinctiveness, uniformity and stability (DUS) submission in 2016/17 season and the varieties will be released in 2017, based on high grain yield potential, drought tolerance and large seed size.

Zimbabwe has also been receiving support from the Agency through the project ZIM5020 - "Optimising Water Use and Soil Productivity for Increased Food Security in Drylands", designed to enhance national food security through farmer participation in sustainable technologies that optimize soil water and nutrient use. A number of activities were conducted under the project, which includes; Research on soil nutrient and water dynamics under different tillage systems.

Trials were run among small scale farmers in the country to evaluate strategies that improve soil fertility and restoration of degraded arable fields using chemical and biofertilizers in a maize-legume rotation.

Mr President,

Zimbabwe also wishes to express its satisfaction and appreciation with the decision of the IAEA to avail funding for the 2016-2017 programming cycle to an important national project titled “Establish Molecular Epidemiology Research/Diagnostic Methods, Tissue Culture and Production of Biological Reagent and Antigens for Surveillance of Disease of Economic and Zoonotic Importance.”

Further, through the long running project titled *“Improving crop and livestock production and productivity through eradication of bovine and human trypanosomiasis in Matusadona National Park”* we expect to eventually eradicate all tsetse flies from this area of 1200 km².

With the assistance of the IAEA, the Government of Zimbabwe intends to eradicate tsetse flies from areas in and around the national park using the Sterile Insect Technique (SIT). Feasibility studies of the project have now been completed.

The use of the Sterile Insect Techniques to eradicate tsetse flies is a relatively new method not only to Zimbabwe but other African countries as well. Zimbabwe is grateful to the Agency for the support rendered in 2016 on this project.

To this end, Government has started mobilising additional resources to fund the breeding, air freighting and release of sterile flies in the project area.

Mr President,

Cancer has emerged as the number one killer in Zimbabwe. In the fight against this public health challenge, the IAEA has been a helpful and willing partner which has contributed significantly through

technical advice, fellowships to medical radiation users, as well as the provision of equipment. This cooperation with the Agency has resulted in the establishment of the Master of Science (MSc) in Medical Physics programme in the country.

The Government of Zimbabwe appreciates the Agency`s support in sending in experts to lecture on the programme. The first batch of students is now in their second year of study and is expected to graduate in 2017. Medical Physicists are a vital component of any cancer management programme as they assure the correct and safe usage of the sophisticated equipment used in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer. There is a world -wide shortage of clinical medical physicists more so in the African region. This programme is expected to ease this shortage.

Further the Government would also like to acknowledge the training of a Nuclear Medicine Physician through IAEA funding over the past three years as part of the on going programme to capacitate the local health centres in the treatment of cancer. A second prospective Nuclear Medicine Physician earmarked will commence training fellowship in January 2017.

Zimbabwe has made progress in radiotherapy service provision in the past year. The second biggest hospital is now ready to provide radiotherapy services after the commissioning of one state of the art Linear Accelerator. Work is also at advanced stages to install and commission the second equally modern Linear Accelerator at this hospital.

Zimbabwe appreciates the technical expertise provided by the Agency to strengthen existing training programs for radiation oncologists and radiotherapy treatment technicians (RTTs). Zimbabwe is now ready to partner the IAEA and open the training in these two radiation medicine disciplines to the African region as a whole by hosting IAEA fellows in need of such training.

With improved infrastructure comes the demand of human resources to maintain and operate the equipment. In that regard, Zimbabwe looks forward to continued support in fellowship training to improve our human resource capacity.

Mr President,

Zimbabwe appreciates the on-going cooperation with the Agency in the strengthening of nuclear security infrastructure within the aegis of the country`s framework of the Integrated Nuclear Security Support Plan. Extensive progress has been made to finalise the Nuclear Security Detection Architecture Project that will lead to the deployment of detection equipment at the country`s points of entry and exit and internal strategic locations.

Zimbabwe is also looking forward to the national workshop to finalise Concepts of Operation (CONOPs) and Standards Operating Procedures (SOPs) that is scheduled for 10-14 October 2016 that will be facilitated by the Agency. Thereafter Zimbabwe will deploy detection equipment at three major entry and exit points before the end of October 2016. This will go a long way in improving the country`s capability to deal with nuclear and other radioactive material out of radiation control.

In addition, Zimbabwe welcomes the support of the Agency in strengthening capabilities to respond to Nuclear Security Events. The Agency facilitated a National workshop to develop a national capability development plan that was held from 20-22 September 2016. To this end, Zimbabwe fully recognizes that the responsibility for security falls under the State and thus it fully commits itself to further strengthen nuclear security infrastructure.

In conclusion, Zimbabwe would like to commend the International Atomic Energy Agency for arranging the Ministerial Nuclear Security Conference scheduled for December 2016. The Conference will serve as an important platform for strengthening global nuclear security.

I THANK YOU