OPENING REMARKS AT
RINDERPEST FREEDOM CELEBRATION
20 SEPTEMBER 2011

Thank you, Ms Tutwiler.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to welcome you to this celebration of the global eradication of rinderpest. Eliminating this deadly disease is a momentous achievement, which is bringing immense economic benefits to many developing countries. The IAEA is proud to have played its part.

Our technical partnership with the FAO, the World Organisation for Animal Health, the African Union and national governments in the development of immunological and nuclear related technologies for the diagnosis and control of rinderpest was fundamental to the success of this project.

I thank the Member States of the IAEA for their commitment and unwavering support during the eradication process.

The IAEA was instrumental in developing the Enzyme Linked Immunosorbent Assay platform – known as ELISA – which evolved from a research tool into an affordable diagnostic laboratory technology.

Easy-to-use kits were provided to laboratories in the field, specifically designed for use in the 34 countries participating in the Pan African Eradication Campaign.

Through its Technical Cooperation programme, the IAEA trained national veterinary staff across Africa to use the ELISA Kit as a monitoring tool in the fight against rinderpest, and helped establish a feedback system.

I am especially proud of the work done on rinderpest by the Joint FAO/IAEA Division.

This involved coordinated research and technical cooperation projects, with financial and technical support from partners including the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the European Commission, the UK Institute for Animal Health, and France's Agricultural Research Centre for International Development.

Although the world is now free from rinderpest, the expertise of the Joint FAO/IAEA Division will still be called upon in the immediate and longer term post-eradication phase. The rinderpest virus is being preserved in a number of laboratories, mainly for the production of vaccines in case the disease should reappear. The IAEA has been asked by the Joint FAO/OIE Commission on Rinderpest to be responsible for the monitoring of the laboratories and to take the lead for rinderpest virus sequestration.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The same technologies used to eliminate rinderpest are now being successfully applied to diagnose and control other transboundary animal diseases. The IAEA will continue to attach high priority to helping Member States effectively use nuclear science and related technologies to increase food production and contribute to economic development.

Thank you.