



STATEMENT DELIVERED BY DEPUTY MINISTER OF ENERGY,
AMBASSADOR THEMBISILE MAJOLA, MP
ON BEHALF OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

61ST SESSION OF THE IAEA GENERAL CONFERENCE

19 SEPTEMBER 2017

VIENNA

Madam President
Director General
Honorable Ministers and Heads of Delegation
Distinguished Delegates

On behalf of the Government of South Africa, I congratulate you Madam President, and your Team on your election to lead the 61st Session of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) General Conference. Please be assured of my delegations cooperation.

Let me also congratulate Grenada for becoming a new member of the IAEA.

South Africa would also like to congratulate Mr Yukiya Amano on his re-appointment as Director General, and pledge our continued support and cooperation implementing the programme of the IAEA.

Madam President

This 61st session of the General Conference is timely since it coincides with the official opening for signature and ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 20 September 2017, in New York, which we encourage all Member States to support. This Treaty is a historic milestone in global efforts to establish and maintain a nuclear weapons free world. It will provide a powerful normative framework against nuclear weapons and will serve to complement relevant international instruments, such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the various nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties, and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which has yet to enter into force.

Madam President

The contribution of nuclear science and technology to socio-economic development has become a central focus of the work of the IAEA. The positive contribution by the Agency, through its motto *Atoms for Peace and Development*, in shaping the new global development agenda, more specifically the African Agenda 2063 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, is appreciated by South Africa.

Through its Technical Cooperation (TC) Programme, the IAEA provides the necessary support to Member States, especially African, in realizing national and regional development goals. Support in this regard covers areas such as human and animal health, food security and agriculture, environment and water resource management, and industrial applications. More specifically, the IAEA TC programme has greatly assisted Member States to use nuclear derived techniques to fight zoonotic diseases - animal diseases which affect human beings. It is understood that 70% of human communicable diseases are acquired from and spread by animals. Therefore fighting animal diseases is central in safeguarding the health of our people.

It is in this context that South Africa has supported the IAEA's project to strengthen regional and national veterinary laboratories for the early detection of zoonotic diseases in wildlife and livestock. This project - the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (VETLAB) Network project - which was initially targeted to support laboratories in sub-Saharan Africa has grown to over 44 laboratories in Africa and expanded to 19 in Asia. In Africa, the VETLABs continue to ensure the competitiveness of the livestock industry and access to international markets. Given the value of the VETLAB Network, it is therefore important for Member States to continue to provide funding to ensure the sustainability of this project. South Africa joins the call made by the Group of 77 and China for funding for the TC Programme to be Sufficient, Assured and Predictable. Similarly we also appeal to all Member States to honour their assessed commitments on time and in full.

Madam President

The Nuclear Applications Laboratories at Seibersdorf are at the core of the conduct of research and development and training in the areas of food and agriculture, human and animal health, and water resource management. Through these laboratories the IAEA shares expertise, facilitates capacity-building and enhances collaboration with Member States.

South Africa welcomes commendable progress made towards the renovation and modernisation of these laboratories through the ReNuAL initiative. In particular, we are

pleased with the completion of the first phase of the project made possible through generous contribution of Member States. Construction for the second phase has begun and I appeal to all Member States to pledge additional resources to maintain the momentum towards the successful completion of the project.

Madam President

Energy security is central to economic development across the world. The report published by the IAEA on the "*International Status and Prospects for Nuclear Power 2017*" indicates that there are 447 operational nuclear power reactors in 30 countries, and 60 are under construction in 15 countries. It similarly illustrates that the demand for nuclear power is on a positive trajectory demonstrating that it remains a viable option for Member States.

South Africa has an excellent track record for safely operating its nuclear facilities for more than fifty years, as Nuclear power is an integral part of our energy mix. Through our nuclear power plant Koeberg, the country has demonstrated its ability for long-term, safe operation. This is currently the lowest operating cost station in South Africa. In order to ensure energy security and mitigate the carbon footprint, we are engaged in efforts to expand its nuclear programme.

We therefore look forward to participating in the forthcoming IAEA International Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Power in the 21st Century, which no doubt will provide an opportunity for us to discuss and exchange views on the key issues related to the development and deployment of nuclear power.

Madam President

South Africa remains committed to ensuring and maintaining effective nuclear security measures in respect of all nuclear and other radioactive material, in accordance with our national and international obligations, and we therefore welcome the entry into force of the 2005 Amendment to Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. National efforts are at an advanced stage to ratify the amended convention.

Nuclear security is a global concern requiring international cooperation. The IAEA as an inclusive, multilateral forum is uniquely placed to coordinate international efforts and to support Member States, upon request.

In this context South Africa welcomes the outcome of the International Nuclear Security Conference, which took place in December 2016. South Africa is pleased that the Conference reaffirmed Member States collective commitment to nuclear security, while recognizing that it must be addressed in a comprehensive manner. South Africa further wishes to underscore that measures to strengthen nuclear security should not hamper Member States inalienable right to pursue the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

South Africa welcomes and supports the adoption of the IAEA Nuclear Security Plan for 2018-2021 by consensus at the recent Board of Governors meeting. Undoubtedly this Plan will go a long way in assisting the IAEA to support Member States in their efforts to strengthen their respective nuclear security regimes. Accordingly, South Africa will review its nuclear security plan to align it, where appropriate, with international best practice.

Madam President

South Africa attaches great importance to the effective implementation of the IAEA's safeguards system in all states with safeguards agreements in force and in accordance with the IAEA's legal mandate and states obligations. Accordingly, South Africa continues to work closely with the IAEA to implement its safeguards obligations under the Integrated Safeguards approach, which was introduced in July 2015. The IAEA Safeguards Implementation Report (SIR) for 2016 indicates that South Africa continues to maintain its broader conclusion, confirming that the country's nuclear programme is exclusively for peaceful purposes.

Madam President

As many countries develop and expand their nuclear power programmes in order to respond to energy security challenges and needs, the issue of nuclear safety and the role of the Agency in coordinating international efforts to strengthen nuclear safety have become even more important.

My delegation welcomes the increasing number of requests for the Agency's peer review services from Member States, which underscores their value in strengthening nuclear safety. As part of strengthening our regulatory framework, South Africa hosted an Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) Mission in December 2016. We are in the process of crafting an action plan to address the findings of the Mission.

This year, the Agency hosted the 7th Review Meeting of the Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS), where South Africa presented a national report demonstrating the country's high level of nuclear safety and the extent to which the Vienna Declaration has been incorporated into our broader efforts.

South Africa therefore welcomes the initiatives undertaken by the IAEA in promoting the wider adherence to the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management and we are honoured that South Africa has been elected to serve as the President of the Joint Convention for 2018.

Madam President

Distinguished Delegates

As you are aware in October 2016 South Africa was elected to Chair the IAEA Board of Governors. Next week on 25 September our tenure will come to an end. During this period, we are pleased that the Board concluded by consensus a number of critical matters, including the Medium Term Strategic Framework, Appointment of the Director General, the Programme and Budget for 2018-2019, and most recently the Nuclear Security Plan 2018-2021.

We extend our sincerest gratitude to all Member States for their support. In particular, we thank the African Group for entrusting my country with this important responsibility - on its behalf.

I thank you