

**STATEMENT BY HON. Ms ELIZABETH A. OHENE,
MINISTER OF STATE FOR TERTIARY EDUCATION
AND SCIENCE, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE
AND SPORTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA
AT THE 52ND REGULAR SESSION OF THE GENERAL
CONFERENCE OF THE IAEA
VIENNA, AUSTRIA**

29TH SEPTEMBER - 4TH OCTOBER 2008

Mr. President,

Honourable Ministers,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Ghana delegation and in my own name I wish to extend my sincere congratulations to you on your election as President of the 52nd Regular Session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

I also want to congratulate members of the Bureau for their election. My delegation is confident that under your able leadership the Conference will be successful. I wish to assure you that you can count on the full support and cooperation of the Ghana delegation in the discharge of your duties.

Our appreciation goes to Dr. Mohammed ElBaradei, Director General of IAEA and his very competent staff for the excellent documentation prepared for this Conference, especially the 2007 Annual Report and the arrangements made for this Conference. We thank the Austrian authorities for being excellent hosts for the Agency.

Ghana welcomes the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Lesotho as Member States of the Agency.

Mr. President,

The 2007 Annual Report of the Director General confirms that the Agency's activities are central to the maximisation of the utilisation of nuclear technology for economic and social development as well as for preventing its misuse for non-peaceful purposes.

Mr President,

Ghana attaches great importance to the IAEA Technical Cooperation Programme and appreciates the Agency's role in partnership with Member States of Africa to use nuclear science and technology for addressing the many-sided socio-economic problems of human health, nutrition, agriculture, energy, industry and environment. My delegation would like to express its deep appreciation to the IAEA, especially the Director for Africa and his staff who made concerted efforts to implement Ghana's national, AFRA and other regional projects.

Mr. President,

My delegation is pleased to inform you that the research scientists of the three institutes and five centres of Ghana Atomic Energy Commission and other national research institutions and Universities are engaged in various research activities using nuclear and biotechnology techniques, which are well aligned to the development agenda of Ghana with the sole objective of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Our nuclear facilities are not only dedicated to research, education and training but also to the promotion of commercialisation. In order to achieve sustainability, we follow the AFRA guidelines and there are Business/Marketing Plans for income generation for major nuclear facilities and projects.

It is our objective that nuclear techniques should continue to play a critical role in crop improvement, pest management, food preservation, medical sterilisation, radiotherapy and nuclear medicine etc in our country. We shall continue to use non-destructive testing techniques including the use of radioisotopes and radiotracers for trouble-shooting and optimization of petrochemical and mining industries.

In our efforts to promote the commercialization of radiation processing of food and medical products, the government through the Export Development and Investment Fund (EDIF) has provided funds for the upgrading of the existing gamma irradiator. It is our cherished hope and firm belief that the facility will greatly enhance the export of agricultural produce and contribute largely to our health-care delivery system.

Mr. President,

With respect to human health, we are happy to note the considerable work, which is being done by the Agency. The WHO statistics quoted in the Director General's Report that 84 million people will die of cancer over the next ten years, with 75% of them from developing countries is frightening. We are happy though, to note the Agency's assertion that with adequate funding and resources, more than 40% of all cancers can be prevented and 30% can be cured, if detected early and treated.

At this juncture, Mr President, permit me to thank Dr. Mohammed ElBaradei for the major role he played in facilitating the acquisition of loans from the Arab Bank for Economic and Development (BADEA) and the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) for the expansion

and upgrading of the two existing Centres for Radiotherapy and Nuclear Medicine.

I am delighted to inform you that all necessary arrangements are being made to establish a Comprehensive Programme for Cancer Therapy (PACT) in Ghana. Recognising the upsurge of cancer in Ghana and the West African sub-region, my country has decided to establish a Radiological and Medical Sciences Research Institute to play a leading role in cancer research and the treatment of any radiological emergencies. We shall welcome any form of assistance from friendly countries to strengthen the establishment of infrastructure to support research and education in the new institute.

Mr. President,

It is the firm conviction of my delegation that human resources will constitute ultimately the basis for sustainability and growth of the nuclear industry in Ghana and Africa. It is for this reason that Ghana has established the Graduate School of Nuclear and Allied Sciences at the University of Ghana, in cooperation with the IAEA, for the preservation, maintenance and enhancement of nuclear knowledge. I am happy to inform you that the enrolment of the postgraduate school now stands at

138. There are 124 MPhil and 14 PhD students offering the eight accredited programmes. Ghana remains grateful to the Agency for its support in diverse ways, particularly for providing funds for some of the students pursuing PhD Sandwich programmes. Preparations are also in progress to run the harmonized African Masters degree in Nuclear Science and Technology and the Postgraduate Diploma in Radiation Protection programmes during the next academic year.

I am also pleased to inform you that the Training Department of the Graduate School of Nuclear and Allied Sciences has hosted many IAEA/AFRA training workshops and courses in various fields of nuclear technology including safety and security.

Mr. President,

Realising the need to strengthen the institutional capacity in nuclear science and technology, my country has embarked on the establishment of a National Accelerator Facility with emphasis on the use of ion beams for teaching and research in the field of nuclear physics and materials engineering. The beneficiaries of the accelerator technology will be research scientists and postgraduate students from the universities in Ghana and Africa. The building to house the accelerator is near

completion and the government has provided an amount of five hundred thousand US Dollars on cost sharing basis, towards the procurement of the equipment. I would like to reiterate our appeal to Member States to provide the extra-budgetary funding.

Mr. President,

In light of soaring food prices, amid challenges of climate change, energy security and the need for urgent and decisive action to address food security issues, the relevance of the Agency's contribution to agricultural development, particularly in African Member States cannot be overemphasised. It is against this backdrop that Ghana supports the initiative of the Agency which has culminated in the development of a groundwater assessment programme, using the technique of isotope hydrology. Undoubtedly, the initiative will improve water resources management in many African countries which are facing drought and non-availability of water. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Agency for the development and use of the Sterile Insect Technique (SIT). Ghana as a PATTEC participating country is involved in the mass-rearing and irradiation of the tsetse flies. We would also like to commend the Agency for the research and

development activities using the technique for the suppression and eradication of anopheles mosquitoes that cause malaria.

Mr. President,

The Government of Ghana has decided to generate electricity using nuclear power plants in the long term. We were pleasantly informed by the Agency of its willingness to work very closely with the national stakeholder institutions to establish the first nuclear power plant. We are looking forward to the workshop on issues related to the introduction of nuclear power to be presented by Agency staff in the first quarter of next year.

Mr. President,

My delegation would like to assure you and the international community that Ghana is fully committed to nuclear safeguard, safety and security and will continue to ensure that all practices of nuclear technology are conducted in a safe, secure and environmentally friendly manner. We commend the Agency for continuing to support national and international efforts for the safe and secure use of nuclear technology.

In Ghana, a draft legislation to establish an independent regulatory body, which has taken on board relevant international instruments has

been prepared and awaiting parliamentary approval. Special attention is also being paid to nuclear security issues. A committee comprising senior officials from national security agencies, operators of nuclear facilities and the regulatory body, oversees the planning and implementation of issues, including those based on Integrated Nuclear Security Support Plan (INSSP) and International Physical Protection Advisory Service (IPPAS). At this juncture, let me express Ghana's sincere gratitude to the Agency for the supply of equipment, provision of expert services and the organization of national and regional training courses.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I wish to state that Ghana reaffirms its full support to the Agency for performing creditably well its statutory duties related to nuclear safeguards, safety and security. We very much appreciate its technical cooperation programme and its role of transfer of nuclear technology to Member States. We call on all Member States to re-dedicate their nuclear activities to peaceful purposes and for the benefit and progress of mankind. For, while safety and security are primarily national responsibilities, failure can have far-reaching consequences beyond national borders. Ghana is looking forward to enhanced cooperation and partnership with the Agency.

On this note, Mr President, Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to thank you for your attention.