

**STATEMENT BY THE HEAD OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN  
DELEGATION, MS. DIPUO PETERS, MINISTER OF ENERGY,  
TO THE 53<sup>RD</sup> REGULAR SESSION OF THE IAEA  
GENERAL CONFERENCE**

**14 SEPTEMBER 2009**

Madam President,  
Director General,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates

Ambassador Macmillan, I would also like to add my country's congratulations and support on the assumption of your role as President of this General Conference.

South Africa also warmly welcomes the applications for Membership of the Agency by the Republic of Rwanda and the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Madam President,

Humanity is faced with critical challenges related to maintaining and enhancing its continued prosperity within the context of ever increasing demands being placed on sustainable food production, health and security. Of critical importance is the

availability and use of energy resources that would foster sustainable development and decrease greenhouse gas emissions. In this regard, the Agency is well placed to assist Member States in meeting these challenges.

These challenges require of the international community to recognize the mutually reinforcing roles of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, as we strive for the common objective of a world free of nuclear weapons. In this connection South Africa welcomes the entry into force of the Pelindaba Treaty creating a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone on the African continent. South Africa would like to take this opportunity to urge the remaining 24 African States to become parties to the Treaty.

Madam President,

It will be recalled that during the 52nd IAEA General Conference, South Africa shared its concerns regarding the inability of the international community, more especially developing countries and the African continent, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). This makes it imperative that we work together to coordinate our efforts in support of the Millennium Development Goals across the world. I believe that a clear focus on implementation of these goals will accelerate our efforts to make progress on existing commitments to support the world's development.

We are aware that climate change is a serious threat globally, especially for the energy sector. We hope that the Copenhagen Conference in December will take the necessary decisions, taking into account socio-economic development imperatives of developing nations.

Madam, President,

South Africa is committed to the use of nuclear energy as part of base-load energy generation and to building the associated industrial capacity to support this goal. In order to sustain our nuclear generating capacity in South Africa a cabinet level committee will be established to oversee and coordinate the implementation of this policy.

Also in line with the Policy, various strategic initiatives have commenced to prepare South Africa for nuclear energy expansion. A range of feasibility studies covering all important components of the nuclear fuel cycle are being undertaken by Necsa. The emphasis remains on the attainment of security of fuel supply for future national energy needs, while being economically viable and competitive in the global market. Relationships have also been developed with all main international players in fuel cycle services in this regard to ensure the latter perspective in these studies. At the same time preparations are progressing for the establishment of laboratories and facilities in order to establish a local skills and technology base to facilitate re-establishment of fuel cycle operations in South Africa.

Madam President,

As a demonstration of its commitment towards the responsible and sustainable use of nuclear technologies, South Africa's SAFAR-I reactor core was fully converted to permit the sole use of Low Enriched Uranium fuel. Substantial further progress has also been made in developing the technology to manufacture Low Enriched Uranium target plates for isotope production.

I am also pleased to share with you that the South African Nuclear Energy Corporation (Necsa) through its wholly-owned commercial subsidiary, NTP Radioisotopes, is assisting the efforts of addressing the world-wide shortage of these isotopes that the world currently face, by increasing production of Molybdenum-99 to the maximum permitted under its operating licenses. South Africa, through Necsa, is now also represented on a special OECD Committee that is looking at ways of stabilizing world supplies of this radioisotope.

Madam President,

The resurgence in uranium mining, as well as the nuclear energy expansion program will result in further increased competition for scarce skills. It is our firm belief that the sustainability of an appropriate level of nuclear technical capacity (engineers and scientists) remains a challenge worldwide.

South Africa thanks the Agency for its continued support in providing technical training and fellowship programmes.

Madam President,

The building of capacity and capability in self-assessment in the African region are important in encouraging greater cooperation among Regulatory Bodies in Africa. In this regard, I am pleased to report that South Africa through the National Nuclear Regulator (NNR) was instrumental in the formation of the Forum of Nuclear Regulatory Bodies in Africa (ANRBA) and hosted the forum's second meeting in South Africa on 26 March 2009.

Madam President,

I am pleased to announce that South Africa's National Nuclear Regulator, will be hosting the next IAEA International Conference on Effective Nuclear Regulatory Systems, scheduled to take place in Cape Town from 14 to 18 December 2009. International collaboration on matters of mutual interest with regard to nuclear safety regulation is of great importance.

Madam President,

The active involvement of the youth in the nuclear sector is important as they are the advocates for spreading the message about peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Our South African Youth Nuclear Professional Society (SAYNPS) is affiliated to the International Youth Nuclear Congress (IYNC). The South African

Young Nuclear Professionals Society has also won the bid to host the International Youth in Nuclear Congress 2010, which is scheduled to take place in South Africa in July 2010 immediately after the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

Madam President,

The issue of gender equality has long been high on South Africa's agenda. In 2004 the South African Minister of Minerals and Energy launched "Women in Nuclear South Africa" (WINSA), thus creating a forum for exchange of information among women from different nuclear institutions. As laid out in its charter, WINSA is a national forum for promoting broad-based understanding of nuclear technology, safety and non-proliferation, and advancing the empowerment of women in the nuclear field.

The President of South Africa, His Excellency Jacob Zuma has established a Ministry of Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities. As a partner in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), South Africa signed a binding Protocol on Gender and Development in August 2008. The Protocol aims to "Provide for the empowerment of women, to eliminate discrimination and to achieve gender equality and equity through the development and implementation of gender responsive legislation policies, programmes and projects." It includes 23 set targets, including that women will hold 50 percent of decision-making positions in the public and private sectors by 2015.

Madam President,

With regard to the safety of our facilities, South Africa is now engaged in the second 10-year safety review of its Koeberg nuclear facility that has been in operation for the past 25 years.

Madam President,

The management of radioactive waste, in particular the management of high level radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel, continues to pose a global challenge. To deal with this challenge, South Africa now has the National Radioactive Waste Disposal Institute Act (Act No.53 of 2008).

In addition to this, South Africa will continue to participate in international conventions, such as the Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS) and the Joint Convention on Spent Fuel Management and the Management of Radioactive Waste. At the 3<sup>rd</sup> IAEA Joint Convention Meeting on Spent Fuel Management and the Management of Radioactive Waste held in May 2009, South Africa presented its first National Report, which was well received.

Madam President,

AFRA plays a very active role in the sphere of nuclear science and technology, and will continue to play a leading role in the embodiment of the vision of the Pelindaba Treaty. During the past

year experts from the South African nuclear industry continued to assist the IAEA in the execution of its technical cooperation and skills transfer activities on a wide range of topics, especially as part of AFRA programmes. A total of 44 Expert Missions were conducted at the request of the IAEA, primarily to countries in Africa, the Middle East and South East Asia.

Madam, President,

South Africa recently hosted an IAEA nuclear security delegation in May 2009, with the mission of determining the Country's nuclear security needs regarding the hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup tournament. We would like to commend the Agency for its continuous support and assistance, especially during the time when the country is about to host this major public event. We will welcome all assistance in this project within the context of the Agency.

Madam President,

South Africa believes that there is a need for the strengthening of the Agency's Safeguards System. Safeguards verification remains an effective tool to provide confidence in the safe and secure usage of nuclear applications. In this regard, we believe that the Additional Protocol is a highly effective instrument in providing assurances regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities, especially in those Member States with significant nuclear activities. South Africa believes that it

is incumbent upon all States with nuclear technical capabilities to build confidence and provide assurances that nuclear capability is being used for peaceful purposes only.

Madam President,

South Africa welcomes the reports by the Director-General on the nuclear programmes of the DPRK and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

With regard to the DPRK we share the concern of other Member States about the termination of the IAEA monitoring and verification activities in the DPRK. South Africa urges and encourages the DPRK to allow the IAEA inspectors to carry out its monitoring and verification activities in its territory.

South Africa has consistently called upon the DPRK to fully and verifiably terminate any nuclear weapons programme, to return to the NPT as soon as possible, to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and to place all its nuclear facilities and materials under comprehensive IAEA safeguards.

On Iran we are encouraged by the increased cooperation between the Agency and the Islamic Republic of Iran and urges Iran to fully co-operate with the Agency and implement the binding resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in order to resolve the matter, whilst at the same

time, it is allowed to develop nuclear technology for peaceful applications in conformity with the letter and spirit of the NPT.

We also note that there exists a window of opportunity arising from the readiness of concerned parties to initiate talks, which we hope would lead to substantial discussions to resolve the issues surrounding Iran's nuclear programme.

Madam President,

I wish to place on record South Africa's highest regard for the exemplary work and achievements of Dr. ElBaradei and the International Atomic Energy Agency over the last twelve years. Dr ElBaradei has led the Agency with great dignity, integrity and impartiality, virtues that contributed towards building confidence about the work of the Agency, as was evidenced by the award of a Nobel Peace prize. I wish Dr. ElBaradei every success for the future.

In conclusion, South Africa welcomes the incoming IAEA Director General, Ambassador Yukia Amano of Japan, and expresses its commitment to working constructively with the new DG and the Secretariat.

I thank you.