

INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA) MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
28 – 30 November 2018

Statement by Honourable Minister Wera Mori, MP member for Chuave
Minister for Trade Commerce and Industry of Papua New Guinea.

1. Introduction

Thank you Co-chairs & Excellencies and good morning all delegates, let me begin by introducing myself. My name is Wera Mori, I am the Minister for Commerce and Industry of Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the Minister responsible for the National Institute of Standards and Industrial Technology (NISIT), NISIT is the only mandated Standards and Conformance Authority in PNG and is earmarked to take on the Regulatory and Policy responsibilities for the safety and control of Radiation Sources and their usage in PNG.

2. Acknowledgement

At the outset, I wish to acknowledge the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for organising this Ministerial conference. My delegation is e thankful that you have invited PNG to participate in this very important Ministerial conference. I am thankful to be here with my delegation as we have much to learn in understanding our responsibilities as a member of this esteem International Body.

My delegation also includes the Director General of NISIT and other key officials who are involved with Establishment of the Regulatory Framework for Safety & Control of Radiation Sources in PNG. As Minister responsible for NISIT, I will update this conference on the status of some of the important projects been implemented in PNG.

I want to assure all delegates here at the conference that PNG is serious about becoming an international player when it comes to the peaceful safe application of radiation usage in Health, Agriculture, and Researches in areas of Trade, Commerce and Industry activities.

Innovation, Technology & Research will remain one of the key drivers underpinning many nuclear radiations and its many applications of our current and future challenges and will always be the case as long as mankind exists. We are now in the digital age and it will be challenging for many of us who are from underdeveloped or developing economies. However, this is the impetus for working hard to better ourselves in our diligence to improve the safety and the living standards of our people.

As a responsible Government and by becoming a member of IAEA in 2012, it was another way the PNG Government demonstrated its desire to participate actively in the conduct of researches and other innovations pertaining to the safe, peaceful usage and applications of nuclear radiation, just like other IAEA member economies.

3. Background

PNG became a member of IAEA on April 4, 2012 and 3 years later signed its first Country Programme Framework (CPF) for period 2016-2021 on 03 December 2015. The National Liaison Office (NLO) is currently with the National Department of Health, which is the contact point on IAEA matters until such time the Nuclear Radiation Safety Bill recently approved by PNG's cabinet is passed by Parliament. as After passing of the radiation Bill, its safe and peacefull applications in Health, Agriculture and Scientific Researches will come under the auspicious of NISIT. NISIT will be the regulator in this industry and will become the IAEA point of contact.

As we all know the International rules set by IAEA have become very stringent in recent years due to international treats of terrorism and many other challenges that could endanger the lives of people if we do not have the necessary national legislative framework and standards needed to safeguard them.

Having said this I wish to inform this conference that PNG is an importer of Radiation sources for use in Medical, Industrial, Research and other applications. One example is the Cobalt 60 Radiation Source used for Cancer treatment at the Angau General Hospital in Lae, whose radiation source has been depleted and requires immediate replacement. Many Cancer patients who require treatment have no choice but to go overseas like Australia, Singapore or the Philippines for treatment. We understand the importance of establishing our National Regulatory framework enough to obtain IAEA clearance on the import of New radiation sources and the safe export of used radiation wastes back to its country of origin.

4. Status on Various Projects being carried out in PNG

4.1 Regulatory Infrastructure

I am pleased to advise this conference that our Radiation Safety and Control Act 2018 is about to be passed by Parliament and we envisage this bill to be enacted by the end of 1st quarter 2019. This has been made possible by the Joint technical working Team led by National Department of Health and NISIT Senior Technical officers. The National Executive Council of the PNG government approved the passing of this by our Parliament.

4.2 Cattle project on Genetic Characterization

This project is jointly conducted by the University of Natural Resources and Environment (UNRE), and the Department of Agriculture and Livestock. It involves characterizing of the genotype of cattle using nuclear techniques and then modifying them using artificial insemination. The lab facilities however are yet to be built at UNRE. Under this project we have plans to have a laboratory each in Lae and Port Moresby respectively.

4.3. Sterile Injection Technique project for cocoa pod borer

This project is a feasibility study carried out by the Cocoa Board of PNG, however the active implementation of this project has been slow to date. This is important to save cocoa, which is a major Agricultural cash crop commodity.

4.4 The Project on Enhancement of Cancer services

The Project on Enhancement of Cancer services focusing on Radiotherapy and radiology services. This project is still active, but implementation is very slow. We need to have a cancer treatment services at both Kundiawa in the Simbu Province, and Port Moresby in the National Capital District.

5. New project for TC cycle 2020-2021

5.1. Profiling of radiation in mineral rich regions of PNG

This project was submitted by the University of Technology Lae. The project covers radiation environmental monitoring and detection of naturally occurring radiation sources including natural uranium, the primary isotope used for nuclear fuel and fuel fabrication and other bye products.

We may commence a regional reconnaissance initially through the application of remote sensing over the entire country, which has a very dynamic exciting geological setting given its favourable regional tectonic setting.

5.2. Establishment of the Radiation and Nuclear Physics course at the University of PNG.

This project is submitted by the University of Papua New Guinea, Waigani Campus in Port Moresby. Under this Project, the UPNG will be resourced to run a nuclear physics course to meet the needs of various industries and Health services in applications of nuclear technology.

6. Other National Priorities

6.1 Establishment of a Dosimetry Laboratory in Lae,

NISIT is also in discussions with the University of Technology in Lae on the possibility of building a dosimetry laboratory at the University Campus within the Applied Physics Department. The importance of the project will be elevated to high priority once the Regulatory body is established under NISIT.

7. Conclusion

IAEA sanctioned programs in PNG through NISIT have the full support of my Government. I am confident that once our new Legislation is passed, and the Regulatory body has been established, many new projects will be proposed and initiated in the future to resolve many of the practical challenges.

PNG is privileged to be a member of the IAEA and have benefitted from a number of IAEA Technical Cooperation Programmes. On behalf of Prime Minister, the Rt. Honourable Peter O'Neill and his Government, I thank the IAEA and look forward to the many projects that we can achieve by working together.

Thank you..