



**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR RAPULANE MOLEKANE
RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE AND GOVERNOR
THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA AT THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC
ENERGY AGENCY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NUCLEAR
SECURITY
SUSTAINING AND STRENGTHENING EFFORTS
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Draft Statement: International Conference on Nuclear Security 2020

Co- Presidents,
Director General of the IAEA
Ministers
Distinguished Delegates

South Africa congratulates the co-presidents of the Conference, H.E. Mr Bogdaan Aurescu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, and H.E. Mr Federico Alfaro, the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Panama, for their appointment and would like to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation in assuring that ICONS 2020 is a success.

We also thank the Director General, Mr Rafael Grossi, and the International Atomic Energy Agency for their efforts in organising the third International Conference on Nuclear Security (ICONs). Rest assured that the South African delegation will actively participate in the extensive programme mindful of the unique opportunity ICONS 2020 affords Member States to substantively engage on all the critical areas of this important issue.

Distinguished Delegates

The IAEA has a unique statutory mandate as well as the capabilities and expertise to support Member States and coordinate international cooperation on all nuclear related matters on a global scale, including in Nuclear Security.

An essential international tool in this regard is our collective commitment towards non-proliferation. This year affords us a rare opportunity as we commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to reiterate and strengthen our resolve towards nuclear non-proliferation and we call upon all States outside the NPT to become State Parties.

The NPT also guarantees our inalienable right towards the use of nuclear energy and technology for peaceful purposes. South Africa attaches great importance to the benefits derived from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and technology, because it not only provides an alternative means to generate power but also directly contributes to our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals as it can be used to improve human and animal health, food safety and security and water management, to name but a few.

It is our individual and collective responsibility to ensure that our use of nuclear energy and technology is secure and safe; in this regard South Africa has taken steps to strengthen our Nuclear Security and is committed to assist efforts internationally. However, these efforts should not limit our right to access nuclear

energy and technology for peaceful purposes, as reiterated in the Declaration we adopted. South Africa insists that strengthened Nuclear Security should not become a precondition for accessing the benefits of nuclear energy and technology.

Whilst Nuclear Security remains the responsibility of each Member State, South Africa strongly supports the work of the IAEA in assisting Member States, upon request, to strengthen Nuclear Security regimes, through training, capacity building, and the development of legal and regulatory frameworks, to name but a few. We will also continue to support all international efforts and legal instruments aimed at preventing, detecting and addressing the illicit and malicious use of nuclear and radiological material.

Co-President

South Africa is one of the world's largest producers of medical isotopes, which we produce on a large scale using Low Enriched Uranium fuel. We therefore reiterate our commitment, made in the Declaration, that we should all explore ways of minimising the use of Highly Enriched Uranium, where technically and economically feasible. However, the reduction of the use of HEU in civilian stocks is not enough, especially when compared to those in use in the military stocks. Therefore, our view remains that any discussions on Nuclear Security should focus on the security for both civilian and military stocks of uranium and plutonium in all their forms.

ICONS 2020 takes place in a time of serious concern for global security, which is characterised by increased tensions, radicalisation and disputes. Strengthened Nuclear Security in these dangerous circumstances is essential and whilst the Declaration we adopted is a strong political commitment, more can be done. South Africa remains firm in its conviction that a world free of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, must be our collective goal. We cannot fully strengthen the global Nuclear Security regime as long as nuclear weapons exist. In this regard, we welcome the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in 2017 as a significant step towards achieving this goal as it supports and strengthens all existing nuclear treaties and legal instruments.

In collusion, 2020 is a significant year for the African Continent as this is the year that we have committed to "*Silence the Guns*". A major step towards this goal is our collective commitment, expressed in the Pelindaba Treaty, that no African State will conduct research on, develop, manufacture, stockpile, acquire, possess, or have control over any nuclear explosive device by any means anywhere. We invite all the Member States of the IAEA to follow our lead and to banish these evil weapons, not only from Africa, but from the entire world.

I thank you.