



Republic of Botswana

**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF TERTIARY
EDUCATION, RESEARCH, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS LETSHOLATHEBE

**TO THE 64th REGULAR SESSION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA)
GENERAL CONFERENCE IN VIENNA, AUSTRIA-VIRTUAL**

21-25 September 2020

- ***President of the 64th General Conference;***
- ***Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency,***
- ***Honourable Ministers, Your Excellencies, Heads of Missions and International Organizations***
- ***Distinguished Delegates***

1. On behalf of the Republic of Botswana, it is my pleasure and privilege to address the 64th Regular Session of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) General Conference.

2. President, let me congratulate you on assuming the Presidency of 64th IAEA General Conference. Let me also congratulate Mr. Rafael Mariano Grossi for assuming the office of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency on the 3rd December 2019. I pledge my country's support to him and his staff as he takes the leadership of the IAEA in these challenging times.

I would like to express our profound gratitude to the IAEA for its support to Botswana for donating

equipment that will contribute to the rapid detection of not just Covid 19 but other viruses. The equipment has been received and will greatly help improve the turnaround times for the Covid 19 test results.

3. President, the regulatory activities have not been spared by the impact of Covid 19. I must however highlight that gaps in regulatory oversight at this unprecedented time may provide opportunity for criminals and other unscrupulous people to take advantage of the situation and access radioactive and nuclear material for use in criminal activities.

This calls for revisiting the regulatory processes and coming up with solutions that can allow for minimal disruptions and continuity in emergencies such as these.

4. President, the Technical Cooperation programme has shown resilience and our implementation rate is at 79.9%. This has been made possible by the IAEA's quick adaptability and unwavering support in ensuring that member state's programmes continue

despite the challenges presented by the COVID 19 pandemic. To this end the regulatory staff participated in the Webinars that were hosted by the IAEA technical divisions. I pledge Botswana's commitment to honouring contribution to the Working Capital Fund, Regular Budget and to the Technical Cooperation Fund to support IAEA activities.

5. President, the Government process of acceding to the revised African Regional Cooperation for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology Agreement (AFRA) is at advanced stage.

6.In conclusion, I reiterate Botswana's commitment to supporting IAEA activities. I am appealing to all nations at large and individuals to play their part in the fight against Covid 19.

7. I thank you.