



STATEMENT BY HONOURABLE Z. SODA,
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Mr. President,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate you, **Ambassador Alessandro CORTESE**, on your election to steer the work of this 66th Session of the General Conference. I pledge my delegation's full support and cooperation towards the successful discharge of your mandate. Let me also add my voice to those who have spoken before me, in thanking the Director General and the Secretariat for organising this meeting, and for all the energies being expended in implementing the Agency's mandate. The fruits of your spirited efforts and hard work are indeed evident to us all.

Mr. President,

Zimbabwe values the importance of nuclear technology and nuclear applications for peaceful purposes as well as the Agency's role in the promotion of safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear energy. In that regard, we reiterate our commitment to the Agency's safeguards system as it builds confidence among States that they are abiding by their international commitments. We urge the Agency to remain proactive in this critical area of nuclear use, safety and security in light of our common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

I would like to acknowledge, and indeed, commend the IAEA for the successes being registered under the Technical Cooperation Programme. Let me reiterate Zimbabwe's commitment to meeting its obligations to the IAEA in general, to

the Technical Cooperation Fund and the National Participation Costs (NPCs), as these are critical drivers of the TC programme. In the same vein, I applaud the Director General and his staff for the spirited efforts in mobilising resources as well as securing critical partnerships which support the TC programmes from which we benefit.

My delegation would like to commend the IAEA for its ground-breaking participation at COP26 in Glasgow, which served to highlight the role of nuclear technology and applications in the global fight against climate change and in achieving the SDGs. Zimbabwe greatly values the importance of nuclear technology in the field of clean energy especially at this critical juncture when we find ourselves grappling with increased incidences of extreme and often violent weather patterns manifesting in frequent droughts, floods and destructive cyclones. We wish to encourage the Agency to continue to collaborate with Member States wishing to utilise or further expand their nuclear-powered electricity generation capacities.

Zimbabwe welcomes recent collaborations between the Agency and the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), in the wake of heightened global food insecurities. We are confident that this strategic partnership will help transform and strengthen agricultural production while fostering resilience in global food systems, through the popularisation of the Agency's nuclear techniques in pest control, climate smart agriculture and plant mutation breeding, to name just a few.

My country's own partnership with the IAEA in the field of agriculture has been transformative, with interventions ranging from the use of nuclear science and technology to determine soil quality for effective agro-ecosystem management, mutation breeding as a measure to improve the production and productivity of crops, using nuclear techniques in developing drought-resistant legumes and cereal crops, as well as in confronting common tick-borne diseases which have threatened to decimate the national herd, and use of nuclear techniques to determine the appropriate application of plant nutrients in irrigation systems. With the assistance of the Agency and partners, Zimbabwe is also undertaking studies to assess surface and groundwater dynamics in a process that will allow us to effectively and efficiently manage our water resources, including for agricultural purposes.

Mr President,

The COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges and opportunities for both radiation safety and security, as well as in furthering nuclear science and technology programmes. With the successful vaccination campaigns and other proactive measures, we are glad that the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and related hindrances are now minimal, even as restrictions have been eased.

Mr President, technology transfer and human capacity development are critical in the adoption of nuclear techniques and applications for peaceful purposes. In that regard, we call on the Agency to continue expanding its fellowship programmes aimed at supporting the training of nuclear scientists, including

women scientists, and to increase its support towards the integration of nuclear science and technology into our education systems. We also wish to acknowledge the creativity and dynamism shown by the Agency during the peak period of the COVID-19 pandemic, that saw the continued implementation of programmes, especially in training, through the popularised online/virtual meeting platforms.

Mr. President

My delegation would like to commend the continued provision of assistance to Member States, especially developing countries, through the ZODIAC, ReNuAL 2 and NUTEC Plastics, and the expansion of these programmes in the recent past. In the area of Human Health, cancer remains a huge burden to health care systems across the globe and indeed in Zimbabwe. Let me therefore applaud the Agency's support to my government in the fight against cancer by providing equipment, expert advice and human resources development. Our Health and Child Care Ministry is currently developing a robust National Cancer Control Plan with the help of the IAEA, aimed at reducing the incidence of cancer and ultimately, cancer mortality.

Mr. President,

Bearing in mind the importance of nuclear safety and security, Zimbabwe has made significant strides in strengthening its radiation safety regulatory infrastructure, as well as in contributing to the global nuclear safety regime through the provision of experts for peer review missions and the hosting of fellows and scientific visitors. We have also registered significant progress in

the construction of a centralized Disused Radioactive Sources Management Facility. IAEA expert support and capacity-building has enhanced our national competences for the safe management of the infrastructure.

My government is strongly committed to upholding international conventions and agreements furthering nuclear safety, security, and safeguards. To that end, we are on course to ratifying several conventions related to the safety and security of sources.

Mr President,

In July this year, Zimbabwe signed its 3rd Country Programme Framework (CPF), which will run from 2022 – 2027. The new Country Programme Framework is aligned to the Country's national priorities, as set out in the national 5-year **National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1) and Vision 2030**. The Country Programme Framework will assist in addressing socio-economic development needs through the application of nuclear science techniques and applications.

As I conclude, allow me to, once again, thank the Agency for all its support to my country and to other member states, including in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Zimbabwe wishes to urge the IAEA to continue deploying its expertise and knowledge, together with partners in confronting contemporary challenges, including in the health sector.

I thank you Mr President.