



STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
ZIMBABWE,

AMBASSADOR STUART H. COMBERBACH

67TH REGULAR SESSION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA)

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Madam President

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

I join others who have spoken before me in congratulating you, Madam President, and the members of your bureau for your election. My delegation pledges its full support and cooperation to you.

Let me also extend warm congratulations to the Director General on his reappointment and for his presentation of the IAEA Annual Report : as always, comprehensive, detailed and impressive.

Our thanks also to the Secretariat for their outstanding work and commitment to the cause of safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear science and technology : and their contribution to international peace and security as well as to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Madam President,

My government remains committed to its international obligations under the various conventions on nuclear safety, security and safeguards to which it is a party. Our desire to expand the peaceful application of nuclear technologies, imposes upon us the obligation to

accede to all critical treaties, thus ensuring the necessary regulatory framework, safety, security and the relevant safeguards. In that regard, I am pleased to announce that my delegation deposited six instruments of ratification with the Director General at the Treaty Event held on Monday this week. These are:

- Convention on Nuclear Safety;
- Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage;
- Protocol to Amend the Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage;
- Joint Protocol Relating to the Application of the Vienna Convention and the Paris Convention;
- The Agreement on IAEA Privileges and Immunities; and,
- Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material.

We will also deposit, with the UN Secretary General in New York, the instrument of ratification for the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

Madam President,

This is testament to Zimbabwe's commitment to uphold the highest levels of security for nuclear materials, and it signifies our eagerness to continue to strengthen the required regulatory, institutional, as well as, the physical environment to ensure the highest levels of safety, security and safeguards.

We reiterate our commitment to the Agency's safeguards system which helps to build confidence that States are abiding by their international commitments. We urge the Agency to remain proactive in this critical area of nuclear safety and security in light of our shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The legal and regulatory framework for the safe and secure use of radiation sources in my country continues to be strengthened in line with international standards. The Radiation Protection Authority of Zimbabwe regulates the use of nuclear technologies, and, with the assistance of the Agency, continues to enhance its radiation waste management capacities. Commendable progress has been made, Madam President, on the construction of a centralized and appropriately securitized Disused Radioactive Sources Management Facility. IAEA expert support and capacity-building has been invaluable in strengthening national competence in the safe management of the infrastructure.

With respect to the outstanding Radiation Protection Amendment Bill, it is anticipated that it will be on the agenda of the current 10th Parliament which commenced its sittings earlier this month. The amended bill will address a number of recommendations made by various peer review missions over the years, and will consolidate the legal and regulatory framework for safe and secure use of radiation sources in the country.

Madam President,

The Technical Cooperation programme remains the primary mechanism for the transfer of nuclear technology to Member States, in addressing key development priorities. We assure you of our commitment to meeting our obligations in respect of the Technical Cooperation Fund, the National Participation Costs (NPCs) and the regular budget - all of which are critical enablers of the Technical Cooperation pillar.

In the same vein, I would like to applaud the Director General and his staff for their tireless efforts in mobilising resources, as well as securing critical partnerships for the TC programmes from which we benefit.

We are confident that the Agency will continue to support the transformation and revitalisation of our agricultural sector. Fostering resilience in food systems is pivotal to guaranteeing global food security and nutrition. The propagation of the Agency's nuclear techniques in **pest control for plants and animals, livestock vaccines, enhanced cattle breeding techniques, climate smart agriculture, plant mutation breeding; and improving the productive capacity of soils on smallholder farms** in support of the maize, wheat, and soybean production recovery plan, will complement national efforts aimed at making Zimbabwe, not only food and nutrition self-sufficient, but a net exporter of food, thus contributing to global resilience.

The challenges we continue to face in the area of cancer therapy, are of profound concern to the Government. Regrettably, two cancer-treatment centres set up some time ago with the assistance of the Agency are currently non-functional, due a raft of challenges - including the loss of highly qualified personnel such as Medical Physicists, Nuclear Medicine Physicians and Radiographers - all lost through brain-drain. Having recently subscribed to the Rays of Hope Initiative, our focus is on bringing the current dysfunctional centres back into sustainable operation, whilst also establishing additional centres for wider reach.

Madam President,

As technology transfer and training are critical in the adoption of nuclear techniques and applications for peaceful purposes, we call on the Agency to continue expanding its fellowship programmes aimed at supporting the training of nuclear scientists, and to increase its support towards the integration of nuclear science and technology into our education systems. This will certainly go some way in mitigating our brain drain challenges. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the expansion of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie (MSC) Fellowship Programme, more so, as it also tackles the critical issue of gender mainstreaming in the area of nuclear science.

Madam President,

As I conclude, allow me to, once again, thank the Agency for the support rendered to my country through the technical cooperation programme and urge the IAEA to continue deploying its expertise and knowledge, together with partners, in addressing the complex challenges which confront our modern world.

My delegation will continue to render support to and cooperation with the Agency, and will play our part to ensure that all projects being implemented in my country are successful.

I thank you Mr President.