



**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR RAPULANE MOLEKANE,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, ON BEHALF OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH
AFRICA, TO THE 63RD SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY
AGENCY (IAEA) GENERAL CONFERENCE, 18 SEPTEMBER 2019, VIENNA,
AUSTRIA**

Mr President

Acting Director General

Honourable Ministers and Heads of Delegation

Distinguished Delegates

On behalf of the Government of South Africa, let me congratulate you for your Presidency, and your Bureau, on your election to lead the 63rd Session of the International Atomic Energy Agency General Conference. You have the support of my delegation.

At the outset, I wish to thank the IAEA community and delegations for the words of comfort to the South African Delegation following the sad untimely passing of our Deputy Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, Honourable Bavelile Hlongwa, who was supposed to be delivering this national statement. We shall miss her energy, enthusiasm and leadership in the nuclear energy sector.

We also wish to convey our sincere condolences on the recent departure of Mr Yukiya Amano, who served the Agency with distinction for so many years. We salute his

tireless efforts, dedication and professionalism in serving humanity during his tenure as Director General of this institution.

Mr President,

The 63rd session of the General Conference precedes the 50th Anniversary of the entry into force of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and the 75th anniversary of the United Nations in 2020. This year also marks the 10th anniversary of the Pelindaba Treaty declaring Africa a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone. With all these milestones, sadly a nuclear weapons free world remains elusive. We need to redouble our efforts in this regard.

Mr President,

At a national level, in order to ensure energy security and mitigate the carbon footprint, my country continues to ensure that nuclear remains an integral part of South Africa's energy mix. In this regard, our Government has announced its commitment to acquire nuclear new build programme at a price, pace and scale the country can afford. In the meantime, work is at an advanced stage to extend the life of our nuclear power station, Koeberg, beyond its originally intended life by another twenty years. The application of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes has been positively felt, among others, in the areas of human and animal health, agriculture and food security, environmental management, climate change mitigation, water and sanitation, and industrial applications.

These efforts affirm the Agency's positive contribution towards our 2030 National Development Plan, the 2063 African Agenda and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This is done through the Technical Cooperation Programme.

Mr President,

This year marks the 30th anniversary of AFRA and our continent is committed to the strengthening of partnerships which this platform provides. In July this year, South

Africa hosted the AFRA Technical Working Group Meeting, wherein over 40 African member states participated. We look forward to assuming the Chairship of AFRA.

My Delegation notes with satisfaction that this year's Scientific Forum theme is titled "A Decade of Action on Cancer Control and the Way Forward" and exchanges on this very important matter would vastly expand our knowledge and deepen efforts towards the treatment of the cancer disease.

In the area of nuclear medicine, South Africa, has launched a project known as the Nuclear Medicine Research Infrastructure project, whose aim is to establish a distribution network of medical imaging facilities dedicated to drug development and clinical research. We expect this project to be fully operational by 2021.

Mr President,

I am pleased to inform that progress is being made to ensure that our company, the Nuclear Technology Product (NTP) soon returns to full production of medical isotopes. Our global customers can rest assured that South Africa remains committed to providing high quality service and a sustainable supply of these life-saving medicines. In order to further strengthen global supply of radioisotopes, through research using nuclear technology, our Government has established a Task Team for a new Multi-Purpose Reactor project aimed to replace the aging SAFARI-1 research reactor by 2030.

Equally, we continue to register progress in other applications of nuclear technology, in a manner that enhances close collaboration with fellow African countries. For instance, the National Institute of Communicable Diseases has completed building the first African mosquito vector mass rearing facility. We are pleased to report that our joint Malaria Sterile Insect Technique project has completed the pilot mass rearing facility which will be officially opened in November 2019, with a small-scale pilot release programme scheduled for 2020.

Mr President,

The strengthening of regional and national veterinary laboratories for the early detection of zoonotic diseases in wildlife and livestock is vital. The Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (VETLAB) Network project continues to expand its reach. This enhances food security efforts by ensuring the competitiveness of the livestock industry and access to international markets increases.

Furthermore, as Co-Chairs of ReNuAL, we express our appreciation for the commendable progress made in the renovation and modernization of the Nuclear Applications Laboratories at Seibersdorf. These important laboratories are the core of research, development and training in critical areas of development, especially of developing countries.

Mr President,

South Africa has an excellent track record for safely operating its nuclear facilities for more than fifty years. The country has demonstrated its ability for long-term, safe operation. We continue to adopt international best practices and are looking forward to the visit of the expert mission to review our National Nuclear Regulator Safety Culture Improvement Plan later this year. South Africa welcomes initiatives undertaken by the IAEA in promoting the wider adherence to the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management.

Our National Radioactive Waste Disposal Institute is forging ahead to establish a Centralised Interim Storage Facility for the long-term storage of spent nuclear fuel. A Borehole Disposal Concept has been developed under contract with the Agency to provide safe and secure disposal technology for Disused Sealed Radioactive Sources inventories.

Mr President

Nuclear Security, although the responsibility of the individual State, is a global matter that requires international cooperation. Strengthening measures to enhance nuclear security should not hamper member states' inalienable right to pursue peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In my country, efforts have progressed to an advanced stage to

ratify the amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material.

For South Africa, effectively maintaining nuclear security measures in respect of all nuclear and other radioactive material, in accordance with our national and international obligations, is essential. Therefore, we welcome and support the adoption of the Agency's Nuclear Security Plan for 2018-2021, which will assist Member States in their efforts to strengthen their respective nuclear security regimes.

Mr President

The effective implementation of the Agency's safeguards system is a critical element of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. It contributes to international peace and security. South Africa continues to cooperate effectively with the Agency to implement our safeguards obligations under the Integrated Safeguards approach. The Agency's Safeguards Implementation Reports continue to maintain the broader conclusions that our country's nuclear programme is exclusively for peaceful purposes.

My delegation is of the view that the Agency, in carrying out its critical safeguards work across the world, should be encouraged and supported. We commend the Agency for its undertaking of verification and monitoring activities in the Islamic Republic of Iran in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231. We further urge all the signatories to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to preserve this historic multilateral agreement.

Mr President

While recognizing the progress being made in employing more Women in the Agency, particularly in the professional ranks, a lot still needs to be done to upscale these efforts. It is equally important to ensure that the principle of regional representation is also applied when this and other gender and youth related matters are considered.

In conclusion, my delegation looks forward to playing a constructive role at forthcoming International Conferences on Climate Change and the Role of Nuclear Power, and on Nuclear Security, to be held in October 2019 and February 2020 respectively.

I thank you