



**STATEMENT BY THE HEAD OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN DELEGATION,
AMBASSADOR ABDUL SAMAD MINTY, TO THE 54TH REGULAR
SESSION OF THE IAEA GENERAL CONFERENCE
21 SEPTEMBER 2010**

Mr. President

Director-General

Your Excellencies

Distinguished Delegates

On behalf of my delegation I would like to congratulate you on the assumption of your role as President of the General Conference and assure you of my country's support. South Africa would also like to thank your predecessor for successfully steering the deliberations of the 53rd Regular Session of the IAEA General Conference.

South Africa also welcomes our neighbour the Kingdom of Swaziland as a new member of the Agency increasing African members to 42.

Furthermore, South Africa would also like to thank the Director General for his opening statement, as well as the Secretariat for the documents prepared to form the basis of our deliberations in this session of the General Conference.

Mr. President

Our Conference takes place at a time when the environment is more conducive for disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control which has, among others also contributed to paving the way for a new START Agreement and a successful 2010 NPT Review Conference. South Africa believes that we should make optimal use of this positive development to add impetus to our work in the IAEA.

It is South Africa's view that the outcomes of the 2010 NPT Review conference have the potential of strengthening global peace and security and could play a meaningful role in outlining the future approach towards an eventual world free of nuclear weapons.

As stated on many previous occasions South Africa wishes to underscore that Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZs) are an integral part of the NPT in accordance with Article VII of the NPT and that they continue to be an important aspect of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation process. In this context, South Africa welcomes the entry into force of the Pelindaba Treaty and looks forward to more countries ratifying it.

Mr. President

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to re-emphasize the importance of energy security to promote sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In this connection it will be recalled that at the May 2010 NPT Review Conference a number of States supported the view that the IAEA has an important role to play in assisting developing States in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy through the development of effective programmes aimed at improving their scientific, technological, and regulatory capabilities. South Africa encourages and strongly supports the Agency's continued contribution towards the MDGs and interaction with the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) for sustainable development.

Mr. President

The acute need to secure reliable energy supplies and the urgent requirement to reduce carbon emissions has put nuclear energy firmly on the agenda as a viable choice to be pursued in order to achieve a balanced energy mix. Nuclear energy is increasingly becoming a preferred solution to energy security and in efforts to mitigate climate change challenges.

As many more countries decide to pursue nuclear power to address their energy needs it is imperative, as South Africa has emphasized on various occasions, that the IAEA Safeguards System should be strengthened. The Additional Protocol is an important tool to provide credible assurances regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear material.

Mr. President,

In 1998 South Africa presented a new energy policy that makes nuclear energy an integral part of the South African energy mix. Subsequently, in June 2008, a nuclear energy policy for South Africa was approved. I am also pleased to announce that earlier this year the South African Government formed a Inter Ministerial Committee on Energy to pursue an Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) to ensure a balance of available energy sources, cost of deployment of the different technologies and the benefits that will accrue to South African citizens and the economy in the short and long term.

The Department of Energy is also leading the development of a nuclear energy implementation strategy that will look at issues on how Government can develop and/or enhance the necessary infrastructure required for new build, such as skills development, legislative and regulatory framework, procurement, localization and industrialization and nuclear fuel security. Through this endeavour more jobs will be created and we will work with international partners with the most cost effective plans that address these issues with minimum impact on cost and delivery schedule.

The South African Nuclear Energy Corporation (NECSA) continues to carry out feasibility studies into front end of the nuclear fuel cycle to ensure security of fuel supply for nuclear new build. These studies will feed into the nuclear energy implementation strategy, which will in turn feed into the IRP process.

Mr. President

With regard to new nuclear power plants the South African electricity utility, Eskom has continued with the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of three potential sites for nuclear power plants. There has been as from 2007 extensive public participation in the EIA process which culminated with the release in March 2010 of a draft Environmental Impact Report for public comment. It is anticipated that a final Environmental Impact Report will be completed before the end of 2010 and submitted to Government for evaluation and a decision on an environmental authorization in the first half of 2011.

To assist communities, organizations and individuals to participate in the EIA process in a meaningful manner, Eskom has been conducting nuclear awareness workshops in the vicinity of the proposed nuclear sites and hosted representatives from communities around one of the sites for a visit to the Koeberg Nuclear Power Plant.

Fellow Delegates,

The management of radioactive waste more especially the management of high level radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel continues to pose challenges. This notwithstanding, South Africa has made some progress through the establishment of a legal framework to manage radioactive waste as set out in our policies and legislation. The National Radioactive Waste Disposal Institute Act (Act No.53 of 2008) has come into effect and processes are underway to physically set-up the Institute and address matters such as funding and human resourcing.

Mr. President,

The role of nuclear technologies for the development of the African Continent cannot be overlooked. The feasible solutions brought through the IAEA Technical Cooperation and AFRA programmes have contributed to Africa's Development in so many ways. However, a great deal of work still needs to be done. The African region will look at how to optimise the use of nuclear technologies on the continent.

In this connection and as part of its contribution to this endeavour South Africa's Nuclear Energy Cooperation has in the past year participated in the safe packaging of disused high activity sealed radioactive sources in countries like Sudan, Tanzania, Vietnam and Uruguay, with others to follow in the near future. NECSA also continues to host several training workshops as part of its contribution to human resources development within South Africa.

Mr. President,

I am pleased to report that following the successful conversion of the SAFARI-1 research reactor core to LEU fuel during 2009, Necsa and its subsidiary NTP Radioisotopes have accelerated their programme to convert the production processes for molybdenum-99 and iodine-131 to make use of LEU target plates. This has resulted in the delivery of LEU-based isotopes to the world market since July 2010, making South Africa the first large scale supplier of Mo-99 entirely based on LEU. Furthermore, during the 2009-2010 period of serious shortages in the supply of isotopes of critical

importance to the global nuclear medicine community, Necsa/NTP increased its production levels and did everything in its power without compromising safety and quality to reduce the impact of the under-supply situation.

Likewise I am pleased to report that South Africa continues to pay due attention to strengthening the safety of its nuclear facilities. Following the first 10-year safety review, important safety enhancements have been implemented at one of the nuclear facilities in my country. As a result of this the Probabilistic Safety Analysis (PSA) estimated frequency of core damage is now similar to the reference nuclear power plants operated by Electricite de France and better than the IAEA recommendations for new nuclear power plants. The second 10-year safety review has commenced, and will contribute to further strengthening of safety.

South Africa has also made some considerable strides in the area of nuclear security which is rightfully a national responsibility. South Africa will however, count on the help of the Agency in this regard if and when necessary. South Africa urges that nuclear security ought to be considered in all its aspects and not through placing more emphasis only on nuclear terrorism. The National Nuclear Regulator of South Africa is finalizing a nuclear security framework which will be integrated into the safety culture of operators.

Mr. President,

It is a cause of great concern to my delegation that there has been no progress made with regard to the decision we collectively reached to expand the IAEA Board of Governors. Continuing failure to achieve this objective is not only an impediment to the democratization of the Agency but also continues to make the Agency fall short of being a truly inclusive multilateral body. South Africa is of the view that there should be an increase in the number of African countries in the Board of Governors reflecting the proportionate increase to 42 African countries that are members of the IAEA.

Mr. President

My delegation would like to again underscore the importance South Africa attaches to the Agency's Technical Cooperation Fund which should form an integral part of the IAEA budget. South Africa believes that a step in this direction would constitute a long overdue correction of a fundamental mistake of funding the TC through voluntary contributions when it is in fact a core activity of the Agency. There is also a continuing need to ensure that resources for the TC should be adequate and predictable.

Mr. President

My delegation also supports the observations of the External Auditor that “Member States should ensure that Extrabudgetary Funds do not replace regular and predictable funds for the organization’s core activities”.

Mr. President

Through the International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale (INES) Advisory Committee, chaired jointly by representatives from South Africa and Spain, South Africa has been closely involved in the updating and extension of the INES procedures to radiation source and transportation events. South Africa’s nuclear facilities, Eskom’s Koeberg NPP and Necsa’s SAFARI research reactor and radioactive isotope production facilities will implement the new INES User’s Manual (2008) with effect from 1 October 2010. The National Nuclear Regulator of South Africa has also initiated a process to broaden the application of INES to other institutions and facilities in South Africa.

In conclusion, Mr. President,

My delegation extends its appreciation to the IAEA and those countries that have provided assistance in the nuclear security arrangements for the 2010 FIFA World Cup that was held in South Africa and looks forward to continued cooperation in the future. South Africa encourages the Agency to continue its support to improve nuclear security, accounting and control of nuclear material and the prevention of illicit trafficking of such material.