

DRAFT SOUTH AFRICAN STATEMENTS TO THE IAEA BOARD OF GOVERNORS: 7-11
MARCH 2011

AGENDA ITEM 3: STRENGTHENING THE AGENCY'S ACTIVITIES RELATED TO
NUCLEAR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND APPLICATIONS:
NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY REVIEW 2011

Chairperson,

My delegation thanks the Director General and our two new DDGs, whom we also welcome, for the preparation of this informative report and the technical briefing given. We associate ourselves with the statements made on behalf of the G77 and China and the African Group.

Chairperson,

My delegation takes note of the draft Nuclear Technology Review 2011 that is under our consideration.

We are pleased to note in the report, the growing global interest in nuclear power, as well as the application of nuclear techniques for sustainable development, especially in developing countries. My delegation also notes the revised Agency projections for growth, which remains high, as more countries are interested in developing or expanding nuclear power as part of their power generation.

Chairperson,

South Africa welcomes the Agency's endeavour to coordinate international efforts to address the worldwide crisis in the supply of molybdenum-99 from late 2007 till the end of 2010, due to temporary shutdown of some large-scale producers. In an effort to mitigate this problem, South Africa's SAFARI-1 reactor operating at the South African Nuclear Energy Corporation (NECSA's) subsidiary NTP Radioisotopes, has successfully implemented the world's first commercial scale production of the medical isotope molybdenum-99 (MO-99) using exclusively low-enriched uranium (LEU) targets. This follows its successful HEU conversion to LEU target plates in the production of medical isotopes, a remarkable technical achievement due to the skills and capacity of our scientists, making South Africa the first major producer of LEU based radioisotopes, critical for nuclear medicine procedures used for diagnosis of diseases such as cancer and cardiac problems.

With regard to reference to this development by the Ambassador of the USA and that of Australia, I should report that in 2010, NECSA and its subsidiary NTP Radioisotopes won an award from the US Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) for this significant contribution of large-scale LEU based Mo-99 production to address the global supply shortage of medical isotopes.

Chairperson,

My delegation notes that in the DG's report in paragraph 80 on page 17, reference is made to South Africa's Pebble bed modular reactor (PBMR) project, which has been placed under a "care and maintenance plan" to safeguard intellectual property and assets until the government decides on further plans. As indicated in the past, South Africa's project was halted due to inter alia financial constraints in light of the continuing impact of the global financial and economic crisis.

Chairperson,

My delegation welcomes initiatives in collaboration with the Agency to assist Member States in searching for, managing and controlling high activity radioactive sources. In this regard, the use of technology such as mobile hot cell, which benefitted a number of African countries, could be useful to assist countries that require such assistance.

In conclusion, Chairperson, regarding the use of nuclear techniques, South Africa through strong partnership with the Agency, continues to make effective and meaningful use of nuclear technology and applications for socio-economic development in areas such as food and agriculture, human health, water and soil management, and environmental protection. In this context, we believe that the Agency has a unique specialised knowledge in terms of nuclear techniques and we would like to urge the Agency to strengthen its partnerships with relevant international organizations to promote the use of these valuable techniques to support national efforts to address inter alia, food security, thus contributing through the technical cooperation programme towards efforts to overcome poverty and attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in developing countries.

My delegation has repeatedly emphasised the importance of the Agency's technical cooperation programme and the need for this core statutory function of the Agency to be funded in a sufficient, assured and predictable (SAP) manner. It is of utmost importance for the integrity, reputation and future of the organisation for the Agency to recognise the need to correct a mistake of the past by incorporating the TC programme into the Agency's regular budget.

With these comments, my delegation takes note of the Nuclear Technology Review 2011, contained in document GOV/2011/3 and its additional documents.