

## NATIONAL ASSEMBLY QUESTION 1417

### **Mrs C Dudley (ACDP) to ask the Minister of Energy:**

- 1) Whether, in light of the recent disaster in Japan, Cabinet has taken a decision on the pursuit of electricity production by means of nuclear energy; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details;
- 2) Whether he has considered economic, health and safety grounds in taking this decision; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details? NW1531E

### **REPLY**

- 1) Cabinet was apprised of the situation on Fukushima and the decision to approve the IRP2010 considered the Fukushima accident. The reasons for the energy mix as proposed in the IRP2010 have not changed due to the unfortunate accident at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plants. The energy mix is balanced considering different factors such as the need to reduce our carbon foot print and provision of reliable and affordable electricity services to run the economy. However, the country will not ignore the lessons to be learned from this event. South Africa will continue to follow the developments in this regard and participate in different forums established to look into the accident and the subsequent response actions.
- 2) Yes, nuclear energy provides the most reliable base-load power after coal. The design of reactors is the cornerstone of nuclear safety, with consistent application of the defense-in depth principles, and the nuclear industry is one of the most regulated as far as safety is concerned. There is no intention to change the position in the future. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) through its conventions such as Convention on Nuclear Safety, Joint Convention, and Convention on Early Notification and Assistance Convention ensure nuclear safety, safety of spent fuel management and radioactive waste management worldwide and make provision for assistance in the case of a nuclear accident. South Africa is a member of the IAEA and a contracting party to these conventions. Safety features of reactors have continued to evolve towards design basis which have more inherent safety features. The National Nuclear Regulator is entrusted with the protection of persons, property and the environment from effects of nuclear damage. The NNR, as the nuclear safety authority responsible for the siting, design, construction, operation, manufacture of

component parts and decontamination, decommissioning and closure of nuclear installations will therefore license future nuclear power plants.