

**Opening Remarks by Minister of Energy, Ms Dipuo Peters, MP
during the occasion of the “2nd Regional Conference on Energy and
Nuclear Power in Africa”.**

Cape Town, South Africa, 30-31 May 2011

Programme Director -

Prof Ogunlade Davidson, Minister of Energy & Water Resources, Sierra Leone

Mr Mohamed Mahamud, Assistant Minister of Energy, Kenya

Dr. Hussein Elhag, Executive Director, African Energy Commission

Dr. Erepamo Osaisai, Director General, Nigerian Atomic Energy Commission, Nigeria

Dr. Abd El Hamid Abbas El Desoky Ibrahim, Nuclear Power Plants Authority in Egypt

Prof. Shamsideen Elegba, Director General, Nigerian Nuclear Regulatory Authority

Adv. Boyce Mkhize, CEO of National Nuclear Regulator

Dr Rob Adam, CEO of Necsa

Mr. Ali Boussaha, Director, IAEA Division for Africa

Comrade Mr David Macatha, Treasurer General of NUM

Executives from the Energy and Nuclear Energy Industries

Representatives of Non-Governmental Organisations

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning, Kusheh, Jambo and welcome to South Africa.

Five days ago we celebrated the 48th Anniversary of Afrika Day, reminding us of the power of a united front in dealing with the different challenges facing our continent. This continent is blessed with warm & friendly people, breath-taking landscapes and large quantities of natural resources, some barely exploited. The values espoused by the OAU and subsequently the AU guides the interactions amongst us as Africans and I plead for all of you to make those values the overriding theme and motive in all your endeavours every day. Together we can do more to facilitate socio-economic development of the peoples of Africa.

This event is the first regional meeting on nuclear energy following the accident at the Fukushima Daichii Nuclear Power Plant. The damage suffered by the reactors at this power plant was very unfortunate and our thoughts are with those working tirelessly to bring the reactors to cold shut down conditions. Equally, we continue to send our condolences for the lives lost during the earthquake and tsunami and hope that recovery efforts will soon bear fruit.

One of the reasons we are here today is because globally security of energy supply is becoming one of the key focus areas, mainly because of decreasing natural resources, global warming, climate change, pollution, and rapid global growth. We, as Africans, are not alone in this race to have a secure energy future. We are blessed with sufficient resources to cover our needs, even if we were consuming like the most advanced first world countries. However, most of our resources are exported to develop and grow other economies, countries, and continents, while we risk not having these resources or the more advanced technologies when we need them most – for our children and generations to come. Can we really have sustainable growth without security of energy resources or technology?

Due to lack of access to electricity for most of our population, and the lack of access to more advanced electricity generation technologies, we are faced with energy supply solutions that further lead to the demise our people's health and the environment, both of which cannot continue indefinitely. One way of stopping this viscous cycle is through collaboration and sharing of solutions and experiences, which naturally leads to the next level of joint solutions in the form of regional projects. This, ladies and

gentlemen, can only result in a more developed and competitive Africa. We have seen this in regional blocs such as the European Union countries joining forces to share strengths and mitigate weaknesses. As you are all aware, the African Union is just that platform. I hope that through your deliberations today and beyond, a way forward on collaboration on nuclear energy on the African continent can be formulated.

There are several electricity generation projects that are planned or under construction on the African continent for both coal fired power stations and hydro. Where possible we must pursue these in a collaborative manner to maximise knowledge and resources for these projects. This approach may even ease our ability to raise funds for these projects and reduce the levels of financial assistance required from the international development finance organisations such as the World Bank and IMF.

Last month we approved South Africa's Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) which will address the electricity generation mix for South Africa for the next 20 years. It is important to note that nuclear and renewable energy will have a significant contribution in the anticipated generation mix. This is a

balanced plan that seeks to responsibly use energy sources available to us including gas, biomass, nuclear, coal and imports. In this plan we expect the following new generation capacity, 42% renewable energies, 23% nuclear and 15% coal by 2030. This is part of our contribution to mitigating climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It is also to ensure security of energy supply to the South African economy and households. As a country we pursue a balanced energy mix and for us the different energy sources are not seen to be competitive but rather they are supportive as none can exclusively meet the electricity needs of our country.

Multinational solutions in the form of an interconnected grid could be valuable in dealing with local supply constraints and utilising all available energy resources. Strategic alignment on the external supply of our non-renewable resources can create longer term beneficiation of these resources within the region, instead of outside.

Security of supply of nuclear fuel as the continent is slowly becoming nuclear energised is important. African countries such as South Africa, Namibia, Niger, Gabon, etc are rich in uranium. This gives the African states the confidence that they can rely on Africa for their uranium supplies. This mineral must also benefit Africans through job creation. Partnership with all stakeholders in this value chain, including trade unions involved in mining of energy minerals is essential. Today we have here the National Union of Mineworkers, who will later share with us some insight into trade unions views on Energy policy.

The level and scope of attendance at this event shows that the African Continent is rising up as a collective to address and share valuable information regarding the challenges we are facing as Africans, and together develop with solutions towards the improvement of our continent. We have been working together in the past, since the first of this Regional conference in Cairo, Egypt, two years ago, and are continuing to do so today.

We in South Africa have understand that Nuclear is not a quick fix solution but a long term method to address the energy crisis and climate change challenge. Considering long term commitment to nuclear, countries interested in embarking on this program will require at least 100 years to maintain sustainable and safety operation of the nuclear power, decommissioning and waste disposal. Proper planning therefore is of vital importance in this regard.

There are many lessons to be learned from accident at Fukushima, in particular the safety and emergency response aspects, as these seems to have been challenged by the natural disaster in Japan. We have seen even an “advanced” country such as Japan being criticised for not handling the nuclear accident effectively. Can we as Africa do better if faced with a similar event? The answer to that question starts by not saying “we do not have earthquakes and tsunamis”. This is not the crux of the matter. I think that one of the key messages coming out of Japan would be that emergency preparedness needs to be escalated to the highest level, even if reactors are deemed safer through new improved technologies. New nuclear countries can develop a good nuclear safety culture from the outset, but to do this we need to be willing to learn all the lessons and

embrace them, not forget them and assume “that won’t happen to us”. I look forward to deliberations by the regulators, including our own National Nuclear Regulator on this matter as part of the proceedings.

Furthermore, the Fukushima tragedy is not going to make it easy because the public’s confidence in the safety of nuclear power plants has been shaken. All of us working in the nuclear field have an enormous task ahead of us to assure the public that nuclear power plants can be operated safely and to earn their trust. It is our duty to work hard and communicate transparently about the risk of radiation and address the concerns raised by the Fukushima accident.

Our communications need not be alarmist. During the process of planning, it is important that the public has to be communicated with. They are entitled to simple, accurate and accessible information. The countries having big and successful nuclear programme have a high levels of support from the public. It is upon us, as Africans, to learn and adopt the experiences from these successful countries, and determine our communication strategy to engage the public. The public is the main

shareholder of the nuclear program in any country as they can make or break the program.

Improvement of safety features and innovation of technology is continuing. I am aware that the IAEA INPRO (International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles) Programme and Nuclear Energy Agency GIF Programme are there to address technology improvement and innovation. I encourage further participation in these programs to keep abreast of technology and to jointly find innovative solutions.

We are grateful to our national utility, Eskom, who has been operating the Koeberg Nuclear Power station safely since it was commissioned. Koeberg is an important baseload station in terms of stabilising the grid. Without it, the electricity supply in the Western Cape here would be erratic and suffer big losses due to the long transmission distances of over 1500km from the coal fields in the Highveld where nearly all our coal fired power stations are.

We are well aware that Koeberg was built over 30 years ago and as you well know the nuclear industry has not attracted the requisite number of new entrants and many of the people who have been in the sector have reached retirement age. A lot of expertise has thus been lost, as in the case with most western world countries that stopped nuclear programmes after Three Mile Island and Chernobyl. Extensive collaborative efforts are required to bridge these gaps from education, training and knowledge management systems to maintenance and operation of current nuclear power reactors.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) does a lot of work to assist Member States to set-up the required documents and institutions for a nuclear power programme. This is done through invaluable workshops, technical meetings, conferences such as these, and guidance documents. We have already started the Integrated Nuclear Infrastructure Review process. I encourage you all to make more use of this shared resource. I believe that this conference will help us strengthen our understanding on all important nuclear infrastructure issues and share the experience with the countries considering building the first power plant.

It is important to encourage youth participation in our nuclear programs. Nuclear skills therefore have to be transferred in order to sustain this industry. Skills development and training of the young nuclear artisans, operators, technicians, engineers, and scientists is key in this regard. In South Africa we have a very active society known as the South African Young Nuclear Professional Society dealing specifically with that matter. They are professionals across the nuclear and even non nuclear organisations.

In a similar vain we have WINSA or Women in Nuclear South Africa which encourages the participation of women in the nuclear sector. This industry is historically male dominated, and we realised that women should also play a vital role in this space, as with every other sector.

May I also take this opportunity to highlight the forthcoming conference organised by Nuclear Industry Association of South Africa (NIASA) from 1–3 June 2011 at Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC), titled ‘Nuclear localization Conference’. For African countries to start or expand their nuclear programme, localization creates jobs, and it is very critical for a new build programme. I encourage those who can attend this conference to do so.

In conclusion I would like to say that I hope this conference will achieve that its objectives and that we will continue to work together as a continent to strengthen our relations on energy and nuclear issues.

I thank you, Ahsante Sana, tenki, ke a leboga.