



**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY MPETJANE K. LEKGORO, SOUTH AFRICAN AMBASSADOR  
TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
“INTERNATIONAL MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON NUCLEAR POWER IN THE  
21ST CENTURY”**

**30 October - 1 November 2017**

**Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates**

Mr President

The Director-General

Your Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Afternoon.

On behalf of the Government of South Africa, allow me to thank the Government of the United Arab Emirates for hosting this International Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Power in the 21st Century: Challenges and Possibilities, and the excellent hospitality extended to the South African delegation in this beautiful city of Abu Dhabi. We equally recognize the collaboration of the IAEA and the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency in organizing this important conference.

Let me also congratulate you Ambassador Hamad Alkaabi on your appointment as President of this Conference. We hope that under your able leadership the Conference will come to a successful conclusion.

Mr President

The Theme of this year's Conference is very relevant considering that nuclear energy continues to be a viable option for many countries including my own, to address energy challenges now and in the future. This further reminds us that nuclear safety should continue to be at the heart of our activities.

Since the last Ministerial Conference held in the Russian Federation in 2013, there have been a number of events which have contributed positively to the safe and secure operation of nuclear power plants such as the release of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident report and the adoption of the Vienna Declaration on Nuclear Safety.

In the aftermath of the Fukushima Daiichi accident, South Africa undertook a comprehensive assessment of our nuclear power station in Koeberg, outside Cape Town, in order to incorporate the lessons learnt from the report including verifying

design, operation, and emergency responses. The assessment revealed no major shortcomings in the safety of our facility. However a National Plan of Action was developed in order to make the facility even more robust against extreme external events. In our view the report was timely and provided assurances to concerns raised by the general public about the safety of nuclear power plants.

Equally, the Vienna Declaration on Nuclear Safety will go a long way to strengthen nuclear safety. As a Contracting Party to the Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS), South Africa continues to fulfill its obligations under the Convention by demonstrating a high level of nuclear safety. During the 7<sup>th</sup> Review Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the CNS held earlier this year, we provided an update of our activities in compliance with the articles of the Convention and the Vienna Declaration.

Mr President,

Energy security is central to economic development across the world. The report published by the IAEA on the “International Status and Prospects for Nuclear Power 2017” indicates that there are 447 operational nuclear power reactors in 30 countries, and 60 are under construction in 15 countries. It similarly illustrates that the demand for nuclear power is on a positive trajectory thereby demonstrating that it remains a viable option for Member States.

Nuclear energy is central to socio-economic development and has become a key focus of the IAEA. In this regard, South Africa commends the Agency for its continued support to Member States to address their socio-economic challenges in the priority areas of human health, food and agriculture, industrial applications, water resource management and environmental protection. The positive contribution by the Agency in shaping the new global development agenda, more specifically Africa’s Agenda 2063 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, is well appreciated by South Africa.

South Africa made an informed decision to pursue nuclear power as part of the energy mix, through the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) 2010 – 2030, which envisages an additional 9.6GW of nuclear power capacity. We are currently reviewing South Africa’s Nuclear New Build Programme so as to ensure that the

process accords with our legislative framework, including engagement with the public in the decision-making process. Once this review has been completed, we are committed to implementing the Nuclear New Build Programme at a scale and pace that our country can afford.

South Africa is committed to ensuring that the expansion of our nuclear power generating capacity provides the maximum benefit to the country. In this regard, we are convinced that the Nuclear New Build Programme will bring many socio-economic benefits in line with our country's National Development Plan. These range from reducing greenhouse gas emissions in keeping with South Africa's climate change commitments, the development of advanced technology, and skills development in order to achieve a stable, sustainable, clean, and cost effective baseload electricity.

Mr President,

As recently as February 2013, we became the first country with an existing nuclear power programme to invite the IAEA to undertake a review of our self-assessment of our readiness to expand our nuclear power capacity, using the IAEA's Integrated Nuclear Infrastructure Review process. Since then we managed to develop a number of strategies based on thorough studies conducted to ensure readiness towards a procurement phase of the nuclear expansion programme.

Mr President,

South Africa is not immune to the challenges faced by other countries seeking to pursue nuclear expansion programmes. Public acceptance of nuclear is a challenge that requires urgent attention by the nuclear power community such as vendors, operators, regulators and utilities. South Africa is in process of rolling out robust short term public stakeholder engagements and looks forward to implementation of a long term intervention in the near future.

Subsequent to the IAEA INIR Mission, South Africa further invited the IAEA Emergency Preparedness and Review Mission in February 2014, the IAEA Safety Aspects of Long Term Operation in November 2015 and the IAEA Integrated

Regulatory Review Services Mission in December 2016. South Africa benefited from the support of the IAEA provided through these peer review missions and currently we are in the process of implementing Action Plans to address the recommendations of these missions.

South Africa is one of the water scarce countries in the world and the irony of it is that we are surrounded by oceans and yet we are facing severe water restrictions and drought – a crisis that can be resolved through the deployment of nuclear technologies, especially Generation IV systems that are capable of desalinating sea water for human consumption.

Mr President,

In addition, South Africa values innovations and advancement in nuclear technology. It is upon this entrenched value that we are a founding member of the Generation IV International Forum (GIF) – a co-operative international endeavour which was set up to carry out the research and development (R & D) needed to establish the feasibility and performance capabilities of the next generation nuclear energy systems. We hosted with success the 38<sup>th</sup> Expert Group and 44<sup>th</sup> Policy Group meeting of GIF in Cape Town from 16-20 October 2017 and while at present our focus is on readily deployable nuclear technologies, we remain committed to collaborating on generation IV systems.

Mr President,

Finally, in affirming the IAEA's motto of "Atoms for peace and development", South Africa believes that nuclear power is one of the sustainable energy sources that provides clean, reliable electricity.

I am looking forward this informative Conference and wish all delegates fruitful discussions. Thank you.