

Opening Remarks by Zizamele Mbambo

**Deputy Director General: Department of Mineral Resources and
Energy**

**Regional Meeting to Promote the Joint Convention on the Safety of
Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste
Management in Africa**

11 - 14 December 2023, Anew Hotel, Centurion

Programmer Director Mr Thiagan Pather

Ms Nelli Aghajanyan, Joint Convention Coordinator of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

Ms Annatina Muller, Advisor to Joint Convention President

Mr Justice Chipuru, IAEA International Expert

Distinguished International Guests

South African Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to extend my gratitude to all of you for your positive response to the invitation to attend this Regional Meeting of the IAEA Joint Convention. I further extend my gratitude to the team that organised this meeting successfully.

International participants, you are all warmly welcome to South Africa and hope you will enjoy your short stay our country and enjoy our warm Summer season weather. All the participants at large are welcome, and I

hope that you will have fruitful discussions during the next 3 days of your meeting.

Program Director,

It is noteworthy that the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent fuel Management and the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management is the first legally binding international treaty covering the areas of safety of spent fuel and radioactive waste management. The convention's Contracting Parties represent a commitment to achieve and maintain a consistently high level of safety in the management of spent fuel and radioactive waste as part of the global safety regime for the protection of the people and the environment.

In recognizing the need for safe nuclear programme and the benefits of the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, particularly, in the back-end of the nuclear fuel cycle, South Africa acceded to this convention in November 2006 and its obligations under this convention came into force in February 2007.

It is noted that challenges exist globally in the management of spent fuel and radioactive waste. However, global good practices can be implemented regionally to improve and collaborate in the aspect of safety of spent fuel and radioactive waste management. Having cooperative governance between various organs of states on various aspects of the management of radioactive waste can better enhance our capabilities regionally. Other practice that can ensure safety regime for the protection

of the people and the environment is having in place legislated requirements for establishing in our countries public engagement forums to allow members of the public living in the vicinity of nuclear facilities to freely engage so that they become aware of nuclear safety and protection matters.

I would encourage our fellow African countries that are non-contracting parties to the Joint Convention to thoughtfully reflect as they will have a broader understanding of the Joint Convention and be more informed of the great advantages of becoming a Contracting Party.

One may say, “But there is no nuclear facility in my country so there is no need to accede to this convention”. The Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent fuel Management and the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management is beneficial for countries currently engaged in nuclear programs, countries that are still planning and countries that have conceptual waste management facilities. It is important to note that while your country may currently not be involved in nuclear programs, then it is a great opportunity to start the nuclear programme having a broader and clear understanding, all the knowledge shared and experiences and lessons learned from other Contracting Parties already engaged in nuclear.

I believe the presentations from different speakers will be inspiring in a way that we can moved to prioritise safe practises in the aspects of spent fuel and radioactive waste management and will drive us as African region to strive for success and be able to bring out good practices for other regions to learn from them.

In conclusion I wish you a good stay once more

Thank you