

STATEMENT DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR T. MUSHAYAVANHU, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE: 59TH REGULAR SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA) GENERAL CONFERENCE: 14 – 18 SEPTEMBER 2015

Mr President
Director General
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates,

Let me, at the outset, congratulate you Mr President, on your election to steer the work of the 59th Session of the IAEA General Conference. I wish to pledge my delegation's active participation, full support to, and co-operation with you towards the successful discharge of your mandate.

Mr President,

Zimbabwe attaches great importance to the mandate and work of the IAEA, in particular to the multi-faceted assistance and support that the Agency continues to offer to my country, and indeed to other Member States. In respect of Zimbabwe, which became a member of the IAEA in 1986, our collaboration with the Agency has evolved from strength to strength in such diverse areas as nuclear medicine and cancer treatment; animal disease control and tsetse-fly eradication; as well as energy planning and capacity building. In all these spheres of co-operation, the practical assistance and support of the Agency has contributed immensely to improved livelihoods and general well-being of our citizens.

This evolving co-operation between Zimbabwe and the IAEA has taken place within the context of the first and second Country Programme Frameworks. The second Country Programme Framework is due to expire in December this year, by which time we are hoping to have concluded consultations on the third Framework document.

As an agro-based economy, Zimbabwe is grateful to, and appreciative of, the assistance rendered by the IAEA during the 2014-2015 programming cycle. In particular, our Crop Breeding Institute received support in executing two projects, one national and another regional. The national project focused on “Developing Drought Tolerant and Disease/Pest Resistant Grain Legume Varieties with enhanced nutritional content using Mutation Breeding and Novel Techniques”. The regional project addressed the “Improvement of Crops Using Mutation Induction and Biotechnology through a Farmer Participation Approach”. For a country that is facing recurrent droughts, the projects were designed to develop drought and disease tolerant/resistant grain legume varieties.

Yet another project in Zimbabwe, known as Zim5020, is receiving support from the Agency. This project called “Optimising Water Use and Soil Productivity for Increased Food Security in Drylands”, is designed to enhance national food security through farmer participation in sustainable technologies that optimize soil water and nutrient use.

It would be remiss of me if I fail to mention the excellent collaboration with the Agency on disease surveillance and control of trans-boundary animal diseases such as the foot and mouth disease (FMD). The support from the Agency in this area was received through both the National and Africa Regional projects. Through the national projects, our Central Veterinary Laboratory acquired an Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometer (AAS), while six technologists were trained in testing residues in animal products. The other major achievement was the establishment of more sensitive, specific nuclear-based diagnostic tests and research tools for trans-boundary animal diseases like foot and mouth disease.

Our appreciation to the Agency is because we have witnessed spectacular, and very practical results and tangible benefits from that collaboration. For instance, the last foot and mouth disease in 2013 was detected and confirmed in the field using the FMB LAMP PCR rapid diagnostic technique which was introduced in Zimbabwe by the IAEA under the RAF/5/057 project.

Mr President

I also wish to express the satisfaction and appreciation of my delegation with the decision of the IAEA to avail funding for the 2016-2017 programming cycle to an important national project designed to “Establish Molecular Epidemiology Research/Diagnostic Methods, Tissue Culture and Production of Biological Reagent and Antigens for Surveillance of Disease of Economic and Zoonotic Importance.”

Mr President,

Cancer has emerged as the number one killer in my country. In our fight against this public health challenge, we have found a willing and helpful partner in the IAEA, which has contributed through technical advice, fellowships to medical radiation users, as well as the provision of equipment. This cooperation with the Agency has resulted in the establishment of the first oncology Nursing Training Centre in Harare. In addition, our cancer diagnosis treatment infrastructure has been upgraded mainly through cost-sharing between the government and the Agency. Of particular note was the installation of the advanced Dual Head Gamma Camera installed at Mpilo Central Hospital, and the Single Energy Linear Accelerator at Parirenyatwa Group of Hospitals to offer advanced diagnosis of cancer and treatment of patients.

Within the framework of the Integrated Nuclear Security Support Plan developed and approved in 2013, we are happy and grateful as a country that this year we received valuable support from the IAEA with organising and conducting a one-week training course on the security of radioactive sources and strategies for detecting materials that are outside regulatory control. However, in line with the discussions we had with the Agency last year, Zimbabwe still awaits the assistance that was promised in a number of areas that we will pursue bilaterally with the Agency.

Mr President

As I alluded to earlier in my remarks, Zimbabwe's relationship with the IAEA has blossomed with every passing year of our collaboration with the Agency. Our current Country Programme Framework is ending in December this year, and we have already started to work on the next Framework (2016-2020). We hope that the document will be submitted to the Agency by the end of next month.

Zimbabwe was honoured to receive Mr Kwaku Aning, Deputy Director General and Head of the Department of Technical Cooperation in May this year for consultations aimed at enhancing the cooperation between the government of Zimbabwe and IAEA. A lot of progress was accomplished in discussions between Mr Aning and authorities in Harare. We look forward to a deepening of this relationship with the Agency, particularly in the area of capacity-building. In particular five areas were identified for assistance: human health, the re-establishment of Nuclear Medicine; pest control assistance in setting up training facilities at Zimbabwean universities; the use of Isotope Hydrology in water management; and finally the area of energy planning and climate change.

Zimbabwe received an Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) Mission in November last year. The IRRS Mission identified a number of good practices and made some recommendations and suggestions where improvements will enhance the effectiveness of the regulatory framework and functions in line with the IAEA Safety Standards. The government of Zimbabwe is grateful to the IAEA for pledging to assist in addressing these useful recommendations and suggestions.

We are also grateful to the IAEA for capacitating our Radiation Protection Authority. The Authority has performed so well since its inception in 2009 to the extent that the Agency has now identified it as a centre to place Fellows from other African countries, and we have already started receiving some Fellows.

Mr President,

I have addressed my country's collaboration with the IAEA in the various spheres of peaceful or civilian application of nuclear technology, one of the three pillar of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). However, as we meet today, only the non-proliferation pillar has attracted the keen interest and active attention of the powerful among us, who themselves possess inordinate quantities of arsenals of weapons of mass destruction. In 1995 Zimbabwe was among a group of Non-Aligned countries which stood firmly against and opposed the unconditional and indefinite extension of the NPT. We had no reason to believe that our powerful interlocutors were negotiating in good faith.

Mr President

Zimbabwe feels vindicated by the events since 1995 because, now there is no pressure to disarm, and yet for the rest of us without nuclear weapons, we have no chips to bargain with and no cards to play. There is general consensus among the overwhelming majority of UN Member States that since 1995, subsequent Review Conferences, including the last one held in May/June in New York, have only confirmed our fears about the unwillingness to disarm.

Mr President,

We are meeting two months following the agreement on the Joint comprehensive Plan of Action between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the EU plus 3. We support this agreement because of our firm belief in the positive role of cooperation and peaceful coexistence over conflict in the conduct of relations between and among states. The agreement reaffirms our conviction in the inalienable right of all states to the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

We recall that Iran has always proclaimed that its nuclear programme is for peaceful applications, in line with its international obligations. As a country, and as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement,

Zimbabwe has steadfastly supported the Islamic Republic of Iran's right to pursue its civil nuclear programme, and condemned the sanctions imposed on our brothers and sisters in Iran. My delegation wishes to agree with the observation made by Iran yesterday in their statement before this plenary session, that diplomacy, dialogue and negotiations can yield positive results than sanctions and military threats.

In conclusion, I wish to assure the Director-General that during the course of this conference, we shall seek to engage the various Departments of the Agency to advance the frontiers of our bilateral cooperation.

Mr President
I thank You