

National Statement: South Africa
April 01, 2016

STATEMENT

BY

THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

ON OCCASION

OF

THE NUCLEAR SECURITY SUMMIT

Washington, D.C.

March/April 2016

On behalf of the Government and People of the Republic of South Africa, I wish to express my appreciation to President Obama for hosting the 2016 Nuclear Security Summit in Washington D.C. It is fitting that this Summit, which marks the end of the Nuclear Security Summit process in its present format, is again held in Washington, where the first Summit took place in 2010.

Looking back, I believe that we should be pleased with the high level of political commitment to nuclear security that has been established amongst the States participating in the Nuclear Security Summit process. Commencing in 2010, the various Summits have forged a common awareness of the importance of nuclear security and have strengthened the nuclear security architecture.

Regrettably, in the recent past the world has again witnessed acts of terrorism. Our own Continent has also been a regular target for terrorist attacks. It is clear that such incidents could occur anywhere in the world: in developing or developed countries, and in nuclear weapon or non-nuclear weapon States. Such incidents demonstrate the need to collaborate and work together, recognizing that no country is immune to acts of terrorism. Addressing the root causes of terrorism

in all its manifestations should remain our key priority. At the same time, in the nuclear arena, we need to continue investing in nuclear security to enhance expertise to deter, detect and combat malicious acts in order to protect nuclear facilities, nuclear material and other radiological substances.

Nuclear security is a global concern requiring global solutions that involve all States. It therefore follows that the level of nuclear security can only be effectively raised through cooperation in fora where all States can contribute to shaping a truly international response. It is for this reason that South Africa has long advocated for a multilateral approach to promoting nuclear security which upholds the centrality of the United Nations system and respects the principles enshrined in its Charter. For South Africa, much of the value of the Nuclear Security Summit process has therefore been the political support generated for the work of existing multilateral bodies, notably that of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

South Africa believes that through a co-operative approach in the relevant multilateral organisations, we can effectively deal with nuclear security risks. We are therefore pleased that after this Summit, we will vest the issue of nuclear security mainly in the IAEA by infusing the gains of the NSS into the IAEA and bringing on board those countries that are currently not part of the NSS process. Although nuclear security remains a national responsibility, the IAEA has an essential role in facilitating and coordinating international cooperation and supporting the efforts of States to fulfil their nuclear security responsibilities.

South Africa remains committed to ensuring and maintaining effective nuclear security measures in respect of all nuclear and other radioactive material, including nuclear facilities in the country, in accordance with its national and international obligations. As South Africa is planning a future expansion to its nuclear programme, nuclear security remains a priority for us.

South Africa welcomes the progress that has been made since our first Summit in Washington D.C. followed by further Summits in Seoul and The Hague in 2012 and 2014. We are committed to the continuous enhancement of nuclear security control measures in accordance with the national threat assessment, as well as global threats, taking into consideration our international obligations. We remain committed to ensuring adherence to our international obligations and implementing nuclear security measures in accordance with our legislation. In this regard, South Africa is a party to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and is in the

process of ratifying the Amended Convention with the objective of enhancing its obligations related to nuclear security.

South Africa will continue to work together with the international community to enhance nuclear security. We have installed Radiation Portal Monitors at some facilities and currently we are working with the IAEA to enhance the detection capabilities at our Ports of Entry. In August 2014, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) of the United States of America audited one of our facilities with the objective of assessing security systems. I am pleased to say that the outcome was positive.

Following the FIFA World Cup in 2010 hosted by South Africa, the support we have received from the IAEA (including capacity building and detection equipment) has enabled the country to offer national training courses to law enforcement officials, including operators, to implement nuclear security measures at relevant events. South Africa has hosted and participated in numerous workshops with the objective of enhancing nuclear security at its nuclear installations.

We are continuing with our programme to recover, consolidate and return disused and orphan radioactive sources throughout Africa and some non-African countries. We are also in the process of finalising the establishment of a nuclear forensics capability. As South Africa recognises the need for a Nuclear Security Support Centre to coordinate nuclear security activities in the country, we are committed to establishing such a Centre to ensure sustainability of expertise in the nuclear security field.

Although the Summit process has done much to strengthen nuclear security, we should not forget that in order for the global nuclear security system to be truly effective, it needs to be comprehensive. Even if all civilian materials were fully secured to the highest standards, this would only cover an estimated 15% of the weapons-usable material around the world, leaving a critical gap in the architecture.

It is thus both legitimate and important to also address the issue of the remaining 85%, which is categorized as military materials that are not subject to any international security standards or oversight mechanisms. In this regard, it is important to note that the 2016 Communique reaffirms the commitment of leaders to the shared goals of nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Enhanced nuclear security

arrangements for nuclear material and facilities in civilian use and nuclear non-proliferation efforts alone will not eliminate the threat of nuclear terrorism. Progress towards the realization of our shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons can no longer be postponed. As long as high-risk nuclear material remain outside international oversight, the threat of nuclear terrorism will remain.

Nuclear energy not only provides for the expanded opportunity to generate power for our development, but we also derive benefit from its application in areas such as health, nutrition and agriculture. It is therefore appropriate that the 2016 Communique states that measures to strengthen nuclear security will not hamper the right of States to develop and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

As we are meeting for the last time as participating States in the Nuclear Security Summit process, it is important that we share the outcome of this Summit with other International Atomic Energy Agency Member States, as well as with the Agency and other multilateral organisations. It is trusted that the International Conference on Nuclear Security scheduled to take place in December this year in Vienna, Austria, will serve us well in carrying forward the 2016 Summit's outcomes and deliverables.

I thank you.