



OPENING SPEECH

BY

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THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

AT THE

AFCONE - IAEA Workshop

on

Nuclear Power

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**Distinguished Participants;
Ladies and Gentlemen;**

Good Afternoon,

I would like to congratulate the AFCONE and the IAEA for organizing this important workshop. I am honored to contribute some insights into the topic of Promoting Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy in Africa especially as it relates to the Promotion of Safe and Secure Nuclear Power in Africa.

Energy poverty remains a serious obstacle to economic and human development in most parts of the African continent. Africa continues to face critical challenges in the energy sector attributed to poor infrastructure, low purchasing power, low investments, and dependence on traditional fossil fuels. Thus, there is an urgent need to strategize in leapfrogging the dirty fuels of the past with future abundant clean energy sources.

The AU Agenda 2063, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the AU Post-Covid-19 Recovery Action Plan as well as the AU Energy Transition Programme, underscore the importance of clean energy as an enabler of social, environmental, and economic transformation by providing the means of closing the energy access gap and consumption levels to achieve a balance in demand and supply with very little or no emission.

Therefore, our continent needs to adopt energy generation systems that sustainably provide reliable and incessant supply of electricity. The low-carbon technologies that are currently adoptable within Africa, are wind, solar, hydroelectric, and nuclear.

**Distinguished Participants
Ladies and Gentlemen**

Nuclear is one of the energy technologies available today with the lowest GHG emissions currently producing above 10% of the world's electricity, accounting for around one-third of all low carbon electricity.

It is expected to continue to play an important role in the energy mix for many countries around the world.

Some countries in Africa have recently committed to increasing the share of power from nuclear energy in order to address their respective energy challenges. But the major concern on nuclear waste safety and nuclear proliferation are still the roadblocks that must be tackled, in addition to negative public perceptions which collectively make the prospect of accomplishing these ambitious objectives unpopular.

Practically, the development and operation of a Nuclear Power Programme is a major undertaking requiring careful planning and preparation. It is a fact, that, the safe operation of a nuclear power plant relies on the establishment of a strong and robust Regulatory Framework and active regulatory institutions. This is in addition to extensive capacity-building programmes that will help address the demand for skills and expertise in the nuclear development sphere. Furthermore, regulatory institutions should be fully involved in the nuclear power project design and construction. This will help to develop an organizational culture that promotes the appropriate attributes, values, standards, morals, and norms to optimize the plants' safety.

Strategically, a strong, well-developed interactive methodology among the nuclear industry stakeholders is vital in managing the growth and change, in the technical and commercial competence, within the industry. This is to ensure clear procedures for internal and external communication are followed to augment the system's safety. Thus, it is imperative to engage all stakeholders including national, regional, and local authorities, regulatory bodies, the vendor, emergency response and technical support organizations, the grid operators, and the public, and assign each with particular responsibilities and capabilities in order to achieve the optimum attainable safety.

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Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is our mandate at the AUC to coordinate the formulation of most of the transformative actions, policies, strategies, and regulations needed to foster energy solutions and reduce carbon emissions at the continental, regional and national levels including the new energy paradigm of “decentralized, decarbonized, de-risked and democratized” energy services that will enable Africa to realize its Agenda 2063 aspirations.

The AUC is fully aware and keenly observing with interest, the various national and regional nuclear programmes in the continent, most notably the development of an integrated West African regional nuclear power programme, with a three-year action plan, named the West African Integrated Nuclear Power Group (WAINPG), plans by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to be implemented by the West Africa Power Pool (WAPP).

Thus, we are always ready to support the African Union Member States embarking on nuclear power programmes by providing a platform for the exchange of information and interaction among countries and continental stakeholders, as well as for learning relevant lessons from case studies and current global practices within the nuclear industry.

The African Union Commission and its institutions will continue to cooperate in building the capacities of relevant nuclear industry stakeholders at all levels to implement any Nuclear Power Programmes in the continent. In this regard, the African Union Commission will continually work to optimally align available donor support to the needs of our Member States and in creating an enabling environment for the implementation of a nuclear power programme toward the reduction of GHG emissions and ensuring a cleaner, secure, reliable means of energy production and in providing support through technical cooperation programmes.

Thank you