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SECOND MEETING OF THE
AFRICAN COMMISSION ON NUCLEAR ENERGY (AFCONE)
26 JULY 2012
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

OPENING REMARKS BY MR. EL-GHASSIM WANE
DIRECTOR, PEACE AND SECURITY

Distinguished Members of AFCONE,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the leadership of the African Union Commission, I wish to welcome you to Addis Ababa and to the AU Headquarters, in particular, for your second meeting. That this meeting is being held again at the AU is further manifestation of the Commission's commitment to spare no efforts towards the full operationalization of AFCONE.

The convening of the First Ordinary Session of AFCONE in May 2011 was an important step in operationalizing the Commission and in giving effect to the objectives and provisions of the Treaty of Pelindaba. This step was widely recognized and welcomed by States Parties, the AU as a whole and the wider international community. The 17th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held in July 2011, expressed satisfaction at the successful holding of the meeting and encouraged the States Parties to the Treaty to provide AFCONE with the necessary support to ensure the early and effective commencement of its activities.

I am glad to note that since the First Ordinary Session, five Member States have deposited their instruments of ratification of the Treaty, bringing the total number of States Parties to thirty six.

The Chairperson of the Commission, as the depository of the Treaty, has worked relentlessly towards implementing the relevant conclusions of AFCONE inaugural meeting. Allow me to provide a brief overview of the efforts made so far in this respect.

Regarding the appointment of the Executive Secretary, and as you would recall, AFCONE had had agreed that the position should be filled through a competitive process, administered by the AU Commission and conducted in compliance with its rules and regulations. Consequently, the Commission launched the recruitment process, and the position was advertised mid-2011. A Panel was put in place to review applications, and short-listed the most qualified candidates. On 20 February of this year, short-listed candidates were interviewed and the Panel has submitted its report and recommendations. Pursuant to the relevant provisions of the Treaty, and on the basis of the report and recommendations of the selection Panel, the Chairperson of the Commission will undertake consultations with the Chairperson of AFCONE, in order to complete the process.

The Commission has also worked towards concluding the host agreement with the Government of the Republic of South Africa. Over the past months, the Office of our Legal Counsel and the South African side have been working together to finalize this important document. We look forward to this afternoon's presentation, by colleagues from the South African delegation, on the preparations being made to host the Executive Secretariat of AFCONE, which will be based in Pretoria.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to point out that all the documents which will be discussed in the course of the day, namely the rules of procedure, structure, guidelines for the programme of work, terms of reference of the Executive Secretary and the proposed scale of assessment, were reviewed during the First Ordinary Session of AFCONE, during which valuable and insightful inputs were made.

In consultation with the Chairperson and members of AFCONE, the Chairperson of the Commission will convene the Second Conference of States Parties in November 2012. The draft agenda of that Conference, which will be discussed in the course of your deliberations, will subsequently be shared by the Commission with the States Parties on behalf of AFCONE. The Commission will make all other necessary arrangements for the successful convening of the Conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The establishment of AFCONE has generated high expectations, from both States Parties and within the wider international community, on the important role that it can play in all nuclear related issues: monitoring of compliance by the State Parties with their non-proliferation obligations; nuclear and radiation safety and security; nuclear sciences and technology; partnership and technical cooperation.

I would like to renew the AU Commission's commitment to provide AFCONE with all the support needed to ensure its full operationalization and effective functioning.

I wish you fruitful deliberations.