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AU and South Africa sign Nuclear Energy Commission host agreement

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – 4 November 2015: The African Union Commission Chairperson, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, and the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa, Ms. Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, signed, on Wednesday, 4 November 2015, the Host Country Agreement for the establishment of the Headquarters of the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE).

The Host Agreement will allow AFCONE and its Secretariat to function fully and effectively to implement the mandate of the African Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Pelindaba), which entered into force in July 2009.

According to the AU Commission Chairperson, the African Commission on Nuclear Energy will play a key role in supporting sustainable development on the continent, notably in supporting key Agenda 2063 priority areas such as infrastructure, health, agriculture, industrialization and energy (amongst other priorities). The Chairperson of the Commission stressed the positive role that AFCONE will play in advancing the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

On her part, the South African Minister for International Relations expressed the satisfaction of her government to host the Pan-African institution, noting the significant contribution towards the ultimate goal of achieving a world in which nuclear weapons no longer exist.

Following the signing, the Chairperson of the AU Commission seized the opportunity to call on all concerned States to ratify and accede to the Treaty of Pelindaba and its Protocols without further delay. She further expressed her appreciation to the Republic of South Africa for being graciously hosting of a number of other AU organs.

About the Treaty of Pelindaba

The African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, also known as the Treaty of Pelindaba, was signed in Cairo, Egypt, on 11 April 1996 and entered into force on 15 July 2009.

The Treaty, for which the Chairperson of the African Union Commission is the depositary, prohibits the development, manufacture, stockpiling, acquisition, testing, possession, control or stationing of nuclear explosive devices in the Zone territory of States parties and the dumping of radioactive waste in the African Zone.

It also prohibits any attack against nuclear installations in the Zone by the parties and requires them to maintain the highest standards of physical protection of nuclear material, facilities and equipment, which are to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes.

The Treaty has three Protocols. The first two commit States parties not to use or threaten to use a nuclear device against any territory within the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, as well as not to undertake, assist or encourage the testing of any nuclear explosive device anywhere within the Zone.

These two Protocols are open for signature by the five recognized nuclear-weapon States.

The third Protocol, which is open for signature by France and Spain, concerns the territories for which they are *de jure* or *de facto* internationally responsible, and which are situated within the Zone. The Protocol commits them not to contribute to any act that constitutes a violation of the Treaty.

About AFCONE

The African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE) was established by Article 12 of the Treaty of Pelindaba as the body responsible for, inter alia, ensuring States Parties compliance with their obligations under the Treaty and its Protocols and promoting regional and sub-regional programmes for cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology.

In 2012 AFCONE adopted its programme of work which consists of four pillars focusing on: a) monitoring States parties' compliance with their Treaty obligations; b) nuclear and radiation safety and security; c) nuclear sciences and applications; and d) partnerships and technical cooperation with the relevant regional and international bodies.

The Secretariat of AFCONE will be located in Pretoria, South Africa, and will be headed by an Executive Secretary. AFCONE is financed by States Parties assessed contributions, as well as grants from international partners.