

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR AS MINTY
CHAIR OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON NUCLEAR ENERGY (AFCONE)

FIRST PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE THIRD CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES AND
SIGNATORIES THAT ESTABLISHED NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE ZONES AND MONGOLIA

27 APRIL 2012

Chairperson,

Congratulations on your election as Chairperson to guide our preparations for the important Third Conference of States Parties and Signatories that established nuclear-weapon-free zones and Mongolia.

You have the full support of the members of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone for your efforts to successfully conclude our meeting.

It is indeed an honour for the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE) to be formally represented at this preparatory meeting for the first time.

We thank Chile, and in particular Ambassador Alfredo Labbé, for his dedication to the cause of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, so fittingly demonstrated by his outstanding leadership displayed in presiding over the Second Conference of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in 2010.

Chairperson,

Africa's deep concern with the effects resulting from the dissemination of nuclear weapons gave birth to a vision of an African nuclear-weapon-free zone during the early 1960s. This resulted in sustained efforts being undertaken in Africa to achieve this vision, which culminated in the signing in Cairo, on 11 April 1996 of the Pelindaba Treaty, and its subsequent entry into force on 15 July 2009.

This Treaty is regarded as a key component of the overall peace and security architecture of the African Union. It is also regarded as one of the building blocks of the Common African Defence and Security Policy.

The First Conference of States Parties of the Pelindaba Treaty reiterated that the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone constituted an important step towards strengthening the non-proliferation regime, promoted cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, promoted general and complete disarmament, and enhanced regional and international peace and security.

This Conference also stressed the determination of African countries to take advantage of article IV of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which recognizes the inalienable right of all State Parties to develop research on, production and use of, nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination, and to facilitate the fullest possible exchange of equipment, material, and scientific and technological information for such purposes.

Chairperson,

It is my honour to report that since the entry into force of the Pelindaba Treaty, and following the First Conference of States Parties to the Treaty, the twelve Commissioners of AFCONE have been elected.

The Commission held its first meeting in May 2011, and a second meeting is planned to be held in July 2012. One of the immediate focus areas of the Commissioners is the establishment of its headquarters in South Africa. This would enable the Commission, and its Secretariat, to commence with implementing their Treaty responsibilities.

In future, AFCONE focus areas will include collating reports and the exchange of information as provided, arranging consultations, reviewing the application to peaceful nuclear activities of safeguards by the IAEA, bringing into effect the complaints procedure, and encouraging regional and sub-regional programmes for co-operation in the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology.

An essential function of AFCONE is promoting international co-operation with extra-zonal States for the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology.

The Third Conference of States Parties and Signatories that established nuclear-weapon-free zones and Mongolia, is an important forum where such co-operation could be strengthened.

Progress has also been made towards the appointment of the Executive Secretary of AFCONE, and hopefully an announcement of the successful candidate will soon be made.

I am also pleased to report that to date, the Treaty has been ratified by 35 African States, and 4 of the nuclear-weapon States have ratified the Protocols to the Treaty they have signed.

Those States not yet party to the Treaty are encouraged to complete their ratification or accession procedures as soon as possible to enable all African States to be party to the Pelindaba Treaty.

Also, the one nuclear-weapon-State that still needs to complete its ratification process of the Protocols it has signed, as well as the one non-nuclear weapon State that also needs to become party to Protocol III of the Treaty, is encouraged to complete this process without delay.

Chairperson,

Nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy are firmly entrenched not only in the African nuclear-weapon-free zone, but also the other established nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Our respective Zones play an essential role in preventing the proliferation – both vertical and horizontal – of nuclear weapons.

The establishment of such zones enhances global and regional peace and security, strengthens the nuclear non-proliferation regime and contributes towards realizing the objectives of nuclear disarmament.

Collectively, nuclear-weapon-free-zones are an authoritative voice to delegitimise nuclear weapons.

Furthermore, by sharing their experiences, the established nuclear-weapon-free zones can also contribute toward the establishment of other nuclear-weapon-free zones, in particularly the Middle East and Central Europe.

In conclusion Chairperson,

The Third Conference of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia provides us with another valuable opportunity to forge greater co-operation among the established zones to the benefit of achieving a world free of all nuclear weapons.

However, this Conference, in addition to a consensus outcome on our collective position on nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, should forge a practical outcome on enhancing the contribution of nuclear energy to the benefit of the economic and social development of our respective Zones.

The Members of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone stand ready to positively contribute to the preparations for this Conference, which will facilitate a comprehensive outcome in 2015 to our mutual benefit.

I thank you.