WORKSHOP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1540 (2004)
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STATEMENT BY
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Ambassador Pieter Vermeulen, Chief Director, United Nation (Political), Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) of South Africa,

Ambassador Baso Sangqu, Chairman of the UN Security Council Committee 1540,

Representatives of the host Government of South Africa,

Representatives of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs and the 1540 Committee,

Representatives of African States,

Partner agencies and institutes,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by thanking the Government of South Africa for hosting this important workshop, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) for its support, as well as the partner countries of Norway and the US.

I am confident that this workshop will facilitate a better understanding of resolution 1540, its objectives and the obligations of Member States. More importantly, it will highlight why the resolution matters to African states and how best international obligations and developmental needs can be reconciled.

In this regard, I would like to thank and commend Ambassador Sangqu, as the current chair of the 1540 Committee, for his commitment and his efforts towards ensuring that the needs of African states and the peculiarities of the African context are adequately taken into consideration as far as the implementation of resolution 1540 is concerned.

Resolution 1540, in essence, is an instrument that aims to support and strengthen the existing non-proliferation, disarmament and security regime. It encompasses nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, other related material, as well as their means of delivery, which are generally addressed separately under multilateral conventions. It further aims to strengthen the counter-terrorism regime as it relates to non-proliferation issues and to address other cross-cutting issues such as border security and transnational organized crime. The global non-proliferation, disarmament, nuclear security and counter-terrorism regimes and resolution 1540 are therefore mutually reinforcing.
The threats that resolution 1540 aims to address are real. For the period July 2009 to June 2010 alone, 222 incidents were confirmed to the IAEA Illicit Trafficking Database. Of these, 21 involved possession and related criminal activities, 61 involved theft or loss and 140 involved other unauthorized activities. During this period, five incidents involved high enriched uranium or plutonium, one of which was related to illegal possession and four were related to other unauthorized activities.

Information reported to the IAEA Illicit Trafficking Date Base demonstrates that the existence of unsecured nuclear and other radioactive material persists and given the prevailing security environment, Africa remains equally vulnerable to such threats as other regions. There are currently nine operational research nuclear reactors in Africa and numerous radioactive source used in medical facilities and industries.


Despite this achievement, there remain delays and challenges to the full implementation of these instruments at the national level, whether in terms of setting up national authorities and bodies, enacting legislation and reporting to the agencies administering these instruments.

African states, undeniably, have pressing and competing priorities that they have to address with limited financial and human resources. These include health, education and post-conflict reconstruction, to name but a few. But we should not see our obligations under these regimes as an extra burden. In fact, we stand to benefit from them to further our developmental goals.

There are substantial opportunities, experiences and resources available that we can tap into to build national capacities, including in the areas of border management and security, medical laboratories, chemical industries, human and animal health and agriculture. And this will further enable us to fulfill our obligations.

We will hear more over the course of these two days, from the 1540 Committee, UNODA and the relevant bodies and organizations about these resources, as well as the experiences of African countries and how they were able to meet their international obligations while addressing their developmental needs. I will also have the opportunity
to speak to you tomorrow about what we have done at the AU, and what we further intend to do, to enhance the implementation of the relevant regional and international instruments on the continent.

Last but not least, I would like to extend my thanks to the implementing agency, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), particularly the colleagues at Africa's Development and the Threat of WMDs Project, Noel and Amelia, for all the work they have done in putting this workshop together.

Thank you.