



**Opening Remarks by the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation,
Mr R Lamola for the Nuclear Suppliers Group Plenary meeting**

Cape Town, South Africa

Delivered virtually

24 July 2025

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my honour to welcome you all to South Africa and the city of Cape Town for the 2025 plenary meeting of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. This meeting holds particular significance as we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Group. A golden jubilee to celebrate five decades of shared purpose, progress and partnership in our quest to facilitate responsible trade and transfers of nuclear related equipment, technology, material, and software.

Excellencies, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am sure you would all agree that the world stands at a precipice. Our belief in the international rule of law enshrined in and guarded by the United Nations now faces an

existential crisis. The stakes for humanity could not be higher as the threat of nuclear weapons being used remains.

South Africa, as the only country to have developed and then voluntarily dismantled its nuclear weapons programme, remains a strong proponent of disarmament and non-proliferation and an ardent supporter of a world free from the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction.

We have consistently expressed support for measures that would strengthen safeguards and non-proliferation systems with a view to addressing the serious challenge posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons while ensuring that controls under the NSG do not deny developing countries access to sensitive material, equipment and advanced technologies required for peaceful purposes and their developmental needs.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. It must be reiterated that the NPT is complemented by numerous other international and regional instruments, including the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Our support for these Treaties as well as the NSG is rooted in our own history, as well as our broader vision for global security and non-proliferation. South Africa has also always emphasised the humanitarian imperatives that underpin our search for a world without the threat posed by the possession, use and proliferation of nuclear weapons.

We note there is increasing public concern about a nuclear confrontation. Accordingly, the importance of international cooperation, diplomacy and dialogue remains more

imperative than ever in advancing non-proliferation initiatives and thus fostering trust among States.

Your presence here reflects our shared commitment to advancing global peace and security through responsible nuclear trade and effective non-proliferation measures.

The NSG was founded on the principle that nuclear materials and technologies must never be diverted for weapons purposes.

Today, that principle is more relevant than ever. We find ourselves navigating a complex and uncertain geopolitical environment, one marked by renewed tensions, regional instability, and challenges to the multilateral norms that have long underpinned our collective security.

In this context, the work of the NSG reinforces the pillar of the international non-proliferation architecture.

Our mandate, to ensure that nuclear dual-use goods are traded only under conditions that do not contribute to the spread of nuclear weapons, requires vigilance, mutual responsibility and cooperation.

Navigating the nuclear crossroads is a shared responsibility.

We gather at a critical juncture, where the pursuit of global security demands our unwavering commitment to rigorous export controls. This is not merely a technical exercise; it is a profound moral imperative.

We must, therefore, continuously refine our guidelines, update our control lists, and deepen our policy coordination, ensuring that every sensitive item traded contributes to, rather than compromises, the peace we collectively strive for. This requires effective national implementation, leaving no stone unturned in our vigilance.

Yet, as we uphold this vital principle, we cannot ignore the rising tide of global aspiration the growing interest in nuclear technologies as a potent instrument for sustainable development. From powering homes to healing the sick, the peaceful atom offers a pathway to progress that many nations legitimately seek.

Thus, in our resolute pursuit of non-proliferation, we must ensure that our transfer controls never become an impediment to legitimate international trade and cooperation in the peaceful application of these transformative technologies.

It is incumbent upon us to resist the imposition of unwarranted restrictions and conditionalities, particularly on developing countries.

For in their legitimate exercise of the inalienable right to develop, use, and access nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, they are not seeking a favour asserting a fundamental entitlement that underpins global equity and shared prosperity. This delicate balance, this dual imperative, is the challenge we must embrace together.

Non-interference in the inalienable right to access nuclear technologies for peaceful purposes would reassure those outside of the NSG to voluntarily use the guidelines and export control lists thus benefitting the international community as a whole.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my deepest hope that this crucial meeting will not merely be a gathering, but a pivotal moment one that deepens our dialogue, strengthens coordination among all Participating Governments, and ensures our collective actions continue to passionately promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

This is a noble endeavour, yet it carries a solemn duty: to unfailingly safeguard against its use in weapons-related activities and programs.

We are united by a shared purpose, bound by mutual responsibility. It is together, through this common understanding and unwavering commitment, that we can truly uphold the integrity of the nuclear non-proliferation regime the very bedrock of global security. This is how we contribute to a more secure, more stable world for all.

I wish you successful deliberations, confident that you will approach these discussions with the wisdom and foresight they demand.

Let us set aside our differences, not by ignoring them, but by transcending them through a common understanding of our collective responsibility as members of this vital Nuclear Suppliers Group. The eyes of the world, and indeed the hopes of future generations, are upon us.

I thank you