



SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL STATEMENT
78TH SESSION OF THE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY
19-27 MAY 2025

COMMITTEE B

ITEM 18.1: THE IMPACT OF CHEMICALS, WASTE AND POLLUTION ON HUMAN HEALTH

Resolution Effects of Nuclear War on Public Health

Chairperson,

South Africa calls on the World Health Assembly (WHA) to support the resolution *Effects of Nuclear War on Public Health*.

My delegation is pleased to join the cosponsors of this important initiative, several of whom know these effects first-hand, as they hail from states, which were either the blast sites of nuclear tests or experienced the nuclear fallout in this regard.

Not only were they robbed of their loved ones, together with the land of their ancestors, which remains contaminated, but their bodies still carry the enduring scars. This manifests, among others, in severe and lasting health impacts, including a heightened risk of and proliferation of cancers, an increased rate of miscarriages, stillbirths, as well as birth defects.

As Africans, we too know the damage caused by the nuclear tests conducted on our Continent and the spectre of the apartheid government's nuclear weapons programme, which loomed large in our lives and those of our neighbours.

These effects transcend national borders, and beyond their impact on the health of current and future generations, pose grave repercussions for human survival more broadly. South Africa therefore welcomes the resolution's provision for updated reports from the Director-General in this regard.

It is the ongoing tragedy of this nuclear legacy, which should serve as a clarion call to urgently establish a nuclear-weapons-free world, especially today where *"nuclear sabre-rattling has reached a fever pitch"*.

As the only country to have voluntarily destroyed its nuclear arsenals, South has always viewed the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of a nuclear weapons detonation – whether by accident, miscalculation or design - as at the very centre of our disarmament efforts. It is only by ensuring that nuclear weapons are never tested, manufactured or used again under any circumstances that we can mitigate against these horrific effects.

We owe it to the victims of these deadly experiments and their families, together with the Hibakusha to ensure that we save succeeding generations from the unacceptable suffering that they still confront.

I thank you