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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Technical cooperation project of the European Commission and the National Nuclear Regulator in South Africa for strengthening the nuclear safety and radiation protection regulatory capacity successfully implemented.

15 October 2026, Centurion, South Africa.

A partnership was built between the European Commission Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) and the National Nuclear Regulator (NNR) in South Africa.

Within this partnership, the NNR with its Centre for Nuclear Safety and Security (CNSS) and the DG INTPA implemented successfully a joint project in the years 2023-2026. The project was aimed at maintaining and fostering further technical capacity of nuclear regulatory authorities at highest levels which is essential to ensure safe and effective regulation of nuclear facilities. The project was implemented with a contracted international Consortium working together with European Nuclear Regulators. It addressed a number of specific topics including:

- “Ageing Management” of nuclear facilities,
- “Fire hazards” including participation in the European Nuclear Safety Regulators Group (ENSREG) 2nd Topical Peer Review on ‘*fire protection at nuclear installations*’,
- “Safety assessment” and “use of specific software codes for safety assessment”,
- “Emergency preparedness and response”,
- “NORM and NORM facilities”,
- “Decommissioning” of nuclear installations,
- “Development of regulatory documents”,
- “In-house training capacity building”.

A comprehensive training program was developed based on the “Strategic Approach on Training (SAT)” promoted by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). It was implemented with different elements, comprising: 10 conference type workshop events of 1 to 2 weeks duration, a 3-week fellowship program on safety assessment code use, a 1-week study tour on Emergency Preparedness, and a 1-week study tour on NORM in Namibia for experience exchange with the Namibian Radiation Protection Agency (NRPA).

Furthermore, a Stakeholder Workshop on Fire Safety with NNR, Eskom and the municipality of Cape Town was conducted. The last events were implemented successfully in March 2026, and the project is now completed with the Final Report delivered as well as the handover of all project documentation including the training materials developed during more than 3 years. The Final Project Meeting was held on 13 July 2026.

The international technical training workshops have had a direct and practical impact on the NNR's ability to regulate nuclear and radiation safety. The knowledge and techniques gained are being applied by NNR specialists in the assessment of safety submissions, regulatory inspections, licensing decisions, technical reviews and the evaluation of safety performance by authorized facilities.

The workshops also provide NNR technical staff with practical exposure to how other experienced regulators address complex nuclear safety issues. This enables the NNR to strengthen its regulatory methodologies, identify potential safety concerns more effectively and apply internationally recognized approaches within the South African regulatory environment.

Importantly, the benefit is not limited to individual officials who attend the workshops. Participants share their knowledge and experience with colleagues, helping to build institutional capability and strengthen the NNR's collective technical expertise. In practical terms this contributes to a more robust, consistent and evidence-based approach to regulating nuclear safety and protecting persons and the environment.

An important and recognized outcome of the project is the establishment of direct contacts between the NNR and European nuclear regulatory authorities including, the ENSREG, the Nuclear Regulator of Hesse (Germany) and the Bulgarian Nuclear Regulatory Authority (BNRA) - with intensive cooperative exchanges in workshops and the expressed interest to continue cooperation with the NNR.

"This project exemplifies the power of collaboration and the critical role of knowledge-sharing for strengthening regulatory competencies with the aim of advancing regulatory oversight in alignment with international safety standards. The skills gained and partnerships formed will continue to generate value for the NNR in years to come," said Dr Nhleko, Director CNSS. The DG INTPA acknowledges the very good outcome of the joint project which will serve to continue the established good partnership with South Africa. Areas for possible future cooperation with positive impact to nuclear and radiation safety were an agenda topic at the Final Project Meeting.

The project was co-funded with 2.7 million Euro, utilising the European Instrument for International Nuclear Safety Cooperation (INSC) programme of the European Union which promotes nuclear safety culture, the safe management of radioactive wastes and the implementation of effective and efficient nuclear safeguards. The INSC funded initiatives and projects implemented in different countries worldwide are coordinated and supervised by the DG INTPA of the European Commission.

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About the National Nuclear Regulator

The National Nuclear Regulator is a public entity which is established and governed in terms of Section 3 of the National Nuclear Regulator Act, (Act No 47 of 1999). The fundamental objective of the NNR is to provide for the protection of persons, property and the environment against nuclear damage through the establishment of safety standards and regulatory practices suited for South Africa. To this end, the NNR provides oversight and assurance that activities related to the peaceful use of nuclear energy in South Africa are carried out in a safe and secure manner and in accordance with international principles and best practices.