

Nuclear technology beneficial says Marriane Nganunu -- Botswana

There is no need to be defensive about nuclear science and technology anywhere,

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Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Communication, Science and Technology (CST), Marriane Nganunu, says nuclear technology has beneficial applications in areas of agriculture, medicine, manufacturing and processing industries, civil works and research in general.

Addressing the National Training Course, jointly organised by the International Atomic Energy in Vienna and the CST ministry, she said it would be difficult for patients to be operated if the X-ray machines were not available.

She added that ionising radiation, among other techniques could be used effectively to treat cancer. The course was designed to prepare the participants for the safe use of nuclear technology.

In the agricultural sector, Nganunu said research efforts were at an advanced stage to the sterile insect technique (SIT) to eradicate these tsetse fly and trypanosomosis (sleeping sickness) without using chemicals, some of which were not environmentally friendly.

She explained that the method had been used successfully in other countries to eradicate fruit flies and thereby improve yield.

However, she said nuclear technology could be extremely hazardous when used for non-peaceful means or evil intentions.

She said even when the intentions were good, the absence of safety precautions when using or handling nuclear sources, posed a real danger not only to the user, but also to the general public and the environment.

Nganunu asserted that her ministry had become aware that there was serious shortage of personnel with relevant experience and who were adequately trained in the radiation protection.

She said it was a matter of high priority for the ministry that while setting up the radiation protection inspectorate, it was important to create a pool of trained personnel in the public and private sector who are knowledgeable in radiation safety.

She said as the countrys liaison officer, she was pleased that these national training courses have come at the right time.

Nganunu said in November she completed the last review of the Radiation Protection Bill before submission to the Attorney Generals Chambers, adding that she was confident that by the end of March next year, the bill would have been enacted into an Act of Parliament.

Participants were taken through a packed programme consisting of property and safety of radiation sources, radiation protection programme in diagnostic and interventional radiology, and the main elements of a regulatory programme for radiation safety