Zimbabwe hasn’t signed an agreement allowing uranium exports to Iran, Deputy Mining Minister Gift Chimanikire said, after a media report the country entered into a deal to export the material used to build nuclear weapons.

“We have no capacity to handle uranium as a country, and besides we don’t even know the quantity of uranium” deposits viable for mining, Chimanikire, a member of the country’s opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change, said in a phone interview today. “We signed a memorandum of understanding with Iran, which covers various agreements in mineral trading such as diamonds, gold and other minerals.”

London-based Times newspaper reported today, citing an interview with Chimanikire, that Zimbabwe had signed an MoU to supply Iran with uranium. Zimbabwe has uranium deposits in the Zambezi Valley although the quality, quantity and economic viability of the reserves have never been formally established.

Western nations suspect Iran wants to use its nuclear program to produce weapons, and have imposed a series of sanctions to pressure it to curb its nuclear ambitions. Iran says its program is meant for energy production and medical research.

The International Atomic Energy Agency told a member country that Iran’s foreign ministry met with Zimbabwean mining officials to resume negotiations on uranium, AP reported in Feb. 2011. London-based Sunday Telegraph reported April 2010 that Iran and Zimbabwe had reached a secret agreement on swapping uranium for fuel.

Chimanikire said today the MoU with Iran was signed some time ago and not this year, he said.
“Trade in uranium is governed under the International Atomic Energy Agency,” Chimanikire said. “We as country are yet to ratify that and have to go through the cabinet committee on legislation.”