

48th RCA General Conference Meeting

Vienna, Austria, Meeting Room 4, M Building

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Welcoming Remarks

by

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Mr Chairman,

Distinguished Representatives of the RCA State Parties,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to join you this morning at the opening of the 48th General Conference Meeting of the Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology for Asia and the Pacific (RCA).

On behalf of the Acting Director General, I extend a warm welcome to the National RCA Representatives, the Director of the RCA Regional Office, and all delegates and participants, especially those who are attending this meeting for

the first time. Your presence, interest and active engagement are reflections of your country's continued commitment and dedication to the programme, and of the importance you attach to regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific.

Back in 1972, when the first RCA meeting was held at the IAEA Headquarters, the Agreement had only six participating countries: India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam; and six observers: Australia, Bangladesh, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia and New Zealand. Today, it is very satisfying to see how the RCA has grown – eighteen countries have deposited their instrument of acceptance for the Regional Cooperative Agreement that entered into force on 12 June 2017. I congratulate you on this achievement, and encourage the remaining countries (China, Fiji, Philippines and Laos) to complete their internal procedures and submit their instruments of acceptance as soon as possible.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to learn that the RCA plans to conduct a pilot assessment of the social and economic impact of the RCA programme in certain thematic areas, such as mutation breeding, non-destructive testing, air pollution and radiotherapy. The Agency is committed to supporting this important endeavour, which will be so valuable for the preparation of the 50th anniversary of RCA, under the slogan 'RCA at 50'.

As the RCA looks towards its 50th anniversary, we expect strengthened strategic foresight and innovation on the part of the Agreement to enhance its relevance and impact for socioeconomic development in the region. This may require generating new ideas, more strategic planning, the introduction of new approaches, the development of new partnerships and the leveraging of new resources.

The Asia and the Pacific region has growing economic and technological strengths, and numerous opportunities abound for the RCA to further amplify the contribution of *Atoms for Peace and Development*, the motto that our late DG Amano has left us as his legacy. With the expansion of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC) and emerging good examples of South-North and South-South cooperation, the RCA is in a very good position to spearhead initiatives along these lines.

Resources, however, are critically needed for substantive programming, and every effort by the RCA to strengthen partnerships with potential stakeholders as well as to secure extrabudgetary funding in support of the RCA programme is important. The Technical Cooperation Fund is limited, and a number of General Conference resolutions noted that financing of the TC programme is a shared responsibility and encourage Member States that are in a position to do so to make voluntary contributions.

I note that the RCA has already commenced with project pre-concepts for the 2022–2023 RCA programme. As we look to the future, I encourage you to use your creativity and innovation to amplify the benefits of the RCA for future generations, and to ensure that RCA programmes can contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in an effective and efficient manner.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Collaboration within the IAEA, particularly between the Department of Technical Cooperation and the technical Departments is essential to the IAEA's timely, efficient and effective support to RCA States Parties. I thank our colleagues in the technical Departments for their continuing excellent cooperation in the

successful implementation of the RCA programme. I would also like to re-affirm the strong commitment of the Department of Technical Cooperation, especially through the Division for Asia and the Pacific, in support of the RCA programme.

I wish you a very productive meeting and a pleasant stay in Vienna.

Thank you for your attention.