

50th RCA General Conference Meeting

16-17 September 2021

Virtual Meeting

Welcome Remarks by

Mr Hua Liu

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Distinguished RCA Chair,

Distinguished Delegates and Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to join you this morning at the opening of the virtual 50th RCA General Conference Meeting.

On behalf of the Director General of the IAEA, Rafael Mariano Grossi, I extend my warm welcome to all delegates and participants. Your presence demonstrates the continued strong commitment of the RCA State Parties to the technical cooperation programme.

I express my appreciation to the RCA Chair, the RCA State Parties and my colleagues in the Division of Asia and Pacific for their joint efforts to organize this online meeting.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Currently, the global community continues to face the challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which regrettably continues to be part of our daily lives and operations.

Nuclear science and technology, however, continues to provide its unique contribution to sustainable development and emergency response. Following the outbreak of the pandemic, the IAEA moved swiftly to provide RT-PCR equipment and training to 129 countries and territories around the world. Twenty-seven of these are in the Asia and the Pacific region. In addition, close to 300 national laboratories around the world have received targeted support.

In June 2020, the Director General introduced the ZODIAC project to help countries prevent pandemics that originate in animals and can be transmitted to humans. ZODIAC aims to strengthen the preparedness and capabilities of Member States to rapidly detect and respond to disease outbreaks, and is supported by a technical cooperation project approved by the Board of Governors in September last year. The first meeting with the ZODIAC National Coordinators for Asia and the Pacific took place in March this year. A survey has been conducted for the ZODIAC National Laboratories and the response rate was very high. This will guide us on how best to support our Member States. In addition, related Coordinated Research Projects are being developed for the different regions. I strongly encourage the RCA State Parties to participate in ZODIAC activities through the RCA programme.

Plastic pollution is another major global challenge. Radiation technology has potential use in plastic recycling. Isotopic tracing techniques can be used to monitor microplastics in our seas. Our Director General highlighted this at the first Roundtable on NUTEC Plastics for the Asia and the Pacific Region, which took place in May this year. Collaborative partnerships are essential for an

integrated, coordinated and solution-oriented approach. I invite the RCA to participate in NUTEC Plastics, contributing their expertise and know-how, and engaging in regional activities to monitor and address plastic pollution.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the RCA has continued to implement its regional programme successfully in 2021. Seventeen virtual regional training courses and meetings, and forty expert missions (conducted as home-based assignments), have been carried out. Eight more training courses or meetings and thirty expert missions will be conducted by the end of 2021. I also note that the development of the RCA programme for the 2022–2023 TC cycle went very well, reflecting the commitment of RCA to its TC programme.

I understand that social and economic impact assessments of RCA projects in two sub-thematic areas – non-destructive testing and radiotherapy – will be completed by the end of 2021. The IAEA highly appreciates this initiative of the RCA. We encourage the RCA to share its experience in the assessment of the social and economic impact of regional TC programmes with other regional cooperative agreements.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The RCA will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2022. It is an excellent opportunity to look back at the challenges, experiences, achievements, good practices and lessons learned over the last five decades. These five decades mean that you have extensive experience to build on in deciding the way forward for the RCA – an RCA that is more cohesive, creative and innovative, effective and efficient, impactful and sustainable. There are enormous resources available in RCA State Parties, waiting to be mobilized and harnessed. I encourage you to discuss new

ideas and approaches for mobilizing and utilizing these resources in the region. For example, in order to be able to develop and maintain a sustainable high-quality workforce for the nuclear sector, the RCA is encouraged to consider establishing a consortium of universities in the region to provide tertiary education in nuclear science and technology. It is also very important for the RCA to consider and develop policies, measures and mechanisms to strengthen cooperation on nuclear and nuclear-related research and development (R&D), commercialization of R&D results, technology transfer and diffusion among national nuclear institutions in the region.

Madam Chair, ladies and gentlemen,

I thank National RCA Representatives, Lead Country Coordinators, and National Project Coordinators for their excellent cooperation in ensuring the successful implementation of the RCA TC programme. Each of you play a critical role in the planning, implementation and realization of the TC programme. Now, your role is even more vital to keep programme implementation at a high level and to meet your countries' expectations.

Before I close, allow me to express my appreciation to the RCA Regional Office, the RCA Programme Advisory Committee, the Working Group on 2018–2023 RCA Medium-Term Strategy Coordination, the Working Group on Drafting the 2024–2029 RCA Medium-Term Strategy, all TCAP staff and our colleagues in the Technical Departments for the excellent cooperation in ensuring the successful implementation of the RCA TC programme.

I am confident that the RCA will continue its successful contribution to sustainable socioeconomic development in RCA State Parties, and I re-affirm the strong commitment and full collaboration of the IAEA in support of the RCA programme.

I sincerely wish you and your families good health and safety, and I wish the meeting every success.

Thank you for your attention.