

**Report of the Fifth Meeting of the
Committee of the RCA Scholarship Programme
14 September 2022**

Introduction

According to the 44th Regional Meeting of National RCA Representatives (NRM) held on 19-21 April 2022, the RCA Scholarship Committee Meeting was requested to submit a report on the Feasibility Study (FS) to the 51st GCM for consideration and decision. An announcement on the long-term aspiration of the RCA GPs for establishing the RCA Scholarship Programme may be made during the Ministerial Conference in September 2022.

Following the 4th Meeting of the Committee of the RCA Scholarship Programme held on 18 August 2022, the 5th Meeting of the Committee of the RCA Scholarship Programme was taken place on 14 September 2022 via video conferencing. The Agenda of the Meeting is in **Annex 1**.

The Meeting included 7 participants and observers comprising representatives from AUL, MAL, THA, SIN, VIE, and IAEA. The List of Participants is included in **Annex 2**.

The objective of the Meeting is to update the progress of the FS report and discuss relevant matters related to the timeline and TOR for the development of the Scholarship.

Opening

On behalf of Dr. Tran Chi Thanh, NR of VIE, cum Chair of the Committee of the RCA Scholarship Programme, Dr Duong Thanh Tung opened the meeting and gave welcome remarks to the participants.

VIE and SIN were appointed as the rapporteurs for the meeting.

1. Presentation on the progress of Feasibility Study report

On behalf of VIE, Dr. Duong Thanh Tung presented the Feasibility Study report of the RCA Scholarship Programme, included in **Annex 3**.

VIE reiterated the rationale and importance of the RCA Scholarship programme and presented on the updated report of the Feasibility Study for the RCA Scholarship programme. VIE thanked the GPs for the comments and inputs provided to the report so far and pointed out that the pilot phase would focus on the domestic/national training first for developing and least-developed countries.

VIE explained on the resource mobilization and financial plan with 3-year pilot phase and the funding was envisaged to comprise of 80% from IAEA TCF and 20% from RCA GP in-kind

contributions, with a HRD TC project (2 years) to be developed. VIE clarified that the pilot phase would last 3 years so that there would be 2 batches of students graduated, with the starting year from 2023 (first batch) and 2024 (second batch), until 2026. VIE also presented on the three scenarios and recommended to the meeting that scenario 3 was the most feasible option to implement the RCA scholarship programme during the pilot phase.

The RCA Focal Person (FP), Mr. Sinh Van Hoang highly appreciated the hard work of the team doing the Feasibility Study report. He confirmed that the IAEA fully agrees with the initiative of the scholarship programme and strongly supports financial resources. Additionally, he stated that it is important to submit the updated FS report to all 22 National Representatives (NR) on 15 September for them to give comments/ recommendations, after combining the comments/ recommendations from the committee in this meeting. The NRs are encouraged to provide their opinions about the endorsement of the FS report in the 51st GCM on 23 September 2022.

SIN questioned whether the funding of USD700,000 (the 80% of the scenario 3) from IAEA was an additional separate fund or it was diverted from other current RCA initiative pipelines. The RCA FP answered that the finance resource for the scholarship programme is from regular fund of the RCA.

Additionally, MAL asked if a Government Party (GP) could not support the remain 20% of financial fund for the scholarship programme, whether it was possible to mobilize any other sources. Answering this question, the RCA FP stated that it is necessary for all GPs to contribute to the RCA scholarship programme to show their strong commitment to the RCA. In the worst scenario, the RCA FP raised his opinion of considering reducing the number of scholarships if the amount of in-kind contribution was not enough.

AUL mentioned that each GP has different processes for contributing the fund to this scholarship programme. AUL asked if there is an additional fund apart from regular contribution, and whether GPs need to contribute in-kind budget as well. The RCA FP stated that although the Technical Cooperation (TC) fund is stable and the IAEA will support the scholarship programme through TC fund; however, it is necessary to mobilize the fund from each GP.

Mr. Gashaw Gebeyehu Wolde reassured that funding would be committed as the capability building was important which involved building of a pool of skilled workforce, and this RCA scholarship programme would fulfil this need. IAEA suggested to start small with, and as the mechanism refined and cooperation developed, the programme could be slowly expanded. IAEA confirmed again that IAEA would provide and source additional internal money and would not divert from the overall RCA programme resources.

THA stated that they will support the scholarship programme in principle but could not commit financially to the scenario 3 at this stage. THA commented that the internal procedures for consulting with their government about funding and identifying universities for the programme will take time. Therefore, THA suggested prolonging the timeline for the scholarship programme.

THA also thanked AUL for the earlier suggestion regarding the independent long-term study on the feasibility of the RCA scholarship programme, and shared that full study proposed by AUS would be able address the longer needs and gaps, and the long-term cost and benefits of the RCA scholarship programme. SIN shared the views of THA and agreed that the AUL's proposed study would be able to better identify and address longer term needs, and how RCA could better sustain programme while meeting the needs of GPs. Hence, both VIE's feasibility study report and the AUL's proposed study would be important.

With reference to para 16 of executive summary, the aim was to expand the programme to cover PhD programme after the first phase, SIN suggested making the scholarship programme be a permanent one to serve long-term needs, before expanding to PhD level. Regarding para 33 on "unclear planning", SIN suggested to consider inserting "policy" along with "unclear planning" (i.e. "unclear planning and policy") as unclear policy would not give assurance on a clear career path which would affect the scholarship take-up rate. Referring to Table 4 of the main report on "RCA Scholarship implementation arrangements", SIN suggested to replace "Provide no-objections, when relevant" with 'Provide professional and independent advice and views". VIE agreed to comments and will adjust the report accordingly.

In terms of structure and detailed information of the FS report, SIN stated that they do not have well-developed postgraduate programmes in nuclear science and technology, and Singapore students were instead sent to overseas university to receive academic training related to nuclear science and technology. SIN sought request for VIE to update the report accordingly. Additionally, SIN pointed out that the team needs to make three points more clearly as follows: the impact of nuclear personnel on nuclear science and technology field, the plan and policy of the scholarship programme, what is the certainty of career. SIN also pointed out some information related to wording in paragraphs 3 and 10 in the FS report that need correctly mentioned.

THA suggested the FS team to add the source and approaches to calculate the finance scenarios for all NRs to understand the mentioned numbers in the FS report.

The Meeting took note the Feasibility Study report and appreciated the hard work from VIE's team in preparing the report.

The Meeting noted the strong financial supports by the IAEA to the RCA scholarship programme and requested each GP for commitment in terms of in-kind contribution.

The Meeting agreed that the updated FS report will be circulated to all NRs on 15 September 2022.

2. Other matters

VIE presented the updated TOR of the RCA Scholarship Programme, included in **Annex 4**.

VIE asked for the endorsement of the committee for an additional term in the TOR related to the development of FS report for the Scholarship Programme. The meeting agreed to include this term in the TOR.

The Meeting agreed with the updated TOR and it will be circulated to all NRs along with the FS report. All the documents will be submitted to RCACO for circulation.

3. The Way Forward

The meeting noted the support and cooperation from all committee members to further develop the Feasibility Study.