

29th RCA General Conference Meeting

Venue: Conference Room V, IAEA Headquarters, Vienna, Austria

Wednesday, 20th September 2000

1. Opening

The 29th RCA General Conference meeting was held at Conference Room V of the IAEA Headquarters in Vienna on the 20th of September 2000, in conjunction with the annual IAEA General Conference.

The conference was attended by 31 participants from 16 of the 17 RCA Member States. The IAEA was represented by the DDG-TC, DIR TCPA, Head EAPS and RCA Coordinator. The list of participants is in Annexure-1.

Mr. Lee Kheng Seng, RCA National Representative of Singapore, acted as interim Chair on behalf of Singapore, the outgoing Chairperson and started the meeting. He invited Mr. Qian Jihui, DDG-TC, to give the welcome address.

Mr. Qian, on behalf of the IAEA Director General, welcomed the delegates to the 29th RCA General Conference. He was pleased to note that all the RCA MSs with the exception of Mongolia¹, were represented in the meeting which was a sign of continuous interest and commitment to the RCA. He introduced to the MSs Mr. Werner Burkart from Germany, who had been recently designated DDG-NA².

Mr. Qian stressed the importance of the meeting which would deal with issues relevant to the future programme of RCA and its management. He noted the progress that RCA had made in the past few years. The absence of a Sunday meeting prior to the GC³ was a sign of improvement in RCA management. He was particularly happy that the Lead Country Concept was working well within the region and helping to strengthen the principle of ownership of projects by the Member States. He added that the quality of project proposals had generally improved and the efforts of Lead Countries as well as those of the Secretariat should be commended.

He said that he had been informed that the Republic of Korea had offered to host an RCA Regional Office and support its operational cost. This offer seemed to be in line with one of the earlier recommendations by RCA MSs made at the 1996 RCA GC meeting to improve the RCA ownership of the programme. He added that several years had already passed since then and it would be the decision of MSs whether to accept this offer and to determine the terms of reference and operational modality.

¹ The RCA National Representative of Mongolia was unable to come due to health reasons.

² Mr. Burkart replaced Mr. Sueo Machi who retired by end of June 2000.

³ In the immediate past 3 years, the MS met on a Sunday prior to the main meeting. At the 22nd RCA Meeting of National Representatives held in Mumbai, India, the MS agreed to avoid having a Sunday Meeting prior to the GC unless it was absolutely necessary.

He hoped that the meeting of the Tripartite Forum, AFRA/ARCAL/RCA would further strengthen interregional co-operation efforts and would identify some of the successful projects as well as new technologies for transfer. He wished the participants a successful meeting. The full text of Mr. Qian's remarks is given in Annexure-2.

Mr. Werner Burkart, DDG-NA, in his address expressed pleasure for being given the chance to meet many of the delegates for the first time. He congratulated the RCA MSs for the many successful activities carried out by RCA. He noted that many of the RCA project activities such as radiation processing, radiation induced mutation, and quality assurance for radiation therapy, come under Nuclear Applications (NA) and he would be very happy to extend all his support for the activities of RCA. He also emphasized the importance of the issue of intellectual ownership in managing human resources. The IAEA laboratories like Monaco, ICTP, and Seibersdorf have a long list of valuable inputs for capacity building and could be used by MSs for their needs. He added his wishes for a successful meeting.

2. Statement of Interim Chairperson

Mr. Lee Kheng Seng, the interim Chairperson, welcomed the members and conveyed regrets from his Director for not being able to be present at the meeting. He informed the participants that Singapore had signed an MOU⁴ with the Agency for training of participants from developing MSs and looked forward to additional ventures. He noted that this meeting had become challenging because of issues such as the non-extension of UNDP funding, Lead Country Concept, RRUs, etc., and was sure that the incoming chairperson would steer the meeting successfully. He expressed thanks for the support given to Singapore as Chairperson for 1999.

3. Election of Chairperson

Mr. A.K. Anand, India, was elected as the Chairperson as proposed by Indonesia, seconded by Pakistan, and supported by all the MSs.

4. Statement by the Elected Chairperson

Mr. A.K. Anand, RCA National Representative for India, took the Chair and conveyed his thanks to Indonesia, Pakistan, and all MSs for their support. He hoped that their valuable support would be available to carry out his responsibility as Chairperson to tackle the long agenda. He requested that the meeting should concentrate more on policy matters, administrative decisions, and management issues, leaving the micro-level technical decisions to the various AGM and PCMs.

Mr Abdul Muin (Malaysia) and Mr. C.A. Krishnan (India) were nominated as Rapporteurs for the meeting.

5. Adoption of Agenda

⁴ Signed in March 2000.

Pakistan sought clarification regarding the cancellation of the Sunday meeting and the status of the informal consultation meeting held on 18 and 19 September 2000. The RCA Coordinator clarified that the cancellation of the Sunday meeting was on the basis of the general feeling of Member States at the 22nd RCA Meeting of National Representatives (see footnote 3). The RCA Coordinator and the Chairperson clarified that no decisions were taken in the consultation meetings and were meant only for clarifying various issues and ideas among Member States. The Republic of Korea expressed the view that advance notice should be given for these informal consultative meetings. Indonesia emphasized that this meeting of National Representatives should concentrate on policy level issues and leave the technical matters to the other subgroup meetings, empowering them to execute aspects such as project formulation, implementation, and monitoring.

Thailand welcomed the full day meeting instead of an additional separate Sunday meeting. Indonesia, while congratulating India for being elected as Chairperson, thanked Singapore for the excellent way the meeting was conducted in Singapore. Australia expressed condolence for the demise of Dr. S. Gangadharan⁵, India, who was the earlier RCA National Representative of India.

The proposed agenda (Annexure-3) was then adopted.

6. Adoption of the RCA Annual Report 1999

New Zealand expressed that the Annual Report was much improved with the inclusion of items such as success stories, highlights, etc., and though many more things could be included in the future, it was moving in the right direction. Australia expressed similar views while mentioning that the executive summary should contain more items for the benefit of external agencies and funding bodies. Australia agreed to provide such corrections and subject to the inclusion of the same, the RCA Annual Report 1999 was adopted.

Australia complimented Malaysia for producing an excellent RCA brochure. This brochure would be useful in 'marketing' the RCA activities. Malaysia thanked Member States who had provided input to this document.

7. Follow-up Actions Arising from the 22nd RCA Meeting of National Representatives

The RCA Co-ordinator presented the status of the follow-up actions (Annexure-4) and informed that all had been carried out.

8. Adoption of the Report on the 22nd RCA Meeting of National Representatives

The meeting report was adopted subject to several minor inputs to be provided by Australia.

⁵ Dr. S. Gangadharan retired from BRIT in August 2000