

**22<sup>ND</sup> MEETING OF RCA NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES**

**Mumbai, India**

**28 February- 3 March 2000**

**STATEMENT BY MR. A. SHIHAB-ELDIN, DIRECTOR-TCPA, IAEA**

Honourable Dr. Chidambaram, Chairman of Atomic Energy Commission,  
Dr. Kakodkar, Director of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre,  
Dr. Anand, Director, Technical Co-ordination and International Relations Group,  
Bhabha Atomic Research Centre,  
Distinguished RCA Representatives,  
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a privilege for me to welcome you on behalf of the International Atomic Energy Agency and its Director General to this important Meeting of RCA National Representatives. I am also delighted to extend to all of you the greetings and best wishes of the Deputy Director General of the Department of Technical Cooperation (Mr. Qian) for a most successful meeting.

Exactly one year ago, I arrived in Vienna to assume the duties of Director of the Division for Africa, and East Asia and the Pacific in the Department of Technical Cooperation at the IAEA. That same week, you were holding your 21<sup>st</sup> annual RCA Meeting of National Representatives in Singapore. I have since had the privilege of meeting most, if not all, of you either in Vienna or during some of my official missions to Member States in the region. I recently accompanied the Director General on his trip to Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia and Thailand. I also had the opportunity to travel to China earlier last summer. These trips have afforded me the chance to visit many institutions, meet with government officials, and to become more familiar with the range of nuclear applications in those countries.

Through visits to countries, meeting with representatives, one-on-one contacts, as well as challenging and demanding work at the Agency's Headquarter throughout the year, I now know more about the region and its development issues and priorities. But I have much more to learn. And I am relying on you to help me learn and better serve you.

Today we meet in India, whose population together with China account for one-third of the world's population. This is only my second visit to India, and I am again awed by its rich and diverse culture and heritage. But India is also a leader; a leader among developing countries in acquiring and applying modern technology, including nuclear technology, for social and economic development. The venue for this meeting, the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, is testimony to India's capacity in nuclear technology.

India's achievements and potential are not limited to nuclear technologies, but cover other important fields ranging from agriculture and energy to computer and information technology. Thus India is poised to make great achievements in the peaceful application of nuclear techniques and technologies to improve food production, human health, water and energy resources. This is vital for the future development of India, the region and all developing countries.

This is the second major RCA meeting I have attended, the first one was the 28<sup>th</sup> RCA General Conference Meeting held in Vienna last September. As you know, the Department of Technical Cooperation is currently working feverishly to appraise and process over 700 TC project proposals (with more than 500 new) in order to formulate the TC programme for the 2001/2002 cycle, which will be submitted for Board consideration and approval in December. It is apt therefore that the key agenda item of your meeting is the consideration and finalization of the RCA programme for 2001/2002.

In his welcoming address to the 1st RCA General Conference meeting, Mr. Qian Jihui, Deputy Director General of the Department of Technical Cooperation, stressed, as he did last March in Singapore, the importance of good upstream work in order to identify and prepare a solid RCA programme. According to the TC Strategy endorsed by the Agency Board of Governors, good projects are those that provide solutions to real and important national development problems (and for RCA, common to Member States in the region), exploit existing national and regional capabilities, apply effectively substantive nuclear techniques and enjoy strong government support.

During its first meeting held on 19 November 1999, the newly established Technical Co-operation Programme Committee (which reports to the Director General through the Programme Coordination Committee (PCC)), endorsed the use of a simple, but powerful set of criteria for prioritizing TC projects. For projects outside mandatory areas or “core competence” of the Agency, such as nuclear power, safety and radiation protection, highest priority is given to projects in areas where there is concrete evidence that a given nuclear technique can:

- a) have a significant impact on key development problems that the government(s) has an existing national programme in and provides evidence of its willingness to invest its own or borrowed resources; and
- b) have a distinct advantage over other approaches.

In the RCA region, there are many examples of such high-priority areas. Isotope hydrology is one. The environment is another good example, as evidenced by the national and international support accorded to the joint UNDP/RCA/IAEA project. You will be apprised of progress and achievements of this later project during the course of this meeting.

To ensure success, proposed projects must not only be in high-priority areas, but must also be well prepared. For this purpose, RCA has chosen the innovative “Lead Country” approach and has designated lead countries in five thematic programme areas. Lead Countries, in close cooperation with other Member States, are already playing a pivotal role in the formulation of project proposals for consideration at this meeting. The Agency is committed to continue to provide RCA with technical expertise in order to formulate sound and well-designed project proposals within the priority areas.

However, I wish once again to underline an important characteristic of the programmes of all the “Regional Agreements”: *ownership*. The regional programmes of the Regional Agreements belong to the Member States of those agreements, RCA in your case. Following formulation and submission of your programme, the Agency will appraise it carefully and will provide appropriate seed funding and technical assistance to those projects that are in line with the TC Strategy and meet the Model Project criteria. This year the TC Department has been asked by the Board of Governors to apply the Model Project criteria more rigorously as it appraises, prioritizes and selects project proposals for the 2001-2002 programme cycle. This is considered more crucial and necessary for regional projects that are proposing the use of proven or promising nuclear technologies in priority development areas. We know such regional projects exist, but we need your help to identify and approve them.

Given the RCA’s long history and noteworthy success in regional cooperation, I am confident that you are capable of demonstrating RCA’s leadership through the design of a sound and effective programme for the next cycle. I am pleased to observe and wish to acknowledge that Member States in the region have started to consider and apply Model Project criteria in the preparation of project proposals to be submitted to the TC Department.

Therefore, I am encouraged and have good reason to expect that the programme you are about to consider and endorse at this meeting will not only better meet your needs and expectations, but will also be of higher quality in terms of project preparation and potential for sustainable impact, warranting, I hope, consideration for possible increased level of support from the Agency through the TCP.

Ladies and Gentleman:

Another relevant issue to your meeting is the size of the future TC Programme. While the needs of Member States have continued to increase, especially in developing countries, as evidenced by the

increasing number of requests submitted for support by the TC Programme, the Agency's Regular Budget has remained static for the last decade. Pledges for the TC Programme in recent years have also remained essentially flat, in real terms. The situation is not expected to change much in near term. In fact, the best that we can realistically expect for our budget is zero real growth.

Any increase in resources to meet growing needs of Member States must therefore rely on generous donor contribution, as well as cost-sharing modalities. We are fortunate that in the RCA region, many countries make regular donations to support various elements of the RCA programme. I again appeal to those donor countries to continue providing their generous contributions and to increase them. In fact, I invite all RCA Member States to consider making extra-budgetary contributions to the TC Programme, no matter how modest, including provisions for cost-free experts to assist in the management and delivery of a more effective TC Programme, to overcome the manpower limitation under the zero-growth Regular Programme Budget.

In addition to the item on RCA projects for 2001/2002, your meeting is comprised of several other agenda items, all of which are aimed at enhancing the management and delivery of the RCA programme. The Board of Governors and the Secretariat continuously strive to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of TC, as well as the Regular Agency programme. In this regard, let me take a few minutes to brief you on some recent developments in the TC Programme which are of direct interest to you.

During the last General Conference Meeting, you were briefed on the development and publication, following approval by the Director General, of a set of "Management Principles" aimed specifically at enhancing the synergy between the Department of Technical Cooperation and Technical Departments. As a result, the Agency has revised the roles and responsibilities of key Secretariat staff involved in the design and implementation of the TC Programme.

One key element of this process, that will soon be visible to you, is the designation of Technical Officers as Project Responsible Officers (PROs) for between 40 and 50 on-going projects. You have become accustomed talking with Technical Officers on *technical* matters. As PROs, these officers will also be accountable to the DDG-TC for achieving the expected results of given projects, and for managing the projects on time and within budget. They will therefore be communicating with you on more than technical matters for those projects to which they have been assigned. We believe this will lead to a tangible improvement for many TC projects.

Another development is the addition of new Performance Indicators to complement the Financial Implementation Rate (FIR) indicator, which was used almost exclusively to measure TC Programme performance. Recently, the Secretariat began to use two global indicators recommended by the Agency's External Auditors. These are quantified details of what the Agency purchases and average cost of key activities (e.g., expert recruitment). A third, but more complex Performance Indicator, is the proportion of planned outputs fully or partially completed on time and within the budget. This is difficult to measure, but the groundwork has been laid to assess performance indicator for a sample set of projects.

Another very useful Performance Indicator for measuring quality of performance is the percentage of TC projects (number and value) that meet the Model Project standard. Specifically, those projects that have strong government commitment, evidenced by the existence of a national programme, in the project area and willingness to invest its own or borrowed resources, one backed by government (or donor) resources, financial and human. By this, we do not mean project cost-sharing; rather, we are referring to the choice a government makes in its own national budget to support certain development activities.

The Agency continues to review and revise policies, rules, and procedures to streamline and improve the efficiency of implementation. The streamlining of the financial rules for implementation is but one important example, whereby only two components, human resources and equipment costs, will be tracked instead of the current six! The newly released TC Operational Manual contains many of these simplified procedures.

Results-based management is now embraced by the whole Agency, the Regular Programme, as well as TC. What this means is a heightened emphasis on the expected results we are trying to achieve and monitoring our efforts to achieve those results through performance indicators, rather than controlling inputs and managing individual activities. While some elements of this approach are already visible in the proposed Regular Budget for 2001, it will be better reflected in the Regular Programme budget for the 2002-2003 cycle. This process is not easy; it will take years before it takes hold and becomes apparent. But it is an essential transition to make. Fortunately for TC, this approach is not new. In fact, it is the foundation of the TC Strategy.

Before I conclude, I wish, on behalf of the Agency, to acknowledge India's important and much appreciated participation in the Agency's work in general and in RCA programme in particular. We recognize and value India's contribution to the RCA programme manifested by the hosting of many scientific meetings as well TC training courses, placement of TC fellows, and being lead country in many ongoing and new RCA projects. I plan during the course of this week to discuss with my Indian colleagues ways and means to further enhance this positive and fruitful cooperation.

We are fortunate to hold our opening session at BARC Headquarters in Trombay. I am sure that all of you are, like myself, looking forward to this afternoon's session following lunch when we will have the opportunity to visit some of the excellent facilities at this world famous centre. During this week, time permitting and with your permission, I have arranged with our host to travel to Kalpakkam to visit the Madras Atomic Power Station and Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research and the Nuclear Desalination Plant, currently under construction.

Finally, let me express my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Indian Government for hosting our meeting. I would like to particularly thank Dr. Chidambaram, Dr. Kakodkar, Dr. Anand and his colleagues for the excellent organization, warm and gracious hospitality, and for all of the local arrangements that have been made to ensure the success of our meeting.

I wish you all a most successful meeting.  
Thank you for your attention.