

## **43rd Regional Meeting of National RCA Representatives**

*Virtual Meeting*

*28-29 April 2021*

**Welcoming Remarks by**

Mr Hua Liu

Deputy Director General, Head of the Department of Technical Cooperation,  
International Atomic Energy Agency

Distinguished RCA Chair,

Distinguished Delegates and Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to join you today. It is the first time I have attended the Annual Meeting of National RCA Representatives since I assumed my new role as Deputy Director General and Head of the Department of Technical Cooperation in February.

Please allow me to start by expressing my appreciation to the RCA Chair, the RCA State Parties and the Division of Asia and Pacific for their joint efforts to organize this online meeting. I would also like to thank you all – your presence is, as always, a strong sign of the commitment of the RCA State Parties to the technical cooperation programme. On behalf of the IAEA, I welcome you all warmly.

I congratulate the Government of Thailand on taking over the Chair of the RCA. I am confident that you will help the RCA programme to continue its successful progress in making substantive contributions to sustainable socioeconomic development in RCA State Parties. I also take this opportunity to express my

appreciation to the Government of Malaysia for leading the RCA successfully during the unprecedented and difficult global outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 - a situation which is sadly still very much part of our daily lives today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I note that twenty countries have already deposited their instrument of acceptance of the new Regional Cooperative Agreement 2017. I congratulate you all on your strong interest in and commitment to the RCA. I encourage the remaining two countries to complete their internal procedures and to submit their instruments of acceptance to the Director General as soon as possible, in order to take full advantage of the contribution of nuclear science and technology to the sustainable development and well-being in the region.

The RCA has demonstrated solidarity, proactivity and innovation in its timely response to the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the IAEA has also played its part. More than 128 countries and territories have received equipment and consumables to support testing for COVID-19, of these 27 are in the Asia and the Pacific region. In addition, 286 national laboratories around the world have received targeted support and technical backstopping.

The RCA programme had a good implementation rate in 2020. I understand that 22 regional meetings were held in virtual format, attended by almost 460 participants. Twenty-eight home-based assignments were conducted. I am pleased to learn that 100% of the Project Progress Assessment Reports (PPARs) for the 2020 RCA projects were submitted on time through the IAEA IT platform.

Tangible and significant achievements have been made recently under RCA projects. For example, regional capacities in crop development have been enhanced under project RAS5077, 'Promoting the Application of Mutation

Techniques and Related Biotechnologies for the Development of Green Crop Varieties’.

In the field of health, RAS6085, ‘Enhancing Stereotactic Body Radiation Therapy (SBRT) for Frequent Cancers in the RCA Region’, over 1,500 medical staff received training, allowing over 150,000 cancer patients to be treated.

In addition, regional capacity to monitor marine radioactivity has been enhanced under the project RAS7028, ‘Enhancing Regional Capabilities for Marine Radioactivity Monitoring and Assessment of the Potential Impact of Radioactive Releases from Nuclear Facilities in Asia-Pacific Marine Ecosystems’. Through this project, over 255 people have been trained in marine sampling and analysis, and a document, has been developed and more than 40,690 data have been submitted to the Asia and Pacific Marine Radioactivity Database (ASPAMARD), which is shared with the Marine Radioactivity Information System (MARIS). This will be a very useful resource for marine environment radioactivity pollution monitoring in the Asia and the Pacific region in the future.

I am pleased to note that the development of the RCA programme for the 2022–2023 TC cycle is making good progress, and that the quality of RCA project designs has been evaluated as good. I have emphasized the need for a longer-term vision that strengthens the alignment of our work with the UN Sustainable Development Goals in support of Member States’ priorities and strategies. We must be strategic in our work and ensure that nuclear technology efforts contribute to the attainment of the SDGs. The financial resources remain the same compelling the need to explore innovative means to mobilize support for the solution to the pressing issues in the region through co-financing and proactive engagements with financial institutions. The RCA is a mature, well established agreement, and the Asia Pacific region has key intellectual, technological and economic strengths.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I note with appreciation RCA's ongoing work on the social and economic impact assessment of RCA projects. You started last year with a focus on mutation breeding and are expanding the approach this year to examine the socioeconomic impact of projects on Non-Destructive Testing and Radiotherapy. You are also embarking on the formulation of the RCA Regional Programme Framework; and the RCA 2024-2029 Medium-Term Strategy. These are important opportunities to take a fresh innovative approach to the RCA programme as the RCA prepares for its 50th Anniversary in 2022. I encourage you to build on the RCA tradition of solidarity and dynamism, and to continue using your creativity to generate new ideas as well as strategic and innovative approaches that can support new partnerships and mobilize resources. These efforts will underpin RCA's tangible and substantive contributions to the achievement of the SDGs in each RCA State Party, and will be an important legacy for future generations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Nuclear science and technology is essential for sustainable development.

From the COVID-19 experience and feedback, last year, our Director General introduced the ZODIAC project – an initiative by the IAEA to ensure that Member States are technically prepared and effectively connected so that possible future outbreaks, epidemics and pandemics of zoonotic diseases can be detected early and effectively addressed. A first ZODIAC Information Meeting for the nominated ZODIAC National Coordinators for the Asia and the Pacific region was held on 18 March 2021. During this meeting, comprehensive information on the five complementary pillars of ZODIAC, which will provide cohesive and IAEA comprehensive support, was shared.

The Director General also attaches high importance to plastic pollution. An upcoming Roundtable for the Asia and the Pacific region on '*NUclear TEChnology for Controlling Plastic Pollution (NUTEc) – Atoms Contributing to the Search for Solutions to Plastic Pollution*' will take place on 18 May 2021. The Director General has already sent invitations to the countries in the region and we expect high level participation. This roundtable will highlight IAEA research and technical cooperation projects in plastic recycling using radiation technology; as well as on the monitoring of microplastics in the marine environment using isotopic tracing techniques. It aims to promote collaborative partnerships for an integrated, coordinated and solution-oriented approach to the fight against plastic pollution. The Asia and the Pacific region have many relevant capabilities, and I expect that the RCA will make an important contribution to this effort. I look forward to your engagement.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

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, Working Group on Drafting 2024–2029 RCA Medium-Term Strategy, all TCAP staff and our colleagues in the Technical Departments for your excellent cooperation and dedication to ensuring the successful implementation of the RCA TC programme.

In conclusion, I re-affirm the strong commitment and full collaboration of the IAEA in support of the RCA programme.

I wish you a very productive meeting.

Thank you for your attention.