

RCA Meeting 63rd General Conference
Vienna, Austria, Friday 13th September 2019, 09:00, M4

Opening Remarks

Najat Mokhtar, DDG NA

Chairman/DDG Dazhu

Distinguished Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

Good morning! It is an honour for me to address the RCA meeting. This time last year I was the Director of TCAP so it is an especial treat for me to back with you today, and to see the excellent developments that are continuing to take place in the region. This annual meeting is a great opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of the RCA countries to research and development, capacity building, and implementation of nuclear science and technology.

The mandate of our two Departments, the Department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications and the Department of Technical Cooperation are, naturally, closely entwined. - While our experts conduct research and development, provide training, and deliver products and services, this expertise is translated into tangible results in Member States through the excellent work of the IAEA Technical Cooperation Programme.

RCA is a highly productive region! There are 480 active contracts and agreements with RCA Member States, and, at present, eleven active regional technical cooperation projects supported by NA in the region, (with a further four in closure). This has made a significant contribution to sustainable social and economic development in Asia and the Pacific region, especially in the areas of human health, food and agriculture, and a healthy environment.

At the core of our work in NA are our 12 laboratories in Austria and Monaco. They are dedicated to research and training in the use of nuclear techniques for development. Hundreds of scientists from the RCA region have already trained in our labs through courses and fellowships and this fruitful exchange is set to continue, especially now that the renewal work in Seibersdorf has moved on considerably this year. The IPCL is finished, the FML building construction is completed, while the new dosimetry bunker is now operational with the newly installed LINAC. I extend the invitation to all of you to visit Seibersdorf Laboratories and the Isotope Hydrology Laboratory while you are in Vienna.

More than 36 million Euros in extra-budgetary funds have been raised for the Seibersdorf redevelopment from 38 Member States and other donors - and - I am very happy to report that 13 RCA countries have contributed so far. Thank you! I would like to encourage all Member

States in the region to continue supporting the initiative - There is still more work to do to upgrade the original buildings for the remaining labs, but, with the continued generous support of our Member States, we will get there.

With these timely renovations, and through our partnerships with the institutions and researchers in your region, our work is proving highly effective. For example – I note the extensive work being done in the project to cultivate improved varieties of bioenergy crops on marginal lands. Over 420 mutant lines have been developed so far including, 218 sugar cane and 148 Brassica and 32 Sorghum mutants, which are now under the process of selection.

In terms of health, I am pleased to see the work being done to improve the practice of radiotherapy, as well as the number of nuclear medicine professionals trained in oncology, neurology and cardiology. Over 2770 professionals were trained in these areas in ten Member States with significant results in terms of educational and training networks and curricula.

I also note the advances made in terms of skills related to non-destructive testing of industrial components to enhance industrial efficiency using advanced radiation-based technologies.

To finish - I would like to highlight the importance of our network of 38 Collaborating Centres, 32 of which are oriented towards NA/TC work, and 13 of which are in RCA countries- more than any other region. We are in the process of designation of one new Institute in Thailand, and integrating three areas of collaboration into one broader topic in the existing centre in Malaysia. The Collaborating Centres are a sure mechanism by which scientific knowledge and expertise is shared globally. These agreement and others like them are at the heart of what we do.

Nuclear techniques touch so many aspects of our everyday lives in every country and every region today. I thank you for recognizing the important role that nuclear science and technologies have to play in RCA. I look forward to our continued collaboration and wish you a successful meeting.

Thank you.