



**REGIONAL COOPERATIVE
AGREEMENT**

**INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY
AGENCY**



**REPORT OF
THE 44th RCA GENERAL CONFERENCE MEETING**

**Meeting Room M6
IAEA Headquarters
Vienna, Austria**

**11 September 2015
09:00 – 18:30**

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ACRONYMS

AFRA	The African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ANZSNM	Australian and New Zealand Society of Nuclear Medicine
DDG-TC	Deputy Director General, Technical Cooperation Department
DDG-NA	Deputy Director General, Nuclear Sciences and Applications Department
DIR-TCAP	Director for Asia and the Pacific Division
DIR-TCPC	Director of Programme Support and Coordination
DIR-RCARO	Director of RCA Regional Office
GCM	General Conference Meeting of the National RCA Representatives
GP	Government Party
HRD	Human Resource Development
MTS	Medium Term Strategy
NR(s)	National RCA Representative(s)
NRM	National RCA Representatives Regional Meeting
LCC	Lead Country Coordinator
PMO(s)	Programme Management Officer
RCA	Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
RCARO	RCA Regional Office
RCA PAC	RCA Programme Advisory Committee
RCARO SAC	RCARO Standing Advisory Committee
RCA-FP	RCA Focal Person
RWA	RCA Website Administrator
SH-TCAP1	Head of Section 1 of Asia and the Pacific Division
TC	Technical Cooperation Programme
TO(s)	Technical Officers
TCAP	Division for Asia and the Pacific
WG	Working Group

Introduction

The 44th RCA General Conference Meeting (GCM) was held at the IAEA Headquarters, Vienna, Austria, on 11 September 2015. Forty participants from 19 RCA Government Parties; Australia (AUL), Bangladesh (BGD), Cambodia (CAM), China (CPR), Fiji (FIJ), India (IND), Indonesia (INS), Japan (JPN), Republic of Korea (ROK), Malaysia (MAL), Mongolia (MON), Myanmar (MYA), New Zealand (NZE), Pakistan (PAK), Palau (PLW), the Philippines (PHI), Sri Lanka (SRL), Thailand (THA) and Vietnam (VIE), and four representatives of the RCA Regional Office (RCARO) attended the Meeting.

Ms. Najat Mokhtar (DIR-TCAP), Mr. Oscar Acuña (SH-TCAP1) and Mr. Sinh Van Hoang (RCA-FP) represented the IAEA. The Agency's Technical Officers, Programme Management Officers of TCAP1 and support staff also attended selected sessions of the Meeting.

The list of participants is given in Annex 1.

Opening

a. Opening of the Meeting by the RCA Chair

The RCA Chair officially opened the 44th RCA GCM.

b. Introductory remarks by DDG-TC and DDG-NA

The Chair invited DDG-TC to deliver his message. The DDG-TC's message is reproduced in Annex 2.

The Chair invited DDG-NA to deliver his message. The DDG-NA's message is reproduced in Annex 3.

c. Group Photo

A group photo of all meeting participants was taken.

d. Adoption of the Agenda RCAGCM (44)/1

The Chair requested comments and suggestions on the draft provisional agenda, which had been circulated to the NRs. Two new agenda items were proposed and accepted, one on the shortage of IAEA staff and the other on the format of the RCA Annual Report. The Chair noted and adopted the amended agenda.

The adopted agenda is provided in Annex 4.

The meeting adopted the agenda.

One item on a presentation of shortage of IAEA staff was proposed and endorsed.

One item of “any other business” regarding the format of the RCA Annual Report was proposed and endorsed.

e. Appointment of Rapporteurs

The Chair called for nominations for rapporteurs of the meeting. Mr Jarrod Powell (AUL) and Ms Noriah Jamal (MAL) were nominated and endorsed. Both agreed to carry out this task.

Mr Jarrod Powell (AUL) and Ms Noriah Jamal (MAL) were appointed as rapporteurs of the Meeting.

I. Reports on the Follow-Up Actions of the 37th NRM – RCAGCM (44)/2

At the invitation of the Chair, the RCA-FP provided a summary of the most important follow-up actions arising from the 37th NRM. He highlighted the great efforts and contributions of all participants in the implementation of all follow up activities, including the finalization of the RCA Annual Report, the formulation of the draft Medium Term Strategy (MTS), and the drafting of the RCA Amendment.

In particular, the RCA-FP thanked all NRs, the former and current RCA Chairs, WG Chairs, RCA PAC, DIR-TCAP, RCA Secretariat staff and RCARO for their efforts.

The Meeting took note of the Report and complimented the Agency on the effective implementation of Follow-up Actions from the 37th NRM.

II. Implementation of regional events in 2015 and tentative arrangements of regional events for the first half of 2016- RCAGCM(44)/3

The RCA-FP presented a summary of the implementation of regional events in 2015 as well as tentative arrangements for regional events in the first half of 2016. He noted that the current RCA Programme consists of nineteen (19) projects, with eight (8) projects to continue in 2016. He noted that all projects are progressing well and in accordance with work plans.

The RCA-FP highlighted late submission of nominations and incomplete nominations as an issue. He noted that although the majority of nominations are submitted on time, the few that arrive late create delays in the current process. He asked that NRs encourage participants to submit completed nominations on time via the In-Touch platform. The Meeting agreed that all nominations should be submitted by the deadline for each meeting, and that late nominations will be dealt with at the discretion of the Secretariat. The presentation is given in Annex 5.

PLW noted that delays might sometimes occur due to insufficient time being given to for completion and submission of nominations. The Secretariat agreed that it would endeavour to provide requests for nominations with sufficient time for the consideration of NRs.

AUL noted that the In-Touch platform cannot currently be used by non-TC recipient countries. The Secretariat acknowledged this and reported that there are efforts underway to address this.

The RCA-FP asked that NRs consider creating an RCA Fund, set a target amount to be achieved, and encourage all GPs to contribute to reaching that amount. The Meeting agreed that terms and conditions of the proposed RCA Fund would be discussed by a Working Group formed under the Medium Term Strategy and Strategic Priorities, and that the Working Group would report to NRs. To assist in this discussion, the Secretariat would distribute the existing AFRA rules and guidelines to all NRs as an example of an existing fund.

The Meeting agreed that all nominations should be submitted by the deadline, and that late nominations will be dealt with at the discretion of the Secretariat.

The Meeting agreed that the Secretariat would endeavour to provide requests for nominations with sufficient time for the consideration of NRs.

The Meeting agreed that all nominations should be signed by NRs prior to submission and that this should be stipulated in the guidelines and operating rules.

The Meeting agreed that terms and conditions of the proposed RCA Fund would be discussed by a Working Group formed under the Medium Term Strategy and Strategic Priorities, and that the Working Group would report to NRs. To assist in this discussion, the Secretariat will distribute the existing AFRA rules and guidelines to all NRs as an example of an existing fund.

The Meeting encouraged GPs with extra budgetary funds kept in suspense accounts to consider the allocation of these funds to RCA projects.

The Meeting noted the forward work programme and requested NRs to advise the RCA-FP of their confirmation to host the events to which they have been assigned or to advise of any changes by the end of September 2015.

III. Proposed RCA Programme for 2016-2017 TC programme - RCAGCM(44)/4

On the invitation of the RCA Chair, the RCA-FP presented the proposed Programme for 2016-2017.

The meeting took note of the proposed programme and thanked all involved in its preparation. The meeting also agreed to consider and work with their governments on the provision of additional funding for Footnote A projects.

NRs were asked to review the list of planned regional events for 2016 and 2017 and advise the RCA-FP of their ability to host the events as proposed, or of any necessary amendments. The RCA-FP proposed a deadline of 30 September 2015 for all information to be provided to the RCA-FP. This deadline was endorsed by the meeting.

The meeting took note of the proposed programme and thanked all involved in its preparation.

The meeting agreed to consider and work with their governments on the provision of additional funding for Footnote A projects.

The meeting agreed that GPs will confirm by the end of September 2015 their availability to host the events as proposed in the RCA programme for the IAEA 2016-2017 TC Programme.

IV. Presentation of the concept paper on TCAP Strategy to enhance the training component of TCP – RCAGCM(44)/5

DIR-TCAP noted the concerns as to the effectiveness of fellowships of less than one month's duration. She reported that, currently, the largest portion of fellowships fall within this category. The presentation is given in Annex 6.

DIR-TCAP highlighted the importance of ensuring that training is compatible with actual needs and is of a high standard. She emphasised the role of regional training centres in providing for these needs, and in promoting regional networking.

AUL highlighted the potential for e-learning and that it could play a more significant role. DIR-TCAP acknowledged that e-learning has a role in regional training programmes and reported that, where possible, it will be used in situations where it is effective and cost efficient.

PHI recalled the six week training courses that have been held in previous years, noting that they were very effective in introducing young scientists to the topic, and proposed that a similar format be used in future.

DIR-TCAP reported on efforts to map HRD needs by way of a questionnaire completed by TC recipients. The results of the questionnaire, compiled by thematic area, indicated that water and environment, and safety and security, are the top priorities for Member States. Future activities under the non-RCA projects will be prioritised according to the results of the questionnaire.

Preparations for the IAEA School for Nuclear Medicine Professionals are in the final stage. A curriculum has been developed. Regional training centres have been identified

and have been asked to participate, subject to fulfilling technical requirements. Certificates issued by the school will be co-branded by the Agency and the host centre. In order to increase the effectiveness of fellowships and to ensure that fellows share their training, DIR-TCAP urged NRs and fellows to provide feedback on their activities upon returning home.

The Meeting acknowledged and gave in-principle support to the approach of the proposed TCAP Framework Strategy to enhance the training component of TC – RCAGCM(44)/5 and agreed to consider it in detail.

The Meeting acknowledged and gave in-principle support to the approach of the proposed TCAP Framework Strategy to enhance the training component of TC – RCAGCM(44)/5 and agreed to consider it in detail.

The Secretariat agreed to distribute the presented slides to all NRs to assist in this.

V. Report of the Working Group on the preparation of the RCA Medium Term Strategy and Strategic Priorities 2018 - 2023 - RCAGCM(44)/6

At the invitation of the RCA Chair, Ms Dela Rosa, Chair of the Working Group, presented the work undertaken by the group. Ms Dela Rosa noted that the Working Group was now in phase three (3) of its work. The WGs Chair presentation is given in Annex 7.

Ms Dela Rosa reported that the Working Group met in Vienna, 22-26 June 2015, to draw up the draft RCA Medium Term Strategy and Strategic Priorities (MTS & SP) for 2018-2023. The resulting draft considers and establishes the RCA's strategic context, strategic directions, critical processes and procedures, critical implementation enablers and performance indicators. Ms Dela Rosa also reported on the actions to be executed under the proposed RCA MTS & SP 2018-2023.

The meeting discussed the proposal for additional thematic areas and its implications for project proposals starting in 2018. It also discussed the processes that would be required to amend the Guidelines and Operation Rules. The Chair RCA PAC reminded the meeting that according to the planning timeline, projects commencing in 2018-19 are to be proposed and planned in the coming months.

The Meeting agreed in principle to adopt the proposed RCA MTS & SP for 2018-2023, on the basis that any proposed modifications to the draft are provided to the Chair of the Working Group within two weeks of the Meeting, and that the final version is returned to the RCA Chair for endorsement and distribution to NRs.

The Meeting agreed on the creation of the working groups and the associated timelines proposed in the draft, and asked that the Working Group consider the skill requirements for each working group and report to the 38th RCA NRM.

The Meeting noted the report provided by the Chair of the MTS Working Group.

The Meeting agreed in principle to adopt the proposed Medium Term Strategy and Strategic Priorities for 2018-2023.

The Meeting agreed that any modification to MTS be provided to the Chair of the WG within two weeks and that the final version of the MTS is returned to the RCA Chair for endorsement and distribution to NRs.

The Meeting agreed on the creation of the working groups and the associated timelines proposed in the draft Medium Term Strategy & Strategic Priorities for 2018-2023.

The Meeting asked that the Working Group on the preparation of the RCA Medium Term Strategy and Strategic Priorities 2018 - 2023 consider the skill requirements for each working group and report to the 38th RCA NRM.

VI. Report of the Working Group on proposed amendments of the RCA Agreement RCAGCM(44)/7

The Chair of the WG, Mr. Steven McIntosh, provided a summary of the Meeting Report from the 3rd meeting of the Working Group (Annex 11). He reported that the WG had held three meetings, in Vienna, Sydney and Mumbai, and had produced a draft amended agreement. The proposed amendments were explained to the Meeting.

IND requested clarification on the position of GPs which did not ratify future amendments of the RCA made under the proposed Article XIV of the draft revised agreement. Mr McIntosh explained that under the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, they would remain party to the un-amended agreement. IND and PLW asked that this be clarified in the draft text. Mr McIntosh undertook to redraft the relevant provision in consultation with the IAEA Office of Legal Affairs.

In response to a query, Mr McIntosh explained that the draft provides a legal basis on which RCARO can provide support to the RCA Secretariat, as an “other relevant body”.

IND and NZE suggested that the words “as appropriate” be added to the provision on security, to which Mr McIntosh agreed.

JPN expressed its support for the proposed amendments.

The Meeting agreed in principle to the proposed amendments, and agreed that the WG Chair would distribute a clean version reflecting the discussion held, following which NRs would provide any further input to the WG Chair within four weeks. The WG Chair will advise the RCA Chair as to whether any substantive comments have been received, and a final version will be circulated to all NRs by the RCA Chair. Subject to the proviso that there are no substantive changes, NRs agreed to consult with their Governments with

respect to ratification of the amended agreement. The amended agreement will be subject to normal IAEA procedures.

The Meeting noted the report delivered by the Chair of the Working Group on proposed amendments of the RCA Agreement.

The Meeting agreed in principle to the proposed amendments, and agreed that the WG Chair would distribute a clean version reflecting the discussion held, following which NRs would provide any further input to the WG Chair within four weeks. The WG Chair will advise the RCA Chair as to whether any substantive comments have been received and a final version will be circulated to all NRs by the RCA Chair. Subject to the case that there are no substantive changes, NRs agree to consult with their Governments with respect to ratification of the amended agreement. The amended agreement will be subject to normal IAEA procedures.

VII. Reports of the Director of the RCA Regional Office (RCARO) and Chair of the RCARO Standing Advisory Committee RCAGCM(44)/8

The Director of the RCRAO reported on RCARO's programme of work and actions carried out in 2015. In particular, he reported on efforts underway to increase awareness of RCARO's activities, including the proposed appointment of RCA Web Administrators (RWAs) and changes to the publication of the RCARO Annual Report. The report is given in Annex 8.

Chair of RCARO SAC reported on the 21st Meeting of the SAC, held in Vienna on 10 September 2015. The Chair of RCARO SAC reported on progress made, including the publication of the 6th batch of RCA success stories, and asked GPs to support RCARO in promoting the work of the RCA. NZE agreed to promote RCA at the next Australian and New Zealand Society of Nuclear Medicine (ANZSNM) meeting, to be held in New Zealand. AUL offered to assist NZE in doing so.

The Meeting noted the report delivered by the Director of the RCARO and expressed appreciation for the work carried out by RCARO.

The Meeting agreed to adopt the recommendations made in the report of the Chair of the RCARO SAC.

VIII. Report on reporting in-kind contributions of RCA Government Parties - RCAGCM(44)/9

The Chair of RCA PAC delivered a report on the reporting of in-kind contributions. He informed the meeting that current definitions are the product of decisions made at previous RCA GCMs and NRMs. He presented on those activities that have been agreed as eligible to be considered in-kind contributions and the methodology for calculating an

agreed notional value. The Meeting agreed that RCA PAC undertake the calculation of the in-kind contributions for all GPs for RCA activities in 2015. The Presentation of the Chair of RCA PAC is given in Annex 9.

The Chair of RCA PAC reported that six GPs submitted in-kind contributions for the 2014 RCA Programme. The total in-kind contribution for the 2014 RCA programme equated to €2,793,280, according to PAC's calculation based on the Annual Report. Chair RCA PAC explained that use of the in-kind contributions template by all GPs would enable a more accurate calculation in the future. AUL asked for clarification on the inclusion of in-kind activities not covered by the current template. Chair RCA PAC explained that what is and isn't to be included in the GPs' final advice to the IAEA Secretariat as to their in-kind contributions, for the purposes of the compilation of the Annual Report, is at the discretion of NRs. The Meeting agreed that the Chair RCA PAC should provide each NR with the completed templates for their portion of the RCA programme in order to assist them in assessing their in-kind contributions to the IAEA. In reporting their in-kind contributions to the IAEA Secretariat, NRs would be free to add other in-kind contributions which did not fall within the template format. In the case that NRs do not provide a final calculation of in-kind contributions, the total calculated by RCA PAC will be reflected in the Annual Report.

The Meeting noted the report delivered by the Chair of RCA PAC and agreed that RCA PAC undertake the calculation of the in-kind contributions for all GPs for RCA activities in 2015.

The Meeting agreed that the Chair RCA PAC should provide each NR with the completed templates for their portion of the RCA programme in order to assist them in assessing their in-kind contributions for the purpose of the Annual Report.

The Meeting agreed that in the case that NRs do not provide a final calculation of in-kind contributions, the total calculated by RCA PAC will be reflected in the Annual Report.

IX. Preparations for the 2018/2019 TC Cycle - RCAGCM(44)/10

At the invitation of the RCA Chair, the Chair RCA PAC presented on preparations for the 2018/2019 TC Cycle and asked the meeting to consider the adoption of the timetable of action for the development of the 2018/2019 programme which was presented. The Meeting noted the need for urgency in preparing proposals for the 2018/2019 TC cycle. The presentation of the Chair RCA PAC is given in Annex 10.

Chair RCA PAC explained that the proposed timetable of action resembles the process undertaken to determine the programme for the previous TC Cycle. Both the Secretariat and AUL expressed support for this approach, noting that it produced high quality proposals.

Separately, the Secretariat reported that it is currently reviewing guidance on the next TC Cycle, including the potential elimination of the Concept Phase, however this shouldn't affect RCA. The Secretariat reported that DDG TC will communicate any changes by January 2016.

Chair RCA PAC suggested that, given the tight timeframe for preparations for the 2018/2019 programme, the RCA Chair distribute decisions made at the GCM immediately after the conclusion of the meeting to allow for the initiation of required actions, and that this approach is taken at future NRMs and GCMs. The Meeting agreed to adopt this approach.

The Meeting agreed to adopt all recommendations put forward in the Chair RCA PAC's report RCAGCM(44)/10, and to adopt the timeline of actions proposed by the Chair RCA PAC, as per the RCA guidelines and operating rules. The Chair RCA PAC will circulate the timetable to all NRs.

The Meeting took note of the report provided by the Chair RCA PAC and noted the need for urgency in preparing proposals for the 2018/2019 TC cycle.

The Meeting agreed to adopt all recommendations put forward in the Chair RCA PAC's report RCAGCM(44)/10.

The Meeting agreed to adopt the timeline of actions proposed by the Chair RCA PAC, as per the RCA guidelines and operating rules. The Chair RCA PAC will circulate the timetable to all NRs.

X. Introduction of Coordinated Research Projects (CRPs)

The RCA Chair invited Ms Nathalie Colinet to present to the Meeting CRPs and the contribution that they make towards achieving the objectives of the IAEA. She reported that 63 per cent of participating MSs are developing countries, which gain significant benefits from CRP participation. Ms Colinet reported that there are 125 CRPs involving around 1900 research institutes currently underway, averaging five years duration. The presentation on CRPs is given in Annex 11.

The Meeting took note of the presentation provided on CRPs.

XI. Roundtable discussions with Technical Officers (TOs) and Programme Management Officers (PMOs) on on-going RCA projects

The RCA Chair invited the TOs and PMOs to share RCA success stories with the Meeting. TOs shared successes in providing online training in safety for workers at food irradiation facilities. They reported that this project has also been successful in publicising the work of food irradiation facilities.

Mr Frank Bruhn, Head, Quality Control TC, provided an update on e-learning and communications work being carried out by TC.

The Meeting received a report on the success of RAS5055, which has reduced land degradation in the 13 participating GPs by 50 per cent over the four years since its inception.

The TOs and PMOs stressed to the Meeting the importance of submitting project plans on time.

The Meeting thanked the PMOs and TOs for their contribution to the effective operation of the RCA programme.

XII. Holding of the 38th RCA Meeting of National Representatives in Mongolia in 2015 and Holding of the 39th RCA Meeting of National Representatives in Bangladesh or Korea

At the invitation of the RCA Chair, MON confirmed that it will host the 38th NRM at the end of April 2016.

BGD confirmed that it will host the 39th NRM in March 2017.

ROK volunteered to host the 40th NRM in 2018.

The Meeting noted that the 38th NRM will be held in Mongolia at the end of April 2016.

The Meeting agreed that the 39th NRM will be held in Bangladesh in March 2017.

The Meeting agreed that the 40th NRM will be held in Korea in 2018.

XIII. Shortage of IAEA staff

The RCA Chair invited the RCA Secretariat to present their views on the shortage of staff at the IAEA and its implications for the RCA. The Secretariat reported that an increasing workload – driven by an increasing membership of RCA - is in contrast to the limited number of available staff, and asked that GPs consider ways in which this burden might be alleviated, including the potential for sending a cost free expert to provide support to the Secretariat or the provision of extra budgetary funds to provide for additional Secretariat resources. NZE suggested that some responsibilities of the Secretariat may be devolved to other parties, for example RCARO (given the agreement on amending the RCA to allow this) or GPs. The Secretariat welcomed consideration of this strategy. The presentation is given in Annex 12.

The Meeting agreed that the next meeting of the WG on the role of RCARO should consider the recommendations made by the Secretariat to address these challenges, and that the Secretariat should be invited to participate in this meeting. The WG should report back to the NRM on the results of this meeting.

The Meeting also agreed that NRs would consider provision of cost free experts and/or extra budgetary funding to support the Secretariat.

The Meeting noted the challenges in staffing faced by the Secretariat.

The Meeting agreed that the next meeting of the WG on the role of RCARO should consider the recommendations made by the Secretariat to address these challenges, and that the Secretariat should be invited to participate in this meeting. The WG should report back to the NRM on the results of this meeting.

The Meeting agreed that NRs would consider provision of cost free experts and/or extra budgetary funding to support the Secretariat.

XIV. Any Other Business

The RCA Chair invited the Meeting to raise any relevant issues that had not yet been discussed. Chair RCA PAC took the opportunity to report to the Meeting that RCA PAC has made a submission to the next round of IAEA Best Practices on the project design process undertaken by the RCA for the 2016-2017 TC Cycle. The Meeting welcomed the nomination of the project design meeting for the 2016-2017 cycle as a candidate for IAEA Best Practice.

Chair RCA PAC also proposed a streamlined structure for future RCA Annual Reports, and demonstrated how the current format could be condensed into five pages. The Meeting noted the proposal regarding the format of the Annual Report made by the Chair RCA PAC, and agreed to adopt it for the next report. The presentation is given in Annex 13.

The Meeting noted the proposal regarding the format of the Annual Report made by the Chair RCA PAC, and agreed to adopt it for the next report.

The Meeting welcomed the nomination of the project design meeting for the 2016-2017 cycle as a candidate for IAEA Best Practice.

XV. Closing

The RCA Chair thanked all participants for their active participation and valuable contributions, and declared the meeting adjourned.

The meeting ended at 18.30h.