

Report of the WG on the RCA MTS 2018/2023 Coordination

Background

The 11th Meeting of the Working Group on MTS Coordination (WG MTSC) was held on 03-05 August 2022 via video conferencing. The Meeting had five (9) participants comprising representatives from BGD, MAL, NZE, PHI, and ROK, and the RCA PAC Chair, Section Head, TCAP1, and the RCARO as observers.

In consideration of the RCA NRs' actions on the recommendations of the WG MTSC presented at the 44th NRM, the 11th WG meeting had in-depth discussions on the alignment of the MTS, RPF and the TC project development cycle, timelines for the limited final review of the MTS 2018-2023 and engagement with the WG drafting the MTS 2024-2029 (WG MTSD), timeline for the final review of the MTS 2018-2023, and the implications of a possible delay in the implementation of the MTS 2024-2029.

The meeting also discussed its tasks on resource mobilization, expanding partnerships, and human resource development. Initial steps of establishing partnership with the ASEAN COSTI (Committee on Science, Technology and innovation) and with the South Asia Regional Cooperation are underway. The draft TOR of the Committee on Comprehensive HRD programme) was discussed. The study on the establishment of a permanent committee on resource mobilization was continued.

The outputs of the discussions were translated into conclusions/ recommendations and actions as reflected in the Meeting Report and in the updated Work Plan for 2022.

The report of the 11th meeting of the WG MTSC is in Attachment 1. The report contains recommendations related to:

- Actions to be taken should the MTS 2024-2029 not be ready for implementation in 2024
- Timelines for the limited final review and final review of the MTS 2018-2023
- Meeting with the WG drafting the MTS 2024-2029
- Documentation of the best practices and timelines in developing the MTS and all associated components, and their incorporation in the GOR
- WG's updated annual Work Plan for 2022

Proposed Action

The Meeting may take note of the report and approve the relevant actions to support the activities of the WG MTSC.

Attachment 1

Report of the 11th Meeting of the Working Group on RCA Medium-Term Strategy Coordination 03-05 August 2022 (Virtual Meeting)

1. Introduction

Upon approval of the 44th RCA National Representatives Meeting (NRM) on 19-21 April 2022, the 11th Meeting of the Working Group on the RCA Medium Term Strategy Coordination (WG MTSC) was held from 03 to 05 August 2022 via video conferencing. The adopted Agenda of the Meeting is in **Annex 1**.

The meeting of the WG MTSC consisted of 9 participants and observers comprising representatives from BGD, MAL, NZE, PHI, ROK, RCA PAC Chair, RCA FP and RCARO. The RCA FP was unable to attend the meeting due to medical emergency in the family. The IAEA was represented by the Section Head, TCAP1. The representative from the PHI was the WG Chair. The List of Participants is in **Annex 2**.

The Meeting aimed to:

- Finalize the Performance Indicators and Target Criteria for the MTS Final Review and
- Explore new strategies for more effective and efficient implementation of the RCA Programme, and
- Review, evaluate progress of, and update the WG MTSC work plan for 2022

It was expected that the Meeting would produce the following documents for consideration by the 51st GCM:

- Final Performance Indicators and Target Criteria for the MTS Final Review
- Proposed new RCA Strategies
- Updated WG MTSC Work Plan
- Working Group Meeting Report.

2. Feedback from the 44th NRM

The Chair briefed the meeting on the actions taken at the 44th NRM. The presentation is included in **Annex 3**.

The 44th NRM designated Ms. Alumanda Dela Rosa (PHI) as the new Chair, and Mr. Syed Mohammad Hossain (BGD) as the new Vice Chair. The new members endorsed by the 44th NRM were Mr. Cheonkyeong Park (ROK) and Akiko Hayashida (JPN). The RCA FP did not receive any nomination from the GPs for one more member of the WG preferably with skills and experience in resource mobilization and partnerships. All the other recommendations of the WG were endorsed by the NRs.

The NRs approved five (5) project concepts for the TC cycle 2024-2025, including one specifically addressing the needs of the new GPs. With regards the RCA Scholarship Programme, the NRs requested the responsible Committee to conduct a feasibility study, and report the findings of said study to the 51st GCM. The Meeting agreed that based on the results of the study, a HRD project be developed in accordance with the RCA GOR.

The Chair of the WG Drafting the MTS 2024-2029 (WG MTSD) informed the Meeting by email that the first draft of the MTS 2024-2029 will be submitted by the WG at the 45th NRM. This new schedule is a deviation from the original schedule submitted to the 50th GCM wherein the first draft was to be submitted at the 44th NRM.

3. Limited Final Review of the MTS 2018-2023

The information on the revised timetable of the WG MTSD drew concern from the participants that the MTS 2024-2029 may not be ready and approved by the NRs by 2024. The meeting considered it a critical situation for the RCA, and requested the Chairs of the WG MTSC and the RCA PAC to bring the matter to the attention of the NRs through the RCA Chair and the RCA FP while indicating that their respective WGs would be ready to provide assistance, if necessary, to the WG MTSD to facilitate the development of the new MTS.

The following options were discussed to find a solution to the impending problem: a) make a recommendation to the NRs at the 51st GCM that an interim MTS is to be prepared by the WG MTSD with possible assistance from the RCA PAC and the WG MTSC; b) the RCA PAC and the WG MTSC collectively develop the interim MTS, and submit the draft to the 51st GCM, and c) make a recommendation to the NRs at the 51st GCM that should the new MTS 2024-2029 not be ready by 2024, the current MTS 2018-2023 is deemed extended until the new MTS is available. There should be a firm statement from the NRs tasking the WG MTSD for an accelerated action and a definite timeline to complete the MTS 2024-2029.

The meeting took the third option and decided to make a recommendation based on this option to the NRs at the 51st GCM.

Recommendation 1

The meeting recommends that the NRs endorse the proposal of the WG MTSC and the RCA PAC that should the MTS 2024-2029 not be ready in 2024, the current MTS 2018-2023 is deemed extended until the new MTS 2024-2029 is available. An accelerated action by the MTSD with a definite timeline to complete the new MTS is imperative.

The meeting decided to undertake the limited final review of the MTS 2018/23 as first decided at the 10th Meeting. The performance indicators, target criteria, and the respective reviewers are shown in Table 1 (**Annex 4**). Due to the added load of the RCA PAC members, the RCA PAC may not be directly involved in the review, but may extend assistance when required by the WG MTSC.

The WG MTSC will hold its 12th Meeting in January or February 2023 to consolidate the results of the limited final review, prepare the report on the limited final review, and formulate recommendations to the WG MTSD based on the results of the midterm and limited final reviews of the MTS, lessons learned from the implementation of the MTS, and any other recommendations arising from this meeting. The Chair will discuss with the RCA FP on the possibility of a back-to-back and in person meeting between the WG MTSC, RCA PAC and the WG MTSD in either January or February of 2023.

Recommendation 2

The meeting recommends that the NRs endorse the face-to-face 12th WG Meeting in January or February 2023 to consolidate the results of the limited final review, prepare the report on the limited final review, and formulate recommendations to the WG MTSD, and the meeting be held back-to-back with the in person meeting of the WG MTSC, RCA PAC and WG MTSD .

4. Draft TOR for the Committee on RCA Comprehensive HRD Programme

Based on the endorsement of the NRs at the 44th NRM, the WG MTSC proceeded with the task of formulating the ToR for the Committee on Comprehensive Human Resources Development (HRD) programme. The WG MTSC Vice Chair presented the rationale for the importance of the Committee to the RCA. The proposed ToR was also presented (**Annex 5**).

The Committee is tasked to review the current state of HRD and formulate strategies and actions on sustainable human capacity building which includes human resource development, education and training, knowledge management, and knowledge networks in the RCA region. The Committee supports the RCA Scholarship programme and international student competitions to engage future generations in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) .

In contrast to the previous WG on HRD which involved recommendations that were project-based, the Committee, as proposed, has a wider coverage and a longer time span to enable it to lay out a strategic short-, medium-, and long-term HRD plan for the RCA. As such, the membership of the Committee , while small in number, perhaps three (3), should be well chosen in terms of affiliation (academe, nuclear background, industry) and expertise.

The HRD plan will entail resources over the current funding of the RCA programme. Thus, the needed financial resources and the corresponding resource mobilization should be determined.

The relationship of the Committee with the present Committee on RCA Scholarship Programme should be studied. It was suggested that the WG MTSC should wait for the results of the feasibility study presently being conducted, and input relevant information from the feasibility study to the ToR.

The meeting decided to continue gathering information , e.g., results of the feasibility study, to refine the ToR before submitting it to the NRs. The WG MTSC should be able to submit the ToR at the 45th NRM.

5. Status of Implementation of WG MTSC Recommendations: Their Adoption in the RCA Projects

The status of the recommendations of the WG MTSC would be discussed for the first time by the WG. Next to the NRs, the RCA PAC and the RCA FP are the primary stakeholders who may be involved in the implementation of most of the recommendations. The list is not complete. Only those recommendations that could be implemented by the RCA PAC and the RCA FP were included, and they were invited to give their feedbacks.

The RCA PAC Chair made the following comments:

- a) Almost all the recommendations relevant to PAC, made during the past 2-3 years have been implemented.
- b) In making recommendations, there should be a clear understanding of the person or persons responsible for implementation of the recommendations and the time frame for implementation
- c) There should be a follow-up to see whether the recommendations have been effectively implemented, and if so whether they have produced the expected results. If not corrective actions have to be taken.
- d) Some recommendations related to the RCA TC programme would require consultations with the IAEA staff

The RCARO observed that the WG MTSC has undertaken tasks that are not only at the strategic level but also at the operational level. At the early part, the WG remained to work at the strategic level, but at certain point, it needed to work also at the operational level to enable it to fulfill its tasks. A case in point was its involvement in revising the report templates because it cannot extract the data necessary to review the performance indicators most notably on outcomes and impacts.

The meeting noted the comments, and decided that the Final Review of the MTS 2018-2023 will include an assessment of the WG MTSC's own effectiveness as a coordinating group in the implementation of the MTS.

6. WG MTSC Mandate on Resource Mobilization

With the endorsement of the 44th NRM for the establishment of a permanent committee on resource mobilization, the meeting continued to discuss possible attributes/functions of the committee. The Chair shared some facts about resource mobilization, to wit: a) resource mobilization requires a lot of work and takes a lot of time, considering that organizations are not entitled to support, they must earn it; b) organizations must be ready, and willing to sell themselves and their proposed projects with evidence-based results; c) resource mobilization is also about the needs of the funding agency, and organizations must study and understand the needs of the funding agency, and d) the organization's performance impacts its ability to generate resources.

The RCARO shared its experiences in resource mobilization over the past 20 years. The work has been hard and tedious; some efforts were successful, some were not. As a member of the previous WG on Financial Gap Analysis and Resource Mobilization, the RCARO reviewed some of the activities of the previous WG. The said WG recommended for the establishment of an RCA Fund similar to the AFRA Fund, but the NRS did not approve the recommendation. The WG then recommended for the issuance of a Declaration whereby

the RCA GPs make voluntary extrabudgetary contributions to augment the resources of the RCA. The RCARO suggested that the WG MTSC consider soliciting advice and lessons learned from the other Agreements relative to resource mobilization.

The RCARO shared the information that the Declaration to be signed at the Ministerial Level Meeting in September 2022 cites resource mobilization as a significant activity to secure additional resources for the RCA. It would be appropriate to establish a committee on resource mobilization which could provide support to aforesaid Declaration. As a member of the previous WG on Resource Mobilization, the RCARO offered to prepare a draft ToR for the permanent committee on resource mobilization for discussion at the next WG meeting.

7. WG Mandate with Building Partnerships: With ASEAN and other Regional Cooperation Bodies

To start the preliminary discussion on building partnership with the ASEAN, the Chair presented the history of ASEAN and its Committee on S&T and Innovation (COSTI) as well as its ASEAN Plan of Action on S&T and Innovation (APASTI 2016-2025). The presentation is in **Annex 6**. Considering that nine RCA GPs are members of the ASEAN, and seven RCA GPs are Dialogue Partners (DP) of the ASEAN, one would expect that common interests on S&T may be shared by the RCA and the ASEAN. Both organizations even shared common challenges. The meeting supported forging a partnership with the ASEAN.

According to Ms. Zurina Moktar, Head of the S&T Division, ASEAN Economic Community Department, a brief proposal/concept note (1-2 pages) should be submitted. The concept note which outlines the specific area of collaboration that RCA would like to pursue would enable the ASEAN to explore the possibility of having nuclear S&T as a priority area of the ASEAN COSTI.

The meeting considered other regional cooperation bodies which the RCA can build partnerships with. The meeting requested ASM Saifullah (BGD) to gather information on the South Asia Regional Cooperation and report to the next WG meeting. With regards the cooperation between the IAEA and the ADB, the WG MTSC will coordinate with the RCA FP on possible future joint activities between the RCA and the ADB under the Physical Agreement between the IAEA and the ADB. The RCA FP also serves as the Secretariat's Focal Person under the said Physical Agreement.

8. Annex 16 and Other Matters in the GOR

The RCA PAC Chair presented the work undertaken by the WG MTSC and RCA PAC to improve the format and content of the RCA reports for optimum usability of the information in the reports (**Annex 7**). The revised Project Participation Form has been used for the 2022-2023 RCA projects. The guidelines prepared by the WG MTSC, as contained in the revised Annex 16 of the GOR, and the Achievement Report to be used by the LCCs six months after the completion of the project offer some promise for utilization by the LCCs. The WG MTSC requested for copies of the other report templates for possible recommendation by the WG in improving the report templates' format and content.

9. Alignment of MTS, RPF, and the TC Project Development Cycle

The 44th NRM requested the WG MTSC with assistance of RCA PAC and the RCA FP to develop options for shifting the timing and/or durations of future MTSs and RPFs to achieve better alignment with each other and the project development cycle of the IAEA.

The meeting thanked C. Daughney (NZE) for initiating the study, and preparing the working document for this meeting.

The paper (**Annex 8**) described the past and current practices of MTS development and implementation, and considered several options in terms of timing its alignment with the development of RPFs and the IAEA TC cycle, and schedules of the requisite reviews of the MTS.

It is expected that the MTS covers all the components that comprise the RCA programme and its implementation. For the MTS covering three TC cycles, its development starts as early as three years before the start of the 1st TC cycle it covers and ends three years after the end of the third TC cycle. For the current MTS, the WG was established by the RCA GCM in 2013, and the MTS was approved by the 2015 GCM in time to inform the development of the first TC cycle under its coverage. Within this period the WG or referred to as the WG MTSD, undertook the survey of the needs of the GPs, commissioned an RCA consultant to update the RCA regional profile, and convened an experts group meeting to set the strategic priorities for the MTS. All the inputs of these activities were incorporated into the MTS. The establishment of the WG MTSC was approved by the 2016 NRM and had its first meeting in 2017, a year before the MTS 2018-2023 went into effect.

The RCA PAC Chair raised three issues/concerns on the preparation and alignment of the RPF with the MTS, namely, a) should the MTS and the RPF be developed by one group or two different groups; b) should there be one or two separate documents for the MTS and RPF, and c) the timing and effort to prepare the documents (**Annex 9**). The RCA PAC Chair opined that the RPF should be developed by the RCA PAC into a separate document because it is responsible for the RCA programme development. However, the WG MTSC Chair and NZE were of the opinion that there should only be one overarching working group or the WG MTSD, which is responsible in producing all the key components of the MTS. The WG MTSD's responsibility is to ensure that these components are coordinated and integrated, fit for purpose for the RCA, and produced on time into one document which is the MTS. It was emphasized in the meeting that this working group responsible in developing the MTS should be in consultation and coordination with the relevant/appropriate committees/working groups existing within the RCA. A case in point would be the development of the RPF where the WG MTSD should consult and coordinate closely with the RCA PAC. The Meeting came to a consensus that only one entity, the WG MTSD, would prepare and coordinate all activities of the MTS, and produce one document which is the MTS.

From the different options of timing and alignment of the MTS, RPF and the TC cycle presented in the study, the meeting considered several good practices that may be continued in the formulation of future MTSs, and recommendations that may be forwarded to the NRs, to the current WG MTSD, and to the IAEA for information.

The good practices and recommendations considered were:

1. Any RCA project should be governed by only one MTS. The start and end of the MTS period should be aligned with the start of the 1st TC cycle covered by the MTS, and end with the end of the last TC cycle covered by the MTS. The meeting decided that this good practice should be continued.
2. The RCA could continue the good practice whereby the NRs approve the establishment of a Working Group, the WG MTSD, to develop the MTS. The WG MTSD is responsible for scoping and positioning all components that need to be integrated and coordinated within the MTS. In doing so, the WG MTSD should make the necessary consultations with the appropriate and relevant committees/working groups now operating within the RCA to ensure the MTS will serve the purpose of the RCA. The meeting decided that this could be shared with the current WG MTSD .
3. The MTS could be approved by the RCA GCM at least three (3) years before it is scheduled to take effect at the start of the first TC cycle to enable the preparation and development of TC projects under the aforesaid cycle. The meeting decided that this good practice should be continued.
4. The Final Review (FR) of an MTS should ideally occur three (3) years after its coverage period to allow time for the reporting of post-project outcomes from its last TC cycle in accordance with the RCA GOR. The FR of the current MTS is planned to take place in early 2026, and the results of the FR reported to the 2026 GCM. The meeting decided to submit this recommendation to the 51st GCM as requested by the 44th NRM.
5. The Midterm Review (MTR) of an MTS should ideally occur just after the completion of the Final Review of the previous MTS, but at least 3 years prior to the commencement of the next MTS so that there is an opportunity to inform the development of its first TC cycle. The meeting decided to share this recommendation to the current WG MTSD. The new MTS should be informed by the MTR of the current MTS and the FR of the previous MTS.
6. As a longer MTS has been found to give no added benefit in terms of scheduling, and priorities may change, a 6-year MTS would be the most pragmatic schedule. Thus, the meeting decided that a cycle of 6 years would continue to apply for future MTSs.

Recommendation 3

The Meeting recommends that the NRs endorse the conduct of the Final Review of the current MTS in early 2026, and the results of the Final Review would be reported to the 2026 GCM.

The MTS 2018-2023 is the first MTS to undergo a formal midterm review (MTR) which occurred in 2020, and a final review (FR) at the end of its coverage in 2023. The study revealed that the MTR and the FR are quite close together in time. The MTR occurs just after the completion of the FR of the previous MTS. Several benefits could accrue from this timing such as the gathering of data can be undertaken at one time, and the data

shared between the two groups of reviewers, and efficiencies of scale would be realized as the same set of reviewers can be tapped to do both reviews.

The aspects of doing tasks in the RCA has always been a challenge. It is hoped that preparing the RPF, for instance, in the future may be easier with new approaches and new technologies developed. There is no standard procedure yet for developing the MTS and all its accessory components, including the timing and alignment with each other and with the TC cycle. The meeting recommended for the need to document best practices and timelines in developing the MTS and all associated components, and to include these in the strategic review of the GOR approved by the 44th NRM. The guidelines and standard procedures will guide future WG MTSDs in its task of producing the MTS.

Recommendation 4

The Meeting recommends that the NRs endorse the documentation of best practices and timelines in developing the MTS and all associated components , and the inclusion of these in the strategic review of the GOR approved by the 44th NRM.

10. Any Other Business

The RCARO noted that according to the recommendation of the 50th GCM on archiving the RCA online training materials on the RCA e-Learning Campus, the RCARO and the RCA FP are being on consultation with the relevant department in the IAEA to clear the issue. The meeting noted that before including the IPRs in the GOR, there is a need of completing the advice from the OLA specifically identifying a Contact Person in the Secretariat relative to this matter. It was suggested that the WG MTSC Chair coordinate with the RCA FP on this.

11. Work Plan for 2022

The WG MTSC reviewed and updated the activities in the Work Plan (**Annex 10**) based on the decisions agreed upon during the 11th Meeting.

Recommendation 5

The Meeting recommends that the NRs endorse the updated WG MTSC Work Plan for 2022.

12. Closing

It was agreed that the next meeting of the MTSC WG would be held physically, possibly in the January or February 2023, in consideration of the timetable for submitting advice and

recommendations to the WG MTSD, subject to possible alignment with RCA PAC meeting schedule.

The Chair thanked the WG members, Section Head, TCAP1, RCA PAC Chair, and the RCARO for their active participation and contributions at the Meeting.