

9. RCA Programme

a. Activities in 2000

The RCA Coordinator informed the Meeting about the following major activities implemented after the 22nd RCA Meeting of National Representatives:

- Joint UNDP/RCA/IAEA Mid-term Review, April/May 2000
- AGM in Health Care, Indonesia, May/June 2000
- Lead Country Meeting, Vienna, July 2000

(i) Joint UNDP/RCA/IAEA Project Mid-term Review Mission⁶

The meeting participants welcomed the observations and positive suggestions of the Mid-Term Review Mission and was happy to note that the Mid-Term Review Mission Report had acknowledged the importance and successful implementation of the sub-projects and activities. The participants observed with satisfaction the recommendations of the review team for the extension of financial support beyond 2000 as well as the additional components in cases like arsenic in groundwater and air pollution (Asian haze). The attendees noted for guidance the various suggestions of the mission for further improvement of the implementation of activities.

While welcoming the mid-term mission report, the participants unanimously expressed disappointment at the decision by UNDP not to extend financial support beyond 2000 as was initially conveyed to the RCA MSs at the beginning of the Mission; deciding instead to discontinue further support beyond its commitment until the end of 2000 and to request the Agency to close the UNDP-funded portion of the joint project by year end.

As expressed by Australia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Philippines, and Sri Lanka, the participants strongly felt that the final decision conveyed by UNDP was contrary to the spirit of the recommendations of the mid-term review mission and should be conveyed to UNDP. Many of the activities were contributing to major global issues such as the environment, human resources development, etc., which were in tune with UNDP's objectives.

The meeting noted that the review mission has observed some lack of co-ordination within UNDP's office in their review report and which perhaps had contributed to the non-appreciation of the useful outputs of the sub-projects by the UNDP and hence withdrawal. In view of this, the matter could be again taken up with UNDP for reconsideration.

With the above observations, the meeting noted the mid-term review report.

⁶ The mid-term review report has been distributed separately to RCA MS

(ii) AGM on Health Care, Indonesia

Please refer to 9b(i) below.

(iii) Lead Country Meeting Report⁷

The Lead Country (LC) Meeting was held on 24-26 July 2000 at the Agency Headquarters.

The RCA Co-ordinator presented the LC Meeting report and informed the participants that the UNDP's decision to not extend financial support had come just when the LC Meeting was going on. This was an unexpected disappointment to the LC Meeting participants but was taken into account while finalizing the workplans. The meeting noted the issues developed on page 7 of the LC Meeting Report for referral to this General Conference Meeting.

The RCA Co-ordinator noted the recommendations of the LC meeting such as, the information flow, electronic newsletter, editorial board, etc., and requested participants for comments and approval for final adoption.

The participants decided that India and Malaysia should consider the legal aspects covering the issues of access rights and document ownership associated with the RCA home page, and the Lead Country Malaysia should supply a paper in the next meeting for adoption. The establishment of an Editorial Board for the production of an RCA newsletter to be posted at regular intervals on the RCA home page was supported.

The attendees also endorsed India as Assisting Lead Country for "Access to Clean Drinking Water" and Australia as Lead Country for "Distance Learning Materials in Radiation Protection and Emergency Preparedness" components of the electronic networking and outreach (ENO) sub-project.

The LC Report was adopted.

(iv) UNDP Position on the Project

The RCA Co-ordinator presented a summary of the UNDP response to IAEA clarifications. He informed the participants that India had agreed to host the terminal Tripartite Review Meeting in December⁸ as requested at the closure of the UNDP component of the project.

On the decision by UNDP to discontinue further support beyond its commitment until the end of year 2000, the MSs indicated they would take the matter up with UNDP either through regional offices or in New York. Australia noted the apparent need for improved communication between the IAEA and

⁷ The LC Meeting Report has been distributed separately to RCA MS

⁸ This meeting took place in New Delhi, India from 11 - 13 December 2000

UNDP which was evident by a lack of ownership by UNDP of the joint project.

Bangladesh felt that contacting local UNDP offices alone might not be enough. Japan remarked that the strong reasons why this project is needed by RCA MSs should be conveyed to UNDP. The Director, TCPA, felt that the IAEA can only help to a certain extent and efforts from MSs are also necessary highlighting national/regional needs. New Zealand remarked that a different approach, e.g., an alternate source like the World Bank, should also be sought if efforts with UNDP failed.

As the outcome of this discussion, the participants expressed its concern at the UNDP decision not to continue its funding support beyond the end of 2000. The participants invited the Agency through the RCA office to make representations to the UNDP with regard to the possibility of having the decision reconsidered and invited MSs to approach their regional UNDP representatives and also UNDP Headquarters in New York and for the outcomes to be reported to the Meeting of RCA National Representatives in Bangladesh.

It was also noted that a few MSs already contacted their national UNDP offices to seek clearance or intervention with the UNDP New York office regarding this matter.

(v) Events in 2000

The RCA Co-ordinator presented the remaining events held during 2000 (Annexure-5). He informed the participants about the two events under the joint UNDP/RCA/IAEA project, one under the marine sub-project and the other under the air pollution sub-project, which were planned during 2000 in Manila, whose dates have to be confirmed⁹.

The Chairman suggested that MSs should help the RCA Co-ordinator by offering to host the remaining events at short notice to complete the calendar of activities. Pakistan conveyed that they would always be ready to host events if required. Sri Lanka clarified that a scheduled meeting in Sri Lanka in February 2000 was postponed due to the forthcoming general election simply as a precautionary security measure. A new date for this event was 6-10 November 2000.

b. Programme 2001/2002

The RCA Co-ordinator gave an overview of the various programmes and budget estimates (Annexure-6) following which the various thematic programmes were presented by the Lead Countries. As presented, there were

⁹ Both events are with project RAS5/037 on genetic diversity on rice; at the time of writing, one event, the meeting of project counterparts is confirmed for 6-10 December 2000 while the other, a 3-wk training course on molecular markers, is postponed to February 2001

32 projects for the 2001/2002 cycle; subsequently two projects¹⁰ in agriculture were cancelled by MSs based on an earlier agreement¹¹ as both had not received funding for more than two years.

(i) Health-related Projects

Indonesia presented the summary of the AGM on Health Care¹² organized subsequent to the 22nd RCA National Representatives' Meeting. The meeting was attended by 32 delegates representing all the RCA MSs. The Agency was represented by Mr. S. Groth, Director, Division of Human Health and Mr. C.R. Aleta, RCA Co-ordinator. The participants reviewed in detail the current projects, priority areas in the Health Sector, and the resources needed for implementation. The details of the project were highlighted in addition to identifying the human resources needed. Development of facilities essential in the sector were also noted. It was pointed out that the AGM recommended the creation of an advisory body that would provide overview and direction of the RCA health-related programmes. In this context, Indonesia emphasized the need for evolving simple mechanisms to facilitate project implementation.

The Chairman complimented Indonesia and the AGM for carrying out such an elaborate exercise. It was noted that the implementation may be carried out as recommended by the AGM in 2001-2002 and can be again reviewed for 2003/2004.

(ii) Agriculture-related Projects

China presented the projects under agriculture (Annexure-7). It was emphasized that a high-priority area is restoration of soil fertility and that China will provide an extra-budgetary contribution to initiate this project in 2001 instead of 2002.¹³

(iii) Industry- & Environment-related Projects

India presented the projects under the thematic area "Industry- & Environment-related Projects" (Annexure-8). India emphasized that the various sub-projects under the UNDP project had close linkages with different activities under this thematic area and hence suitable linkages needed to be made to avoid any overlap. Australia expressed surprise that the project on low radioactive portable nucleonic gauges was a footnote a/ project in view of the state-of-the-art technology involved.¹⁴

¹⁰ These were RAS 5/036 on pesticide monitoring and RAS 5/038 on genetic enhancement of wheat, oil and pulse crops

¹¹ MS during the 1996 RCA GC agreed that footnote a/ projects not receiving funding for more than 2 years would be dropped from the programme

¹² A separate meeting report of the results of the AGM has been distributed to RCA MS.

¹³ CPR provided \$100,000 from its RCA reserved fund to this project.

¹⁴ AUL, JPN, & NZL expressed interest in supporting this project.

(iv) Energy & Research Reactor/Radioactive Waste Management

The Republic of Korea presented the projects in the next cycle which included three areas: energy, reactor research utilization, and radioactive waste management. The role of nuclear power and other energy options in the investigation and mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions was also included as an important activity. It was agreed that the research reactor school proposal would be further discussed at the project meeting in Mumbai in December 2000.

(v) Radiation Protection

Australia presented the projects based on the report circulated. The project is proceeding well and many positive outcomes had resulted. The present programme continues for 2001-2002 with participation from all 17 MSs and involves close co-ordination with the Model Project. A series of peer reviews were in progress. Australia expressed concern at the approaches made by Agency to the non-Model Project countries asking them to join the new umbrella projects without any information on the potential impact on RAS/9/018 or consultation with the Co-ordination Group of RAS/9/018. The participants recommended that further discussion should take place on these matters before finalizing the new projects¹⁵. IAEA officers advised that all activities within the RCA project RAS/9/018 would proceed.

(vi) General

In reply to Pakistan's query about the activities carried out under the technical co-operation among developing countries (TCDC) project, the RCA Co-ordinator clarified that conducting training/expert missions, preparing annual reports and other promotional materials, and creating databases were carried out under this project. Pakistan expressed disappointment that the TCDC project which was very important and was meant to develop co-operation in the RCA region had been doing something else instead. The vision paper gave a specific objective for TCDC, and the Training Programme was only one of the components. Mr. Razley, Head, East Asia Pacific Section, IAEA, explained that the whole programme of RCA covered elements of TCDC and if needed, the title could be changed. Sri Lanka emphasized that human resources development programmes should be continued as such because they were very important needs of the developing countries. Indonesia and Philippines shared the opinion expressed by Pakistan that TCDC should be kept as such and relevant activities to cover its objectives should be initiated and strengthened. Malaysia pointed out that they were only a contact point to compile a database on expertise and resources available in the region. Australia pointed out that a working paper on TCDC was available and it would be better to look into it. The Chairman noted that the TCDC project should be activated and another

¹⁵ AUL LC Coordinator (Mr.Cameron) had consultations with the agency officials and clarified the role of RCA project vis-à-vis the 2 umbrella projects on Radiation Protection.

heading could be made to cover other expenditure, which are also essential for the management of RCA.

(NOTE: While the project has been created by the Agency as equivalent to the regional human resources project (similar to the human resources project for the national TC programmes), it is serving as a conduit for TCDC; for example, sending experts to assist a particular country solve a problem in a specific area; preparing materials/documentation to promote TCDC; sending national consultants to other regions in connection with tripartite activities of AFRA, ARCAL and RCA; accepting in-house trainees to train them on Agency information systems and RCA programming and implementation systems; and other similar activities—submitted by the RCA Co-ordinator).

Funding Issue:

There was a general discussion on the balance between the different sector areas.

Referring to agenda 9(b), the RCA Co-ordinator gave the summary of funding. Australia pointed out that the project under Industry, “Optimisation of Mineral Resources Recovery using Low Radioactivity and Portable Nucleonic Gauges”, was an important one, had been put as a footnote a/ project, and efforts should be made to get funds allotted for this.¹⁶

New Zealand requested that in the future information on ‘footnote a/’ projects should clearly indicate whether non-Agency funding had been identified with donor states, or whether funding was still awaited. Indonesia emphasized that there should be consultation between the Technical Officer and the Lead Country Co-ordinator for a project before the budget was classified into hardcore and footnote a/ categories.¹⁷

China would like to have more contributions to the China-funded project in the area of restoration of soil fertility.

Indonesia remarked that priorities both within and between sectoral programmes should be worked out in future including for the 2003-2004 cycle. The Chairman pointed out that priorities should be considered as discussed in the 22nd RCA WGM in Mumbai.

¹⁶ Interest to support this has been expressed earlier by Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

¹⁷ This was an agency prerogative to put projects into hardcore or footnote a/ status.