

Report of
the 8th Meeting of the Working Group on
RCA Medium-Term Strategy Coordination
4-5 February 2021 (Virtual Meeting)

1. Introduction

Upon approval of the 42nd RCA National Representatives Meeting (NRM) held online on 23 April 2020, the Eighth Meeting of the Working Group on the RCA Medium Term Strategy Coordination (MTSC WG) was held from 4 to 5 February 2021 via video conferencing. The adopted Agenda of the Meeting is in **Annex 1**.

The Meeting of the MTSC WG consisted of twelve participants and observers comprising representatives from AUL, BGD, JPN, MAL, NZE, PHI, ROK, and RCARO. The Chair of PAC and RCA-FP also participated. The representative from JPN was the interim Chair. The List of Participants is in **Annex 2**.

The main purpose of the meeting was to:

- Review, evaluate progress of, and update the MTSC WG work plan for 2021; and
- Assess the Mid-Term Review of the Medium-Term Strategy to discuss the future direction.

It was expected that the meeting would produce the following documents for consideration by the 43rd National Representatives Meeting (NRM):

- Proposed updates to RCA documents including the GOR, if required;
- Updated MTSC WG Work Plan;
- Draft Declaration Letter;
- Working Group Meeting Report

The Chair Mark Alexander (AUL) advised that due to his appointment as the Chair of Medium-Term Strategy 2024-2029 Drafting WG (MTS WG) he would be stepping down as Chair of the MTSC WG. The meeting endorsed Deputy Chair, Yoshiko Okamoto (JPN), as the interim Chair for the meeting. The previous Chair will continue as a member of the WG. JPN nominated Alumanda Dela Rosa (PHL) as the Deputy Chair, which was also endorsed by the meeting. Those endorsements are subject to approval by the 43rd NRM.

Recommendation 1

The meeting recommends that the 43rd NRM officially endorse Yoshiko Okamoto (JPN) and Alumanda Dela Rosa (PHL) as Chair and Deputy Chair of the MTSC WG.

JPN gave brief updates of recent development since the 7th meeting (Annex 3), and outcomes of discussions from the 42nd NRM and 49th GCM.

2. Feedback from Mid-Term Review

The PAC-Chair gave a presentation on the summary of the evaluation of each Performance Indicator, conclusions and recommendations from the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Medium Term Strategy (MTS). The report is included as **Annex 4**. The PAC appreciated the guidelines prepared by MTSC WG, that it made possible for PAC to complete the MTR within a reasonable time period. It was noted that while the level of achievement of some of the aspects of the MTS was good, some required improvement: for some Performance Indicators there were not sufficient data available to allow evaluation, and possible data/measures were also suggested. The WG appreciated the PAC-Chair for the review and for useful comments and recommendations made.

The WG had a general discussion on the direction to further proceed. It was noted that there were two key points to assess in this WG; 1) how to improve performance of the RCA and 2) how to improve the Final Review Process. In this regard, the Meeting stressed that it is quite vital to consider how the learnings from the MTR be incorporated into the next version of the MTS. It was also reminded that the impacts of COVID-19 should be taken into consideration while assessing the review.

It was noted that it is important that the Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States also share the benefit of the RCA and that a component of the Final Review Process should consider this viewpoint. PAC-Chair commented that according to the survey on priority areas conducted by PAC, to which twenty out of twenty-two GPs has replied, all four new GPs has chosen Radiation Protection as their priority area. Radiotherapy was also another area where all four new GPs answered as priority, but the needs of those four countries could be quite different from those of other GPs. The WG agreed that it is necessary to develop a new mechanism to address the needs of new GPs, such as establishing a special project targeting them.

Recommendation 2

It is recommended that the 43rd NRM approve to develop a new mechanism to address the needs of new GPs, such as establishing a special project targeting their needs.

3. Outcome Monitoring

The RCA-FP gave an update on the Secretariat project on *Case Studies of Social and Economic Value of RCA Projects*. The report is included as **Annex 5**. The initial case study on Mutation breeding was successfully finished and distributed. The WG noted the importance of conducting such case studies, and appreciated the accomplishment made by the Secretariat. The project is continuing, and case studies in two other thematic areas, Non-Destructive Testing (NDT) and Radiotherapy are currently being undertaken. They are expected to be completed by September 2021. The RCA-FP noted that social and economic impacts can be measured only after several years of completion, not within 2-4 years, and that those assessments can be made only after 10-15 years of its completion.

NZE noted that the Secretariat's case study uses two complementary different approaches (narrative approach and benefit-cost analysis), the former of which was similar to the outcome harvesting approach that had been previously tested by the WG MTSC. NZE also noted that several different scenarios were used for cost benefit analysis, but every scenario used in the

case study were found out to yield a positive result under the full range of variables and assumptions tested.

The WG discussed how the RCA can obtain the biggest benefits and how to monitor them. An idea to keep conducting relevant RCA projects in one technical area for 10-15 years was suggested, with a view to obtaining sufficient outcomes. To this idea, it was commented that according to the RCA procedure, it is not always possible and realistic. It was noted – and the WG agreed – that it is important to keep monitoring each project outputs after each project cycle, and is necessary to identify the most reasonable way to analyze them. In this regard, it was also noted that identifying possible project outcomes at the beginning of the project, and monitoring progress towards their achievement throughout the project, was important.

Because of the COVID-19, the WG could not get sufficient feedback on new project reporting format which was introduced after the 42nd NRM. The WG hopes to assess the reporting format in the next WG.

Recommendation 3

It is recommended that the NRs note the importance of monitoring the RCA project outputs after each project cycle, and endorse that the MTSC WG in cooperation with the IAEA Secretariat identify the most reasonable way to analyze them.

4. Draft Declaration Letter

In accordance with the decision at the 42nd NRM, PHI presented a draft letter by the RCA Chair to the Permanent Missions of all GPs in Vienna, which aims to follow up on the 2018 Declaration highlighting that the lead up to the 50th anniversary of the RCA would be an opportune time for Extra Budgetary (EB) contributions.

It was noted that it was very difficult for every GP to get additional budget for the RCA, and that it was important to stress the RCA accomplishments and values in order that each GP would understand its importance. In this context, it was suggested to touch on the result of cost benefit assessment on mutation breeding that every euro invested had yielded 11 Euro benefits to the farmers and consumers. The WG also noted that it is important to appeal that the RCA would help to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

After considerable discussion, the WG agreed to propose a draft letter to the 43rd NRM as attached in **Annex 6**.

Recommendation 4

The MTSC WG recommends that the 43rd NRM endorse the draft letter from the RCA Chair to the Permanent Missions of all GPs, which follows up on the 2018 Declaration and highlights that the 50th anniversary of the RCA would be an opportune time for EB contributions

It is also recommended that the NRs provide comments to the RCA Chair within two weeks of conclusion of the 43rd NRM, and that the RCA Chair will finalize and distribute to the Permanent Missions of RCA GPs within one month of the conclusion of the 43rd NRM.

5. Considerations on the Parameters of the Final Review

AUL gave a presentation on the review and brief comments on each Performance Indicator, as well as possible directions to go forward. The presentation is included as **Annex 7**. The WG appreciated the presentation, which serves as useful inputs for the future MTSC WG discussion as well as for the next Mid-Term Strategy.

It was noted that it is necessary to coordinate the timeline of the discussion with the MTS WG, in order that the outputs from this WG would be sufficiently taken into consideration in drafting the next Medium-Term Strategy.

There have been considerable discussions on changing, deleting or merging some Performance Indicators or criteria which were found out to be non-usable. The question on legitimacy in changing the parameters between Mid-Term and Final Review was also raised. It was agreed that what was important was that the final purpose of the review was not only the review of the Medium-Term Strategy but also that of the RCA programme itself. The necessity to develop new mechanisms to collect missing or non-sufficient data was also agreed. In this context, it was also suggested to use questionnaires to the NRs to collect some necessary data on the occasions of NRM/GCM.

Ultimately, the WG agreed that it would discuss the further details of each Performance Indicator with a view to improving guidelines to the PAC, as well as to give recommendations to the next MTS.

6. Regional Resource Units (RRU)

BGD and MAL presented the issues to be considered on RRU, and presented possible updates to the GOR. The presentation is included as **Annex 8**.

There have been extensive discussions on several points such as funding possibilities, extension of roles and functions and the designation procedures. As RRUs had not been sufficiently nor efficiently utilized in many of the projects, it was also considered to scrap the concept of RRU itself.

After considerable discussions, it was noted that the primary objective of the RCA Agreement was to furthering mutual cooperation of the Government Parties. In this regard, it was agreed that the concept of the RRU would be useful to promote the cooperation in the RCA and should be remained, however, some kind of improvements in the nomination and designation procedures were necessary. It was also noted that a certificate for the RRU would help the organization to secure internal budget for the RCA activities, and help promoting the RCA.

Ultimately, it was agreed that in order to further utilize and benefit from RRUs, RRUs should be nominated during the project development stage by the future LCC and relevant Technical Officers.

Based on the discussions, draft updates to the GOR were suggested as included in **Annex 9**, which will be the base for the further discussion in the next MTSC WG meeting.

Recommendation 5

The MTSC WG recommends that the 43rd NRM review the draft updates to the GOR and give feedback to the MTSC WG with a view to finalizing the new RRU concept and guidelines at the 50th GCM.

7. Copyright Issues

Growing demands on online education tools induced by the COVID-19 pandemic as background, JPN presented the issues related to IAEA/RCA copyrights and suggested to include a new section to the GOR. The presentation file and suggested section to the GOR is included as **Annex 10** and **11**, respectively.

JPN introduced an example of copyright infringement which occurred with e-learning tool prepared by a medical organization in Asia, and noted the necessity to develop a guideline to prevent the same problem to happen within the RCA, as such a case could injure the value and reputation of the RCA. Since more and more project outputs are created in digital format these days, the WG generally agreed to the necessity to have some simple guidelines in the GOR. RCA-FP noted that the IAEA Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) was already starting to assess the suggested section. The WG agreed to discuss the issue in the next WG meeting after getting feedback from the IAEA-OLA.

JPN also raised some possible issues which might be faced in expanding the e-learning CAMPUS created by the RCARO, reminding the WG of the fact that its expansion had been recommended by the RCARO Standing Advisory Committee and noted by the NRs during the 49th GCM.

8. Review of Annual Work Plan

The MTSC WG reviewed the Annual Work Plan 2020 in light of discussions at the 8th Meeting with a mind to update actions and identify new actions for the Annual Work Plan 2021.

The Annual Work Plan 2021 is included as **Annex 12**.

Recommendation 6

It is recommended that the 43rd NRM endorse the MTSC WG Annual Work Plan 2021.

9. Closing

It was agreed that the next meeting of the MTSC WG would be held online in the week of July 19th, 2021, subject to possible alignment with PAC or MTS WG meeting schedule.

The Chair thanked the WG members, RCA-FP, PAC, and the RCARO for their active participation and contributions at the Meeting.