# Report of
## the 9th Meeting of the Working Group on
## RCA Medium-Term Strategy Coordination
## 21-23 July 2021 (Virtual Meeting)

## 1. Introduction

Upon approval of the 43rd RCA National Representatives Meeting (NRM) held online on 29 April 2021, the Ninth Meeting of the Working Group on the RCA Medium Term Strategy Coordination (MTSC WG) was held from 21 to 23rd July 2021 via video conferencing. The adopted Agenda of the Meeting is in **Annex 1.**

The Meeting of the MTSC WG consisted of 10 participants and observers comprising representatives from <u>AUL</u>, <u>JPN</u>, <u>MAL</u>, <u>NZE</u>, <u>PHI</u>, <u>ROK,</u> and <u>RCARO</u>. Members from <u>BGD</u> were absent. The Chair of <u>PAC</u> and <u>RCA-FP</u> also participated. The representative from <u>JPN</u> was the WG Chair. The List of Participants is in **Annex 2**.

The meeting was officially opened by the Director of TCAP, Ms. Jane Gerardo-Abaya, who affirmed the importance of the MTS Review and the WG MTSC in helping direct that process. The Director of TCAP also noted that the RCA is going to celebrate its 50th anniversary next year, and appreciated the leading role that RCA has taken in the region, as well as stressed the importance of the partnerships and collaborations, and of focusing on the socio-economic development.

The main purposes of the meeting were to:

- Review, evaluate progress of, and update the MTSC WG work plan for 2021; and

- Review and update, if necessary, the Performance Indicators for the Final MTS Review.

It was expected that the meeting would produce the following documents for consideration by the 50th RCA General Conference Meeting (GCM):

- Proposed updates to RCA documents including the GOR, if required;

- Updated MTSC WG Work Plan;

- Working Group Meeting Report.

<u>JPN</u> gave a brief update on recent developments since the 8th WG meeting, as well as outcomes of the discussions from the 43rd NRM. The presentation is included as **Annex 3**.

RCA-FP stressed that with regard to the outcome monitoring, there exist no mechanism in the TC how to translate outputs to outcomes, and how to monitor the impacts, and expressed his hope that the RCA can pioneer on outcome monitoring and how to ensure it, as well as how to mobilize the resource. The Meeting suggested that that there are three years between the final project meeting and project closure, this time period may be used for monitoring the project outcomes/impacts .

## 2.  Feedback from the PAC

The <u>PAC-Chair</u> gave a presentation on functions and activities of PAC, issues and some suggestions related to Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Medium-Term Strategy, and a few other issues relevant to the MTSC WG. Especially, two issues were raised by the PAC-Chair, namely, funding and Human Resource Development.  The presentation is included as **Annex 4.**

With regard to Mid-Term Review of the MTS the PAC-Chair suggested additional criteria based on the RCA GOR for Performance Indicators 1, 2 and 3.

With regard to the funding of the RCA, the PAC-Chair noted that the allocation from the TCF has decreased from about 3.5 million Euro to 1.7 million Euro during last 15 years and suggested the RCA to have dialogue with the Secretariat in order to enhance the RCA budget. The importance of Extra Budgetary (EB) contributions by the GPs, even a nominal contribution, as stipulated in the Article V (3) of the RCA Agreement, was also noted. PAC-Chair also stated the importance of establishing partnerships with regional development agencies, and also informed that there is a possibility of establishing collaboration with Asia Development Bank (ADB) and initial informal consultations were held with the Head of the Energy Planning Division with the participation of RCARO and RCA FP.

With regard to the Human Resource Development (HRD), PAC-Chair suggested implementation of the recommendations of the RCA WG on HRD presented to the 40th NRM, namely.

- Extending the duration of RTCs
- Assessing the knowledge of participants at the beginning and end of the RTCs
- Maintaining a repository of training materials
- Group fellowships
- Virtual meeting with new GPs to addressing their special needs
- Necessity to look for some mechanisms to prevent duplication RCA and non-RCA projects.

The usefulness of maintaining a database of experts was also noted by the WG.


## 3.  Enhancing the Effectiveness and Achievements of the RCA

The meeting also discussed possible way to make the RCA more effective and attuned with the latest developments in the peaceful applications of nuclear energy relevant to the RCA. During the course of the discussions it was noted the importance of introducing the new technologies into the RCA. In this regard, the Meeting agreed that the communication between the RCA and the Department of Nuclear Sciences and Application (NA) could help introducing new technologies developed under the IAEA into the RCA, and that it would be useful to have a reporting session of the results of relevant Coordinated Research Projects (CRPs) to the NRs.

The possibility of introducing CRPs in the RCA activity, which is also a part of the RCA Agreement, was also suggested. The RCA-FP noted that the RCA is currently under the TC Department while CRPs are organized under the NA Department, and it is a sensitive and challenging issue that could affect the organizational structure of the Secretariat, and needs much consideration and coordination.

> **Recommendation 1**
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> **The WG recommends that the 50th GCM endorse that the Secretariat consult the Department of Nuclear Science and Applications to seek a possible mechanism, such as a reporting session to the NRs, with a view to introducing results/outputs of the relevant Coordinated Research Projects into the RCA activities, and report it to the 10th MTSC-WG.**

## 4. Performance Indicators

The Meeting examined the Feedback from the Mid-Term Review by the PAC, and discussed the possible updates or modifications to the Target Criteria (TC) or Performance Indicators (PI) as well as possible recommendations for the MTS drafting WG on future Performance Indicators of the MTS 2024-2029.

Ultimately the Meeting agreed that the (PIs) which are given in the MTS 2018-2023 should stay the same in the Final Review, but some updates could be introduced to TC with a view to improving the effectiveness and value of the guidelines to be developed for the PAC's Final Review.

The details of the summary of discussions are given in 3.1-3.7.

> **Recommendation 2**
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> **The meeting recommends that the 50th GCM endorse the WG to further discuss updating some of the Target Criteria (TC) of some Performance Indicators (PIs) while sticking to the current PIs for the Final Review.**

### 4.1. Performance Indicator 1

JPN presented analysis of the PI 1.1-1.3, and suggested to collect some missing data through online questionnaires, as well as to update some guidelines for the PAC's Final Review. The presentation is included as **Annex 5**. The Meeting agreed that some of the data necessary for the Final Review could be rather easily collected through online questionnaires and to prepare a list of necessary information which could be collected in the next WG meeting.

> **Recommendation 3**
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> **The meeting recommends that the 50th GCM endorse that the online questionnaires be fully utilized to collect necessary data for the MTS Final Review.**

PHI suggested introducing a new TC under PI 1.1, such as the percentage of GPs who have nominated members in at least in one WG. Degree of the GP's utilization of Information Technology to increase general awareness of the RCA, which is currently a mandate of the RCARO, was also suggested to be added as a new TC under either PI 1.1 or PI 4. The Meeting

also noted that existence of an internal mechanism for effective operation of the RCA activity is also important and could be considered to be included as a new TC.

The number of GPs that submitted at least one pre-concept was also suggested to be included as a new TC, and the WG agreed to discuss them in more detail during the next meeting.

## 4.2. Performance Indicator 2

PHI made a presentation on the PI 2.1-2.4, and suggested to add one additional TC to PI 2.1, with a view to seeking the balance between the strategic priorities within different sectors, as well as to modify/add some TC to PI 2.3. The presentation is included as **Annex 6**.

During the course of the discussion, the PAC-Chair highlighted the difficulty in maintaining a balance between the different Thematic Areas in developing the RCA TC programme according to the current procedure.   . The PAC-Chair informed that the PAC intends to propose a new project developing procedure for the future TC cycles to overcome the shortcomings in the current procedure. In the discussion, a new TC, "Degree of the achievement of each strategic priority of each sector" was also suggested to be introduced for the Final Review.

It was noted that in the past, the Meeting had almost the same discussion and agreed that the allocation of the fund is the decision of the NRs, and the NRs decide the funding balance of each field according to their overall priorities, and it cannot be presumed that it would be best to have equal allocation of funding to all thematic sectors.

The PAC-Chair stated that the budget requirements can be known only after the project designs are finalized and arbitrarily allocating funds for different Thematic Sectors in advance could result in a mismatch between the allocated budgets and the budget requirements.

After substantive discussions, it was agreed to give more clarifications on Criterion 2, as is suggested in **Annex 7**. It was also agreed to add new TCs:

- • The fund is allocated across the needs of new GPs.
- • The achievement rate of the strategic priorities of each field.

A TC on Intellectual Property Rights was also suggested under PI 2.3, but the Meeting agreed that it is more appropriate to discuss including the criterion after guidelines of how to ensure the protection of IP rights are developed.

With regard to the TC on radiation safety protocols, the Meeting agreed that it can be included as a TC for the next MTS.

## 4.3. Performance Indicator 3.1

AUL presented the analysis of the PI 3.1, and the past RCA funding data on the amount of the Technical Cooperation Fund (TCF) allocated to the RCA, as well as its EB contributions. The presentation is included in **Annex 8**. It was noted and the Meeting agreed that forcing project designers to allocate certain activities to EB contributions could undermine the effectiveness of the projects as there was no certainty to when, or even if, EB funds would become available. As such, it was decided that a different Target Criterion was required.

To develop a new criterion, it was noted that the PI was not focused on EB contributions, so a more holistic approach that considered TCF allocations to the RCA could also be beneficial. With this in mind, the Meeting reviewed the change of the RCA budget, the amount of the TCF that went to the RCA, as well as the EB contributions, of the last twenty years, which showed

that the TCF allocation has decreased from about 6.5% to about 2%. It was noted that the data is rather disappointing for the RCA, while the RCA has improved the project designs over the years and its project designs have been evaluated by the Secretariat as "excellent".

Against this background, it was noted, and the Meeting agreed, that in order for the RCA to further tackle the funding issue, it is necessary to request the Secretariat to give a presentation to the next WG MTSC on how the TCF is being TCF is allocated, and how much of the TCF is allocated to non-Agreement projects, or to national projects in the Asia Pacific region. The Meeting prepared the list of questions (included in **Annex 9**).

It was also noted that compared to other TC departments, TCAP consists of two regions, and many countries are outside any regional agreement, which might have resulted in less and less TCF allocation to the RCA programmes. The Meeting agreed that based on the current situation, it might not be appropriate just to ask for more TCF allocations, and in this regard, it is more important to know how much does the RCA need, how much is the gap between this need and the available funding, and how this funding gap might be closed.

The importance of establishing new partnerships with non-traditional partners, as well as the EB contributions, even a small portion, was also stressed. In this regard, it was stressed that in order to attract more funding, it is useful to fully utilize the result of the socio-economic impact assessment analysis made by the TCAP. The necessity to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the RCA activities, in order that we will be able to attract more partners, are also noted.

### 4.4. Performance Indicator 3.2

MAL made a presentation on the analysis of PI 3.2. The presentation is included as **Annex 10**. It was pointed out that this PI was not evaluated in the baseline review carried out by MTSC and the mid-term review carried out by PAC because of the lack of data and it is necessary to consider how to collect sufficient data, or to update the TCs.

As for TC 2, which measures whether RTC participants are from National Project Teams (NPTs), the Meeting noted that it is not easy to control it effectively. Ultimately the Meeting agreed that it is rather time consuming to review such data, but the TC is also critical for HRD and should be kept as it is. In this regard, it was suggested and the Meeting agreed that a sampling investigation might be a possible way to obtain such a data for the Final Review, and the guidelines for the PAC be updated accordingly. Additionally, it was again suggested to recommend to NRs to only nominate NPT members, as well as the Secretariat to find some possible way to ensure this requirement. The Meeting also stressed the importance and usefulness of the Project Participation Form (PPF) as well as the importance of updating it in a timely manner. It was also suggested to include in the meeting invitation letter that the nomination of a participant outside the NPTs might be rejected. The PAC Chair stated that he needs to consult the members of the PAC before making a commitment to conduct the final review.

With regard to the TC 3, it was noted that it is rather challenging and that the Meeting might consider removing the criterion, since it is unmeasurable, although it is a very important one. An alternative idea to send the questionnaire to the NPCs to get information was suggested to learn the accomplishments obtained through the RTC. After substantial discussions, the Meeting agreed to keep this important criterion, and suggested to utilize a post-meeting participation report for analyzing the data.

As for the post-participation report/questionnaire, it was noted that the NPC of the hosting organization could be responsible for making such report, and the LCCs could be responsible for analyzing them. RCARO kindly offered to share the template for such a format, for the review and modification for the discussion in the next WG meeting.

An online questionnaire for those who attended RTCs in the last five years was also suggested as a good and user friendly tool to collect some data, and to make statistics. The topic, especially how to collect data, will be discussed in detail in the next WG meeting.

During the course of the discussions, the importance of HRD was also highlighted, and in this regard, it was also noted that the importance of keeping repository of the online and paper based training materials, in order to share the knowledge obtained through the RTCs.

**Recommendation 4**

**The WG recommends that the NRs request the Secretariat to find a solution (such as to include the condition of the nominee in the RTC prospectus) to ensure that the nominee of the RTC is a National Project Team member.**

**The meeting also recommends the NRs to inform all LCCs to submit updated PPF when the National Project Team Members are modified.**

### 4.5. Performance Indicator 3.3

ROK provided summary of the findings on PI 3.3, and the presentation is included as **Annex 11**. It was noted and the Meeting agreed that in order to analyze the TC under PI 3.3, it is necessary and important that the GPs fill out the PPF completely, which does not happen often.

The Meeting noted a need to update the concept of the Regional Resource Unit (RRU), especially the approval procedure. It was also suggested, and the Meeting agreed, that the PPF should also include the information on national physical resources at the country level, so that the LCCs and the Secretariat can collect information of the needs, and effectively nominate and designate the RRUs as necessary. In this regard, the Meeting agreed to modify the PPF format accordingly, and updated version of the PPF is included as **Annex 12** for the approval of the 50th GCM.

There also was discussion on how to utilize RRUs as efficiently as possible within the project. And suggested to provide the up-to-date RRU list on the RCA website. In this regard, a possible new TC to analyze number of RRUs which were really giving services to the other GPs were suggested. The suggestions on TCs will be discussed in the next WG in more detail.

**Recommendation 5**

**The Meeting recommends the NRs endorse the updated PPF and include it in the GOR.**

**The Meeting also recommends that the NRs endorse the MTSC WG to consider a possible way to improve the efficiency for utilizing RRUs.**

### 4.6. Performance Indicators 4

NZE provided updated analysis on PI 4. The presentation is included as **Annex 13**. It was noted that there is no information whether the new meeting report templates which have been endorsed in the 42nd NRM have been used or not. The WG member from NZE is ready to evaluate the report by NPCs of some kick-off/final meeting as soon as they are available.

In the discussion, the Meeting appreciated the initiative taken by the TCAP of the socio-economic impact assessment while stressing that this kind of assessment is costly and not suitable for routine RCA project evaluation. For such routine evaluation of project outcomes, it is necessary to regularly assess the performance of the project up to and including the two years after all the project has closed, as per the requirements in the GOR. The meeting agreed that it is also important to include not only the expected outcomes/impacts but also those which were not originally planned or intended, for the evaluation purposes.

Although it is the common understanding of the WG that these PIs are the most important among all the PIs, because of the lack of the necessary data the PAC could assess none of them. In this regard, the Meeting stressed the necessity that all the LCCs and NPCs use the most updated meeting report format as was prepared by the MTSC WG, and now contained within the GOR, to evaluate project outputs and outcomes. The Meeting also agreed that it would be quite useful that the Secretariat prepare a video/online material on outcome monitoring to be used at the first project coordination meeting, with a view to sharing the concepts and importance of outcome monitoring with the LCCs and NPCs.

Significant discussions as to how to improve the Final Review of the PIs 4 and TC have been also held, based on the difficulties MTSC encountered in the baseline review and PAC encountered in Mid-term review, while assessing this PI, and some possible new TCs and guidance were suggested in **Annex 7**, which are to be discussed in detail in the next WG meeting.

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**Recommendation 6**

**It is recommended that the IAEA Secretariat and NRs note the importance of Outcome Monitoring and instruct the LCCs to use the most updated meeting report templates contained within the GOR.**

**It is also recommended that the IAEA Secretariat prepare a video/e-learning material on the outcome monitoring and make sure to provide a session on outcome monitoring at the first Project Coordination Meetings so that all the LCCs and NPCs understand its importance and concepts, and can include sufficient information in the report.**

**It is also recommended that the RCARO provide all the necessary formats in the GOR in Microsoft Word format in the RCARO website so that they are easily available for the NRs, LCCs and NPCs.**

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### 4.7. Suggestions for new Performance Indicators

With a view to measuring the efficiency and implementation of the RCA program, an idea to create an additional Performance Indicator, namely the 5th indicator was suggested. The

possible TC are to assess whether and to what degree of completeness the NRs, LCCs, NPCs etc. are following the GOR.

Some members of the WG noted that it is important that the PIs measures that accomplishment/achievements of the RCA during the said period, and from that point of view, Target Criteria may be increased as necessary, however, after some extensive discussions, the Meeting agreed only to update the TC and to stick to the current PIs, and consider giving recommendations for new PIs to the MTS Drafting WG instead.

## 5. Regional Resource Unit (RRU)

MAL presented a review of the last discussion and updates on GOR guidance on RRUs. The presentation is included as **Annex 14**. It was reported that the WG has received only a limited number of comments, one of which was to consider issuing a certificate by the IAEA or by the RCA Chair to the designated RRUs, and that the idea should be consulted with the IAEA Secretariat.

There has been a substantive discussion on the approval process, for example who is to nominate and approve the RRUs. PAC-Chair observed , and the Meeting agreed, that the focus of the NRMs and GCMs should be policy and strategic issues rather than operational issues, and in this regard the list of RRUs should be endorsed by the RCA-FP once there is an agreement on the criteria and procedure, PAC Chair and TO, and the RCA-FP will participate in deciding on the RRUs according to the accepted criteria and the recommended list of RRUs will be presented by RCA FP to a meeting of the NRs for information.. It was also noted that there should be some flexibility in nominating additional RRUs, in case there is need for additional RRUs during the project implementation.

The Meeting prepared the final draft concept of RRU, as well as the RRU qualification summary template as included as **Annex 15**, and **15b,** for the endorsement at the 50th GCM, which is to replace the current section of GOR on RRU.

The Meeting agreed that for the better implementation of the RCA, it is appropriate to use the updated RRU concepts as soon as possible, and also suggested to start using the new RRU concept from 2022-23 Project Cycle, accordingly.

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**Recommendation 7**

**It is recommended that the NRs endorse the new procedure for identification of RRUs as well as the RRU qualification summary template, and start using it from the 2022-2023 TC Project Cycle.**

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## 6. Copyright

JPN consulted the Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) of the IAEA regarding the possible inputs to be included as GOR, and the OLA has prepared a possible new section to be included in the GOR, based on the rules of the intellectual property rights of the IAEA in Part 4, which is included as **Annex 16**.

The suggested section is to be proposed to the 50th GCM, for NRs' preliminary comments.

**Recommendation 8**

**It is recommended that the NRs review the suggested inputs to the GOR in relation to Intellectual Property rights, and give their comments to the Chair of the MTSC WG by the end of September 2021.**

## 7. Any Other Business

### 7.1. Addressing Special Needs of New GPs

NZE presented the summary of the situation surrounding new GPs, such as the assistance previously given to them, as well as the possible ways of addressing their needs. The presentation is included as **Annex 17**. It was reported that the past workshops organized for them were mainly those to give an overview of the RCA, and the last workshop of that kind held was already five years ago. In this regard, new ideas on the possible way to assist them were suggested, which includes:

- RCA Projects that exclusively involve and assist new GPs

- RCA Projects that include other GPs but specifically address priority needs of new GPs

- RCA Projects that include other GPs but incorporate activities that specifically assist new GPs

- Further clarification of IAEA and/or RCA procedures

In order to further plan the assistance to new GPs, it was also noted that it is important to get information about the situation and needs of the new GPs, through surveys, video/e-mail communication, through RCA related documents, etc.

With regard to projects that exclusively involve and assist new GPs, JPN informed that their experts are now planning to submit a pre-concept proposal in radiotherapy which especially addresses the needs of the new GPs. A concern was raised that if the project is just targeting only the needs of the GPs, it does not fit to the idea of "regional" activities, and it was explained that it is also expected that other GPs to join the project as possible donors, with a view to encourage TCDC activities, and in this regard, the concept of this project does not only fit to the idea of regional cooperation, but it can also add new values to the RCA. It was also noted that it is one of the merits of the RCA to learn from the experience of the other GPs.

The PAC Chair suggested some possible ways to give a special consideration to project proposals addressing the needs of the new GPs, and the Meeting agreed to recommend some exceptional procedures, such as to allow bypassing of the pre-concept proposal stage in the 2024-25 TC project cycle for those projects addressing the needs of new GPs.

Taking the importance of this issue into consideration, it was suggested, and the Meeting agreed, that the issue of addressing the special needs of new GPs be included as one of the tasks of the WG and its Work Plan. In order that the WG start discussing on the matter, the necessity to collect information such as their needs, information of the national project etc., were noted, and the WG agreed to prepare a discussion paper on the matter.

**Recommendation 9**

**The Meeting recommends that the 50th GCM endorse the following:**

- **MTSC WG to develop a paper with a plan for consideration how to address the special needs of the new GPs**
- **NRs to incorporate in the Project Designs, as appropriate, a portion of activities to cater for the needs of the new GPs.**

**The Meeting also recommends that NRs consider**

- **Accepting additional project proposals that especially target the needs of new GPs at the Project Concept Phase of the 2024-25 TC Cycle.**
- **In prioritizing the project, giving more weightage to those that address the needs of the new GPs.**

## 8. A Platform for the RCA online training materials

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 43rd NRM endorsed the recommendation by the Secretariat to identify the online-training materials that need to be developed. In addition, during the course of the 9th MTSC WG meeting, it was also noted that a training material repository would be also useful for developing and training national human resources.

JPN presented the issues to be considered related to the online training materials, that there exist at least three online training platforms related to the IAEA activities, including one by the RCARO, and noted the necessity to prepare a common platform for the RCA training materials to be developed by the RCA, with a view to best utilize them. The presentation is included as Annex **18**.

It was noted that although it is basically a good idea, it needs consideration and coordination on the IPR with the Secretariat with regard to management of associated with the training materials. There was also a question about the cost that could be incurred by maintaining such an online platform. After some discussion, it was suggested that the RCARO e-learning campus, which already exists, could also be extended to serve as the common platform and repository for RCA online training materials and for paper-based materials, and the Meeting agreed that it is the most feasible idea.

The necessity for the RCARO to consult the IAEA, at first, was noted to refrain from any concerns related to the IP rights, and the Secretariat expressed its willingness to give support in this regard. As for the cost and manpower that could be incurred by this proposal, the RCARO commented that the proposal is manageable.

**Recommendation 10**

**The Meeting recommends that the 50th GCM consider preparing a common platform as a repository of the RCA online training materials and utilizing the RCA e-Learning Campus as being the platform for this purpose.**

**The Meeting recommends that IPR issues be reviewed and cleared by the IAEA and RCARO for the RCA online training materials to be uploaded on the RCA e-Learning Campus.**

### 8.1. Funding from non-traditional partnership

JPN gave a presentation on possible matters related to resource mobilization, and proposed to create one additional section for EB in the GOR, especially EB from non-traditional partners. The presentation is also included in **Annex 18**.

The meeting had preliminary discussions and exchanged views on the matter. It was explained as a background that there was a query from some experts, whether they are able to receive EB from private partners when hosting RCA meetings, but there were no clear rules. It was noted that an IAEA/RCA activity belongs to those of international organization, a clear set of rules are necessary how, and to which account we are able to receive EB contributions. The importance of transparency and reporting was also noted.

It was suggested and agreed that it would be better to prepare a possible draft input to the GOR, as a base for the discussion, and in this regard, the Meeting asked the RCA-FP to share the IAEA rules with the WG. The issue will be discussed further in the next WG meeting.

### 9. Review of Annual Work Plan

The MTSC WG reviewed the Annual Work Plan 2021 in light of discussions at the 9$^{th}$ 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 19**.

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**Recommendation 11**

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

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### 10. Closing

It was agreed that the next meeting of the MTSC WG would be held either online or physically, possibly in the second half of Feb 2022, subject to possible alignment with PAC or MTS Drafting WG meeting schedules.

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