



REGIONAL COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT
INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY



REPORT OF
THE REGIONAL COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT FOR RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND
TRAINING RELATED TO NUCLEAR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, 2017 (RCA)
COMMITTEE OF RCA CHAIRS MEETING TO DISCUSS AND PROPOSE
ACTION PLANS FOR DEPLOYMENT AND EXECUTION OF THE
RCA MINISTERIAL DECLARATION OF SEPTEMBER 2022

Da Nang City, Viet Nam
27 February – 2 March 2023

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ACRONYMS

ANPC	Alternate National Project Coordinator
CRP	Cooperative Research Project
DDG-TC	Deputy Director General, Technical Cooperation Department
DIR-TCAP	Director for Asia and the Pacific Division
DIR-RCARO	Director of RCA Regional Office
EBT	Extra Budgetary
FNCA	Forum for Nuclear Cooperation in Asia
GCM	General Conference Meeting of the National RCA Representatives
GP	Government Party to the RCA Agreement
IAEA BOG	IAEA Board of Governors
LCC	Lead Country Coordinator
MTSC	Mid-Term Strategy Coordination
NPC	National Project Coordinator
NPT	National Project Team
NR	National RCA Representative(s)
NRM	National RCA Representatives Regional Meeting
PCMF	TC Programme Cycle Management Framework
PPAR	Project Progress Assessment Report
QF	Quadripartite Forum
RCA	Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
RCA GOR	RCA Guidelines and Operating Rules
RCA PAC	RCA Programme Advisory Committee
RCA SPS	RCA Scholarship Programme
RCARO	RCA Regional Office
RCARO SAC	RCARO Standing Advisory Committee
RCA-FP	RCA Focal Person
RRC	Research Review Committee
TACC	Technical Assistance and Cooperation Committee
TC	Technical Cooperation Programme
TCPC	Division of Programme Support and Coordination
WG	Working Group

Introduction

The RCA Chairs Committee Meeting to Discuss and Propose Action Plans for Deployment and Execution of the RCA Ministerial Declaration of September 2022 was held on 27 February – 02 March 2023, in Da Nang City, Viet Nam.

The Meeting was attended by two RCA National Representatives and one standing in National Representative (RCA Chairs Committee members): Viet Nam (VIE) – Current Chair, Australia (AUL) – Incoming Chair and China (CPR) – Future Chair (standing in for the NR); Representatives from the IAEA Technical Cooperation in Asia and Pacific (TCAP/IAEA), and representatives from the RCA Regional Office (RCARO).

The purpose of the Meeting, as set by the Chair and the IAEA representatives, was to discuss and propose action plans for deployment and execution of the RCA Ministerial Declaration adopted in Vienna in September 2022, and submit the proposed action plans to the 45th RCA Regional Meeting for National Representatives (NRM) for further consideration and direction.

Discussion papers were not provided to participants in advance of the meeting. Instead, the NRs were invited to the RCA Chairs meeting to hear insights and recommendations and were not expected to advance substantial decisions on items presented. The meeting proved to support fruitful discussions and share thoughts on how the NRs at the upcoming NRM could consider implementing the Ministerial Declaration of September 2022.

The majority of the Chairs Committee meeting costs were met by the IAEA RAS0086 and the host Chair.

The list of participants is given in **Annex 1**.

1. Opening Session

a. Welcome Remarks by the RCA Chair (VIE)

Mr Tran Chi Thanh, RCA Chair and NR of VIE, delivered his welcome remarks to all the participants.

b. Opening Remarks by the Representative of the IAEA

Ms Jane Gerardo-Abaya DIR-TCAP/IAEA, delivered her opening remarks. Ms Gerardo-Abaya noted that this was the first time in the history of the RCA that a Chairs Committee meeting had been held to have in-depth discussions.

c. Designation of rapporteurs and adoption of agenda

RCARO and VIE were appointed the rapporteurs of the meeting.

The proposed agenda of the meeting was adopted with no rejections (**Annex 2**).

2. Session 1: Review of the RCA Governance and Recommendation

The Meeting took note of the presentation of Mr Sinh Van Hoang, RCA FP, on the strategic issues of the current RCA Governance and recommendations as developed by the IAEA

representatives. Ms Jane Gerardo-Abaya, DIR-TCAP/IAEA also presented on the SWOT Analysis of the RCA Governance mechanism as undertaken by the IAEA representatives and the Meeting had an open discussion on this item. (**Annex 3**).

The Meeting discussed potential challenges that the RCA may be facing due to the high turnover of the NRs and noted that while appointment of NRs was a sovereign decision for GPs, the IAEA stressed that it is desirable that persons with enough relevance and duration be appointed as NRs to enhance the continuity and effective operation of the RCA. Ms Lili Xiao of CPR suggested that having a permanent team for supporting the NR could be helpful by mentioning the NLO office as a successful example. Mr Tran Ngoc Toan of VIE also suggested GPs consider appointing an NR Assistant (NRA) as another option for GPs. Noting that NR appointments are sovereign decisions made by GPs, Ms Natascha Spark of AUL suggested that the NRs may wish to consider developing mitigations/approaches to manage the impacts of the high turnover of NRs as reported by the IAEA.

The Meeting put emphasis on the role of the Committee of the RCA Chairs in effort to enhance the “leadership & ownership” of the RCA and recommended to seek for possibilities and ways to strengthen the roles and responsibilities of the Chairs Committee. Ms Natascha Spark of AUL said it was important that any new emphasis to the RCA Chairs Committee role must be inclusive, so that the needs of all GPs, including LDCs and SIDS, are included.

The Meeting also discussed the difficulties in mediating disputes that could arise within the RCA and recognized that the GOR has limited guidance on resolving disputes.

The meeting agreed that consensus-based decisions were an essential part of the RCA, and the AUL and CPR representatives affirmed its importance. The RCA Treaty itself implies consensus.

The Meeting encouraged the GPs to appoint NRs with the relevant position and duration to ensure effective fulfilment of his/her responsibilities as outlined in the GOR.

The Meeting recommended the roles and responsibilities of the Committee of the RCA Chairs could be further specified and strengthened.

The Meeting recognized that the GOR has limited guidance on resolving disputes. It was recommended that the NRs consider establishing procedures when disputes arise.

3. Session 2: Review of the R&D Cooperation under the RCA and Recommendation

Mr Micheol Park of RCARO presented on strategic directions for the R&D Cooperation, including Asia-Pacific Nuclear Think-Tank for the RCA; Building Nuclear Capacity in the Region; Supporting expansion of R&D component in the RCA; and Enhancing the Efficiency in Managing the RCARO Projects (**Annex 4**).

Mr Tran Chi Thanh, RCA Chair, provided another presentation on R&D Cooperation under the RCA (**Annex 5**) and suggested some related approaches for discussion on: Network of National Nuclear Research Institutes (NNRIs); Network of regional experts/groups on specific topics; IAEA collaborating centers and coordination with RCA in supporting member states.

Ms Jane Gerardo-Abaya, DIR-TCAP/IAEA, expressed her appreciation for the innovative approaches in addition to the current effort of RCARO for facilitating the research in the RCA.

She suggested that it would be more effective to develop a R&D concept optimized for the RCA based on the regional needs and characteristics of GPs.

The Meeting took note of the importance of establishing a network among national nuclear research institutes (NNRIs) of the GPs to facilitate R&D activities under the RCA. Strategic ways, such as hosting meetings of the Heads or high-level officers of NNRIs, were suggested as a means to facilitate information exchange and implement directives from the meetings. The Meeting requested RCARO to prepare a discussion paper for the establishment of the network of NNRIs and related activities to submit in advance of the 45th NRM.

The Meeting noted the proposal to establish a network among the National Nuclear Research Institutes (NNRIs) to promote R&D cooperation under the RCA. The Meeting requested RCARO to prepare a discussion paper including proposed action plan to submit to the 45th NRM for consideration of the NRs.

4. Session 3: Review of the Technology Transfer/Diffusion of Proven Nuclear Technologies under the RCA and Recommendation

As per the request of the IAEA, Ms Lili Xiao of CPR provided a presentation on new progress of China's Radiation Science & Technology (Annex 6) and RCA Technology Transfer (Annex 7).

The IAEA encouraged China to share lessons learned of technology development and transfer to the other RCA GPs in appropriate events.

Ms Hyunkyong Jeon of RCARO presented a report on Regional Cooperation for Technology Transfer under the RCA (Annex 8) with three key points on TCDC, RRUs, Activities for the LDCs and SIDSs under the RCA.

Mr Pill Hwan Park, Director of RCARO, pinpointed that there are a number of documents on the RCA policy matters but few on detailed profile of NS&T in the region, including national nuclear policy and programmes. He mentioned that developing a technology roadmap can contribute to dissemination of nuclear technologies through R&D, technology transfer and HRD activities.

Mr Sinh Van Hoang, RCA FP, suggested hosting an RCA forum, involving a wide range of stakeholders, as a way to facilitate technology transfer, and Mr Tran Chi Than, RCA Chair, supported his opinion by referring back to the suggested network of NNRIs, which could work as a platform to discuss the agenda for the forum.

Ms Hyunkyong Jeon of RCARO recommended engaging the private sector in diverse aspects of the RCA to promote the advantages of nuclear technologies and lead their commercialization. She introduced the workshop on accelerating the adoption of e-beam/X-ray technologies successfully held by RCARO in cooperation with the Office of Radiological Security (ORS) of the US Department of Energy/National Nuclear Security Administration last November as an example.

In result, the Meeting noted the concept of developing a mechanism to engage different stakeholders to promote the technology transfer/diffusion of proven nuclear technologies under the RCA. The RCA Chair will prepare a discussion paper on organizing such forum for consideration of the NRs at the 45th NRM.

The Meeting recommended that the NRs consider organizing a forum, engaging a widened range of stakeholders from policy makers to the end-users as a way to disseminate the advantages of and promote adoption and applications of proven nuclear technologies.

The Meeting requested that the RCA Chair prepare a discussion paper on organizing the forum to submit to the 45th NRM for consideration of the NRs.

5. Session 4: Review of Nuclear Human Resource Development under the RCA and Recommendation

Ms Natascha Spark, NR of AUL, provided a presentation on the status of and discussion points for nuclear HRD under the RCA (**Annex 9**). Ms Spark noted the on-going efforts of the WG on the RCA MTS Coordination which includes drafting terms of reference for a Human Resources Development committee, and asked the NRs to consider how the RCA Chair could support the WG Chairs.

Ms Natascha Spark of AUL reminded participants that gender parity in the field of nuclear science and technology was an important goal for the RCA, and recommended a continued and enhanced focus on this important issue through-out 2023 and beyond.

Mr. Tran Chi Thanh, RCA Chair gave a presentation on the proposed RCA Scholarship Programme (SPS) (**Annex 10**).

Regarding the way forward to the implementation of the proposed RCA SPS, the IAEA's representatives affirmed the strong support of the Agency to the programme. The Meeting noted that the RCA SPS Committee needs to provide detailed clarification to all questions and concerns from GPs and other stakeholders, such as the RCA PAC and WGs on MTS, in order to advance discussion on the proposed programme at the next 45th NRM.

Ms Natascha Spark of AUL further noted that GPs remain concerned with a decision on the SPS being made outside of the scope of the GOR, and asked that this be considered and addressed.

Mr Tran Chi Thanh, RCA Chair, agreed to hold a virtual meeting in advance of the NRM on the proposed scholarships programme, in order to address NRs and Chair PAC queries and allow space for discussion.

Mr. Ho Manh Dung of VIE, provided a brief presentation on an Example of Triangular Cooperation for a Doctorate level scholarship in nuclear science among VIE-LAO-IAEA, which was supported by the Laos national fund in the IAEA Technical Cooperation Fund (**Annex 11**).

Ms Lili Xiao of CPR provided a presentation on Atomic Energy Scholarship of China (**Annex 12**) and a brief introduction on Tsinghua University International Master's Program in Nuclear Engineering and Management (**Annex 13**).

The Meeting welcomed the ongoing efforts of the WG on the RCA MTS Coordination which includes drafting the terms of reference for a HRD committee and looks forward to further discussion at the 45th NRM.

The Meeting encouraged the Chair of the RCA SPS Committee to continue providing detailed clarification to all questions from the GPs at the 45th NRM.

6. Session 5: Review of the Partnership and Resources Mobilization under the RCA and Recommendation

Ms Natascha Spark, NR of AUL, provided a presentation on partnership and resource mobilization under the RCA (**Annex 14**).

Ms Hyunkyoun Jeon of RCARO also presented on the necessity and achievements of RCA partnerships and made strategic recommendations, including strengthening the mechanism for more structured and systematic approach; increasing funding for the RCA Programme; and pursuing dialogue with target organizations (**Annex 15**).

The Meeting noted the importance of convincing potential partners in the benefits and socio-economic impacts that cooperation for NS&T could bring to the region. With regard to the modality for establishing partnerships, Ms Hyunkyoun Jeon emphasized that the NRs, IAEA and RCARO should put collective efforts by taking roles to formalize the partnerships and make them effective.

Mr Tran Chi Thanh, RCA Chair, mentioned the emerging trend of energy transition and that it could be one possibility for the RCA to attract the fund by promoting the benefits of NS&T. Ms Natascha Spark of AUL reminded that moving further into the field of nuclear energy may require a discussion with all NRs, as GPs may have higher order priorities.

The Meeting took note of the need of establishing a structured and systemic approach for facilitating partnerships and resource mobilization. It was recommended that a specialized committee with required skillsets set up involving the RCA key stakeholders with relevant expertise, such as the RCA Chairs, PAC, IAEA and RCARO, taking the leading roles.

The Meeting encouraged to establish bilateral and triangular cooperations as well as small groups of GPs.

7. Closure

The Meeting agreed that the Chair organize a virtual meeting to share the results of the Meeting with all the NRs to assist in their understanding of the agenda and recommendations before the coming 45th NRM.

The RCA Chair delivered his closing remarks and thanked all participants for their active participation and valuable contributions and declared the meeting adjourned.