

For RCA-30 Forum

25 March 2002, Seoul, Korea

Congratulatory Statement

**By Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei
The IAEA Director General**

On the Occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the RCA for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology for Asia and the Pacific Region

I am pleased to offer the congratulations of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology for Asia and the Pacific Region (RCA). This RCA was the first of three regional agreements to be put into place under aegis of the IAEA, as such, has served as a model for the establishment of similar agreements in other regions.

Since the inception of RCA, participating Member States have progressively increased the level of regional ownership of the programme. Moreover, through such initiatives as the establishment of lead countries and regional resources units, and the development of practical rules and guidelines, they have helped endure more sustainable and higher quality projects. Consistent with the Agency's Technical Co-operation Strategy, they are also contributing to our shared objective of promoting tangible socio-economic impact in the region through the peaceful applications of nuclear technology.

Regional activities in food irradiation, for example, have helped reduce microbial contamination and post harvest losses. In the field of industrial applications, Agency supported activities to build up the capabilities of RCA Member States in non-destructive testing have improved their ability to detect flaws in materials and to support in-service inspections. In the area of human health, RCA projects have successfully promoted the use of radiation sterilized tissue grafts and the establishment of tissue banks. Indeed, sixteen operating tissue banks have produced 220,000 tissue grafts at a

value of greater than \$50 million. In the field of marine pollution, a rapid assay to determine the presence of toxins in shellfish developed in one RCA Member State is now being transferred to other countries in the region.

The establishment of an RCA Regional Office in Korea and the holding of this Scientific Forum are very appropriate ways of marking the 30th anniversary. They highlighted in a tangible way to achievements of RCA over the past three decades. The Agency hopes to continue its partnership with RCA members – particularly with the new Regional Office – providing assistance in programming future projects in keeping with the TC Strategy. I trust the opportunity of this Forum will be used to chart a future course of action for RCA, as a center of co-operative efforts to use nuclear science and technology to bring continued benefits to the entire region.