

**Welcome Remarks by Mr. Masahiko Shibayama
Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan
at the 31st Meeting of National RCA Representatives
(21 April 2009)**

Thank you, Dr. Tan.

Distinguished National RCA Representatives,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be present at the opening of the 31st Meeting of National RCA Representatives. On behalf of the host country, I would like to heartily welcome all of the National Representatives and delegates, who traveled to Japan to attend this important event.

RCA, established in 1972, is a pioneer in the field of regional cooperation for peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Thanks to the efforts and dedication of the Member States and the IAEA, RCA has been developed steadily and has become a model for other regional technical cooperation. RCA's activities, such as training courses and workshops, have contributed greatly to the development of human resources as well as the enhancement of nuclear technology capabilities in RCA Member States. Those who have participated in RCA projects are now playing substantial roles in each RCA Member State.

Seen from a financial perspective, around 80% of the RCA budget is derived from the IAEA Technical Cooperation Fund, and 20% from extra-budgetary contributions. I am happy to note that Japan has consistently been paying its full share of the Technical Cooperation Fund for around forty years, even when we have difficulties in domestic fiscal situation. I am also pleased that Japan is the top donor in terms of the extra-budgetary contributions. Recognizing the importance of RCA activities, Japan will continue such contribution.

Radiation applications have an important role to play in such fields as human health, agriculture and industry. In particular, cancer radiotherapy technology has

recently received worldwide attention, because it enables the treatment of delicate parts of body (such as the head, the neck and bones), reduces therapy durations and alleviates physical burdens on patients. If this technology becomes easily accessible to people of the RCA Member States, "human security" in our region will be promoted greatly.

Japan is one of the leading countries in the field of heavy particle cancer radiotherapy technology, and has participated in RCA's human health projects with the active involvement of the National Institute of Radiological Science (NIRS) and the Gunma University. NIRS has constructed the world's first heavy ion medical accelerator. The Gunma University is now constructing a second one, which is the most sophisticated in the world. In addition to nominating an eminent professor as Project Lead Country Coordinator of a human health project, Japan hosts training courses almost every year. At present a training course is being held at NIRS, which 19 trainees from 11 countries are attending. We are organizing a technical tour to NIRS on the margins of this Meeting, and believe that this tour will be a fruitful one, providing you an opportunity to see an RCA activity on site.

Last but not least, allow me to express my sincere appreciation to our colleagues in the IAEA Secretariat, especially to the RCA Focal Point, for making great contribution to the preparation of this Meeting. I would also like to thank the RCA Regional Office and the institutions concerned in RCA Member States for undertaking RCA activities in an earnest manner. Let me conclude my welcome remarks by wishing fruitful outcome of the Meeting as well as continued success of RCA.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.