

**Remarks by Mr Werner Burkart**  
**DDG- NA, IAEA**  
**At the 33rd RCA General Conference Meeting**  
**2nd September 2004, IAEA Headquarters**

Distinguished Chairman, Delegates

I thank you for this opportunity on the occasion of the 48<sup>th</sup> General Conference to address again this meeting of RCA. I also take this opportunity to congratulate the Member States of the region for the progress made and positive achievements during the past year in the various fields of nuclear sciences and applications. The 29 active RCA regional projects, covering the majority of the Agency's activities in nuclear sciences and technology, are a tribute to the depth and diversity of interests in the region.

I have noted in that there is an interest in human health programmes, and we have had some good results in the region, for example in the nuclear medicine project on the implementation of a "Regional screening network for neonatal hypothyroidism" So far the project has led to screening of 3.8 million babies, with over 1100 cases detected, properly treated and saved from mental retardation. One of the important outputs of the project was the preparation of Guidelines for Developing Newborn Screening Programme, which provides background information and practical implementation ideas to assist in establishing and sustaining national newborn screening programmes in developing countries. Our major efforts in human health are now being directed towards cancer.

At the RCA meeting last year I referred to the high profile media campaign mounted by the Agency that attracted much attention worldwide, raising the awareness of the impending crisis of cancer in developing countries, brought about by the anticipated increased life spans of people. We have been active since

then. The Agency has proposed, and the Board of Governors approved in June this year, a new Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy – PACT.

PACT seeks to improve cancer treatment in the context of all aspects of cancer control, including prevention, early detection, diagnosis, and palliation, as needed by each Member State. We will seek to work together with Member States and with other partners, for example with WHO, the International Agency for Cancer Research, the Pan-American Health Organization, and with the public and private sectors to address the problem. We will seek to extend collaboration with others and generate concrete proposals, for example, for the creation of Centres of Excellence in Cancer Therapy. To succeed, we need to raise public awareness, and to mobilize resources, especially from non-traditional sources, such as foundations and charities. Members of RCA can play a key role in these important tasks for your region.

The Technical Cooperation Department and the department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications are working closely together on PACT. Our existing regular budget and Technical Cooperation programmes will continue. The new approach will be complementary to them and will enhance their value to Member States. We are at an early stage, and we have been asked to report progress to the Board. RCA will also be informed.

In respect of our work in Major Programme 2, I reported to RCA last year that Member States had agreed the budget increases to maintain our levels of programme delivery. Since then we have been developing our programmes for 2006 – 2007. Increasing recognition is given to the inter-dependence of the constituent programmes and sub-programmes, and the need to take holistic approaches where relevant. For example, agriculture is a major user of water resources; radiopharmaceuticals development and production relies closely on inputs from medical end-users; management of the marine and terrestrial environmental and aquatic environments are related to pollution control and to impacts on coastal zone issues, and understanding of climate change is linked to better understanding of the

water cycle. Opportunities are being taken to develop cross-cutting projects and research in these and other areas as appropriate.

Cooperation with United Nations organizations, particularly FAO, IOC (UNESCO), UNEP, WHO and WMO, will continue and be strengthened as opportunities allow, and I am sure, for the benefit of the region.

We will, I believe, in the new programmes, be able to better respond to your priorities, as you would wish us to do in the coming biennium.

With these few remarks, Chairman, I wish the meeting every success.