

**Introduction to RCA**  
**Speech by Dr Prinath Dias at the Opening of**  
**The 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of National RCA Representatives**

Mr. Khurshid Kasuri, Minister for Foreign Affairs,  
Dr. Masud Ahmed, Member Physical Sciences, Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission,  
Dr. Munim Awais, National RCA Representative for Pakistan,  
Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates and invitees  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to say a few words about the RCA Programme on this occasion and I thank the organizers of this event for giving me the opportunity to do so. I also thank the host country Pakistan for agreeing to host this meeting and for the excellent arrangement made.

The Regional Cooperative Agreement, established in 1972, is an inter-Governmental agreement among seventeen countries in the Asia and Pacific Region, with the objective of promoting and coordinating cooperative research, development and training in nuclear science and technology in cooperation with each other and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Australia, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam are signatories to the agreement. IAEA is not a party to the agreement, but functions as the Secretariat of the programme, provides assistance for implementation of the RCA projects under its Technical Cooperation Programme, and provides technical support for the programme through the technical departments of the IAEA

The vision of the RCA is to become a respected regional resource community in nuclear science and technology competent and cost effective in providing high impact solutions on a sustainable basis to socio-economic problems for identified end users within the region and Member States.

Implementation of the RCA activities in each Member State is coordinated by a National Representative who meets twice a year, once in March/April in one of the Member States and once in September in Vienna during the General Conference of the IAEA, to decide on the policy and implementation issues of the programme. The projects implemented by each country are coordinated by a National Coordinator. The National Coordinators of each project meet once a year to discuss the progress of the projects and to decide on the future activities. RCA has also appointed Lead Country Coordinators for each project and for each thematic area to provide leadership in the implementation of the projects.

All activities such as selection of projects for implementation, implementation of the selected projects, monitoring the progress of the projects, recording and publicizing the results are governed by Guidelines and Operating Rules of the RCA adopted by the Member States. The Member States have the ownership of the programme and decide on the projects to be implemented based on the needs of the Member States. The Member States also have established Regional Resource Units to provide scientific services, training facilities, and experts to support the programme. A total of 34 such Regional Resource Units have been established.

RCA is currently engaged in implementing 26 projects, in areas of agriculture, human health, industry, environmental protection, research reactor utilization, energy planning and radiation protection. It has an annual budget of approximately 2.5 million US\$. Approximately 50 regional events such as training courses, workshops and meetings are held annually in connection with the projects implemented. Fellowship training and

services of experts are also provided to assist the Member States to implement the projects they have undertaken.

RCA projects are aimed at contributing to solving development problems faced by the Member States that can be better addressed through regional cooperation, through application of nuclear science and technology. Nuclear technology is a very versatile technology with applications in a large number of areas, in addition to its use in generation of electrical energy.

Following are a few examples of contributions the RCA has made in the past to assist the Member States to address development issues. In the industrial sector, the Member States have acquired the capability of using a technology known as non-destructive testing (NDT), which is applied to detect flaws in machinery and metallic structures. Identification of the potential problem by applying this technology makes it possible to take measures in advance to prevent major failures resulting in improving industrial productivity and safety.

Through a project undertaken on applying radiation technology to process natural polymers, it has been possible to develop new products such as hydrogels for treating patients suffering from burns and skin diseases and for prevention of bed sores. Several member states have been able to acquire the technology of providing trouble shooting services to the petroleum industry as a result of an RCA project. A number of national nuclear institutes have been awarded contracts by the petroleum industry to obtain these services.

In the agricultural sector, the projects undertaken as resulted in breeding crops high in yield and with higher resistance to diseases using a technique known as radiation induced mutation breeding. Studies conducted on soil erosion have resulted in new agronomic practices for reducing soil erosion and siltation. Farmers in the Member States have been

able to improve animal productivity by using new food supplements developed as a result of a RCA project and studies conducted on reproduction. RCA has provided support for Member States to use Food Irradiation as a means of improving food safety.

An RCA project on Monitoring Air-Pollution has made it possible for the Member States to acquire the capability of measuring toxic materials in air-particulates using nuclear techniques and to identify the sources of pollution. The results of this study have made it possible for the regulatory agencies in a number of countries to take measures to combat air-pollution. RCA projects implemented in the Human Health Sector has made it possible for the member States to improve the capability of using radiotherapy for treatment of cancer patients and applying advanced nuclear medical techniques for diagnosis of diseases.

RCA also has made it possible for the Member States to develop the capability of using advanced software packages for cost comparisons of different options for electrical power generation and for the evaluation of the environmental effects of the different options. A number of RCA Member States are routinely using this software in the national energy planning studies. The above are a few examples of the contributions the RCA has made to development of the East Asia and Pacific Region.

RCA has the potential to make a larger contribution to regional development, through better alignment of its programme with regional development priorities and through establishment of stringer partnerships with development agencies. This is one of the issues that would be discussed at the Meeting of the RCA national Representatives.

Thank you for your attention.