

INAUGURAL CEREMONY
26th Meeting of National RCA Representatives
12 April, 2004

Welcome Address by Dr. Masud Ahmad, Member (Physical Sciences)
Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission

The Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri,
Dr. Peter Salema,
Dr. Prinath DIAS,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all to this inaugural function of the 26th Meeting of the National Representatives of RCA Member States. Mr. Minister, We feel honored, that you have spared sometime from your pressing engagements to inaugurate this meeting. We also feel privileged that Mr. Peter Salema, Director, Department of Technical Cooperation, IAEA and Dr. Prinath Dias, RCA Coordinator are participating in this meeting, and I extend a most cordial welcome to them.

We feel great pride to host this meeting where delegates from seventeen countries are representing the region. The interest and enthusiasm of the participants augurs well for the future of the Agreement, whose success so far has convincingly demonstrated that cooperation among regional countries is a useful and practical proposition.

The diverse, multidisciplinary and universal nature of nuclear science and technology requires that national efforts be complemented by cooperation at regional and International level. Pakistan has accordingly been a consistent supporter and a strong exponent of an expanded and more effective role of the IAEA, particularly in respect of the socio-economic development of a country through peaceful applications of nuclear energy. Pakistan has always maintained that key ingredients of IAEA's mandate is promotion of nuclear technology, safety and safeguards. Since the past few years, there is growing feeling amongst the developing countries that IAEA's regulatory role is gradually eclipsing its promotional functions. Meetings like this remind us that it is the primary responsibility of the Agency, as well as moral obligation of globally and regionally advanced countries, to introduce and promote the use of atomic energy in the socio economic development of the Third World. Prosperity is the surest guarantee for universal peace and harmony.

Here I cannot resist quoting from Human Development Report which beautifully describes what people expected from emerging technologies and what actually they were destined for. I quote "People all over the world had high hopes that new and sophisticated technologies will lead to healthier lives, greater social freedom, increased knowledge and more productive livelihood". But what actually happened was that the strong feelings persist that though human conditions have improved more in the past century than in the rest of history and the global wealth, global connections and technological capabilities have never been greater, but the

distribution of these global gains is extraordinarily unequal. People also believe that new technologies have widened and not narrowed the gap between rich and poor, advantaged and disadvantaged". Unquote.

In order to remove the widening gap between developing and the developed world, we need a concerted, cooperative effort at the international level which can direct their energy and expertise to help solve problems of the developing countries. There are a number of international organizations all over the world, formed for specific technological objectives and are willing to help solve some of the problems of the developing world. For, instance, Pakistan is a member of such international organizations like WANO, COG, WNU, WNA, Canadian Nuclear Society, American Nuclear Society, CERN, and Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics. These organizations deal with wide ranging issues like nuclear plant operation to basic sciences. But the problems facing the developing countries are of much graver nature and require new and bold initiatives by organizations like IAEA.

Coming back to RCA, historically the year 1972 was significant both for the RCA and for us in the PAEC. It was in that year, that our nuclear power programme started with the completion of a 137 MW power reactor at Karachi. The same year the RCA came into force. Pakistan became a party to it in September 1974. It is heartening to note that the activities of the RCA have significantly increased over the years. Initially these were oriented to agricultural subjects and then gradually expanded to include health, radiation protection, energy, research reactor, industry and environment. We have been taking keen interest in all these activities and Pakistan is now actively participating in almost all the RCA regional cooperative projects. We believe that the promotion of research and development work in the nuclear fields should continue through collaboration and cooperation between countries of the region.

Sir, at a global level, peace, economic growth and technology are inextricably related. Economic growth is critically dependent on the availability of cheap and available energy sources. According to IAEA's own estimates, global electricity demand is expected to triple, in the next fifty years which will also coincide with doubling of the world population. This demand obviously cannot be fulfilled by hydro or fossil fuel resources alone. One of the sustainable solution is nuclear power. In this scenario, opposition to nuclear power, despite its environmental friendly nature is not understandable at all. On the other hand it is our considered view that nuclear power plants under the control of IAEA Safeguards provide the necessary assurances to the world community that these facilities are not used for non-peaceful purposes. The IAEA Safeguards have worked reliably and earned the confidence and respect of the international community. They provide the framework for nuclear trade and cooperation which will ensure that atomic energy is used for peaceful purposes only. The best approach, therefore, to check the undesirable nuclear proliferation is to extend an unhindered use of this technology for peaceful purposes under the vigilance of IAEA.

Pakistan itself provides an interesting example of international embargoes, when it was forced into a difficult position regarding KANUPP due to the unilateral cancellation of our cooperative agreement by the supplier state. In spite of this

arbitrary cut off, we have continued to operate the Karachi Nuclear Power Plant through indigenous efforts. Our second plant at Chashma is working extremely satisfactorily and we are planning to set up more nuclear power plants to meet our energy needs in future.

Nuclear technology has also brought revolution in agriculture and health sector. In agriculture, nuclear techniques have led to more productive crop varieties through plant breeders and in the health sector, standard of health care through nuclear medicine and radiation techniques has been considerably increased. As far as PAEC is concerned, research and development work in agriculture, using nuclear and other techniques, is carried out at three PAEC Agricultural Centres located in different ecological zones at Faisalabad, Tandojam and Peshawar. The research programme includes: evolving new varieties of food and cash crops, control of soil salinity, preservation of food products by irradiation, and biotechnological processes. With the application of nuclear techniques, our research efforts have culminated in resulting in more than Rs. 6 billion additional annual income to the farmers of the country. PAEC has developed technology for the reclamation of salt-affected lands and has identified crops/shrubs which can be grown on these lands on -as-it-is basis. We are transferring this technology under IAEA auspices to 10 IAEA Members States.

PAEC has set up thirteen nuclear medical Centres for diagnostic and treatment of cancer related diseases employing nuclear medicine and radiotherapy techniques. We are now rendering cancer treatment facilities to over 300,000 patients annually throughout the country with special emphasis now to cater the health needs of remote areas.

The use of radiation and radioisotope techniques in industry was also pioneered by the Commission in the country and has generated considerable interest both in the public and private sectors. We are offering training and certification courses in non-destructive testing and industrial radiography from which a large number of quality control inspectors from industry and R&D organizations are benefiting. Our support to the industry in quality assurance and quality control technology, whose testing tools borrowed from nuclear technology, have bolstered efforts of local manufacturers to face the oncoming WTO challenges.

Sir, Pakistan is ready to share its experience in the diverse peaceful uses of atomic energy with other developing countries to help them in socio economic development through greater South-South cooperation.

Please allow me to say a few words about RCA and the present meeting. Pakistan has been participating in most of the RCA cooperative projects. Together with the distinguished delegates from Member States who are present here, we shall explore newer areas of mutual interest. It is our hope that the meeting would result in an in-depth review of the current projects and that we shall be able to formulate realistic recommendations for consideration of General Conference of RCA Member States due in September in Vienna.

In conclusion, I would once again thank you. Sir, and everyone who is participating in this 26th RCA National Representatives meeting, specially our guests from abroad whom I wish a very pleasant stay in Pakistan.

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