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Statements of the Director General

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Introductory Statement to the Technical Assistance and Cooperation Committee of the Board of Governors

by IAEA Director General Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei

The Agency's technical cooperation (TC) programme continues to focus on putting advanced science to work to meet the economic and social needs of developing countries. Today I will briefly discuss TC programme planning and management, including the recent change initiative, highlight a number of key activities, and review the current status of TC funding.

Programme Planning

The Secretariat continues to work on measures to ensure that TC projects achieve meaningful and sustained benefits for Member States. Programme planning in individual States seeks to ensure, through application of the "central criterion", that the projects selected have strong support from the recipient government.

The proposed TC programme for 2005–2006 was prepared on the basis of Member State project requests, pre-project missions, coordination meetings, a rigorous project appraisal process involving Agency technical experts, and planning tools such as the Country Programme Framework (CPF).

The CPF process uses direct dialogue and engagement with central authorities in Member States in the planning of national TC strategies. These CPF discussions focus on moving away from a collection of small, unconnected projects, and trying instead to achieve agreement on a few specific problems, in areas of national priority, in which nuclear technology transfer can produce a significant impact. In recent months, we have drafted new guidelines for CPF development based on lessons learned and best practices from several years of experience. CPFs are being applied in 93 countries, with an additional 8 under development.

Thematic plans — which use the results of field experience to prioritize technical areas in which a particular nuclear technology could have a significant impact — are also a key tool for effective programme planning. We now have 14 thematic plans in place to help guide the preparation of country programmes, on issues ranging from food irradiation to the use of isotopic techniques in the control of communicable diseases.

Programme Evaluation and Management

In recent years, a number of TC programme reviews have been undertaken — by both internal and external bodies — including a review by the Agency's Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on which I reported to you in June.

Based on the recommendations of these reviews, and taking into account the considerable degree to which the TC programme has grown in terms of size, complexity and the number of participating Member States in recent years, the TC Department is embarking upon a change initiative to help manage the programme more effectively. A primary objective is to improve processes and procedures in order to reduce the workload of staff in the Department and to ensure the delivery of a quality programme to Member States.

The Department has developed a one-year plan as a framework for this change initiative. Focus areas include: the organization of TC management; a review of the TC programme cycle and related information technology systems; the promotion of TCDC - technical cooperation among developing countries; and the simplification and standardization of selected processes.

TC evaluation activities in 2004 focused on three areas: model projects for upgrading radiation protection infrastructure; tissue banking; and regional cooperative agreements. As described in the report before you, a plan is in place for implementing the recommendations on model projects, and efforts are continuing to determine how best to proceed with the recommendations in the other two areas.

Areas of Activity

The TC programme remains a principal mechanism for expanding the contribution that nuclear technologies make to development. Let me briefly mention a few areas in which the Agency's efforts are making a difference.

Food and Agriculture

In the area of food and agriculture, concerns about food safety, environmental pollution, undesirable residues and the preservation of biodiversity are driving global demand for new strategies to combat various species of fruit flies, using technologies that do not depend on insecticides. In Thailand, for example, we successfully initiated a pilot project to control the Oriental fruit fly and the Guava fruit fly by integrating the sterile insect technique (SIT) with other monitoring and control methods in a mango production area in Ratchaburi Province. Following that success, Government efforts are under way to promote the use of SIT among mango growers in other regions.

Cancer Radiotherapy and PACT

In the area of medical applications the Agency continues to support many cancer radiotherapy facilities in every region. In the United Republic of Tanzania, for example, we have been working with the Ocean Road Cancer Institute (ORCI) - the only cancer therapy facility in the country - to help improve the accuracy of radiotherapy planning and treatment. The Tanzanian Government has made \$1 million available for the further development of this facility, in large part as extrabudgetary resources to share the cost of the TC project.

To supplement the Agency's limited resources in the area of radiotherapy with additional funding from both governmental and non-governmental donors, we are continuing to give priority to our Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT), endorsed by the Board in June. We have begun receiving offers of seed money and pledges of equipment.

Positive Influence of Model Projects on Safety and Security of Nuclear Activities

In the area of safety the model projects on radiation protection have played a major role in Agency efforts to facilitate Member State compliance with relevant IAEA safety standards. They have been instrumental in: harmonizing regulatory mechanisms relevant to the safety and security of radiation sources; constructing more accurate source inventories, thereby reducing the risk of such sources being used for malevolent purposes; establishing exposure control systems for nuclear medicine, occupational workers and the public; and enhancing national capabilities for dealing with radiological emergencies.

For the 2005–2006 TC cycle, we have encouraged Member States still in need of upgrades to their national radiation protection infrastructure to present requests for Agency assistance. This is reflected in the proposed programme.

Nuclear Security

During the period 2003–2004, the Secretariat delivered 20 nuclear security projects through TC, focusing on training activities in illicit trafficking, border control and physical protection of nuclear material and facilities. I am pleased to report that, for the 2005–2006 TC cycle, all TC nuclear security projects will be funded under footnote a/, supported exclusively by the Nuclear Security Fund and other extrabudgetary resources.

Programme Funding

The assurance of reliable funding is the lifeline of the TC programme, and continues to be a high priority for the Agency. The rate of attainment mechanism has been used in recent years as a means of measuring progress among Member States in meeting their target share of contributions to the TCF. The September 2004 Board agreed to maintain the rate of attainment at 90% until that rate was met. The rate of attainment for 2003 was 87% and, to date, payment to the TCF for 2004 has totalled 84% of the target. It is clear that if we are to reach 90% of the target, all Member States must take seriously their shared responsibility for the TC programme.

In preparing the 2005–2006 TC programme, one of the last steps for the Agency is to take "due account" of the extent to which Member States have fulfilled their TCF obligations. Due account is applied when allocating resources for TC projects and when procuring equipment and expert services for TC activities. For the 2005–2006 programme, Member States that had paid less than 50% of their TCF obligations were considered "poor contributors"; and funding for TC activities in these Member States was reduced. "Excellent contributors", namely those Member States paying at least 90% of their TCF obligations, saw their TC activities increased. We also intend to apply due account with regard to both donors and recipients in procuring equipment and expert services, working in accordance with established financial regulations and rules.

The Board has approved the replacement of assessed programme costs by national participation costs (NPCs). The Secretariat has explained the implementation of NPCs to Member States, and we have been encouraged by the response received thus far. We will prepare an evaluation of the NPC mechanism for the June 2006 Board meeting.

Conclusion

The Agency's technical cooperation programme is, at its essence, a network of partnerships — primarily partnerships between the Agency and its Member States, but also including partners from other government institutions, relevant United Nations system agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private sector donors. Working together, we have created an important tool for transferring nuclear science and technology to the benefit of developing countries. I look forward to the continuation and further development of these partnerships, and to extending the resulting benefits to our developing Member States.

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