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STRENGTHENING OF THE AGENCY'S TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION ACTIVITIES

Report by the Director General to the Board of Governors and to the General Conference

Background

1. In resolution GC(39)/RES/14, the General Conference last year stressed the need, in conformity with the Statute, to strengthen technical co-operation activities and also their effectiveness and efficiency and requested the Director General "to pursue, in consultation with Member States, efforts to strengthen the technical co-operation activities of the Agency through the development of effective programmes aimed at improving the scientific and technological capabilities of developing countries, account being taken of the infrastructure and the level of technology of the countries concerned, in the fields of peaceful applications of nuclear energy, including both the applications of nuclear methods and techniques and the production of electricity, and achieving sustainable development". It further requested the Director General to continue to take follow-up actions on initiatives mentioned in his report to continue to take account of the view of the General Conference on this question when requesting Member States to pledge their respective shares of the Technical Co-operation Fund target and to make timely payments to the Fund.

2. In addition, the General Conference requested the Director General to report to the Board of Governors periodically and to the General Conference at its fortieth regular session under an agenda item entitled "Strengthening of the Agency's technical co-operation activities". The Director General reported to the Technical Assistance and Co-operation Committee in November 1995 and to the Board of Governors in December 1995 on recent developments and matters of significance to the Technical Co-operation Programme.

3. The present document provides a comprehensive update on ongoing and new initiatives for the consideration both of the Board of Governors and of the General Conference.

I. Follow-up actions on initiatives presented to the General Conference's 1995 session

4. The most significant developments since the 1995 General Conference relate to:

- radiation protection and radioactive waste safety[1/]
- the Model Project Concept
- Country Programme Frameworks[1/]
- Sectoral/thematic planning
- Special Training Programme

• Radiation protection and radioactive waste safety[2/]

5. Based on steps already initiated in the context of the Model Project for upgrading Radiation and Waste Safety Infrastructure in those Member States where the Basic Safety Standards (BSS) have not yet been met, a detailed in-house review of the latest situation was made to identify additional Member States for technical support under the project. A check list of essential requirements for safety infrastructure was prepared. Components of the check list include:

- Legislation
- Regulations
- Regulatory Authority
- Notification, registration and licensing system
- Inspection system

1/ The actions relating to radiation protection and radioactive waste safety and to Country Programme Frameworks derive from recommendations made at the Third Technical Co-operation Policy Review Seminar.

2/ Technical assistance in the fields of radiation protection and radioactive waste safety is intended especially to establish or strengthen legal frameworks, regulatory bodies and the technical and infrastructural capabilities required for the enforcement of radiation safety and radioactive waste safety standards.

- Inventory of radiation sources in the country
- Occupational exposure control (radiation protection service and personal dosimetry service)
- Medical exposure control
- Environmental public exposure control
- Waste safety
- Emergency response
- Manpower requirements

6. This list was used as a basis to formulate Action Plans for 53 Member States including five countries already participating in the Model Project. The Agency sent letters to the relevant Member States in January 1996 informing them of these developments and inviting their participation in the Model Project.

7. Four Regional Experts, designated specifically to carry out activities under the Model Project, have taken up their assignments and are currently in the process of finalizing national Action Plans in consultation with the 53 Member States. Due consideration is being given to the prevailing conditions in Member States in order to determine a realistic pace of implementing various activities on the check list. It is expected that by the middle of 1996 most of the Action Plans would have been discussed and agreed with the Member States concerned.

8. Most of the activities being undertaken in support of radiation and waste safety infrastructure through other regional arrangements will be consolidated as the implementation under the Model Project gains momentum. Some national projects will address new specific infrastructure requirements, depending on prevailing circumstances in the countries. Due care will be taken to avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts. Additional details on the Model Project for radiation and waste safety Infrastructure can be obtained from the section on Interregional activities contained in the Technical Co-operation Report for 1995, GOV/2858.

- **The Model Project concept**

9. Progress in 1995 in implementing Model Projects was presented in a Report at the November 1995 TACC meeting. The preliminary results show that Model and Model-like Projects (which have features similar to Model Projects, particularly a socio-economic impact on end-users) are having the desired effect of reaching the target end-users. The Model Project in Hungary is influencing operational safety and reliability of all WWER plants. In

Mongolia, a new teletherapy machine has treated 2,500 cancer patients at the Oncology Research Centre in Ulan Bator since August 1995, following the successful installation of the new system and training of radiotherapists and medical physicists. The Model Project in Poland to demonstrate electron beam dry scrubbing (EBDS) technology to remove pollutants from the flue gases of a coal-fired power plant and recycle the by-product to fertilize crops, has encouraged six other countries to investigate electron beam technology, while two additional countries are preparing EBDS feasibility studies. The growing success of Model Projects reflects solid progress in elaborating the Partners in Development concept.

10. Another clear example of the influence of Model Projects, and the result of upstream work during the year, is the growing interest in many Member States to formulate new project requests to meet the requirements set for Model Projects. These requests are currently undergoing appraisal and, where required, further clarifications or refinements are being made in consultation with the country counterparts. Several on-going projects are achieving quality level of Model Projects, inter alia, through achieving significant impact and may be upgraded to Model Projects status.

11. The Agency, and some counterpart organizations have gained valuable experience in designing and managing technical cooperation projects that transfer the benefits of nuclear technology to end users for social and economic gain. Some of the lessons relate to various aspects of the project cycle; identification, formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Other lessons relate to programme planning and co-ordination of Agency activities with other technical and developmental organizations. The experience of other specialized UN Agencies shows that clear programmatic objectives and sound design criteria can be the basis for formal co-financing arrangements with major donors. As reflected in GOV/INF/779 on the lessons learned to date from Model Projects, experience also shows that supplemental financing can be secured if projects are of sufficient quality and if beneficiary countries are also prepared to take supportive action. It is envisaged that as additional Model Projects are approved, the likelihood that additional resources from traditional and new sources of funding will be identified for technical co-operation activities, will also improve.

- **Country Programme Frameworks**

12. During the year, increased emphasis was placed on "upstream work" to prepare the 1997-1998 Biennial Programme. Upstream work refers to programme planning done in consultation with counterpart institutions to establish priorities, capabilities and opportunities for efficient and effective technical co-operation. Country Programme Frameworks (CPFs) were the central upstream activity to focus future technical cooperation activities on national

priorities and identify specific follow-up actions by the Agency and Member States. CPFs were recommended by the 1994 Technical Co-operation Policy Review Seminar, as a means to ensure that the Agency's technical co-operation activities are directly linked to Member States' national development goals and priorities and thereby to enhance the effectiveness of the Agency's activities. The introduction of CPFs represented a transition to a more proactive planning process aimed at strengthening the Agency's effectiveness.

13. During 1995, a total of 15 CPF related missions were conducted, and 28 Country Programme Frameworks were drafted or completed. This timely result was achieved by according high priority internally to the work, and by the strong support received from the Member States involved.

14. Several CPFs have already resulted in significant improvements in programme focus and priority. For example, in Zimbabwe, five priority activities, some linked to ongoing successful Model Projects in other countries, were identified. In the Philippines, the CPF identified specific projects within sectors of high priority to the government, including preventive nephrology to detect kidney disorders in children.

15. Although the Agency had made a good start and gained a mix of experience, it was considered important to assess these initial results of the CPF through an evaluation by external and internal experts. The evaluation was completed in March 1996 and the results will be reported to the Board after internal review .

However, several lessons appear clear at this stage:

- The process of country planning for technical co-operation - involving an analysis of needs, capabilities and expertise - is complex and places great demand on time and human resources.

- The CPF activity should be understood as a process rather than a single document or mission.

- Upstream work throughout 1995 succeeded in identifying a large number of Model Project opportunities. However the completed CPFs do not entirely reflect this development. To better identify opportunities, the CPF should integrate all the upstream work performed and past experience gained.

- Successful CPFs produce specific outputs, such as action plans leading to project submissions.

16. The lessons learned from the year's experience and the evaluation will guide future CPF activities. A close focus will be kept on CPF quality, and practical plans to conduct CPF will be established, taking into account resource constraints, to avoid a mechanistic approach and unrealistic timeframes.

- **Sectoral/thematic planning**

17. The sectoral or thematic programming approach for technical co-operation activities is still being developed and more work is required before it can be fully put to use. Thematic planning for technical co-operation is intended to be a either global or regional process for assessing technical requirements for the application of selected nuclear techniques that can be effectively and efficiently absorbed by recipient Member States. The process will establish thematic programme objectives with enhanced co-ordination within the Agency and with other agencies and donors. It therefore also offers the prospect of attracting new funding sources.

18. At the present time effort is being concentrated on developing thematic planning in the areas of radiation and waste safety and human health (RIA). The TC Department and the Nuclear Safety Division joined to investigate radiation and waste safety infrastructures for all TC recipients and to prepare Country Profiles that assess compliance with the BSS. This established a sectoral objective to upgrade safety infrastructure in 53 countries not yet meeting the BSS. This objective formed the basis for an action plan that included country specific tasks, schedules and responsibilities for national authorities. Thematic planning for a specific sector is also being elaborated in the radioimmunoassay programme area. Significant results have already been achieved in most of the countries evaluated in 1995 due to well-defined objectives, sound project design and effective integration of the various TC components -- training, experts and equipment. Thematic planning for other selected areas will be further developed in conjunction with the second generation of Country Programme Frameworks, and the next project planning cycle.

II. Improving scientific and technological capabilities

19. The TC Programme continues to help build scientific and technological capabilities in Member States as an important step in consolidating the base for the Partner in Development initiatives. Beginning in 1995, lengthy consultation were initiated with Member

States to identify capacity and infrastructure requirements necessary for meeting their developmental objectives. A number of significant activities in the five regions focused on capacity building.

20. In the field of energy and electricity, planning activities were undertaken to introduce or upgrade capabilities in Member States with particular emphasis on the use of IAEA planning methodologies. Exchange of information and experience with the Member States resulted in enhancements to the planning models MAED and WASP. The capabilities generated through this programme would be used by Member States in decision making concerning future national energy and electricity systems and the optimal role of nuclear energy for power generation.

21. Member States with strong interest in following the option of nuclear power plants were provided relevant technical advice and specific training on various aspects, from siting to nuclear safety infrastructure. For those already operating nuclear power plants, the issues concerning operational safety were addressed in a substantial manner, particularly in Europe, where the safety issues relating to the WWERs and RBMKs were the main concern. An extensive programme of assistance was initiated in 1995 to address the major backfitting activities as well as strengthening the regulatory bodies in the region.

22. In Asia and the Pacific, the Agency has been requested to support NPP feasibility studies in Thailand, Indonesia and Viet Nam. The Agency is also supporting NPP preparations for Indonesia, Public Acceptance and Site Selection for Thailand and ENPEP for Viet Nam.

23. The field of nuclear medicine received considerable support for upgradation of manpower and facilities. The range of activities covered the introduction of basic radioimmunoassay (RIA) kits for diagnostics, upgradation of nuclear medicine equipment, training for the maintenance use and QC of equipment, and QA in all aspects of the application of nuclear medicine. In addition, production, use and quality control of radioisotopes and radiopharmaceuticals received support in many Member States.

24. To improve the capability of Member States in Latin America radiotherapy, radiodiagnostic procedures and nuclear medicine, three national projects on medical physics education and training (ARG/6/007, COL/6/008 and Model Project MEX/6/005) have been initiated. Through these projects, national training programmes in medical physics are being established that will contribute to address the general shortage of specialists in the region.

25. A regional model project to improve the utility of the existing nuclear medicine equipment in Latin America started in 1995. Through this project the technology and the know-how for the upgrading of old and obsolete gamma-cameras is being transferred to 15 countries in the region. Up to now, five gamma-cameras have been upgraded and 86 more will be upgraded by the end of the project.

26. Through regional and national projects, special emphasis continued to be placed in building up capabilities for the optimal use of water and fertilizers for improved crop production. Such activities were combined in some Member States with the development of special varieties to suit arid and semi-arid conditions through radiation induced mutations.

27. In West Asia a regional workshop, consisting of technical lectures and field experiments, was held on the use of nuclear techniques in improving fertigation and soil water balance with an emphasis on fields or protected crops grown under drip irrigation. Specific needs of individual Member States were addressed through expert missions. The results of on-going field studies in participating countries will be carefully analyzed in order to plan further actions.

28. Issues concerning crop protection and the use and fate of pesticides in the environment were addressed by many Member States with technical support from the Agency. Assessment and better management of underground and surface water resources were supported through regional and national projects.

29. A regional Model Project on Water Resources for Africa is aimed at consolidating the capabilities of four participating Member States to use isotope techniques to investigate the water quality and rates of replenishment in various aquifer systems.

30. Moreover, to strengthen local capabilities and to ensure sustainability of activities in the diverse fields of nuclear applications, a special emphasis was placed on human resource development through the provisions of fellowships and the organization of training courses. Thus, about 280 African scientists and technicians received training in 1995 for a total duration of more than 900 man-months.

- **The Special Training Programme**

31. In recognizing the special needs of the Least Developed Countries (LDC) the Agency has initiated a scheme to facilitate the establishment of basic national infrastructures which would permit the adoption of relevant nuclear applications. Under a special training

programme initiated in 1994 LDCs may request assistance in training a limited number of "key"staff. The intention is that the trainees then train others in the basic sciences - i.e. nuclear physics, radiochemistry, etc., at their home institutes.

32. Following selection and nomination, the IAEA's special training programme allows qualified applicants the opportunity to undertake either graduate courses or to perform research in areas not available in their home country. Normally the Agency encourages shorter on-the-job training related to applied science activities, rather than training towards advanced degrees. This approach provides the flexibility to split (hence the name of "sandwich" programme) the training during several years between an "advanced" country and their own home institution where an advanced degree or certification may not be available. To-date, the Agency has selected some 12 candidates for this training from Ethiopia, Namibia, Senegal, Sudan and Zaire. Currently institutes in the Nordic countries are participating in the programme under the coordination of the International Science Programme (ISP) of the Uppsala University, Sweden, as well as in the International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP), Italy.

33. Another new development related to special training (see Resolution GC(XXXVI)/584) is the introduction of educational courses in radiation protection. It consists of a comprehensive training programme including post-graduate professional courses, specialized short courses, seminars and workshops to take place between 1996-2000. The training will be on a regional basis and given in the appropriate official languages of the Agency.

34. This programme, which combines activities of education and training, is designed to provide both theoretical and practical experience in the multidisciplinary development of radiation protection standards and their implementation. Such training activities are over and above those planned under the Model Project - radiation and waste saftey infrastructures (INT/9/143), thus completing the coverage to all TC recipient Member States.

III. New initiatives since the 1995 General Conference

35. The most significant new developments since the 1995 General Conference relate to:

- Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries (TCDC)
- Performance and evaluation methodology

- Standing Advisory Group on Technical Assistance and Co-operation (SAGTAC).

- **Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries (TCDC)**

36. TCDC encourages regional self reliance and the sharing of common experience and as such can contribute to increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the Agency's Technical Co-operation. This approach is not new to the Agency. The RCA Programme, for example, has been making extensive use of TCDC to increase the use of practical problem solving nuclear technology in regional industries and thereby encourage regional industrial competitiveness. Last year this project was one of 10 selected by the Joint Inspection Unit to compare results and field level impacts of U.N. sponsored intercountry projects in the Asia-Pacific region. It was rated number one in the evaluation with a score of 96 out of 100 points; one of the best reviews ever made for a project in the field of science and technology. The RCA network of co-operating Member States was described as a "model" for TCDC. The use of experts from developing countries has also increased in 1995 to 1812, or 47% of all expert assignments. During 1995, 90 group training activities were hosted by developing countries which represents 76% of all training courses.

37. Building on this earlier experience, the Agency is considering new opportunities to employ TCDC, subject of course to the wishes of Member States concerned. One model for TCDC is the use within a particular region of national organizations and experts with practical experience gained, inter alia, through Agency technical co-operation and training to provide services to other regional countries. Slovakia for example, developed a full nuclear regulatory authority with the Agency's assistance through the Model Project SLR/9/005 and is now supporting the restructuring of Ukraine's Nuclear Regulatory Authority under the responsibility of the Agency. The TCDC approach is also being applied to other projects in Europe using the expertise of institutions in South Africa, Croatia, Romania, and Hungary. Greater emphasis will continue to be placed on TCDC activities, in full co-operation with developing Member States.

- **Performance and evaluation methodology**

38. The Agency's evaluation of Technical Co-operation activities has focused on the following developments. First, recognition of the positive effect on programme implementation of quantifying and measuring results has led to renewed efforts on project

design and the development of a quality measurement methodology. The establishment of performance indicators is the foundation for a systematic evaluation methodology, and the success with the Model Projects was the critical first step.

39. Second, the experience gained from the evaluation of the AFRA programmes has provided an important start for introducing a system to assess performance in quantitative terms. Evaluation criteria were identified and standards were set up against which activities were assessed. Both the relevance of the programme's objectives and the design quality of AFRA activities were assessed within this system.

40. Considerable attention has been paid to refining project designs and improving implementation through the introduction of project workplans, as reflected in the Model Project concept, and thereby extend the "discipline" of Model Projects throughout the Programme. The discipline of Model Projects refers to the need to adopt clear standards for programme project planning, project formulation, monitoring and performance, and evaluation. Adherence to such standards enhances the *quality* and effectiveness of the Programme. This does not mean that all projects should be directed at achieving a specific social or economic benefit. However it does mean that all projects should have verifiable objectives directed at clearly defined problems.

41. One such standard for project design is clear objectives that are quantitative and measurable through identified performance indicators and success criteria. This standard promotes clear understanding of responsibilities and expectations, and improves the likelihood of achieving project objectives. A detailed review was undertaken of on-going Model Projects to determine the extent to which the objectives were defined in a measurable way, and to identify verifiable performance indicators and success criteria, as well as progress reporting mechanisms for assessing achievements. This exercise, completed successfully for all 23 on-going Model Projects, involved close collaboration between the project management and the evaluation team. Project monitoring will now be based on these indicators. Expanded use of performance indicators in normal projects proposed for the 1997-1998 programme is an important step toward a systematic and standard methodology to "quantify" programme performance and a further example of how Model Projects are influencing overall project design.

42. These refinements, and particularly the emphasis on programme planning, design and performance, are having a significant influence on the quality of the Programme as a whole. Additional information on evaluation activities during 1995 can be obtained from the section on Evaluation contained in the Technical Co-operation Report for 1995, GOV/2858.

43. In an effort to strengthen the ARCAL programme and to increase the possibilities of achieving a greater impact and a successful implementation, national coordinators have adopted a system for assessing projects (SEPA) which aims at improving the formulation, implementation and monitoring of projects through a systematic supervision of their different stages. The new system, developed as a simplification of classical project evaluation methods, has been designed to be compatible with the procedures used by IAEA in its technical cooperation projects. Special care has been taken to avoid possible differences in management procedures.

44. Participants from all ARCAL Member States have been trained in the new system which has already been put into practice. This harmonized approach for preparing, formulating and assessing impact will greatly strengthen future ARCAL programmes.

- **Standing Advisory Group on Technical Assistance and Co-operation**

45. The first meeting of the Standing Advisory Committee on Technical Assistance and Co-operation (SAGTAC) was held in November 1995. This meeting completed the organizational phase of SAGTAC, and, in accordance with its Terms of Reference, began the process of assessment and recommendation on policies, strategies and measures to enhance the scientific, technological and socio-economic benefits to the Agency's Member States, especially developing countries, through the effective and efficient transfer of nuclear and associated technology.

During its meeting SAGTAC established the following three working priorities:

i) The elaboration of the Agency's strategic objective for technical co-operation;
ii) The identification of essential issues related to the achievement of this objective; and
iii) The development of a workplan to guide its efforts.

46. The workplan established by SAGTAC incorporated seven priority issues which fall under two broad headings; i) the "Partnership in Development" concept including "reaching end users" and the impact of technical co-operation activities, the "special value" of certain techniques; and ii) the "process" of management of technical co-operation, including programme planning, project identification, implementation and the accountability and

responsibility for project results. These two groups of issues became the subject of working papers for the second meeting of SAGTAC held in Islamabad, Pakistan, from 21-25 April 1996.

47. A third item for discussion at the meeting in Islamabad was the review of The Revised Guiding Principles and General Operating Rules to Govern the Provision of Technical Assistance by the Agency - INFCIRC/267. A working group will begin analysis in June, with the full review scheduled to begin at the next SAGTAC meeting in November 1996. This review is needed since the environment within which technical co-operation takes place has changed dramatically since 1979 when the Guiding Principles were issued. In 1979, the Agency delivered $8.6 million in technical assistance, compared to $63 million last year. Further, the provisions of the Guiding Principles dealing with Financial procedures do not fully conform with the new Financial Regulations and Rules approved by the Board and issued last year. During the next two years SAGTAC is expected to make recommendations on how the Guiding Principles can be updated to strengthen technical co-operation in the years beyond 2000.

TC management and operations

48. In parallel with efforts to improve programming activities with Member States, internal measures are being introduced to streamline managerial practices and to enhance staff performance through a variety of training activities.

49. Efforts intensified to complete projects and reduce routine work for project and technical officers. Over 300 project closures during 1995 brought the total closures for the last two years to almost 600 projects. The emphasis on fewer projects will also help focus resources on larger projects with greater potential for creating significant impact.

50. Decentralized approval for programme changes and automated approval forms has increased efficiency in the Division of Technical Co-operation Programmes (TCPM), as will the electronic submission of TC project requests from Member States. Developmental work continues for new computer applications to support experts, field procurement and training course implementation. These new systems will add dynamic new monitoring and reporting capabilities and improve resource management. During the next two years work will intensify to complete an integrated PC/LAN based TC project information management system (TC-PIMS) that will greatly strengthen project management through improved project planning, organization and systematic monitoring and reporting.

51. Communications and the flow of information were also enhanced by access to Internet services. The Agency's "World Atom" includes Technical Co-operation listings of unrestricted documents and recent articles and publications. Expanding electronic communications with other organizations and Member States envisaged in the 1995-96 TC Information Technology Plan will greatly facilitate communication with suppliers, experts and host institutes and improve programme implementation and quality.

IV. Resources and Delivery

52. New records for financial implementation and performance were achieved in 1995. For the second year the amount of unobligated resources carried forward between years was significantly reduced - by some 35% - due to record overall implementation of 75.7%. Progressive use of overprogramming authority was largely responsible for overall implementation increases, but the higher rate of implementation for Model projects (85.5%) reflects the consequences of better planning and realistic budgeting as well as the impact of strengthened project management and procedural streamlining. In every area of project implementation delivery was higher than previous years and records were set in delivering 40% more goods and services to Member States than was delivered three years earlier.

53. The downward trend over recent years in resources for technical co-operation has improved. The amount pledged to the TCF in 1995 was the highest percentage in the last five years reaching 77.5%, higher than the 72% anticipated for at the beginning of the year, but still well below levels achieved during the 1980s. Two Member States made pledges toward the end of last year totaling $3.3 million which brought them into conformity with their 1995 target. Four Governments made additional pledges worth $1.2 million to the 1994 TCF target during 1995. Total resources available of $63.5 million for technical co-operation activities in 1995 were the highest ever, due to unexpected contributions to the TCF and significant increases in interest income and assessed programme costs (APC). Payments by recipient Member States for assessed programme costs exceeded $2 million for the first time, an increase of 36% over 1994. However, over $6.6 million outstanding APC remains in arrears.

54. Discussions with Member States on the 1997-98 Technical Co-operation programme are being undertaken bearing in mind the Board's report to the General Conference on the Financing of Technical Assistance and the Financing of Safeguards (GC/39/23, paragraph 4(a)) recommending that the General Conference "urge all Member States to pledge and pay in full their shares of the targets for voluntary contributions to the TCF and urge the Agency

to take due account of the extent to which Member States have paid their TCF target shares when determining the allocation of resources for TC projects and for the procurement of equipment and expert services for TC activities".

V. Outlook

55. The Secretariat will continue to appraise the General Conference and the Board of Governors of the status of initiatives undertaken and planned for strengthening technical co-operation activities. The idea of a partnership in development between the Agency, its Member States and other external partners is developing as a prominent feature of efforts to strengthen technical co-operation and accelerate and enlarge the contribution of nuclear technology to national development. The concept involves ongoing activities such as Model Projects and CPFs, and new initiatives such as thematic planning and expanded co-ordination with developmental organizations. It also involves closer working relationships with all parties to this new partnership. Future reports will discuss further development and implementation of the Partners in Development Agenda.