



International Atomic Energy Agency
IAEA Statement

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Agenda 11.2. Follow up to the political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases

Chair,

Cancer is a global crisis affecting low and middle-income countries in particular due to the scale of the cancer burden and lack of capacities of national health systems to provide adequate responses. For example, many of these countries lack even a single radiotherapy machine, which is an essential treatment modality. The IAEA is supporting countries to improve access to radiotherapy, access to diagnostic imaging and nuclear medicine services to be delivered in a safe and quality manner. With key partners such as the World Health Organization and the International Agency for Research on Cancer, the IAEA works to assess needs and capacities of Member States and integrate radiation medicine services into national and comprehensive cancer control plans.

Last year, the three agencies carried out comprehensive cancer control assessments in Cambodia, Comoros, Djibouti, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Fiji, Guinea, Jordan, Papua New Guinea and Venezuela. This year, Bolivia, Eswatini, The Gambia, Guatemala, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Paraguay and Peru will be receiving this support. These assessments are used to inform planning and resource mobilization of large-scale cancer control projects, for example in the case of Djibouti, through the Islamic Development Bank.

In this regard, Rays of Hope, the IAEA's flagship initiative is an example of how the IAEA contributes to improvements in people's lives by supporting countries in need with assessments, training, expert advice, procurement of equipment and resource mobilization as they establish or strengthen radiation medicine capacities and services.

The IAEA is working closely with partners such as WHO to improve access strengthen countries' capacities to access and use nuclear technologies to prevent, diagnose and treat cancer. In 2023, the IAEA-conducted applied research provided the much-needed evidence base for an innovative and resource-sparing radiotherapy technique to treat head and neck cancer patients, which will make care more accessible and affordable especially for those in low- and middle-income countries.

In addition, under its flagship Rays of Hope initiative, the IAEA delivered tangible results – from procuring specialized radiotherapy and medical imaging equipment to facilitating the training of 80 medical professionals. The IAEA also established its first Rays of Hope Anchor Centres in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. As regional leaders in cancer care, these Centres will support the cancer care capacities of their neighbouring countries and create opportunities for regional, subregional and integrational advancement.

At the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos in January, the IAEA organized an Affiliated Session on Increasing Access to Cancer Care in Low and Middle-Income countries, which was co-hosted with the UICC and The Lancet Oncology. Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi, and other high level participants reiterated the critical importance of global partnerships and collaborative approaches to address challenges facing LMICs in fighting cancer. The discussions centred on the imperative for joint efforts among international organizations, the private sector and NGOs to mobilize resources to combat cancer.

Through the IAEA's Dosimetry Laboratory in Seibersdorf, Austria, the IAEA and WHO's joint postal dose audit programme checked nearly 1,000 beams across 383 institutions, ensuring that cancer patients in 86 countries could be treated safely and accurately.

In addressing the most common cancer worldwide, the IAEA and WHO are supporting the Global Breast Cancer Initiative by creating a common implementation framework with resource-appropriate strategies for countries to improve both prompt diagnosis and timely treatment.

We look forward to continued coordination, collaboration and cooperation with WHO and other partners. I thank you Chair.