



TERMS OF REFERENCE REGULATORY COOPERATION FORUM (JUNE 2026)

The following Terms of Reference (ToR) provide an overview of the Regulatory Cooperation Forum (RCF), its objectives, and main stakeholders. Additionally, the document describes the Forum's main support mechanisms for its members, including the process for identifying and implementing RCF support activities, RCF information sharing mechanisms, the Forum's financial support scheme, and the programme evaluation mechanism.

1. Background

During the 2009 Conference on “Effective Nuclear Regulatory Systems” in Cape Town, South Africa, regulatory bodies from Member States of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) agreed to establish a regulator-to-regulator forum to promote and improve collaboration and coordination between Member States with established nuclear power programmes as well as international organizations (providers) and those planning to expand or introduce the use of nuclear power (recipients).

Subsequently, in June 2010, the RCF was established, to promote the sharing of regulatory knowledge and experience through international cooperation with the goal of achieving a high standard of nuclear safety that is consistent with the IAEA safety standards. Since the RCF's establishment many embarking and expanding countries have benefited from its activities.

The RCF's first Strategic Plan 2020-2024 was established in 2020 following discussions among its members on the direction of the Forum's activities and how to address common challenges faced by RCF members. Results from a comprehensive 2022 survey on the effectiveness of RCF programme culminated in the RCF's second Strategic Plan 2024-2028. This plan was established in 2024 and outlines five Strategic Priorities designed to guide information exchange and support activities among RCF members. Also, recognizing the progress of several recipients, it is clear that recipients can also act as providers to share their knowledge and experience with other recipients.

2. Goal and Objectives

The goal is to promote the sharing of regulatory knowledge and experience through international cooperation while achieving a high standard of nuclear safety that is consistent with the IAEA safety standards.

The objectives are:

- To promote collaboration and cooperation among RCF members to improve coordination of support for regulatory infrastructure development;

- To contribute to achieving and sustaining a high level of nuclear safety, consistent with the IAEA Safety Standards and Guidance;
- To optimize resources among RCF members and avoid unnecessary support duplication through improved coordination.

3. Guiding Principles and Values

The RCF is guided by the following principles:

- a) The RCF is a member-driven forum of nuclear power regulators of IAEA Member States and relevant international organizations
- b) Members must assume full responsibility for their own regulatory body development
- c) RCF support activities are focused on regulatory authorities of Member States actively pursuing development of their regulatory infrastructures primarily for nuclear safety, taking into consideration nuclear safety and security interface issues
- d) The RCF respects existing and future cooperation arrangements (bi-lateral or otherwise), including the disposition or application of resources, among its members
- e) Each participant of the Forum is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for participating in RCF activities

Values are

- Openness – promoting trust among members, and sharing information and knowledge in an open and transparent manner
- Responsiveness – flexibility in adding value to member countries through targeted interventions
- Excellence – striving for continuous improvement and for ensuring the application of lessons learned
- Commitment – demonstrating a results-based service through active participation
- Respect – showing appreciation and understanding of diverse points of view
- Inclusiveness - providing equal access to opportunities and resources”

4. Membership to the RCF

Membership to the RCF is open to all Member States of the IAEA. RCF members will normally be represented by senior representatives from regulatory bodies in Member States and from international organizations, such as the IAEA, the European Commission (EC) and the Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Technical and Scientific Support Organizations (TSO) or other organizations may participate in the RCF with the agreement of the regulatory bodies of that Member State or upon request from one of the international organisations being a member of the RCF.

The Members of the RCF consist of providers and recipients. Providers are Member States with established nuclear power programmes. Their role is to provide assistance to the RCF and recipient

countries. Recipient countries are those Member States introducing or expanding the use of nuclear power.

The Members of the RCF are expected to contribute to the RCF Programme as “providers” and/or “recipients”. Membership requires Steering Committee approval.

Note: observers are required to apply for RCF membership or provide justification to maintain their observer status every two years.

Membership and Major expected roles and responsibilities are shown in the below table.

Membership	Major expected roles and responsibilities
Active recipients	Report on the development of regulatory infrastructure and support needs to be addressed through RCF
Providers	Share their knowledge and experience. Provide assistance to active recipients, if applicable
Recipients (Not currently satisfying active recipient status)	Share their knowledge and experience, with clear intention to introduce or expand nuclear power programme
Observers	Expected to eventually become RCF members or have other justification for attendance.

To join the RCF requests must be submitted to the RCF Secretariat for consideration based on the purpose of the RCF and Criteria for Support. The decision on membership is made by the Steering Committee. Other IAEA Member States may participate in the RCF as observers with the approval by the Steering Committee.

Detailed roles, responsibilities, criteria, and contact details for the RCF Secretariat are available on the RCF website below.

[Link to detailed roles, responsibilities, criteria](#)

Reference should also be made to the RCF Strategic Plan and the RCF Process Flowchart.

[Link to RCF Materials](#)

The most up-to-date RCF member list can be verified via the link below.

[Link to RCF member list](#)

5. RCF Steering Committee and RCF Officers

The Steering Committee provides leadership for the RCF and ensures transparency, openness, efficient and effective planning and implementation of the RCF programme according to the Terms of Reference:

5.1 The Steering Committee

- Comprised of senior representatives from regulatory bodies and representatives from international organizations.
- Responsible for:
 - Appointing a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson
 - Deciding on policy and strategy related issues, including developing and amending of the RCF Strategic Plan, Terms of Reference and other relevant documents, as well as new membership to the RCF.
 - Reviewing progress on the implementation of the RCF Programme in support of its members
 - Deciding which member can become an active recipient and be available for provider support based on the criteria in the Annex 1. It is ultimately the decision of the provider which recipient country will receive their support.
 - Confirming periodically members' willingness to satisfy their roles and responsibilities as defined for each type of memberships.
 - Approving the establishment and dissolution of working groups.
 - Proposing criteria for reviewing the continuing need for the RCF, and recommending dissolution / closure of the RCF, if necessary
- Meets once per year and when necessary additional meetings may be convened by the Chairperson or the Vice-Chairperson.

5.1.1 Chairperson

- The Chairperson chairs the activities of Steering Committee, chairs the RCF meetings and act as spokesperson for the RCF.
- The Vice Chairperson replaces the Chairperson when the Chairperson is not present.
- The chairperson and vice-chairperson are appointed for a term of 3 years.

5.1.2 Secretariat

The IAEA, in its role as RCF Secretariat, facilitates and promotes the work of the RCF within established Agency practices.

- Organize RCF meetings, promote coordination and collaboration among the provider and recipient members and support other necessary RCF activities.
- Support the development and periodic update of documents, such as the Terms of Reference, the Strategic Plan, the Operational Plan.
- Keep the list of members of the RCF updated and proposing new members for the RCF Steering Committee.
- Prepare the agenda of the RCF meeting
- Establish and maintain RCF website(s) in line with the instructions of the RCF
- Identify, analyse lessons learned and trends, and share them with the RCF members.

- Support programme evaluations, as directed by the Steering Committee.
- Promote the implementation of the RCF Programme.
- Manage extra-budgetary funds contributed to the RCF.
- Encourage improved coordination of support from all involved stakeholders

6. Implementing Arrangements

6-1. Coordination of the support for the active recipients

The support provided through the RCF will be consistent with the IAEA Safety Standards using the Actions identified in SSG 16 as a basis, when possible.

1-1 Decision on becoming active recipients by the Steering Committee

The candidate recipient will present the status of its regulatory body development to the RCF Steering Committee which will decide if the candidate is eligible as an active recipient and for support by the RCF based on the criteria in Annex 1.

Furthermore, the onboarding of a newly accepted active recipient will be supported by an experienced active recipient acting as a “Mentor.” The communication between the two parties will contribute to provide guidance on RCF processes, including service requests, use of the RCF framework, and the preparation of documentation such as reports, presentations, and activity lists.

1-2 Coordination of the support plan for the active recipients

The active recipient should identify and provide to the RCF Secretariat a complete account of its regulatory needs (referred to as regulatory gaps) and should also share regulatory support being received or planned to be received through various entities such as the IAEA, the European Commission, regional networks and all bi-lateral and multi-lateral arrangements. Regulatory gaps to which they have not yet received support should also be included in a recipient’s account to the RCF Secretariat. This information should be summarized in a Table of Action Plan and Request for Support ¹ (and added to the “Mapping Matrix2”)² The recipient should identify those gaps required to be addressed and prioritize them.

Regulatory gaps will be shared either in the annual support meeting or in a bilateral meeting between RCF officers and a recipient country. Summaries of these bilateral meetings will be reported to RCF members through the RCF Secretariat. Representatives of the RCF providers may participate in these meetings if appropriate.

Following notification of a recipient country’s regulatory gaps and support requests, the provider country will work bilaterally with recipient countries to make commitments for support as much as is reasonably possible. When the support is offered, the providers and the recipient will work bilaterally to determine the timing, location and scope of support. Once support has been identified, the recipient

¹ Recipient's plan to address regulatory gaps and proposal for the desired support with specific challenges, time frame, preferred providers and priority

² Table to show the status on regulatory infrastructure development based on SSG-16 and progress of support by RCF providers and other support e.g. Regional network

will incorporate the activity into the “Table of Action Plan and Request for Support” the "Mapping Matrix".

1-3 Progress review at the Yearly Support Meeting

Once the RCF National Action Plan is completed, the involved parties are responsible for ensuring the support committed takes place as planned. The recipient updates the progress of the support, with cooperation of providers, in the "Mapping Matrix".

A meeting for all RCF members and interested Member States to review the progress of regulatory infrastructure development, and to present and coordinate the support activities will be held yearly. This meeting will be organised by the RCF secretariat.

In order to make a synthesis of the structure of the coordination the table below highlights the essential elements of the RCF coordination.

Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders				
RCF Steering Committee	Recipients countries	RCF – Officers and recipient countries	Providers: support offered	RCF - Secretariat
- Provides leadership - Develop the strategic plan - Establish the programme's strategic objectives - Identification of other coordination and support mechanisms - Promote Communication and transparency - Enhance RCF outreach	Share the regulatory support: being received or planned to be received through various entities such as the IAEA, the European Commission, regional networks and all bi-lateral and multi-lateral arrangements, which covers all the activities supporting the development of their regulatory infrastructure Share National Action Plan for Desired Support with priorities	- Make a synthesis of the regulatory gaps to which they have not yet received support - Identify and prioritize the support to be provided - Promote solutions to the request submitted	- Identify the areas they are qualified to offer support - Work bilaterally with recipient countries: - Make commitments for support as much as is reasonably possible - Determine the scope, the timing, the location - Implement the activities offered	- Promote coordination and the implementation of the RCF programme - Support the development of the documents - Develop the first version of the Mapping Matrix for new recipient members - Disseminate Mapping Matrix, RCF national action plan - Support programme evaluation - Manage the extra budgetary funds
Follow –up of the support Progress				

- Review the progress on the implementation of the programme at the support meeting - Evaluate the performance of the RCF Programme every two years; - Endorse the results of the programme evaluation;	- Provide feedback on the progress of the support and present the effectiveness of the actions implemented as regards needs. - Update Mapping Matrix	- Follow up of the support provided - Evaluate (every two years) the performance of the RCF Programme	- Present the progress of the activities being implemented - Present feedback of the work provided and share the lessons to be learned	- Updates the reporting (TOR, and Operating Plan) - Promote a monitoring - Disseminate the action plan - Issue a review report every two years of the activities performed
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6-2. RCF information sharing

- An RCF plenary meeting will be held once per year, normally during the IAEA General Conference or other significant meetings for regulatory authorities, for the purpose of promoting its activities both to RCF members and non-members.
- A support meeting³ and bilateral meeting between RCF officers and an active recipient country will be held in principle once a year to review the progress of regulatory infrastructure development and the regulatory gaps to be addressed as priorities, as well as to coordinate assistance. Representatives of the RCF providers may participate in the meetings of RCF officers and active recipient countries at the invitation of the recipient country.
- A meeting with active recipient countries focusing on strategic issues in line with the RCF Strategic Plan may be held to share experience in regulatory infrastructure development. Cooperation and coordination with other external groups and organizations or other forums should be utilized as appropriate.
- The Steering Committee will nominate a task team to evaluate the performance of the RCF Programme every two years and modify or develop the RCF Strategic Plan Working Groups may be established for specific programmatic and/or country-specific issues, when needed.
- A website, comprising a public and a restricted / secured domain, will be maintained to manage and share information, as well as to promote the work of the RCF. The website will be made available through the IAEA's Global Nuclear Safety and Security Network in the RegNet environment.

7. Finances

³ A meeting for all RCF members and interested Member States to review the progress of regulatory infrastructure development, and to present and coordinate the support activities.

All Member States participating in the RCF are expected to make their own arrangements to finance / fund costs associated with their participation. Additionally, members are encouraged to provide contributions to the RCF programme covering professional staff (Cost Free Expert) and general staff as well as operating costs, in the form of extrabudgetary contribution or in-kind contribution e.g. hosting RCF meeting, chairperson or vice-chairperson. In exceptional situations member's participation in meetings and events might be funded by the RCF, based on the availability of extra-budgetary financial resources. This general budget will also fund IAEA staff travel and related expenditures and other support activities such as consultants and development of promotional material.

Sustainable funding will be identified by the provider members, and funding mechanisms will be reviewed on a regular basis.

8. RCF Strategic Plan and Programme Evaluation

A four-year RCF Strategic Plan shall be developed, inter alia to establish the Programme's Strategic Objectives and guide the work of the RCF. The Plan shall be complemented by a two year RCF Operational Plan, outlining actions and corresponding tasks to address the Strategic Objectives

The Steering Committee will nominate a task team to evaluate the performance of the RCF Programme every two years and present the results to the RCF members for endorsement of the report.

The Programme evaluation should include the following elements:

- a) Implementation and effectiveness of RCF Operational Plans
- b) Lessons learned on the RCF Programme
- c) Feedback from RCF members to the RCF Secretariat on the RCF Programme.
- d) Proposed changes
- e) A statement on the benefit of continuing the RCF and on the adequateness of its organisation

A. (Annex 1) Criteria for becoming active recipients

To be eligible to be an RCF recipient, countries must demonstrate a commitment towards the development of a nuclear power programme or expansion of an existing programme. Note that all the criteria listed below do not need to be met before a decision is made to admit a country as an active recipient.

- a) The Member State's regulatory body is a member of the RCF and has requested support through the RCF Secretariat
- b) The nuclear safety regulatory body has been established and maintained through national legislation
- c) Milestone 1 (Ready to Make a Knowledgeable Commitment to a Nuclear Programme) of the IAEA's Milestones Document⁴ has been completed or is near completion
- d) Training and/or IAEA advisory service or regional network⁵ support on Safety Guide, SSG-16 "Establishing the Safety Infrastructure for a Nuclear Power Programme" has been received
- e) A self-assessment to identify regulatory body needs has been completed and gaps have been identified
- f) The recipient requesting RCF support (candidate recipient) has existing or near term planned bi-lateral or multi-lateral arrangements with countries having established nuclear power programmes
- g) The candidate recipient is a Contracting Party to the Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS)

Consideration will also be given as to whether the candidate recipient country has received an Integrated Nuclear Infrastructure Review (INIR) and/or Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS).

⁴ IAEA Nuclear Energy Series, No. NG-G-3.1, *Milestones in the Development of a National Infrastructure for Nuclear Power*

⁵ Regional networks such as the Asian Nuclear Safety Network (ANSN), Arab Network of Nuclear Regulators (ANNuR), Forum of Nuclear Regulatory Bodies in Africa (FNRBA) and Iberoamerican Organization of Radiological and Nuclear Regulators (FORO), European and Central Asian Safety Network (EuCAS)