

# Concerted Effort Needed To Tackle Cancer Epidemic

## Director General Yukiya Amano Opens Scientific Forum on Cancer in Developing Countries

Director General Yukiya Amano opened the 2010 *Scientific Forum* with a call to unified action to fight the cancer epidemic in developing countries.

He emphasised the fact that although the IAEA's role is important - involving radiotherapy, nuclear medicine, radiology and medical radiation physics - the Agency is just one element in the system, since cancer care also encompasses prevention, diagnosis, and education and training.

"We recognise that there are limits to what we can do on our own to make improved cancer care more widely available in developing countries. With the rising number of cancer cases, the existing radiation medicine infrastructure and available resources meet only a small proportion of the growing needs," said the Director General.

"The IAEA is a small player with modest resources and cannot act alone. But we do want to put our special expertise to work as effectively as possible, in cooperation with our partners. Your input over the next two days on how we can best achieve that goal will be invaluable," he said.

The aim of the two-day *Scientific Forum* was to encourage world leaders and decision makers to focus on the issue of cancer in developing countries, look for practical solutions and facilitate fund-raising efforts.

Mr. Amano said the passion of individuals, not only organisations, is important to the effort. He cited examples from his visits to cancer care centres worldwide. In Cairo, Egypt he was inspired by child cancer survivors who helped current sufferers through the ordeal; and in Seoul, Korea he was impressed by the generosity of ordinary people who, cumulatively, raised more than US\$50 000 for the IAEA's cancer programme, placing their donations in collection boxes around the country.

"The lesson for all of us all here is obvious: we too need to work together, to share our experience, expertise and knowledge with each other and to pool our

resources to ensure that cancer patients in developing countries gain access to the best modern treatment and care," he said.

## **Background**

Without concerted, coordinated action, over 13 million people worldwide will die from cancer every year by 2030. Almost 9 million of these deaths will be in developing countries. In many low-income countries, there is not a single radiation therapy machine.

Millions of people who could be successfully treated die every year. Deaths from the disease disproportionately affect the poorest people in the poorest countries.

The IAEA's expertise lies in radiotherapy, nuclear medicine, radiology and medical radiation physics. And since 1980, the IAEA has delivered over US\$220 million worth of cancer-related assistance to developing countries.

*-- By Sasha Henriques, IAEA Division of Public Information*