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IAEA and Argentina Strengthen Cooperation to Improve Cancer Care and to Address Plastic Pollution in the Antarctica

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(https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/styles/original_image_size/public/argentina.jpg?itok=7eFOPN2M)

IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi and Santiago Cafiero, Argentina's Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship, signed agreements on Thursday to support IAEA initiatives: Rays of Hope and NUTEC Plastics. (Photo: D. Candano Laris/IAEA)

The IAEA and Argentina signed two agreements to strengthen their cooperation on the peaceful uses of nuclear technology to improve access to cancer care in Latin America and to fight plastic pollution in the Antarctica. IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi and Santiago Cafiero, Argentina's Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship, signed the agreements on Thursday in support of Rays of Hope (/services/rays-of-hope) and NUTEC Plastics (/services/key-programmes/nutec-plastics), two IAEA initiatives. "Peaceful applications of nuclear technology have concrete benefits in the daily life of our society," Mr Cafiero said.

Rays of Hope seeks to promote cancer care for all by improving availability of radiotherapy services, medical imaging and nuclear medicine that are critical for detecting and curing this disease. Since its launch in February this year, more than 20 countries have already requested assistance through the initiative, which will help provide access to life-saving radiotherapy treatment, strengthen radiation safety legislation and infrastructure, and provide quality control, guidance, training and equipment.

During the week, Mr Grossi visited FUESMEN, an institution founded by Argentina's National Atomic Energy Commission (CNEA), the National University of Cuyo and the Government of Mendoza. FUESMEN, a partner of the IAEA, is a centre for medical care, education and research. "We will increase our work to bring cancer care for all. Nuclear can help diagnose and treat cancer, and the IAEA is ready to bring those nuclear benefits to even more people in the region with Rays of Hope," Mr Grossi said.

NUTEC Plastics (NUclear TEChnology for Controlling Plastic Pollution) helps countries harness environmentally friendly radiation techniques to recycle plastic and use isotopic tracing to better understand the problem of marine microplastic pollution. Plastic pollution is a global problem, affecting the most remote parts of the world, including the Antarctica. The first evidence of microplastics in Antarctic snow was recently documented in a study by University of Canterbury published in June (<https://tc.copernicus.org/articles/16/2127/2022/tc-16-2127-2022.html>).

"Rays of Hope and NUTEC Plastics are concrete examples of how nuclear technology can benefit the Latin American people and the environment," Mr Grossi said. He spent this week in Argentina (</newscenter/news/iaea-director-general-visits-argentina-highlights-nuclears-role-in-energy-cancer-care-and-development>), meeting with several high-level officials and visiting nuclear facilities and institutions.

Nuclear applications in Argentina

During an event at Tecnopolis in Buenos Aires on Friday, Mr Grossi joined Adriana Serquis, President of CNEA; Jose Luis Antunez, President of Nucleoelectrica Argentina; and Vicente Campenni, General Manager and CEO of INVAP, to discuss Argentina's nuclear programme. "It has a concrete impact on the country's economy and development, with an immense contribution to jobs, health, electricity and technological development," Mr Grossi said during the event, which was attended by government authorities, nuclear industry representatives and the general public. Nora Bar, former editor of science and health for La Nacion newspaper, moderated the event.

In Mendoza on Thursday, Mr Grossi met with high-level officials of IMPSA. IMPSA manufactures and supplies equipment for the nuclear industry. "From designing to execution, IMPSA plays a key role in Argentina's nuclear power programme through its involvement in Argentina's nuclear power plants and especially now in the CAREM (small modular reactor) project," Mr Grossi said.

On Wednesday, Mr Grossi and Mr Cafiero toured the Bariloche Atomic Centre, where they visited the RA-6 research reactor, CAREM simulator, INTECNUS (Institute of Nuclear Technology for Health) and the Balseiro Institute. "There is remarkable scientific development for Argentina and Latin America happening at Bariloche Atomic Centre, home to the RA-6 research reactor – an important tool for education and capacity building," he said. "It is impressive to see its impact on medicine, agriculture and more." RA-6 is used for research and development in reactor physics and nuclear engineering, as well neutron activation analysis, among other uses. Argentina is in the process of constructing a new research reactor, RA-10, which will support Argentina in radioisotope production for medical purposes.

Earlier this week, Mr Grossi, alongside Mr Cafiero, met with Argentina's President Alberto Fernandez and expressed gratitude for Argentina's support of the IAEA's efforts to establish a nuclear safety and security protection zone around Ukraine's Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant.

Related resources

- Rays of Hope: Cancer Care for All (<https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/multimedia/videos/rays-of-hope-cancer-care-for-all>)
- NUTEC: A Nuclear Solution to Plastic Pollution (<https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/multimedia/videos/nutec-a-nuclear-solution-to-plastic-pollution>)
- 🔗 Country Nuclear Power Profiles: Argentina (<https://cnpp.iaea.org/countryprofiles/Argentina/Argentina.htm>)
- 🔗 Nuclear technology and applications (<https://www.iaea.org/topics/nuclear-technology-and-applications>)

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