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Top Stories

Combating Cancer in Africa

Director General Amano to Visit Cancer Care Facilities in Nigeria

Staff Report

11 December 2009

On his first official trip as IAEA Director General, Yukiya Amano will travel to Nigeria to "learn first-hand about its efforts to build an effective cancer control programme." Beginning Monday, 14 December, Mr. Amano's trip includes a briefing at the National Hospital and a visit to the International Cancer Centre.

The International Cancer Centre in Abuja is key to Nigeria's initiatives to improve cancer research, diagnosis, and treatment. The Centre will be working closely with the IAEA's Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT) to advance comprehensive cancer control in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa and to combat the growing cancer epidemic.

Spreading swiftly in the developing world, the global cancer epidemic kills more victims annually than HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria combined. In the past year, 7.6 million lives were lost, a death toll equivalent to an Asian tsunami every ten days. The majority of the global cancer burden is found in low-income and lower-middle income countries. Forty percent of all cancers are preventable, yet only five percent of global resources for cancer are spent in the developing world. If cancer prevention and care services are not expanded, it is estimated that by 2050, the lifetime risk of cancer in Africa will increase by 50% to 60%, doubling the annual number of cases to 2.2 million.

Radiotherapy is one of the most frequently used anticancer therapies but is available to only 5% of the African population. The IAEA estimates that at least 55% of all cancers in Africa could respond to radiotherapy. The Agency is working to improve access to radiotherapy in Africa. In Nigeria, the Agency's technical cooperation projects have helped to establish and upgrade radiotherapy and oncology centres, expand technical capabilities in nuclear medicine diagnosis, establish a national training programme for radiotherapy technicians and conduct programmes to improve the quality of cancer patient care. As a result, there has been a 30% increase in the number of units over the past decade, with further units planned.

At a recent meeting with delegates from IAEA Member States in Vienna, Mr. Amano said he will "pay special attention to cancer control" during his first year in office. Mr. Amano also plans to "appeal for



During the *IAEA General Conference* in September, Her Excellency Hajia Turai Yar 'Adua, Nigeria's First Lady, signed a practical arrangement with the IAEA on developing comprehensive cancer control strategies and action plans tailored to address the needs and conditions of the people of Nigeria and beyond. (Photo: D. Calma/IAEA)

Story Resources

- [IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano to Visit Nigeria Next Week](#), *Media Advisory*, 11 December 2009
- [Director General's Remarks](#), 9 December 2009
- [Nigeria and IAEA-PACT Join to Fight Cancer](#), 19 September 2009
- [In Focus: Cancer Care and Control](#)
- [Programme Action for Cancer Therapy \(PACT\)](#)
- [Technical Cooperation Division for Africa](#)
- [Division of Human Health](#)
- [Nigeria, Federal Republic of](#)
- [International Cancer Centre Abuja \(ICCA\)](#)

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focussed global attention on the cancer epidemic at the *World Economic Forum* taking place in Davos from 27-31 January 2010.

During his three-day stay in Nigeria, Director General Amano will also meet officials from the Nigerian government, the Atomic Energy Commission, Nuclear Regulatory Authority and the Energy Commission. He will tour the Nuclear Technology Centre in the Sheda Science and Technology Complex, which conducts research and development in nuclear science and technology, such as the gamma irradiation plant that is used in food preservation, pest control, and health care delivery.

See Story Resources for more information.