

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) organized the *International Conference on Isotopic and Nuclear Analytical Techniques for Health and Environment* held on 10–13 June 2003 in Vienna, Austria as a way of enhancing its support for isotopic and nuclear analytical techniques (NATs).

This conference brought together 155 researchers with more than half from 32 developing countries. Eleven plenary sessions were held. Also conducted was a panel discussion on Human Capacity Development Needs in the Areas of Analytical Quality Control Services (AQCS), Radiochemistry and Nutrition. The scientific sessions were divided into several topics, which reflect some of the important activities of the IAEA's Department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications (NA). The unedited conference proceedings including all contributions as received are available by the IAEA-Vienna (IAEA-CN-103). 12 selected contributions have been published in *Analytical and Bioanalytical Chemistry* Vol. 379, No. 2, 179–253 (2004). This issue of *Nukleonika* presents another 6 contributions from the conference after peer review.

The organizers of this analytical conference, Mr. G. V. Iyengar, NAHU, Mr. P. De Regge, NAAL, and Mr. M. Rossbach, NAPC together with the IAEA Conference Services were very happy to meet in Vienna so many distinguished guests from around the world and discuss with them on particular research topics related to our programme at the IAEA. It is of particular advantage for the IAEA staff members to have such a dedicated group of researchers at our own premises to listen to the latest developments in science and discuss opportunities for our

own programmatic work. Also the personal ties with some of guests can be strengthened during the coffee breaks and social events.

As isotopic and nuclear analytical techniques cover a large part of our daily work it was interesting to see the many facets raised during the conference. The use of radiotracers in studies of environmental pollution as well as in industrial processes and medical/nutritional investigations were discussed. Many applications of analytical techniques, such as INAA, XRF, PIXE and MS to investigate organohalogen, trace elements and radionuclides in environmental, biological, geological or historic artifacts were described. Very small samples (a strand of hair from Napoleon) to very large samples (waste or precious objects) have been investigated as well as solids, liquids and gases. The broad range of contributions to this conference demonstrated the enormous wealth of nuclear techniques to contribute to problem solving for the benefit of our society.

The role of the IAEA, in particular the NA Department, to support, encourage and strengthen the application of nuclear techniques was demonstrated at this international conference by providing a forum for researchers in the field to discuss and present their recent developments and achievements. It was suggested by the audience that this type of conference be repeated every three to four years. The particular advantage of the IAEA to invite many participants from developing countries was acknowledged and the leading role of the Agency in promotion of nuclear techniques should be maintained through enhancement of QA/QC and further human capacity building activities.

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