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The President of Republic of Ghana with the Executive Director COMSATS and the Senior Officials of MESTI

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From the Executive Director's Desk

Experiences of the last fifty years show that the vicious circle of poverty and under-development has been too difficult to break for most of the countries of the South. The road-blocks on the path to development have been numerous, consisting of both 'natural' as well as 'man-made' elements. The tantalizing fact that some countries did exceptionally well in surmounting all obstacles under prevailing circumstances and joined the group of medium-to-high income countries, shows that a reasonably high level of economic progress is after all not impossible to achieve. The experts of development economics have delved deep into the issues involved and did hair-splitting analyses using the carefully crafted jargons of their trade, but the results of these labours have apparently not led to solutions that could change the situation on the ground. Two extreme views emerge with respect to development deficit: (i) 'everything wrong with poor countries is a result of colonial rule and its continuation in the form of economic imperialism'; and (ii) 'the leadership and populations of developing countries are themselves fully responsible for their poor socio-economic performance'.

The reality is somewhere in between. According to the 'survival of the fittest' principle, it is but natural that industrialized countries would protect their stranglehold of the world economy by using all possible means; including international laws, bilateral treaties, lobbying, and even arm-twisting and military aggression, if necessary. In the history of post-colonial era,

there are numerous examples of all such measures taken by one or the other state or coalition of the 'willing' states. On the other hand, bad governance, corruption, political instability, dictatorial rules and lack of strong administrative, legal, and financial institutions in the developing world continue to mar their prospects for progress. Efforts should be directed at both types of threats, internal as well as external, to achieve a universal minimal quality of life required for decent living as a basic human right. As argued by many scholars from within the Western world, it is in the best interest of the industrialized countries if purchasing power of the billions of deprived people in underdeveloped countries were increased; not out of humanitarian concerns but simply as a good business plan. The countries which opposed the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) resolution¹⁾ on "Elaboration of an International Legally Binding Instrument on Transnational Corporations and other Business Enterprises with respect to Human Rights", should be aware that unbridled corporate power will eventually come to haunt their own societies. So far as the leaders of the South are concerned, there are quite a few individuals who are hard at work to build their societies so as to prepare them to meet the challenges of the New World Order.

COMSATS has the honour of having a Chairperson who is one of such leaders – the President of the Republic of Ghana, His Excellency Mr. John Dramani Mahama. During an audience

¹⁾ Resolution no. A/HRC/26/L.22 adopted on 26th June 2014 during the 26th session of the 37th UNHRC Meeting.

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NEWS/ACTIVITIES/HIGHLIGHTS FROM COMSATS SECRETARIAT

MEETING WITH THE CHAIRPERSON COMSATS HELD IN GHANA

The Executive Director COMSATS, Dr. Imtihan Elahi Qureshi, undertook a visit to Accra, Ghana, and held a meeting with the President of Republic of Ghana, H.E Mr. John Dramani Mahama, in his capacity as the Chairperson of COMSATS. One of the objectives of the meeting was to acquaint the President with the ongoing international activities and capacity-building programmes of COMSATS in its Member States, and seek the incumbent Chairperson's support.

During the meeting that took place at the Flagstaff House, a number of important issues were discussed, which, inter alia, related to holding the 3rd Commission Meeting of COMSATS in 2015, scaling up the role of COMSATS focal ministry in Ghana to steer COMSATS activities, and the efforts being made to launch COMSATS Endowment fund.

Also present during the meeting were the Minister, H.E. Dr. Joe Oteng Adjei, and Deputy Minister, Dr. Musheibu Mohammed-Alfa, of the Ghana's Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI), as well as the Director-General of COMSATS' Centre of Excellence in Ghana, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Dr. Abdulai Baba Salifu. Other senior officials of MESTI present on the occasion were its Chief Director, Dr. Sylvester Anemana, and Director (Science, Technology and Innovation), Dr. Yahuza Mohammed Gomda.



Dr. Qureshi giving multimedia presentation to the honourable President of the Republic of Ghana

In a media briefing prior to the meeting, the Honourable Chairperson of COMSATS remarked that the role of COMSATS to help developing countries incorporate S&T in their development agenda and to pool their limited resources for achieving common objectives. Later speaking with Dr. Qureshi, Mr. Mahama recognized the efforts of COMSATS Secretariat in achieving the laudable objectives of this organization and assured him of Ghana's significant contributions towards COMSATS' activities aimed at promoting South-South cooperation in Africa and in other parts of the world.

A multimedia presentation was made by the Executive Director for the President, covering the history and mission of COMSATS, the composition and role of its statutory bodies, and its programmes and activities for S&T capacity-

building through a Network of 19 Centres of Excellence (CoEs). The Chairperson was told that, in spite of its financial constraints and skeletal human resources at the Secretariat, COMSATS has successfully organized or substantially supported over 200 scientific events, for the benefit of scientific communities of its Member States during the last 18 years.

During the presentation, Dr. Qureshi made a special reference to the 2nd meeting of COMSATS Consultative Committee, held last year in conjunction with the 16th meeting of COMSATS Coordinating Council in Accra, in which it was proposed that the incumbent Chairperson of COMSATS should send personal letters to all Commission members seeking their support for strengthening the technical programmes and financial resources of the organization. The contents of such a letter were also discussed.

Among other benefits that Member Countries can draw from COMSATS mentioned during the presentation included: graduate study scholarships at COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT), Pakistan, training programmes at selected Centres of Excellence, participation in COMSATS International Thematic Research Groups (ITRG), lectures delivered by COMSATS Distinguished Professors, technical consultancy by a panel of experts on ST&I policy, and exchange visits of scientists for exploring bilateral cooperation avenues between institutes having common research interests.

The Chairperson's attention was also called towards the importance of allocation of funds for launching of the ITRG led by the Building and Road Research Institute (BRRI) of CSIR; encouragement of various research institutes working under the administration of CSIR for forming collaborations with their counterparts in other Member States; and the possibility of Ghanaian students to get scholarships at CIIT for graduate studies. A possibility was also explored for the placement of a representative of the Chairperson at COMSATS Secretariat in Islamabad.

The Chairperson expressed satisfaction over the performance and achievements of COMSATS despite its budgetary limitations. He mentioned the possibility of raising funds for COMSATS during the then upcoming meetings of ECOWAS and African Union. His Excellency agreed to: hold

the 3rd COMSATS Commission Meeting in Accra in April 2015; send letters to his counterparts in Member Countries seeking their political and financial support for COMSATS; and consider the placement of his representative at COMSATS Secretariat. The President also discussed the status of research at BRRI and gave instructions to the Minister, regarding low-cost construction projects under the supervision of BRRI.

The Chairperson concluded the meeting by reiterating his personal commitment to promotion of scientific cooperation among developing countries. He hoped that, apart from Pakistan which is the host country of COMSATS, other Member Countries would also come forward to provide financial assistance to COMSATS.

CONSULTATIONS AT COMSATS' FOCAL MINISTRY AND CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IN GHANA

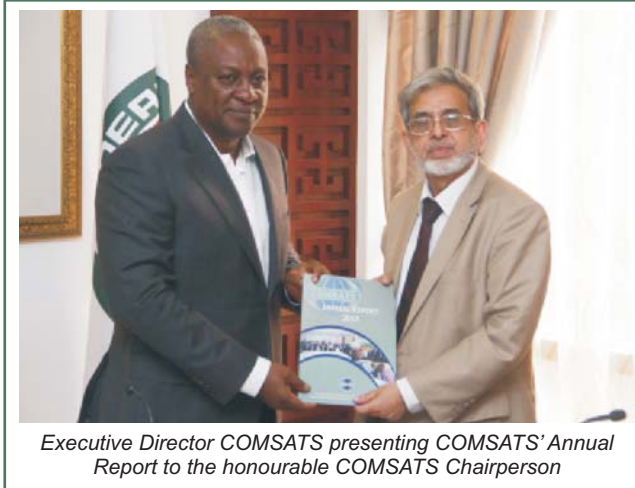
Prior to the meeting with the President of Ghana, Dr. Qureshi undertook extensive consultations at the Ghanaian Focal Ministry for COMSATS, the Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) to review the contents of his multimedia presentation prepared for the Chairperson of COMSATS. The consultations were made in a meeting with the Minister for MESTI, Dr. Joe Oteng-Adjei; the Deputy Minister, Dr. Musheibu Mohammed-Alfa; the Chief Director of MESTI, Dr. Sylvester Anemana; and the

Director General of COMSATS Centre of Excellence in Ghana, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Dr. Abdulai Baba Salifu. Particular attention was paid to the requests and proposals to be made for the Chairperson's consideration. It was agreed that the Chairperson should be apprised of the financial position of COMSATS by pointing out that Pakistan, being the host country of the organization's Secretariat, is the sole contributor towards meeting the expenses of the Secretariat based in Islamabad.

Later, on 10th June 2014, Dr. Qureshi held a discussion session with the Deputy Minister, and the Director (ST&I)

MESTI, Dr. Yahuza Mohammed Gomda, to discuss the impact of the meeting with the President of Ghana. The participants of the meeting conceded that all objectives of the meeting with the Honourable President had been met.

Availing the opportunity of his presence in Accra, the Executive Director also visited the Head Office of CSIR and held a detailed meeting with a group of CSIR Directors, representing different Accra-based research institutes. CSIR is a major R&D organization of Ghana with 13 specialized Institutes relevant to a wide spectrum of S&T fields. The Director General CSIR, Dr. Salifu, and Deputy Director General CSIR, Dr. Rose E. M. Entsua-Mensah, were also present on the occasion. The Executive Director COMSATS specifically invited Dr. Issac O. A. Hodgson,



Executive Director COMSATS presenting COMSATS' Annual Report to the honourable COMSATS Chairperson

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with the President on 9th June (page 2), I made a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the importance of South-South Cooperation in Science and Technology for achieving common developmental targets and the role being played by COMSATS in this connection. The President was told about the real-time exchange of information and agreements of cooperation that take place between the member institutions of COMSATS' Network of Centres of Excellence during the meetings of COMSATS Coordinating Council, including the latest one held in Iran (page 5). While recalling the recent initiatives of the Government of Ghana, focusing on infrastructure development in his country, the President noted that the Ghanaian research institution, 'Buildings and Roads Research Institute', which is affiliated with COMSATS' Centre of Excellence in Ghana, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), can play a role in providing low-cost housing solutions to address the deficit of 1.7 million housing units in Ghana. It was a refreshing

experience to meet a statesman, with high academic credentials and leadership qualities, who could lead his country towards political stability and economic progress based on indigenous human and natural resources. As President of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Chairperson of COMSATS, his vision and policy initiatives can positively influence Western African countries as well as twenty-one Member States of COMSATS spread across three continents.

The road to progress would be a long haul, full of anticipated as well as unexpected hurdles. However, the unwavering determination of the people at the helm of affairs in the developing countries and the help of humanitarian organizations, enlightened businesses, United Nations agencies and intergovernmental organizations, such as COMSATS, will hopefully make a difference. It will be appreciated if the readers could kindly send their feedback on the contents of this Newsletter.

Director Water Research Institute (WRI), to visit Water Research and Technologies Centre (CERTe) in Tunisia and negotiate a cooperation agreement between the two institutions that have similar mandates. Director Institute of Industrial Research (IIR), Mr. Herbert A. Obiri, showed interest in continuing close contacts with COMSATS for participation in COMSATS activities in its Member States, such as the repair and maintenance workshop held in Ghana last year.

On the invitation from the Director (ST&I) MESTI, Dr. Qureshi also visited the Ghana Atomic Energy Commission (GAEC) and observed the research activities in its different laboratories related to peaceful uses of nuclear technology in Industrial, Agricultural and Health sectors.

Dr. Qureshi's visit to Ghana concluded with an understanding that the Ghanaian Ministry will remain actively in touch with COMSATS Secretariat to coordinate follow-up of the meetings held in Ghana and for other matters of mutual cooperation.

IRANIAN DEPUTY MINISTER PLEDGES SUPPORT TO COMSATS

On May 20, 2014, a two-member delegation of COMSATS comprising of Executive Director COMSATS, Dr. I. E. Qureshi, and Advisor (Programmes) COMSATS, Mr. Tajammul Hussain, met H. E. Mr. H. Salar Amoli, Deputy Minister for International Cooperation, Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, Islamic Republic of Iran. The COMSATS delegation was in Iran in connection with the 17th Coordinating Council Meeting of COMSATS. Also present in the meeting was the Acting President for International Cooperation, IROST, Dr. Mahmoud Molanejad.

The Executive Director informed Mr. Amoli about the significance of the Council meeting as a means of exploring scientific cooperation opportunities among developing nations. The Advisor (Programmes) COMSATS requested the honorable Minister to help expedite the release of funds for the award of five scholarships earlier offered by IROST for the students from COMSATS Member States.

The Minister acknowledged the impact of COMSATS international activities aimed at S&T capacity-building through mutual cooperation and ensured the COMSATS officials that the Government of Iran would continue to provide financial and intellectual support for the commendable mission of COMSATS. Regarding the proposal of establishing an International Thematic Research Group in the field of Renewable Energy Technologies, the Minister directed the officials of IROST to appoint a senior expert of IROST in this field to act as the Group Leader, who could guide the research work of the relevant group comprising of researchers from different



Member States of COMSATS.

Assuring the Minister of a thorough follow-up of his instructions, Dr. Molanejad informed that IROST plans to establish a Human Resource Centre in Advanced Technologies, for which COMSATS Headquarters would provide administrative support.

MEETING WITH THE AMBASSADOR OF IRAN TO PAKISTAN

On 8th May 2014, the Executive Director COMSATS called upon the Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Alireza Haghghighian, at the Iranian Embassy in Islamabad, to brief him about the then forthcoming (17th) Meeting of COMSATS Coordinating Council to be hosted by COMSATS Centre of Excellence in Iran, the Iranian Research Organization for Science & Technology (IROST). Other matters related to enhancing COMSATS S&T cooperation with IROST were also discussed during the meeting.

The Ambassador was briefed about COMSATS Coordinating Council, its functions and role, as well as the meeting agenda and the preparations made for the meeting. Among other matters discussed was COMSATS International Thematic Research Groups, two of which have IROST as their members; one on Climate Change and Environmental Protection, and the other on Natural Products Sciences. The Ambassador was also informed about a proposal to be presented at the Council meeting regarding the establishment of a similar group on Renewable Energy that will be led by IROST. The honourable Ambassador appreciated COMSATS programmes for facilitating scientific capacity-building and South-South cooperation in science and technology. He pledged his full support towards COMSATS programmes that involve Iranian S&T organizations.