

**Speech by Ms. Irina Bokova (Delivered by Ms. Vibeke Jensen)  
Director of UNESCO Office in Islamabad**

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Dr Imtinan Elahi Qureshi, Executive Director of COMSATS  
Distinguished members of COMSATS Council

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by expressing my deep appreciation and sincere thanks to the Government of Pakistan for hosting the Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS). I would like to particularly thank to Dr Imtinan Elahi Qureshi, the Executive Director of COMSATS, who has invited UNESCO to participate at this important event.

As you know, last September, Member States agreed on the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. The Agenda charts a new vision for poverty eradication, sustainable development and peace, for the next fifteen years.

For the first time at this level and with such clarity, the role of science, technology and innovation is explicitly recognized as a driver of sustainability. Science, technology and innovation hold answers to key questions we must address, including equitable and inclusive growth, poverty eradication, and sustainable development.

In November 2015, just as world began to implement the 2030 Agenda, UNESCO launched "*UNESCO Science Report*".

The report painted a picture of global change, where clear trends are visible.

First, despite financial pressures, there has been a rise in research expenditure, number of researchers and scientific publications.

Global expenditure on research and development is rising. Between 2007 and 2013, it increased faster (by 30.5 percent) than the global economy (up 20 percent).

At the same period, the world was also marked by important shift in the expenditure on research and development landscape. The high-income countries have cut back their public spending within austerity budgets, while private sector funding has been maintained or increased. Meanwhile, low income countries have increased public investment in research and development. Much of this investment is in the applied sciences and spearheaded by the private sector.

The volume of scientific publications worldwide progressed by 23% between 2008 and 2014, slightly faster than the number of researchers (20%).

A second trend is that the North–South gap in research and innovation is gradually narrowing. A large number of countries are now incorporating science, technology and innovation into national development agendas. More and more countries are planning to reduce their reliance on raw materials and move towards knowledge economies.

With this, broad-based North-South and South-South collaboration is also increasing -- to solve pressing developmental challenges, tackle the consequences of climate change and lay the foundations of green economies and green societies.

Unfortunately, at the same time, disparities remain persistent, between countries and within them. And gender disparities are also prominent in the science sector favoring men.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

UNESCO is very committed to promoting South-South cooperation in science, technology and innovation (STI) as part of our integrated STI policy approach. There are at least three main reasons for this:

First, over the past fifty years, many developing countries have developed substantial knowledge and acquired capacity and experience in setting up institutions, developing human resource capacities and mobilizing financial resources for the development of science, technology and innovation. Many of them have developed new technologies and

new competencies in renewable energy, genetic engineering, biotechnology, electronics and semiconductors, and information and communication technology.

Second, traditional and practical knowledge generated in the South can be shared including traditional knowledge of medicines, ecosystems, social formations, and the sustainable use of resources.

Thirdly, to develop South-South cooperation for STI to tackle common problems within the South. STI is seen as a key factor in solving common problems faced by developing countries such as food and water security, climate change mitigation, and tropical diseases. There is real urgency for developing countries to closely work together to build their capacity of STI.

Let me explain several actions UNESCO is taking in promoting South-South cooperation on STI. We supported the creation of The Academy of Sciences for the Developing World (TWAS) in 1983 in Trieste, Italy, by a distinguished group of scientists from the South under the leadership of the late Nobel laureate Abdus Salam of Pakistan. TWAS has become widely known as the Academy of Sciences for the Developing World. Since 1991, UNESCO has assumed responsibility for administering TWAS funds and personnel. The main mission of TWAS is to promote scientific excellence and capacity in the South for science-based sustainable development. To this end, the Academy conducts activities to recognize and support high-level scientific research in the South, provide promising scientists in the South with research facilities necessary for the advancement of their work; facilitate contact between individuals and centres of scholarship; and encourage scientific research on major problems faced by developing countries. TWAS has played a key role in the development of South-South cooperation through its sponsorship of such initiatives as the TWAS fellowship programme.

In 2008, UNESCO supported the establishment of the International Center for South-South Cooperation on Science, Technology and Innovation in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, as a category 2 center under the auspices of UNESCO. The main purpose of the center is to integrate a developmental approach into national STI policies, to build national capacity, to exchange experiences, to create a network of centres of excellence in developing countries and to support the exchange of students, researchers and scientists.

Similar goals guide the UNESCO University Chairs that has been created across the world -- most recently the *UNESCO Chair in Climate Science and Policy* at The Energy and Resources Institute University, in New Delhi.

In 2013, UNESCO and the Government of the Peoples' Republic of China established a UNESCO Chair at the Beijing Institute of Technology and the Chinese Science and Technology Exchange Centre, to disseminate knowledge, technology development and transfer on climate change with developing countries.

In Brazil, the *UNESCO Chair in South-South Cooperation for Sustainable Development*, at the Federal University of Pará, promotes South-South cooperation for sustainable development.

Within the same spirit to promote South-South cooperation on STI, Dr Qureshi, Executive Director of COMSATS and Madam Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to formalize the cooperation between COMSATS and UNESCO. The overall objective of the MoU is to provide a framework for cooperation between UNESCO and COMSATS to support the development of more effective and relevant policies and actions affecting science, technology and innovation for sustainable development in the South.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, the 2030 Agenda must address the big questions of our time -- questions about eradicating poverty, enhancing food security, promoting sustainable energy, managing water and environmental resources, controlling disease, mitigating natural and man-induced disasters, promoting innovation and fostering sustainable cities.

South-South cooperation in Science, technology and innovation is essential here – to share knowledge and the ability to create it.

COMSATS and UNESCO are well-positioned to accompany these changes and take them forward. Therefore, we need to continue to work hand in hand and translate the MOU into concrete actions of cooperation.

Thank you very much for your attention.