

**ADDRESS BY MR. AKHLAQ AHMAD TARAR  
CHAIRPERSON COMSATS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

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Dr. I. E. Qureshi, Executive Director COMSATS

Prof. Eduardo Posada, Chairperson COMSATS Coordinating Council

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Dr. Benony Komla Kortatsi, Director (Science, Technology and Innovation), Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, Government of Ghana

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning

I am very pleased to be present here today in Accra, and have the honour to address this joint opening ceremony of COMSATS 2<sup>nd</sup> Consultative Committee meeting and the 16<sup>th</sup> Coordinating Council meeting. As Chairperson of the Consultative Committee, comprising the representatives of COMSATS' twenty-one Member States, I welcome the distinguished delegates who have travelled from three continents to be here in this vibrant and colourful capital of the Republic of Ghana. I am also glad to see a large number of local academics, dignitaries and members of diplomatic community who have kindly joined us this morning. I thank them all for sparing the time to attend this ceremony.

The common objective of both COMSATS' meetings is very clear; it is to discuss ways and means of developing S&T cooperation among COMSATS Member States. The significance of having consultations to foster mutual cooperation and finding avenues of specific collaborative activities for the growth of S&T sector among developing countries is not lost on any one. While there is no two opinions about the role that S&T capacity plays in the economic progress of nations, the practical realization of this developmental recipe is usually fraught with challenges that depend on the economic and political profiles of different countries. A common denominator in all cases, however, can be categorized as the lack of human and capital resources. Often, the absence of political will and misplaced priorities aggravate the situation, in spite of the public pronouncements of good intentions and promises to give preferential treatment to the development of science and technology. It is worth recalling that, except China and Tunisia, none of the COMSATS countries has Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) equal to even 1% of their respective GDPs.

It is clear that a paradigm shift is needed to put S&T at the core of development agenda. Once the relationship of S&T capacity and socio-economic development is fully

recognized and imbedded in public policy, the next step is to generate this capacity in a reasonable time-frame. Two factors play crucial role for this to happen; firstly, highly qualified manpower is to be created through existing educational system or specially created institutions, and secondly, to develop institutional infrastructure for conducting necessary R&D work. These two ingredients are necessary, although not sufficient to translate intellectual capital into economic activity. Citing the example of my own country, which has a huge human resource of 100 million young people (below the age of 24) comprising about 55% of the total population, and a diversified educational system, the S&T output is nowhere near the desired level. Furthermore, the scientific and technological output from even a few pockets of excellence is not fully utilized for the growth of economic activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This situation is not uncommon in most developing countries. An objective analysis of the ground situation in Pakistan undertaken by a team of scientists, policy makers, educationists and members of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, under the leadership of Executive Director COMSATS, has led to the development of Pakistan's new Science, Technology and Innovation Policy framework after a gap of more than 12 years. The prescribed remedies given in the form of a list of 115 actions contains some obvious steps, such as allocation of 1% of GDP on GERD by 2015 and 2% by 2020. However, the unusual features include the inculcation of scientific approach throughout the fabric of entire society; encompassing, re-structured science education, new R&D institutions, incentives for scientific careers, public dissemination of scientific knowledge, encouragement of high tech entrepreneurs and establishment of incubation centres and technology parks, to name just a few.

Even with the best national efforts, it is understood that the elevation of a country to become a knowledge society is unachievable without international partnership. A huge amount of financial resources and human efforts can be spared by getting into North-South and South-South cooperation programmes. Learning the best practices and sharing the results of successful ventures, for the uplift of socio-economic conditions of deprived populations in developing countries, is practical and desirable. It is in this area, that organizations like COMSATS, can play the role of a catalyst.

I am very proud to say that the Government of Pakistan took a wise decision back in 1994 to help the developing countries establish a voluntary forum, through which they find an opportunity to exchange scientific know-how, build S&T capacity and get support for undertaking joint research activities. The COMSATS Secretariat, which is fully financed by the Government of Pakistan, through the Ministry of Science and

Technology, is a resource for all Member Countries to be used for advancing their national interests through multilateral cooperation.

It is very encouraging that the representative of the Heads of State/ Government that met in Islamabad during the COMSATS' Ministerial level second Commission meeting in April 2012, reiterated their commitment to support COMSATS and fully participate in its programmes. It goes without saying that the most tangible outcome of this commitment should be the allocation of necessary finances for helping COMSATS to effectively help scientific communities in Member States. With profound appreciation of financial inputs by some countries and in-kind inputs in the form of academic contributions or sponsorship of COMSATS' related activities in their countries, it is my respectful submission that all Member Countries may consider the possibility of entering into official protocols of Annual Membership Contribution with COMSATS. On the part of Pakistan, I reiterate the resolve of my Country to continue the existing annual grant of US \$ 0.4M to COMSATS and allocate additional funds, whenever feasible.

I take this opportunity to extend also the invitation to all COMSATS Member States to review and strengthen their bilateral S&T cooperation agreements with the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of Pakistan. Cordial political relations exist between Pakistan and all countries represented here. But unfortunately, in most cases, these friendly ties are not fully exploited for mutual technical assistance and trade with each other. During the course of the Consultative Committee meeting, I will be presenting the strengths of Pakistan' S&T sector, and will be glad to find common approaches to address shared problems.

In the end, it is my pleasant duty to thank the Government of the host country, Ghana, and MESTI for hosting COMSATS two meetings. The excellent arrangements made by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research are highly appreciated. I thank all relevant authorities for the hospitality extended to the delegates of the two meetings. On behalf of myself and the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of Pakistan, I thank all delegates for their participations in the meetings and sincerely hope that the deliberations spanning three days will be informative and fruitful.

May God bless you.