

**ADDRESS BY PROF. EDUARDO POSADA F.
CHAIRPERSON COMSATS COORDINATING COUNCIL**

Mr. Akhlaq Ahmad Tarar, Federal Secretary, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of Pakistan (Chairperson of COMSATS Consultative Committee)

Dr. Imtinan Elahi Qureshi, Executive Director of COMSATS

Dr. Abdulai Baba Salifu, Director General, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Ghana

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

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

As Chairman of the Coordinating Council of COMSATS, I want first of all to express my sincere gratitude to the Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation of Ghana and to the CSIR for their support in the organization of the 2nd Meeting of COMSATS Consultative Committee and the 16th Meeting of COMSATS Coordinating Council and for the wonderful hospitality of this beautiful country.

It is also a great honour to represent my own country, Colombia, and to some extent, to serve as a link between two of the most promising regions of the world, Africa and Latin America, that share many common points such as our degree of development, our problems but also the challenges that we face and the need of innovative solutions.

COMSATS was created under the initiative of Prof. Abdus Salam, who was one of the main promoters of science as a key element for the socio-economic development of the countries of the South.

An essential role of COMSATS is to support interaction among scientists and international S&T organizations and to promote the cooperation between two or more countries in specific research projects. Our social, climatic, topographic conditions are very different from those in industrialized nations and need, therefore, the development of original solutions well adapted to our particular characteristics. Tropical diseases, knowledge and use of biodiversity, analysis of climatic changes in our regions and their influence on desertification processes or floods, are good examples of fields which have a high interest for our countries and that are already being studied by different COMSATS Centres of Excellence worldwide.

Traditionally, in our countries the scientific cooperation has been limited to PhD training in industrialized countries and in some cases to the development of research also in

cooperation with developed nations. The cases of South-South collaboration are rare even inside a given country.

This is clearly the case in my continent and I am sure that to a similar extent it also happens in Africa. In Latin America we have many examples of regional organizations, OAS, UNASUR, the Andean Community, MERCOSUR, created in some cases for commercial reasons and in some others for political purposes but without a coherent comprehensive organization. In Africa, as far as I understand, the African Union has more ambitious goals and a stronger structure than any one of the American initiatives but it is still far from organizations like the European Union.

This situation is still more dramatic in the particular case of scientific cooperation in Latin America. Several years ago, OAS and the Andean Pact established specific programs for science and technology and supported financially research projects of interest for the region. Today, such initiatives have stopped and there are no special offices with this particular role in any one of the regional bodies. In this sense we have to accept that we are moving back to the situation that we had in the sixties, before OAS and UNESCO launched the initiative of the Americas that led to the creation of most of the S&T organizations in our countries.

In Africa the situation is certainly much better, in this respect thanks to the initiatives of the African Ministerial Council on Science and Technology and the Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action. I am convinced that COMSATS can be an important actor in diffusing this excellent example in my own continent.

It is surprising that in the XXI century, the governments of developing countries have not yet understood that economic and social development require a real effort in education and in science and technology to which the highest priority must be given.

In the modern world the role of science is increasingly important, not only as a key factor for industrial development but in connection with the preservation of the environment and the survival of mankind. In this respect, it is essential to promote cooperation between natural and social sciences as a powerful tool for understanding the evolution of society and establishing the appropriate strategies for development. The benefits of modern scientific knowledge have the potential of changing the destinies of nations by reinvigorating economies, improving the health and nutrition of populations and providing means for decent living.

In this respect, there are several urgent actions that countries of South must consider and that can be actively promoted by COMSATS. Among them I can mention:

- To promote fundamental changes in education at all levels with emphasis in science education as an essential tool for the promotion of a basic cultural change. A special importance should be given to the training of scientists at MS and PhD level.
- To establish long-term policies for science, technology and innovation, that include generous and stable financing and mechanisms to attract private investment for research. A minimum goal should be a national investment of at least 1% of GNP.
- To improve the cooperation of universities and research centers with industry through government financing and tax reductions, and to establish incentives for the creation of new High-Tech industries.
- To provide efficient mechanisms for the administration of resources even if this should require changes in the current legislation.

The cooperation between our centers can offer innovative solutions of common interest that can be transferred to the productive sector. We all know that our institutions are producing science and technology of a very high level. However, only in very few cases this generates products of social or economic impact. Traditionally our governments and our industry: buy most of the foreign soft and hard technology, ignoring locally generated products which are often much better adapted to our particular conditions.

COMSATS is an extremely useful instrument to promote scientific cooperation in science and technology and to contribute to the economic and social development of our nations. I want to invite Member States to give this institution the importance it deserves, and to provide sufficient funds, for the development of joint research programs.

The commitment at the International Centre for Physics (CIF), Colombia, which I represent, is to increase the participation of Latin-American institutions that can be involved in projects with other members of COMSATS Network. Thanks to information and communication technologies, the cooperation is now much easier than in the past and the geographical distance is no longer an obstacle. However, the personal contacts remain essential at the initial stages of collaboration, at least, and for this reason we must try to organize comprehensive scientific activities in the American continent.

In order to promote this collaboration, It could be of great interest to consider the possibility of creating a regional COMSATS Centre in Africa and why not, in Latin America

Finally, I would like to congratulate our Executive Director COMSATS, Dr. I. E. Qureshi, and his team for the excellent preparations made for these meetings, and for their continuous contribution to the consolidation of COMSATS. Thanks to their work, our institution is playing an increasingly important role in the countries where the Member States and Centres come from. My deepest thanks also to the local organizing team for the wonderful work that they have done in bringing people from four continents together for a meeting which, I am sure in advance, will be a great success.