MESSAGE OF THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION, HON. JOE OTENG ADJEI

(Joint Inaugural Session of the 2nd Consultative Committee and 16th Coordinating Council Meetings of COMSATS, 1st May, 2013, Accra, Ghana)

Mr. Chairman,
Executive Director, COMSATS
Distinguished Members of COMSATS Focal Points
Director-General of CSIR-Ghana
Deputy Director-General, CSIR-Ghana
Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Representatives/Directors of International organizations in Ghana
COMSATS Liaison Officers
Directors of CSIR Research Institutes
Directors of MDAs Present
Research Scientists
Distinguished Participants
Members of the Press
Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to express my sincere gratitude, on behalf of the Government of Ghana and my own behalf to COMSATS for giving Ghana the unique opportunity to host the 2nd Consultative Committee and the 16th Coordinating Council Meetings of COMSATS, concurrently at this time that the greatest task confronting the country is making Science, Technology and Innovation the bedrock of socio-economic development and for that matter the driver of the Government's Better Ghana Agenda.

I am particularly grateful and highly honoured as the Minister for Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, to be here with you this morning, to deliver the keynote address at this singular occasion of the joint opening sessions of these very important meetings.

I am also delighted to note that this is the second time in succession that the COMSATS Consultative Committee Meeting is being held in West Africa. The 1st Consultative Committee Meeting was held in Abuja, Nigeria on 27th April, 2009. We in West Africa thank the COMSATS Secretariat for the honour done us by holding two successive meetings in the sub-region.

Historic accounts of mans' application of science can be traced back to ancient Egypt where that civilization was able to achieve remarkable development through the application of science in the building of the pyramids that still stand today. Throughout history many civilizations have harnessed the use of science to achieve remarkable progress thereby improving the lives of many. It is through science that today it is possible to travel the world over in relatively short time; the use of electricity for energy

purposes, telecommunications, etc. Certainly, therefore, for any nation to succeed in bringing the best quality of life to its people, that nation must make sciences, technology and innovation key, and serve as the bedrock to catapult the nation to economic development.

Indeed, nations in the north and the far-east have realized this early enough and have invested their human and material resources in Science and Technology. These nations have, therefore, reaped and are still reaping the benefits in global competitiveness and better life for their people.

Meanwhile, competitive pressures on the national economies in the south are enormous. The global trade environment which is dominated by rapidly emerging technologies and processes produced and developed in the north and the far-east is gradually beginning to threaten local enterprises in the South. Climate change and its consequences in terms of food crises and threats to human welfare are affecting countries in the south just as it is doing to the entire global ecosystem.

However, the opening up of trade opportunities in the global markets in general and the mounting requirements of the World Trade Organization Treaty on Technical Barriers to Trade (Uruguay Rounds of Talks) pose opportunities and risks to the developing economy of the countries in the South. Local enterprises can still be competitive in the global trade environment with enhanced innovation and scientific content in their operations in all areas. In this regard, the South as a matter of urgency has to make urgent policy decisions to harness STI.

It is an undeniable fact that various countries within COMSATS fraternity faced with challenges are trying to solve these problems single-handedly. I believe, however, that if we tackle these challenges collectively, rather than individually, we can overcome them. It, therefore, gladdens my heart that these COMSATS meetings have facilitated the congregation of scientists, mathematicians, technologist and other distinguished scholars, under the COMSATS platform for the promotion of Science, Technology and Innovation for the sustainable development of the South. I am also happy to note that COMSATS' Coordinating Council has among other things been striving through the provision of the centres of excellence to attract talents, minimise brain-drain and induce competent scientists and technologists working overseas to return to their home countries;

I have been told that researchers from various scientific institutions in COMSATS member countries have cooperated in research in international thematic areas. These include:

- Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs),
- Agriculture, Food Security and Biotechnology,
- Natural Products Sciences,
- Climate Change and Environmental Protection,
- Materials Science,

- Mathematical Modelling,
- Construction Materials,
- Space Technology and its Applications.

Researchers from COMSATS' Science and Technology Centres of Excellence have participated in joint technical cooperation projects and technology-transfer programmes. They have also engaged in Collaborative Research Programmes (CRP) in partnership with international donor/development agencies such as UNESCO, TWAS and IDRC.

I have also been told that member countries have benefitted from joint ventures initiated by COMSATS, to promote socio-economic development in remote and marginalized communities. These include the establishment of bio-gas plants, distance education and tele-health services. COMSATS has also provided financial, technical and administrative support for organizing joint international and regional workshops, seminars and conferences by member States to facilitate and enhance technical cooperation. I want to congratulate you on this kind of cooperation.

Mr Chairman, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, it would be recalled that since the 1st COMSATS Coordinating Council meeting in Pakistan in 1994, series of meetings (14) have been held all aiming at giving political support and direction to scientific and technological inventiveness aimed at finding solutions to the numerous developmental challenges in the South. It is also worthwhile noting the significance of the setting-up of Centres of Excellence, which ensure the building of adequate capability in advanced scientific and technological competences in the South for healthy cooperation with the North in science and technology.

I understand the Centres of Excellence generally promote and facilitate the transfer of technology; provide highly qualified technical personnel to industry; provide the platform for finding scientific solutions to intricate developmental and environmental problems in the South; and encourage joint technological ventures amongst the members of the Network.

Ghana, through the efforts of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), which is a Centre of Excellence of COMSATS and the Ministry of Environment Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) is honoured to be hosting jointly the Consultative and Coordinating Meetings of COMSATS in Accra. These meetings I believe will strengthen and also give political backing to the gains made in the previous meetings and the present deliberations. I wish to sincerely applaud the major role the Chairman and the Executive Director of COMSATS Headquarters and his secretariat staff are playing in the economic transformation in the South. I wish to express my heart-felt appreciation to the organizers of these Meetings especially the Director General of the CSIR, Dr Abdulai B. Salifu and his able lieutenants for organising this joint Meetings successfully.

I am informed that the Consultative Committee Meeting will among others aim at:

- Reviewing the five-year Strategy of COMSATS approved by the Coordinating Council,
- Strengthening the coordination between COMSATS Focal Points and Centres of Excellence in Member States to facilitate the implementation of COMSATS programmes and activities,
- Enhancing the role of Focal Points in addressing the financial issues of COMSATS

I hope that participants at this Consultative Committee Meeting, in their deliberations, will focus on using COMSATS as a platform for addressing the following key issues:

- National advocacy for awareness creation on the role of science and technology in addressing development challenges in education, health, energy, agriculture, environment, information and communication technology, water and sanitation, housing, transportation.
- Capacity building in biotechnology, hydrology, engineering, medicine, food processing technologies, alternate energy technologies, nanotechnology, ICTs, policy and strategic planning to meet the development challenges of the south.

Mr Chairman, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, adequate investment in science and technology is crucial for nations in the south to make a meaningful quest for sustainable economic growth and development. It is essential, therefore, to vigorously and effectively promote excellence in science and technology among member countries of the South. With improving conditions and attainment of higher level of excellence in the south, institutions in the North would find it easier to cooperate with those in the South.

Mr Chairman, distinguished ladies and gentlemen I would like to emphasize the need for Centres of Excellence of COMSATS to put in more effort not only for the sustainable development of the South, but also be a key focus of international cooperation in the larger interest of mankind.

Once more, I welcome you all to this joint session and wish you all gratifying scientific experiences and productive deliberations and also restful and pleasant stay in Ghana.

Thank you and God bless you all!