

RAPPORTEURS' REPORT

3rd Meeting of COMSATS Consultative Committee 26th October 2015 Accra, Ghana

The 3rd meeting of COMSATS Consultative Committee was held on 26th October 2015, in Accra, Ghana, under the Chairmanship of Mr. Fazal Abbas Maken, Federal Secretary, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of Pakistan. The meeting was held in conjunction with the COMSATS' 3rd General Meeting to be held on the following two days. The Committee Meeting was graciously hosted by the Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), Government of Republic of Ghana. The representatives from China, Egypt, Ghana, Iran, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda and Zimbabwe, in addition to the senior officials of the COMSATS Secretariat attended the meeting. An eleven point agenda was deliberated upon during two technical sessions. The COMSATS' international role and programmes for S&T-led development of its Member States were evaluated in the light of its Mission and Objectives. The Committee welcomed the membership of Morocco and Palestine and noted that Turkey is participating in the meeting as a potential Member State awaiting its ratification from the concerned State authorities. The following observations and recommendations were made during the meeting:

1. The Committee approved the Minutes of the 2nd Meeting of COMSATS Consultative Committee (1st May 2013, Ghana), and showed satisfaction over the implementation status of its decisions.
2. The participants of the Meeting also took stock of the follow-up of 2nd Commission Meeting of COMSATS (April 16-17, 2012, Pakistan) and welcomed the organization of the 3rd Commission Meeting at the level of representatives of Heads of State/Government that will follow the 3rd meeting of the Consultative Committee.
3. The Meeting appreciated COMSATS' activities undertaken during the period from May 2013 to October 2015, in the light of COMSATS Strategy (2012 - 2016) that was approved by the Coordinating Council and endorsed by the Consultative Committee in its second meeting.
4. The Country Statements by the members of the Consultative Committee or their representatives gave out important information on S&T standing and vision for S&T-led development of these countries. The following observations were made by the delegates:

- i. China expressed its pleasure on being a founding Member State of COMSATS and re-iterated its commitment to actively participate in COMSATS' programmes and activities. The efforts of COMSATS Secretariat were appreciated to enlarge its membership to generate more resources for science and technology cooperation. It was hoped that COMSATS will continue its efforts in facilitating South-South cooperation. In this regard, the emphasis would be given to Human Resource Development.
- ii. Egyptian scientific community is well-aware of COMSATS' programmes and the organization enjoys good reputation. Egypt is currently spending 1.1% of its Annual Budget on the development of science and technology, and is making efforts to raise this figure to 5% in future. The Science and Technology Research Funds have been established for supporting the research efforts of the country. Egypt is currently collaborating with many developing countries, and wishes to extend its scientific cooperation to all Member States of COMSATS. The possibility of establishing an Egypt-COMSATS research fund was also considered feasible.
- iii. Ghana noted that Africa is lagging behind all other regions in the field of science and technology and contributes only 2% of the global scientific research publications. In this regard, it was noted that the countries that have made appropriate expenditure on research and development have been able to achieve significant development in a short span of time. The country commended COMSATS' efforts for narrowing the scientific and technological gap between the North and the South through facilitating the sharing of technological and human resources among the developing countries. Ghana is focusing on establishing technology parks, incubation centres, village technology centre, mathematical sciences, women education, national space data centres, etc. There are about 72 public education institutions in Ghana having focus on science and technology. Ghana will maintain its strong role in the operations of COMSATS.
- iv. Iran called for enhanced scientific cooperation among the developing countries, transcending the geographic and political boundaries. Iran is willing to extend collaboration to all countries of the South.
- v. Kazakhstan has more than 200 research universities, which are contributing to the development of S&T sector in the country. Kazakhstan's current focus is on the development of food technology, chemical sciences, space technologies and green energy. The country's commitment to have a strong participation in COMSATS' activities was re-iterated. The induction of KazNU as a COMSATS'

Centre of Excellence was considered a major step towards the use of COMSATS as a platform of scientific interaction with other developing countries. Kazakhstan would like to position itself as the hub of Green Technology and Green Energy.

- vi. Morocco expressed pleasure on its recent induction to COMSATS as a Member State. The country is willing to collaborate with COMSATS Member States in the areas of mutual interest.
- vii. Nigeria has recently launched a new Policy of Science, Technology and Innovation, which is a demonstration of the country's renewed commitment towards the promotion of science and technology. The policy's focus is on research and development, intellectual property rights, technology transfer, standardization and quality assurance, S&T management system, women education and ST&I partnerships. It will also support the small and medium enterprises (SMEs), in order to enhance and support their goods and services in the market place.
- viii. Pakistan has recently launched its 2025 vision and the 11th 5-year development plan, aspiring to become a knowledge-based economy. The National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy was also launched during 2012. Focus of these policies and plans is on the fields of agriculture, biotechnology, healthcare, water, etc. The help and support provided by COMSATS for the formulation of the new ST&I policy was acknowledged. The country is taking necessary steps to strengthen the S&T organizations of the country, as well as to re-orient the research activities towards market requirements. The total number of universities in Pakistan has risen to 171. Pakistan is a strong advocate of international collaboration in the fields of science and technology, and is a member of various international and regional organizations. Pakistan acknowledges the S&T advocacy role being played by COMSATS. The Member States were encouraged to benefit from the offers of scholarships and short-term trainings made by the COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT), Pakistan.
- ix. Palestine is focusing on creating a mass of highly educated and skilled manpower that is able to contribute towards the socio-economic development of the country. The country is aware of the significance of research and development activities for sustainable development. Palestine being under occupation of Israel finds it hard to realize its potential. In spite of difficulties, the country has been able to establish several Centres of Excellence, and constitute prizes for the outstanding researchers for their innovative work.

- x. Philippines is pleased to learn about the tremendous on-going contributions being made by COMSATS towards facilitating socio-economic development of Member States. The country expressed commitment to actively participate in the activities of the organization. A commitment was made to convey to the relevant authorities the need to designate a COMSATS Centre of Excellence in Philippines.
- xi. Senegal is focusing on higher education, research, science and technology. The country has established General Directorates of Research, in order to support strategic research projects. Senegal hosts two World Bank Centres of Excellence, each at a cost of US\$ 8 million. Senegal leads the PASET initiative, being implemented with support from World Bank, which aims to train 10,000 PhDs in different fields of science and technology. Senegal has set-up a fund amounting to US\$ 4 million for strategic research. The country is member of various regional and international organizations. Senegal would like to make use of the educational opportunities offered at COMSATS university.
- xii. Sri Lanka expressed pleasure on its association with COMSATS, and having had the opportunity of hosting a meeting of COMSATS Coordinating Council in 2015. It was informed that Sri Lanka is participating in four of the five active International Thematic Research Groups of COMSATS. Sri Lanka is committed to ensure harnessing science and technology with an objective of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.
- xiii. Sudan attaches great importance to S&T for achieving sustainable development. The Minister of Science and Technology is a reputed scientist. The country has recently established a Ministry of Science and Communications. The country is taking steps to enhance the incentives for contribution towards science and technology, and has made great strides in the field of e-Government. The focus of country's research efforts is on ICTs, medicine and agriculture. The illegal sanctions against Sudan are hurting the progress of the country in the scientific fields. These sanctions should be lifted immediately.
- xiv. Turkey is benefiting COMSATS through the collaborations established by the Turkish Centre of Excellence of COMSATS (TUBITAK MAM) with scientific organizations of other Members States, including Tanzania and Uganda. TUBITAK, Turkey, has a huge scholarship programme, which is available also

for COMSATS Member States. It was hoped that Turkey will soon attain the status of full Member State of COMSATS.

- xv. Tunisia is facing massive brain drain as well as financial constraints for research and development. However, the country is committed to enhance its scientific collaboration with other developing countries. The Water Research and Technologies Centre (CERTE) has added two more laboratories on desalination and fluid dynamics study. The water research expertise is available for sharing with COMSATS' countries.
 - xvi. Uganda is well aware of the role of science, technology and innovation for socio-economic development. The country's STI Policy of 2009 is focused on the promotion of research and development. Some of the initiatives taken by the government in this respect include establishment of the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports, establishing science and technology parks, and enhancing international collaboration. Furthermore, the goals in the science and technology sector are being brought in line with the broad development agenda.
 - xvii. Zimbabwe is reconfiguring its schools' and colleges' curricula and university mandates towards science, technology and innovation. The country has launched various higher education programmes in order to create a pool of educated and trained human resource, as well as strengthening its universities and R&D organizations for transformation into a knowledge based society. Zimbabwe is also establishing a number of Centres of Excellence in collaboration with the World Bank.
5. The document of the draft Harmonized Statutes of COMSATS to be presented to the 3rd Commission Meeting was endorsed with the hope that COMSATS' operations would be further streamlined after its approval by the Commission.
 6. The Committee noted with satisfaction the efforts made for the establishment of COMSATS' Endowment Fund and considered it imperative to stabilize the financial position of the organization. The Rules and Regulations of Endowment Fund framed by COMSATS Secretariat were endorsed during the meeting. It was hoped that the Member States would start contributing towards this Fund. The participants of the Meeting also expressed resolve to make efforts towards commencing or continuing regular payments of Annual Membership Contribution by their respective governments to fulfill their financial obligations and to show their commitment to COMSATS.

7. The Committee appreciated the efforts of COMSATS Secretariat to enhance the membership of its Commission and the Network of Centres of Excellence that resulted in induction of two more Member States (Morocco and Palestine) and three Centres of Excellence since its last meeting in May 2013 (ITI, Sri Lanka; CERTE, Tunisia; and KazNU, Kazakhstan).
8. The Committee noted with satisfaction the efforts made in connection with the capacity-building programmes, bilateral and multilateral cooperative research, and the consultancy/advocacy for the promotion of Science and Technology.
9. The launching of the two new International Thematic Research Groups (ITRGs) on: 'Mathematical Modeling' (2nd December 2014, Abuja, Nigeria); and 'Agriculture, Food Security and Biotechnology' (10th June 2015, Cairo, Egypt), was highly appreciated. Lauding the research undertakings of the active groups, the Committee called for efforts to activate other groups as well.
10. The Committee recognized the key role of the Focal Points of COMSATS towards securing the political support of their countries' top leadership for the international programmes of COMSATS, as well as for mobilizing necessary financial support for COMSATS Centres of Excellence in their respective countries. In this regard, the activation of COMSATS Endowment Fund was appreciated and its rules and regulations were approved to be submitted for consideration by the Commission.
11. The activities of the organization under its new initiatives, including COMSATS Distinguished Professorship Scheme; COMSATS' Panel of Experts on Science, Technology and Innovation Policy; COMSATS Science Diplomacy Programme; COMSATS Technology Park, were lauded. COMSATS would like to enhance the scope of its programmes falling under these categories. Turkey offered to provide support for the on-going efforts. The Committee called for a stronger participation by the Member Countries/States in these programmes, as well as the ITRGs.
12. The Committee endorsed the Agenda of the 3rd Commission Meeting, which included: Mobilization of Financial Resources for COMSATS; Approval of harmonized Statutes of COMSATS; Placement of Representatives of Member States at COMSATS Headquarters; Discussion on South-South Cooperation Issues and COMSATS' Future Programmes; and Election of the new Chairperson for the next three-year term. It was hoped that the Commission Meeting would result in important policy decisions and a renewed commitment to enhance collaboration amongst the Member States in the best interest of the organization's mandate.