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The Third Commission Meeting of COMSATS

27-28 October 2015

Accra, Ghana

Speeches



Commission on Science and Technology for
Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS)

The 3rd General Meeting of COMSATS
27 - 28 October 2015, Accra, Ghana

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The 3rd General Meeting of COMSATS 27 - 28 October 2015, Accra, Ghana

Welcome Address

by

Hon. Mahama Ayariga

**Minister for Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), Ghana
(Inaugural Session - October 27, 2015)**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure and honour to welcome you all on behalf of the Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), Government of the Republic of Ghana, and on my own behalf, to this third meeting of the Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South. My special thanks are due to the foreign delegates representing the Member States of the Commission who have so kindly taken time out from pressing schedules to come to Accra to participate in this important meeting.

I would also like to convey my special appreciation and gratitude to the Chairman of COMSATS' Consultative Committee and Federal Secretary Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of Pakistan, Mr. Fazal Abbas Maken, and some of the country delegates that participated in the third Consultative Committee held yesterday, and are present here with us in this inaugural ceremony. I also wish to thank all the diplomats of the COMSATS' member countries posted in Accra and other worthy guests for gracing this auspicious occasion.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, the Government of Ghana is cognizant of the multifaceted challenges facing the developing countries in the fast changing geopolitical environment of the world. On one hand, the governments of the South are required to fulfill the basic needs of their populations and, on the other hand, they are obliged to make efforts to keep pace with the S&T developments taking place in the countries of the North, that are revolutionary in nature. For the developing countries, the goal of achieving sustainable development in the near future is not only an uphill task, it requires extraordinary efforts on the national fronts as well as demands stronger and effective collaboration and cooperation on regional and international levels.

As the Minister for Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, I am pleased to note that the Government of Ghana highly values COMSATS as an organization of the countries of the South that promotes interdependence and self-reliance, and has the mission to bring about development, peace and prosperity to its member states through scientific and technological capacity building and joint efforts in areas of national and regional importance. Ghana attaches great importance to Science, Technology and Innovation as means to achieving accelerated growth and national development.

In 2010, my Ministry framed the National Science, Technology and Innovation (ST&I) Policy of Ghana, with a clear vision to integrate ST&I into national development plans for harnessing the nation's S&T capacity in order to achieve the national objectives of poverty reduction, competitiveness of enterprises, sustainable environmental management and industrial growth. Some of the specific objectives were to facilitate

mastering of scientific and technological capabilities; provide the framework for inter-institutional efforts in developing ST&I and programmes in all sectors of the economy to provide the basic needs of the society; create the conditions for the improvement of scientific and technological infrastructure for research and development and innovation. The policy was implemented on the principles of relevance, realism, cost-effectiveness, synergy and partnership.

Over the years, Ghana has achieved a lot in terms of establishing science and technology infrastructure, and building the scientific capacity of its R&D institutions. The objectives set out in the National Science, Technology and Innovation (ST&I) Policy of Ghana (2010) are yet to be fully realized. Enormous efforts are required to meet our STI targets. Ghana as a state certainly requires the support of other developing and developed countries in its strides for growth and development. Though well-endowed, with natural resources, however, the country depends heavily on international technical and financial assistance. Ghana has over the years increased its international linkages, role and participation on international fora. It is a member to a number of regional international organizations, including ECOWAS, African Union, G-24, G-77, IAEA, NAM S&T Centre and COMSATS.

As a Country, we have made all efforts at the national level to improve the country's international standing. According to the Index of Governance (2013), today Ghana is the 7th best governed country in Africa and rates 13th highest on the Human Development Index (HDI) in continental Africa. Ghana's is the 6th largest economy in the African continent by purchasing power parity (PPP) and Nominal GDP, making it one of the fastest growing in the world. In terms of PPP, Ghana has the highest per capita income in the sub-region of Western Africa, while it has the 10th highest per capita income in continental Africa.

The Government of Ghana is focused on its 'Agenda for Transformation', which inter alia calls for adopting new and innovative ways of doing things, drawing on the power of science and technology to diagnose and solve problems. The international forums and programmes of COMSATS indeed provide Ghana the opportunities to learn and reflect, especially in terms of inculcating Science and Technology in the national development agendas. Being a committed Member State of COMSATS, I am pleased to share Ghana's stance on S&T cooperation. The country welcomes S&T led South-South cooperation and pledges to play its due role for the benefit of other Member States.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I once again thank the honourable delegates of the COMSATS' member countries for their interest in the meeting. I am sure that you will have very useful discussions in the meeting and that with your wise decisions COMSATS will be able to achieve its objectives successfully. Finally I would like to place on record my sincere gratitude to all those in my Ministry, its R&D organizations and other Ministries and Government agencies that have helped us in making satisfactory arrangements for the COMSATS' Commission Meeting.

Once again let me welcome you to Ghana and to the meeting. I thank you for your attention.

The 3rd General Meeting of COMSATS 27 - 28 October 2015, Accra, Ghana

**Introductory Remarks
by
Dr. Imtinan Elahi Qureshi
Executive Director COMSATS**

(Inaugural Session - October 27, 2015)

- Honourable President of the Republic of Ghana, H.E. Dr. John Dramani Mahama
- Honourable Minister for Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, H.E. Mr. Mahama Ayariga
- Chairperson COMSATS Consultative Committee/Federal Secretary, Ministry of Science and Technology, Govt. of Pakistan, Mr. Fazal Abbas Maken
- Distinguished delegates of the Commission meeting
- Excellencies
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning,

It is my privilege and honour to make a few introductory remarks on this auspicious occasion of the inauguration of COMSATS 3rd General Meeting. On behalf of COMSATS, I am pleased to welcome distinguished delegates of the meeting, who represent their respective Heads of State or Heads of Government. The presence of high officials of COMSATS Member States, members of the diplomatic community, senior officials of the Govt. of Ghana, and the scientists and engineers of Ghanaian R&D organizations, is a matter of great satisfaction for COMSATS, as well as the host Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation. My profound thanks are due to all of you who are present here today because of your association with COMSATS' mission and objectives. My deepest gratitude is due to the Honourable Chief Guest, who has been kind enough to personally inaugurate this meeting in his capacity as the Chairperson of COMSATS. I sincerely hope that those of you who have travelled to Accra from abroad will find your stay pleasant and productive. The hospitality extended to all of us under the instructions of the Honourable President through the efficient staff of MESTI, and Members of Organizing Committee working under the State Minister Honourable Dr. Rashid Pelpuo, is highly appreciated.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

COMSATS is not just an organization; it is also a movement – a movement that derives its inspiration from the trail blazing leaders of the third world independence struggles such as; Toussaint L'Ouverture of Haiti, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Dr. Mohammad Mossadeq of Iran. What these revolutionaries had in common, was a strong belief that all people in every unified region of the world should have control over their lives, their

ways of life and their indigenous resources. They should be free to manage their own affairs, in ways that best suits their collective interests. In modern context, it means that the legitimate governments of all countries should be able to pursue independent political, diplomatic, and economic policies. If a common ground is found between two countries or groups of countries, they should be able to create and manage their own mechanisms of cooperation. If collaboration in S&T is deemed to be good for socio-economic progress of a group of countries, then such a collaboration need not be dependent or regulated by agencies outside that group. This is not to say that a well-meaning and sincere support from outside has to be ruled out. It simply means that developing countries should have the capacity to plan and execute the cooperation instruments, the way they believe is best suited to them. This is the philosophy that led to the creation of COMSATS as a voluntary intergovernmental organization of concerned developing countries, who wished to prove that they don't need to be prodded by other governments and international organizations to do what is best for them. They even did not have a political umbrella for this purely scientific enterprise. They believed in their own wisdom and tried to show to the world that the global South is capable of creating and sustaining S&T cooperation platforms as per their own vision and self-interest.

This wisdom of COMSATS' worthy founders appeared in the form of a Network of Centres of Excellence spread across four continents. These Centres are R&D organizations in their national capacity but, by virtue of their affiliation with COMSATS, the Network members commit themselves to help their fellow developing countries in areas of S&T in which they have managed to create a higher degree of expertise as compared to other countries. In return, these Centres expect to receive sharing of know-how in areas where they have been relatively less successful. COMSATS facilitates this interactivity and exchange of information in its Coordinating Council meetings which are held every year most regularly, and attended by reputed scientists and engineers who have been entrusted by their respective governments to be the Heads of these Centres. This mechanism has created cooperation opportunities for those Centres, which have the desire to enter into scientific partnership, as is clear from the bilateral MoUs that emerge out of the interactions that take place in the Coordinating Council meetings. Collectively the 20 Centres of Excellence of COMSATS employ over 15000 scientific workers. Also, we have in this Network, at least three full-fledged universities; one in Islamabad, one in Senegal, and one in Kazakhstan. The University in Islamabad, apart from being the Centre of Excellence, also bears the name of COMSATS; it is called COMSATS Institute of Information and Technology, with over 28000 students and around 3000 faculty Members.

The men and women of science that work in these institutions are not present here. But they are looking towards the administrative and political elites of our countries who have gathered here today, with great hope and expectations. They are hoping that bold decisions will be made in these two days, having profound effects on their working conditions. I hope their expectations will be met, to the extent possible, by the honourable members of the Commission. On the part of COMSATS Secretariat, the efforts to achieve objectives of the organization have always been intensive and

ceaseless. As I will report in my presentation to the Commission Members, COMSATS has held 67 capacity building events in the last four years; it is managing research groups under its International Thematic Research Group programme; and it is sponsoring exchange visits of scientists, creating educational opportunities through scholarships and undertaking activities in the domain of science policy and science diplomacy, in spite of a very lean budget.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As one humble member of the scientific community of a developing country who has spent 30 years of life in academic circles, I implore upon you to please accord greater trust to those who have adopted a scientific career and successfully negotiated a steep learning curve to reach the levels of scientific knowledge that they have. These people are the cream of our societies, representing all that is noble and exalted as human beings. The young and, may I say quite abundant, human resource that we have in our countries is our greatest asset and those with scientific and technical abilities are the most precious component of this asset, because they are the ones who can, if given encouragement and resources, ultimately transform our societies for the better, whenever that change comes; now or later or much later. Come it will, that is for sure.

My impassioned plea addressed to the highly honourable and sagacious people of authority who are assembled here, is to please make sure that R&D organizations of your countries working for national causes and for international S&T cooperation acquire the status of the Centres of Excellence in real sense of the word. These Centres should be able to attract the attention of the world by rolling out new scientific theories and technical products, which in US jargon, are called 'cool'. I assure you that any financial resource that you put into your scientific institutions will pay back and any kind of support; political, financial or academic that you extend to COMSATS will come back to you with considerable added value. I look forward to your enthusiastic support for COMSATS. Please don't let the world say that COMSATS, as an experiment of the developing countries to manage their own affairs in science, has not lived up to expectations.

With these words, and high optimism, I look forward to an extensive dialogue during the Commission meeting, resulting hopefully in the transformation of COMSATS into an organization with much higher impact than it had in the past. In the end I would like to thank the teams of organizers in Islamabad and Accra, who have worked really hard to provide you excellent facilities for the meeting and prepared informative documentation in the form of Working Paper and conference documents placed in your conference bags. Please feel free to contact us for any queries.

I wish you all an enjoyable and productive stay in Accra.

Thank you

**The 3rd General Meeting of COMSATS
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Remarks

by

Mr. Fazal abbas Maken

**Federal Secretary, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of Pakistan
(Chairperson of COMSATS Consultative Committee)**

(Inaugural Session - October 27, 2015)

The Minister of State at the Office of the President of Ghana

Hon. Elvis Afriyie-Ankrah

The Minister for Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, Govt. of Ghana

Hon. Mr. Mahama Ayariga (MP)

The Deputy Minister for Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, Govt. of Ghana

Hon. Dr. Alfred Sugri Tia

The Executive Director COMSATS

Dr. Imtinan Elahi Qureshi

Distinguished Delegates,
Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

It gives me great pleasure to speak on behalf of COMSATS Consultative Committee in this prestigious inaugural session of the 3rd General Meeting of COMSATS, which is being attended by the ministerial representatives of COMSATS member countries. I am honoured to be the Chairperson of COMSATS Consultative Committee, which comprises of top level administrative heads responsible for managing S&T sectors in their respective countries. The 3rd Consultative Committee meeting, as you all know, was held yesterday here in Accra. I am glad to report that the proceedings of the meeting went very smoothly, thanks to the excellent arrangements made by the Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology and the meticulous work of COMSATS' Secretariat in preparing well-written comprehensive documents. Some of the decisions made in that meeting will also be helpful in conducting the deliberations of the Commission meeting which is to start after this inaugural function. On behalf of myself and other members of COMSATS Consultative Committee, I wish to register our sincere gratitude to the Government of Ghana, and the President himself, for the warm hospitality we are enjoying in Accra.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since we are living in an age of free information flow; it is possible for us to fully understand the causes of our underdevelopment. We do know what technologies are making headways leading to huge economic dividends for the creators of these technologies. We do understand that knowledge is increasingly becoming more precious than any amount of commodities and agriculture produce. Knowledge products, such as Microsoft windows, generate more revenues than ship loads of cotton or jute. The knowledge of human genetic code and the knowledge of how to manipulate genes are decidedly worth more than all the gold and diamonds in the mines of the world. So, we know that S&T capacity is the key to unlocking the door of our progress.

This clarity of understanding is accompanied with a frustration of not being able to do anything about it. Individual efforts by countries have been made, and isolated examples of success in some sectors have been achieved but the overall S&T profile of the global South remains dismal. In the case of Pakistan, I can quote the examples of significant success in terms of self-sufficiency in food, highest possible level of deterrence against foreign aggression and improvement in higher education enrollment. These are a few of the bright spots among many well-known short-comings.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The establishment of COMSATS was an idea of Prof. Dr. Abdus Salam and the Pakistan's political leadership exhibited the vision to take this idea forward. It reflects the commitment of the Government of Pakistan to give S&T its due share in national development strategy, and also to let Pakistan play a role for the development of other fellow countries belonging to the global South. As Dr. Qureshi has indicated, the investment made by Pakistan, has been paid back in several ways. COMSATS was able to launch an educational institution unlike any other traditional university, which has captured a ranking slot among top 10 universities of Pakistan within 15 years. With its campuses distributed in six cities of Pakistan, it has become a much sought-after model of a modern university in a developing country. I am glad to note that 100 scholarships are offered every year by this university to eligible students in COMSATS member countries to pursue graduate studies in selected disciplines.

COMSATS secretariat was helpful when we needed to prepare a new S&T policy document in 2011. A broader perspective of what is happening in other countries enabled us to absorb some of the novel elements of policies in other developing countries in our policy document. The concept of innovation was introduced for the first time as part of S&T strategy, while the role of public sector was imbibed from successful experiences of South Korea and Malaysia.

Distinguished delegates,

A small but efficient team at COMSATS secretariat is at your disposal, and ever ready to undertake assignments that benefit Member Countries in crucial areas of S&T. The

Government of Pakistan pays full running expenditure of the Secretariat in terms of staff and essential services. However, the execution of scientific programmes and international activities is our common responsibility. COMSATS is your own organization; making best use of the infrastructure that is in place is jointly in our hands. Together, we can make a difference, from the platform of COMSATS as well as any number of other fora, which serve our collective interests. I take this opportunity to thank the Government of Ghana, and pay my highest tribute to the respectable President, who has been kind enough to patronize COMSATS.

I thank once again for the kind hospitality that is being extended to all delegates and wish everyone pleasant and productive proceedings of the Commission meeting.

Thank you.

**The 3rd General Meeting of COMSATS
27 - 28 October 2015, Accra, Ghana**

**Inaugural Speech
by the Chairperson COMSATS**

**H.E. Dr. John Dramani Mahama
President of the Republic of Ghana**

(Inaugural Session - October 27, 2015)

Hon. Mr. Mahama Ayariga (MP), Minister MESTI, Ghana

Hon. Dr. Alfred Sugri Tia (MP), Deputy Minister MESTI, Ghana

Dr. Imtinan Elahi Qureshi, Executive Director COMSATS

Mr. Fazal Abbas Maken, Chairperson of COMSATS Consultative Committee

Excellencies;

Distinguished Delegates;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good Morning.

I am very happy to welcome all of you to the inaugural session of the 3rd General Meeting of the Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS).

I am grateful to my colleague Presidents and heads of governments in member states who have kindly nominated ministers or high level officials as their representatives to this meeting. The presence of delegations from 17 countries out of a total of 23 member states is a matter of satisfaction for COMSATS and for my own country as the host of this meeting. I thank all the delegates and assure them that they will be offered the best of facilities for the meeting in keeping with our high standards of comradeship and hospitality. I have no doubt you will enjoy your stay in Accra.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

Since the election of Ghana as the chair of COMSATS in 2012, the country has gone through a few political challenges. These range from the unfortunate ill-health and eventual passing away of our beloved late President to the holding of elections to form a new Government. You may also be aware that the outcome of the elections was challenged at the Supreme Court and it took almost one year for the matter to be determined. The nation went through the process with calm dignity and the outcome was accepted by all. I believe I can therefore say in all modesty that we proved our democratic credentials and remain an example for others to emulate. Subsequently, things settled down and I was briefed about COMSATS programs and my responsibilities as the chairperson of the organization. I was happy to learn that COMSATS is a platform created back in 1994 for the purpose of promoting Science and

Technology in the South. The briefing given by the Executive Director of the organization in the person of Dr. Imtihan Elahi Qureshi when he paid a courtesy call on me in Accra also gave me further details of the organization's operations. I must say that I was impressed by the nature and scope of these activities especially in the science and technology sector and the promotion of south-south cooperation.

I am also impressed with COMSATS because it is an international inter-governmental organization of developing countries whose aims are the achievement of socio economic progress through science and technology. As you may already be aware, the originator of the idea was a renowned nobel laureate in the person of Prof. Abdus Salam who had earlier established the International Centre of Theoretical Physics (ICTP) in Trieste, Italy. He also pioneered a revolution in scientific cooperation between the North and South. Through COMSATS, he wanted the South-South to cooperate and flourish under the spirit of self-help and mutual support. His enterprise has been successful in creating a movement for international scientific cooperation as evidenced by the achievement of ICTP over a period of 50 years. COMSATS and other similar organizations are no doubt working hard to project what should have been obvious to all; namely, the quintessential requirement of developing science and technology to bring about economic progress. The history of nations shows a direct relationship between technological advancements and political, military and economic dominance. It is therefore essential that the leaders of developing countries realize this and put in place the requisite measures for making it a prime concern.

Distinguished guests,

It is crucial for all of us to reflect on this from our individual perspectives and devise strategies to overcome impediments. This is not to say that developing nations have not made any attempts at all to incorporate science and technology in their development plans. Clearly, such attempts have been made but with varying degrees of seriousness and success. One can point to China as a superb example of rapid socio-economic progress through focus on education and science.

In Ghana, we have created a whole Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) to reflect how seriously we take the issue of science and technology. The ministry has made modest but enviable strides in the field as enumerated by the Honourable Minister. Our meeting here today will therefore give added impetus and a greater sense of urgency to the matter.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The world is currently faced with a myriad of challenges which are a matter of concern to all nations including even the developed ones. These include;

- i) Climate change and its effect on weather conditions;
- ii) Food and water security for increasing populations; and

- iii) The availability of sufficient energy to run industry and maintain a modern way of life.

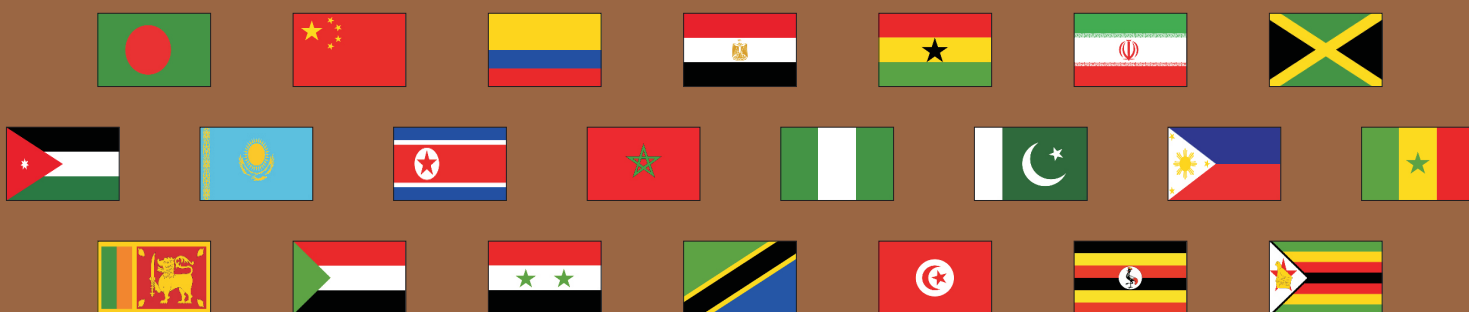
On top of these, developing countries face other peculiar challenges that affect their policy choices and place limits on what they can or cannot do in the interest of their people. Such countries are constrained when it comes to engagement with the international monetary system and access to world markets. They are often producers of raw materials for which they cannot earn much without value addition. In most cases earnings from their natural resources are therefore incapable of changing the lives of the indigenous populations. These vulnerabilities can best be addressed through unity and cooperation within and across developing nations. We have common interests and cooperation is the key for achieving peace and prosperity.

As the chairperson of COMSATS, I call on all member states to improve their cooperation with each other and redouble their efforts at the development of science and technology. This would require greater spending on the matter at home and an increased level of financial support towards south-south cooperation. I therefore call on you as representatives of your countries to make a special case for COMSATS when you get back home. It is an excellent platform for undertaking a variety of joint projects in education, scientific research and technological exchanges.

Thank you for your attention.



COMSATS' MEMBER COUNTRIES



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