

## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

### **DR. S. M. JUNAID ZAIDI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR COMSATS**

(20<sup>th</sup> Meeting of COMSATS Coordinating Council  
Cairo, Egypt, 14-15 May 2017)

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- Excellency, Prof. Khaled Kassem, Senior Assistant Minister for Strategic Plans and Supporting Systems, present on behalf of H. E. Prof. Khaled Abdel Ghaffar, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Government of Arab Republic of Egypt
- Honourable Prof. Dr. Ashraf Shaalan, President, National Research Centre, Egypt, and Chairperson COMSATS Coordinating Council
- Honourable Prof. Mahmoud Sakr, President of the Academy of Scientific Research and Technology, Egypt
- Honourable Members of COMSATS Coordinating Council
- Honourable Members of Diplomatic Community of COMSATS Member States
- Representatives of International Organizations
- Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentleman

Good Morning!

On behalf of the Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS), it is my honour and pleasure to welcome you all in the inaugural ceremony of the 20<sup>th</sup> meeting of COMSATS' Coordinating Council, which is being hosted by the National Research Centre (NRC). We are all grateful to the National Research Centre for the generous hospitality and the excellent arrangements made for holding this meeting.

I would like to pay sincere gratitude to the honorable Senior Assistant Minister for Strategic Plans and Supporting Systems, Government of Egypt, for sparing time from his busy schedule to grace this ceremony with his presence. The patronage and support

of the Government of Arab Republic of Egypt towards COMSATS is gratefully acknowledged.

I am immensely thankful to all of the foreign delegates for travelling long distances to be present here this morning in the beautiful and historical city of Cairo. This is indeed indicative of their commitment to COMSATS and its mission. I am also grateful to the representatives of the Egyptian R&D organizations, Universities, Ministries and Government departments; diplomatic community of COMSATS Member States in Cairo; and the officials and scientists of NRC, who are present among us in large numbers.

Ladies and Gentleman,

As we all know, Science and Technology is the most effective tool to improve the socio-economic conditions in the developing countries. In this regard, adequate investment for capacity building of scientific human resources is of paramount importance. The developing countries must also pay attention to devising effective national policies and action plans for development of adequate infrastructure and facilities for productive research and development. All of this can be catalyzed through international cooperation in science and technology, particularly South-South cooperation. This is where the international organizations such as COMSATS come in.

COMSATS is an intergovernmental organization striving for S&T-led sustainable socio-economic uplift of the developing countries. COMSATS currently comprises of 24 developing countries located in the continents of Africa, Asia and Latin America. It is an apex forum of the developing countries having Heads-of-State/Government of the Member States as Commission members, with the honourable President of Republic of Ghana currently holding the Chair of COMSATS. Here, I would like to mention the name of Prof. Dr. Abdus Salam, Nobel Laureate and a renowned Pakistani scientist, who conceived the idea of establishing such a forum to reduce and ultimately eliminate the widening gap of scientific know-how between the North and the South, which is leading to persistent economic disparities.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Realizing the importance of higher education and capacity building in the development process, COMSATS established a public-sector university in Pakistan in 1998, named the COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT). It now has fully functional campuses in 7 cities of Pakistan as well as a virtual campus, with an enrolment of more than 36,000 students and more than 3,200 qualified faculty members. The university currently offers 97 degree programmes, and is among the top ten universities of Pakistan, and at top most position in the field of 'Computer Science and Information Technology'. Another successful project of COMSATS in the host country, Pakistan, is the COMSATS Internet Services (CIS), which is the pioneer Internet Service Provider of Pakistan operating since 1996.

COMSATS' programmes in Member States pertain to scientific capacity-building through organizing and sponsoring seminars, workshops, conferences and meetings; facilitating collaborative research activities under its International Thematic Research Groups (ITRGs) programme; providing opportunities of scholarships, short-term trainings, experts exchange and laboratory resources sharing; and disseminating knowledge through websites, web-portals, and S&T publications.

Ladies and Gentleman,

The Coordinating Council is the functional arm of COMSATS, which is comprised of the Heads of 20 Centres of Excellence. The annual meeting of the Council, held at one of the Centre of Excellence, is an effective mechanism of South-South Cooperation and scientist-to-scientist level interactions.

The current meeting is being attended by the representatives of 14 Centres of Excellence, and two international partner organizations, in addition to the officials of COMSATS Secretariat. It is hoped that the discussions during the meeting will result in

the launching of new projects and programmes aimed at facilitating socio-economic development in the Member States.

I am thankful to NRC, especially our two very distinguished friends, Prof. Dr. Ashraf Shaalan and Prof. Hosam El-Sayed, for the consistent cooperation and support, and warm hospitality extended to the delegates of the meeting. I would like to pay gratitude to the local organizing committee members who have worked very hard to organize this meeting. Here, I would also like to admire the efforts of COMSATS' officials who have worked hard to provide the delegates with maximum facilitation, information, and necessary documentation for a successful Council Meeting.

In the end, I would once again like to thank the Honorable Senior Assistant Minister and the Government of Egypt for their solidarity with COMSATS. I hope that the delegates will have productive discussions during the proceedings of the meeting and an enjoyable stay in Cairo.

Thank you for your kind attention!