

## **Editorial by Dr. S. M. Junaid Zaidi, Executive Director COMSATS**

The beginning of the year 2020 has been grim and tormenting with COVID-19 posing a momentous and historical challenge at global level. As the death tolls rose and the sufferings and hardships of people intensified, states, communities and international organizations grappled with turning the tide and gearing up the systems to respond to the unprecedented situation. COVID-19 soon evolved from epidemic to pandemic bringing more misery and pain at a massive scale.

The deadly virus has exposed the inadequacy of the health related infrastructure and of disaster preparedness, driving home the urgent need to not only reform the systems but address the existing structural issues. Although COVID-19 has been called the 'equalizer', the sufferings of the poor and deprived communities get accentuated due to several limitations and constraints. Among the COMSATS' member states, it is especially painful that COVID-19 affected some with greater intensity. The Organization's valued member China was afflicted with the deadly virus first. China's efficient handling of the crisis has been inspirational firm resolve and demonstrably good preparedness of the Government to combat it with full force. Other member states, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey and Jordan, are experiencing the onslaught of the disease while other members of the COMSATS' fraternity are also tackling the problem with the hindsight of those that have already experienced the outbreak.

Our hearts go out to all those who have been victims of this disease. We express our solidarity with the governments and peoples of COMSATS' member states and the global community at large. The COVID-19 outbreak has put to test economic infrastructures catering to the five P's of UN's 2030 Global Agenda; 'peace' and 'prosperity' of this 'planet' and its 'people' and 'partnerships', while also presenting a plethora of opportunities for the last one of these. The pandemic has called for urgent action on grand scales for reorienting the health systems and digital coverage as well as for scientists and medical experts all over the world to cooperate on understanding the future trends and solutions. International cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation (ST&I) has never been more pertinent, relevant and urgent. ST&I-led sustainable development is the need of the hour that necessitates more and faster innovative approaches and solutions. COMSATS Secretariat urges all the institutions in member countries, especially the focal points Centres of Excellence, to gear up their initiatives and efforts in contributing towards this endeavor.