

SPEECH of Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary

Our Patron in Chief and Mentor Prof. Dr. Atta ur Rahman *FRS*
Honorable Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Khalid Mahmood Iraqi
Prof. Dr. Ashraf Shalan, Chairperson Coordinating Council
Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Nafees Zakaria
Prof. Dr. Mohammad Hassan Hon. President TWAS
My colleague Prof. Dr. Farzana Shaheen
Distinguished delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

Welcoming

I am extremely pleased to welcome you all to 24th Coordinating Council Meeting of the COMSATS, hosted by the International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences, a founding member of the Council. We are pleased that since the inception of the commission, the ICCBS has played a key role in its strengthening and expansion. In this long overdue Coordinating Council Meeting, a large number of centers of excellence are participating. These centers represent the key S&T competencies of COMSATS member states, and their presence here at one platform carved an excellent opportunity to build global science and technology partnerships for the benefit of people in the South, and meet the prevailing and emerging challenges which the world face today.

Science and Technology

Ladies and Gentleman

We live in a world which is defined by knowledge and its applications. As the Pakistani Nobel Laureate Prof. Abdus Salam once said the *Developing countries differ from developed countries not only because they have less wealth and capital but because they have less knowledge.*

The focus of the 24th coordinating council's meeting on education, and knowledge and international collaboration is, therefore, timely and important.

COVID 19 and Science

During this pandemic of unparalleled proportion, the science and technology have helped the human from existential threats. Never in the history of humanity, science and technology was so promptly deployed to face a global pandemic. Developed world was successfully able to "*transform this calamity into an opportunity*". Pandemic has once again the importance of good governances, social justice, investment in health and education, and most importantly indigenous capacity building in science and technology.

The pandemic, *Ladies and Gentlemen*, has also exposed the gross failures of global cooperation, as impoverished countries were left on their own to struggle with a health crises of unprecedented magnitude. The pandemic has highlighted the vulnerability and weakness of global social and economic systems. As Melinda Gates said:

“This pandemic has magnified every existing inequality in our society – like systemic racism, gender inequality, and poverty,”

POST COVID

Today the post COVID-19 pandemic world is indeed a mix of amazing contrast and disparity. Where countries of the global north, using the knowledge base they had built, have achieved fast track technological transformation, in every sphere including health, economy, education. Whereas the rest of the world is struggling to come out of the mess this pandemic has created. Some countries of the global south have already gone through a complete economic meltdown, several are in state of a whirling economic descend, while many are experiencing a recession of unprecedented magnitude.

This coordinating council meeting is even more important than ever in the context of post COVID world where economic hardships, not only adversely eroded the investment and attention towards science and technology, but also magnified the existing divide in knowledge. Before this growing knowledge gap become unbridgeable, we need to act and act promptly at all levels. In this last ditch effort, South-South cooperation is centrally important.

International S&T Cooperation

Ladies and Gentlemen

Enduring challenges of ramped poverty, youth unemployment, food insecurity, impact of global climate change, etc. have threatened the very existence of human race. No nation alone can meet these challenges, and thus global political will, systemic approach, deployment of science and technology, and international cooperation are imperative.

Strong research institutions are essential both as national capacity to handle local issues but also to engage in cross boundary and international cooperation. They are the places where best of scientific talent is nurtured, new knowledge is generated, and edifice of knowledge based development is laid. They serve as powerhouses of new ideas, and incubators of innovation.

ICCBS Role in Global Capacity Building

One such of excellence is International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences at the University of Karachi. Since its establishment in 1966 it has strived for global science and technology capacity building. It has trained over 2000 young researchers from some 50 countries in frontier research. It 17 specialized research facilities, has also trend several hundred young women researchers from the Afro-Asian countries. *We are pleased to have our alumni Dr. Radhika and Dr. Sirimal from ITT in the audience, we are very proud of their achievements.* The ICCBS is the only center in this region which has provided diplome training to 120 young German students. The Center has helped in the establishment and strengthening of research institutions, including Medicinal and Aromatic Research Center in Khartoum Sudan, Halal Product Testing Laboratory at KISR, Kuwait, Gen. Kotelawala Defense University Bioequivalence institute, and Center for Advance Research (KDU-CARE) in Sri Lanka, Medicinal Plant Laboratory at the Kazakh Al Farabi University Almaty, as well five joint Sino Pakistan Research Center to name a few.

COMSTECH Role in OIC S&T Capacity Building

From the platform of the OIC COMSTECH (OICs Ministerial Standing Committee for Science and Technology Cooperation) we have initiated massive programs including:

- a. Largest research and technical capacity building program

- b. Science and Exile Program
- c. Research project support program
- d. Country specific programs for Yemen, Nigeria, Sudan, Somalia, Kyrgyzstan, and Palestine.
- e. Health Africa Program in Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Uganda
- f. Institutional building
- g. COMSTECH Consortium of Excellence
- h. OIC Technology Portal
- i. Many more

I am extremely pleased to report that as per the founding vision of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, we have developed institutional mechanisms for inter Islamic cooperation in 57 member states, and mobility of research. We will be very happy to work closely with COMSATS under the able partnership of Amb. Nafees Zakaria on projects of common interest, as both institution have a shared vision.

Last but not the least I strongly believe the best model for socioeconomic development for in Global South is to invest in capacity building of our youth, and skills of young generation.

I would like to end my remarks with a quote that

“Scientific thought and its creation is the common and shared heritage of mankind.”

Ladies and Gentlemen

Merely benefitting from the knowledge of others and sitting at the fringes of global pursuit of scientific thought and creation is against the dignity of our intellect, and we must not suffer this humility.

Thank you very much for your presence here this morning.