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**Modalities to Strengthen Regional and Sub-Regional Cooperation  
through South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable  
Development**

Dear organisers, honourable delegates, diplomats, ladies and gentlemen, it is indeed a very proud privilege to speak to this august forum on the modalities to strengthen regional and sub-regional cooperation through south-south and triangular cooperation for sustainable development.

Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS) is an intergovernmental commission of 26 member states from Asia, Africa and Latin America. The Government of Pakistan hosts the Secretariat and pays for its operational costs.

Heads of the member Governments form the Commission which meets and deliberates on major policy issues and provides strategic guidance through its Secretariat based in Islamabad, Pakistan. Currently the President of Ghana is the Chairperson of the Commission.

At the second tier, there is a Consultative Committee, which comprises the heads of the Ministries of science and technology of the

member countries. This forum takes policy decisions in the light of guidance provided by the Commission and oversees the follow up progress made by the secretariat thereafter.

At the operational level, there is a coordinating council. This body comprises heads of 22 Centres of Excellence selected and nominated by the member states. It is further supported by a Technical Advisory Committee, a pool of 10 leading scientists from the world in fields relevant to the Centres of Excellence and the Commission. From the existing Centres, 6 International Thematic Groups (ITRGs) have been formed to share expertise and learn from each other's strengths in common areas of interest and find solutions for weaknesses at national and regional levels.

These three forums make the Commission an ideal platform for all stakeholders in the South and world over to benefit from. Since its inception in 1994, the COMSATS has contributed fairly well to the sustainable development of the South. However, given the size of the area, population and scarcity of resources, south has been struggling except for a few countries which have made good progress.

Our past experience has taught us a lot of lessons and has shown the fault lines which must be addressed if sustainable progress is to be made in science and technology at the country, sub-regional and regional levels. Some of the critical areas in which the south has been lacking behind are:

- 1- Lack of good human resource of researchers and scientists.
- 2- Absence of a steady supply of financial and ancillary resources.
- 3- Paucity of state of the art laboratories and infrastructure.
- 4- An uncompromising political will at the national, sub-regional and regional levels.
- 5- And lack of desired support from the north, international organisations and funding agencies.

Let me also mention here the important role being played and needed to be played by the Universities in providing an enabling environment for attaining of the critical factors mentioned earlier. A focus on improvement of human and physical infrastructure in tertiary education will not only guarantee self-sustainability but will also serve as a repository of knowledge for future research and academic pursuits.

Challenges in science and technology, in today's world, are national, sub-regional, regional and global. For country specific challenges and priorities governments are obliged to be more responsive because of their political survival and popularity. But at sub-regional and regional levels, problem identification, consensus building for joint action, commitment of political will, human and financial resources becomes a problem for attainment of desired goals. Major challenges like Climate Change, Health, Education and work force redundancy in the

wake of 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution need a collective response at the sub regional, regional and global levels. And this will not be possible without support and help from the North, international organisations like the UN, European Commission, Common Wealth, World Bank, Asian Development Bank and the likes.

However, it has been noticed with concern, from my interaction with my colleagues in the South, that there is an ever growing trust deficit between the North and the South when it comes to science and technology. The ever progressing landscape of S&T leaves the South with redundant technologies and know how while the North is moving ahead with new and more modern ones. What the south gets today will be redundant tomorrow and this makes things even worse especially given the fact that in many cases North benefits from the human and material resources of the South.

However, against all the odds, the South must act immediately and decisively and form meaningful and winning partnerships between south-south, north and international organisations because this will help them benefit from each other's strengths and experiences and find leading partners from the international community.

The term sustainability employs the ability to maintain something at a certain level. Ever growing population in majority of countries in the South makes sustainable development all the more difficult as the progress in S&T is confronted by an ever growing population and the

problems associated with it. So governments of the region must take cognizance of this serious problem while endeavouring to attain sustainability through science and technology.

We at COMSATS are committed to assist the international community and the governments in the south achieve lasting sustainability for development through science and technology. Any role which can facilitate partnerships and dialogue among intending partners will find our unwavering support.

In the end let me conclude by quoting Robert Frost the famous American poet,

*The woods are lovely dark and deep*

*But I have promises to keep*

*And miles to go before I sleep*

*And miles to go before I sleep.*

Let us keep striving together until we rise and shine.

**THANK YOU**