

# **27<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Regional Planning Council (RPC) of ECO**

**December 5-8, 2016, Tehran- Iran**

## **Statement by**

**The President ECO Science Foundation, Prof. Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro**

Excellency the Chairman of 27<sup>th</sup> RPC,

Excellency the Secretary General of ECO,

Excellencies the Ambassadors and Delegates from ECO Member States, The Observers,  
Heads of Specialized Agencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

### **Assalam-O-Alaikum and a Very Good Morning to you all!**

It is indeed a pleasure for me to address this august forum of 27<sup>th</sup> RPC Meeting.

Excellencies, on behalf of ECO Science Foundation and on my personal behalf, I express deep gratitude to all the Member States and ECO Secretariat for their continuous support in various forums to the Foundation. Our special thanks to the Government of Pakistan for patronizing ECOSF through its Ministries of Science & Technology and Foreign Affairs.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am pleased to report that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of Board of Trustees of ECO Science Foundation was held on 18 August 2016 in Islamabad; it was sponsored and hosted by the Government of Pakistan. The BoT Meeting, preceded by the Executive Committee Meeting, was Chaired by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan through its Federal Secretary for Science and Technology, and was attended by the Deputy Ministers for Science & Technology, Representatives, Diplomats and High Officials of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Tajikistan. The ECO Secretariat delegation was led by a Deputy Secretary General ECO.

ECOSF is also very pleased to report that we moved our offices to a new and permanent accomodation in the main building of Ministry of S&T in the high security zone of the Islamabad in April 2016. The Foundation is very grateful to the Government of Pakistan for fulfilling their commitment. I would also like to put on record our high appreciations to the Government of Pakistan for consistently paying the mandatory budget contribution to the Foundation ever since 2012.

We are also grateful to Islamic Republic of Iran for paying budget contribution for the year 2012 and partial payment for 2013. However, we look forward to their continued support and I very much hope that Islamic Republic of Iran will soon pay their remaining share of budget contribution for 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016. I also call upon the remaining three ratifying member states- Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan to kindly make their mandatory

budgetary contributions at the earliest to strengthen the Foundation. A stronger Foundation can contribute more actively towards the promotion of STI based economic development in the region. I take this opportunity to urge member states who have not yet ratified the Charter of ECOSF to ratify the ECOSF Charter and its Additional Protocol so as to benefit from its programs and let the Foundation function at its fullest potential.

Excellencies, you are aware that ECO Science Foundation has established a "Science & Technology Fund" for financing the collaborative research projects. As per requirement, all the modalities for utilization of this Fund had already been worked out and approved in the 20th meeting of ECO COM held in October 2012 at Baku, Azerbaijan. To this effect The Foundation organized a workshop of eminent scientist from its Members States in Dec 2015 for Identifying Priority Research Areas for funding under S&T Fund in line with the decision of 2nd Meeting of BoT. Excellencies, moving further on this agenda the ECOSF Board in its 3rd Meeting in August 2016 approved the priority areas and the criteria for invitation of concept proposals for research grant under ECOSF S&T Fund. Subsequently the Foundation has formally launched the program by inviting the concept proposals and last date for submission is 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 and I request all delegates to communicate to relevant stakeholders in your respective countries for broader participation in research programme of the Foundation.

Although pledges for voluntary contribution to the Fund have been made in the past by the Governments of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan, actual contribution has not come through, from any member state as yet. Thus, I request member states to contribute generously please for success of the initiative.

Excellencies, the Foundation is keen to expand its scientific research collaboration between the Member States. To this affect the Foundation after successfully initiating the collaboration between Pakistan and Tajikistan through Academy of Sciences of Republic of Tajikistan and International Center of Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS) of University of Karachi - Pakistan, also initiated partnership with IDB in its two Reverse Linkages Projects in ECO Member States for capacity building at a total cost of US\$ 1,434,400/- (ECOSF Share (US\$ 50,000/-). Moreover the Foundation signed MoU with IDB this year for broader cooperation for promotion of S&T research and capacity building of the ECO Member States. Collaboration with IDB has been approved by the ECOSF Board in its 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting. It is pertinent to mention here that IDB is initiating another project between Ministry of Agriculture of Kyrgyzstan and University of Ankara on Water Use Efficiency and Technologies. ECOSF and IDB are negotiating for collaboration on the project but the main hurdle is availability and the fact that the Kyrgyz Republic has yet to ratify the ECOSF Charter at cost of US\$ 900,000/-.

Let me assure you Excellencies that we are cognizant of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Global Agenda 2030; thus all our current and future programmes have been tuned to contribute towards achieving SDGs by Member States. In fact we would be pleased to assist member states in pursuing their SDGs particularly of S&T Research, Education, Gender and Environment in collaboration with our international collaborators; UNESCO, ISTIC and IAP. The Foundation being an arm of ECO for STI would be very pleased to assist in the main programmes of ECO Secretariat especially of the Directorate of Energy and Environment. In this regard, I am pleased to share with the august house that the Foundation has launched a program/contest for whole ECO Region in collaboration with

partners to address SDGs, “Appldea2R” (Application Idea to Reality), which aims to develop software applications, broadly available to the public related to one or more of the SDGs. The Appldea2R Contest will be an open opportunity for university students all over ECO Member States.

Excellencies it is important to bring to your kind notice that though funding is mainly coming from I.R. of Pakistan, ECOSF has developed good interaction with numerous international science and technology organizations and Donors including; International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre for South-South Cooperation under the Auspices of UNESCO (ISTIC), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; La main a la pate Foundation, France; Ev-K2-CNR Foundation- Italy; Korea Institute of Science & Technology Evaluation and Planning (KISTEP), UNESCO, Islamic Development Bank, International Science and Technology Centre (ISTC), Astana-Kazakhstan and many national organizations in member states and we continue to do so. Member States are requested to further enhance their support to the Foundation for strengthening the linkages within Member States.

Three more MoUs were signed during 2016:

- a. *La main a la pate* Foundation (LAMAP) of France for implementation of Inquiry Based Science Education (IBSE) in ECO Region.
- b. The Turkic World Educational and Scientific Cooperation Organization (TWESCO), better known as International Turkic Academy, Astana- Kazakhstan (May 2016).
- c. Islamic Development Bank (IDB) for a broader cooperation for promotion of S&T research and capacity building in the ECO Member States.

Dear Delegates, the Foundation is of the view that Inquiry Based Science Education (IBSE) is the foundation of S&T Development anywhere; therefore we need to work together today for our future generations so that they could lead us on the basis of real indigenous scientific and technological progress leading to economic development. In this respect, it is great pleasure to report that after successful launch of IBSE in Astana 2015, with the support of our international collaborators a very successful Capacity Building workshop for Master Trainers was jointly organized by ECOSF and Pakistan Science Foundation under the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan on 5-9 Sep, 2016 at Islamabad-Pakistan as a follow-up activity. More activities of this initiative are planned in 2017 for Iran (Jan 2017), Azerbaijan and Tajikistan.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite financial and logistic difficulties, the Foundation undertook numerous important scientific activities during 2016. Details have been provided in the written progress report. The Foundation also circulates an electronic newsletter- *ECOSF NewsLetter*, issued every two months.

1. Travel Grants: For enhancement of mobility of Scientific Community with ECO Region; Travel Grants programme of the Foundation was launched in late 2015 and the information was uploaded on ECOSF website. The desiring Researchers/ Scientists/ Engineers/ Technologists can apply for the grants through self explanatory Request Form. Under this program 22 scientists/researchers/engineers of ECO Region have been provided travel support to attend the scientific conferences, workshops, meeting, etc. 2

each from Afghanistan and Tajikistan, 3 each from Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, 5 from Pakistan and one each from Turkey and Uzbekistan.

2. ECOSF nominated scientific experts from the member states to numerous International Forums including LAMAP, TWAS and IPBES.
3. The Mustafa Prize with its secretariat in Tehran- I.R. of Iran is a top science and technology award granted to the top researchers and scientists of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states biennially. With the approval of ECOSF BoT, the Foundation has joined hands with Mustafa Prize.
4. “Iran- ECOSF Science & Research Cooperative Program” under the the program I.R of Iran will provide 4 PhD level and 5 Masters level scholarships to the students of ECO Member States each year. The initiative will definitely open new avenues for the students of ECO Region and enhance the collaboration between the future ambassadors of Science and Technology.
5. Following events organized/co-organized/participated by ECOSF during 2016 in collaborations with its partners and other national and international organizations:
  - a. World Water Day, Mar 2016, Islamabad-Pakistan.
  - b. Water Summit 2016 organized by the Secretariat for the Advancement of Science and Technology in Islamic World (SASTIW) based in Tehran- Iran in March 2016. By getting the benefit of the event ECOSF facilitated an interaction between Pakistan Council for Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) and Secretariat for Advancement of Science and Technology in the Islamic World (SASTIW) and UNESCO Chair on Water Reuse of the University of Tehran. ECOSF will ensure that the maximum possible support will be provided for collaboration between the organizations in future as well.
  - c. 1<sup>st</sup> Invention to Innovation Summit at University of Baluchistan (UoB) Quetta, Pakistan on May 2016.
  - d. 6<sup>th</sup> ECO Working Group Meeting on Environment, June 2016 in Islamabad, Islamic Republic of Pakistan
  - e. 10<sup>th</sup> IEEE International Conference on Application of Information and Communication Technologies AICT2016, Oct 2016 in Baku, Azerbaijan.
  - f. International Workshops on “Genomics and Genome Editing” May 2016 in Lahore-Pakistan
  - g. Crystallography in Structural Biology” October 2016 in Lahore-Pakistan.
  - h. 12<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Sustainable Development of Drylands in the Post 2015 World Aug 2016, Alexandria, Egypt.
  - i. 8<sup>th</sup> SACAM Meeting in Almaty – Kazakhstan, Oct 2016. It is pertinent to mention that with the efforts of ECOSF, three ECO Countries namely; Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were accepted as full members of SACAM Network; whereas, Azerbaijan was given status of Observer during the meeting.
  - j. 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Science, Technology and Innovation Policy and Management (STIP&M), Nov 2016. It is pertinent to mention that UNESCO, ISTIC

Malaysia and KISTEP Korea, the International partners of ECOSF also collaborated and participated in the conference.

- k. 14<sup>th</sup> Eurasia Conference on Chemical Sciences (EUAsC2S-14), December 2016 will be held in Karachi, Pakistan.

Finally, I would like to say that the Foundation is making all possible efforts to promote science, technology, innovation and scientific education activities in the region with the collaboration and support of International Organizations.; however, the greatest difficulty we are facing is; the slow response from the member states and the Focal Points need to be from most relevant STI institutions and must be activate for timely response. If the response is faster, I assure you Excellencies that coupled with increased financial contributions made by Member States towards the Foundation; our activities would increase many folds.

At the end, I hope the Members States will consider my requests positively in the interest of promoting knowledge based socio economic development in the region. I express my sincere thanks to ECO Secretariat for the commendable efforts in convening this 27th RPC meeting.

Thank you Excellencies!

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