

Comstech News



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OIC MINISTERIAL STANDING COMMITTEE ON SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COOPERATION

From Coordinator General's Desk



Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary
H.I., S.I., T.I.
Mustafa Prize Laureate

The 48th Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of OIC countries had ended with renewed commitment for further strengthening inter-Islamic cooperation for meeting the contemporary challenges, including Islamophobia, regional conflicts, foreign occupation of Muslim lands, and low socioeconomic development. The Plan of Action by the 48th CFM as all OIC institutions to work closely with OIC General Secretariat and member states for socioeconomic development of the Ummah. The COMSTECH played an active role in making this event a major success. The central role of COMSTECH in the implementation of STI agenda 2026, and capacity building in S&T was repeatedly mentioned by speakers, including Chair of the session the Foreign Minister of Pakistan. Throughout the event, COMSTECH was engaged in meeting with various delegations to discuss bilateral and multilateral cooperation initiatives. These include meetings with Foreign Ministers of Nigeria, and States of Palestine, Deputy Minister of Yemen, Heads of Mission of Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Kazakhstan, and Indonesia.

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OIC Organs Chart the Way Forward for New Science & Technology Initiatives

A virtual meeting of the steering committee for implementation of the STI Agenda 2026 was organized by COMSTECH. The agenda of the meeting was to review the progress on the implementation of STI Agenda 2026 during the last two years and to discuss new initiatives for the promotion of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) in the light of the decisions of the 2nd OIC S&T Summit held last year.

The meeting was attended by all 12 members of the steering committee, including the Assistant Secretary General OIC for Science and Technology, the Coordinator General COMSTECH, the Director General of OIC (S&T), COMCEC, IAS, IOFS, SESRIC, SMIIC, and senior officials from ICCIA, ICYF, IsDB, ICESCO, and OIC-CERT. The Coordinator General COMSTECH Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary welcomed the

participants and expressed appreciation for their continued cooperation with COMSTECH and with each other for the implementation of the STI Agenda 2026. Dr. Choudhary highlighted the importance of this meeting both in terms of reviewing the progress of the past four years since the approval of STI Agenda, and its importance in charting the way forward in the light of the Abu Dhabi declaration. → ON PAGE 3

COMSTECH and UIIU Uganda Sign MoU



The Rector of the Islamic University in Uganda (UIIU), Prof. Dr. Ismail Simbwa Gyagenda and the Coordinator General COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at COMSTECH Secretariat.

The intent of this MoU is to promote and strengthen the cooperation between COMSTECH and UIIU by providing a platform for collaborative activities such as sharing experiences and best practices, development of methodologies and mobility of experts in the relevant fields of mutual interest.

Under the MoU, COMSTECH will help UIIU in developing linkages with the institutions in OIC region, and will develop

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Coordinator General COMSTECH Calls on Secretary General OIC in Jeddah

Coordinator General COMSTECH, H. E. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, called on the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), H.E. Mr. Hissein Barahim Taha, at OIC General Secretariat, in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Prof. Choudhary briefed the Secretary General OIC about the preparations for the 31st Executive Committee Meeting of COMSTECH, which is being held on January 27, 2022, in Islamabad,

Pakistan, under the Chair of H.E. Dr. Arif Alvi, President, Islamic Republic of Pakistan/ Chairman COMSTECH.

Secretary General OIC conveyed his appreciation to the Government of Pakistan for generously supporting OIC's Ministerial Standing Committee for Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH). He assured his complete patronage to COMSTECH which is among the key OIC institutions. → ON PAGE 3



PRESIDENT ISDB VISITS COMSTECH

H.E. Dr. Muhammad Al Jasser, President of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), along with senior officials, visited COMSTECH Secretariat.

H.E. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General COMSTECH and senior officials welcomed the honorable guests.

Prof. Choudhary briefed the Excellency on COMSTECH initiatives taken during the last two years. He said that COMSTECH is

working closely with OIC General Secretariat, IsDB and other institutions in OIC system. Prof. Choudhary said that COMSTECH and the IsDB are strategic partners working on several projects. He informed that since assuming the office of the Coordinator General a large number of capacity building programs have been initiated.

President IsDB, thanked the Coordinator General for the warm welcome and appreciated his efforts

for the uplift of the Ummah in the domain of STI. He suggested to develop consolidated programs which have tangible outcomes. The President said that we should not waste our resources on running same programs. He said that he would like to know the operational framework on which COMSTECH is based. He said that COMSTECH is not an Academy of Sciences or a health institution to provide healthcare services. He inquired

that what are the main areas and plans of COMSTECH which are very crucial to focus and leverage for common benefit?

The President appreciated the work of COMSTECH and the Coordinator General thanked him and his delegation for the visit. ♦



COMSTECH and MSTF Sign MoU to Enhance Cooperation

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is signed by COMSTECH the Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation of the OIC, Islamabad, Pakistan, represented by its Coordinator General, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary and Mustafa



Foundation, Tehran, Iran represented by its CEO, Mahdi Safarinia.

The MoU will encourage discussions and cooperation between the both organizations and individual scientists and employees within each organization in relation to opportunities for collaborative research activities and increasing the

capacity of actual and potential role-players who avidly seek the advancement of science, technology, and innovation in the Islamic World.

The MoU is devised to support the development of collaboration between the both → ON PAGE 2

Yemen Envoy Calls on Coordinator General COMSTECH

The Ambassador of Yemen, H. E. Mohammed Motahar Alashabi called on Coordinator General COMSTECH, H. E. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary at COMSTECH secretariat.

Both the dignitaries discussed avenues of mutual interest and cooperation. During the meeting it was agreed upon that COMSTECH in collaboration with

the Embassy of the Republic of Yemen in Islamabad will launch "COMSTECH-CCoE Yemen Programme" for the capacity building of Yemeni scientists.

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Lebanon Envoy Calls on Coordinator General COMSTECH

The Ambassador of Lebanon, H.E. Mr. Ghassan El Khatib visited COMSTECH on Thursday to discuss and explore the avenues of mutual cooperation in the area of science and technology in Lebanon. Coordinator General COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary offered the membership of COMSTECH Consortium of Excellence to five leading universities of Lebanon. He also offered research fellowships and technician trainings to the students

of Lebanon at the prestigious member → ON PAGE 3





COMSTech Announces Award Winners 2021

COMSTech announced biennial award winners of year 2021 in nine categories. This year COMSTech awarded two lifetime achievement awards in the fields of biology and chemistry. Lifetime achievement award in biology won by Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ashraf, Pro

Rector, Professor, Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology, The University of Lahore, and COMSTech lifetime achievement award in chemistry won by Ali A. Mosavi-Movahadi, Institute of Biochemistry and Biophysics, University of Tehran, Shiraz, Iran.

Shah Fahd of department of agronomy, The University of Haripur, KP, Pakistan won COMSTech young researcher award. The COMSTech award

for best scientific book won by Esmail Ghavanloo, Associate Professor, Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran, and the COMSTech award for best patent won by Azrul Azlan Hamzah, Institute of Microengineering and Nanoelectronics, Universiti Kebangsaan, Malaysia.

Fahad Alsohime, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia won COMSTech award for best research paper in biology, whereas the COMSTech award for best

research paper in chemistry won by Mustafa Kemal Beyazit, Sabanci University, Nanotechnology Research & Application Centre, Tuzla, Istanbul, Turkey.

COMSTech award for best research paper in mathematics received by two scientists, Hala El Saka, Damietta University, New Damietta, Egypt, and Khondoker Nazmoon Nabi, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, Dhaka, Bangladesh. → ON PAGE 3



MUHAMMAD ASHRAF



ALIA. MOSAVI-MOVAHADI



SHAH FAHD



ESMAEL GHAVANLOO



AZRUL AZLAN HAMZAH



FAHAD ALSOHIME



MUSTAFA KEMAL BEYAZIT



HALA EL SAKA



KHONDOKER NAZMOON NABI



MOHD IKMAR NIZAM

Kazakhstan Bestows National Award to Prof. M. Iqbal Choudhary

The Ambassador of Kazakhstan H. E. Yerzhan Kistafin presented the Kazakhstan national award to Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary during the launching ceremony of the proceedings of global Al-Farabi forum.

The Ambassador said that it is his honour to present national award of Kazakhstan to Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary. He said that Dr. Choudhary is representing the modern scientific community to promote science and this award is being given in recognition of his services to Kazakhstan.

Dr. Choudhary said that he has been engaged with Kazakhstan since 1988 for the development of



capacity in chemistry and biochemistry. He helped Kazakhstan in establishing many laboratories and institutions. He has supervised many PhD students of Kazakhstan and he is teaching chemistry course. ♦

COMSTech-LRBT Team Performs 490 Eye Surgeries in Niger

COMSTech and LRBT team completed 8-day visit to Niamey, Niger. During the visit it organized an eye camp and training workshop at National Hospital, in Niamey. The team conducted 490 eye surgeries and one training workshop. After having training local doctors performed 28 surgeries.

A seven-member team of experienced ophthalmologists from Layton Rahmatulla Benevolent Trust (LRBT), Pakistan visited Niger from January 31 to 7 February 2022.

This visit was arranged by COMSTech and LRBT in collaboration with Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), and

coordination of Pakistani mission in Niger. All the consumables and medicines for this eye camp were transported from Pakistan and the accommodation was provided by the Ministry of Health, Niger.

This was the second visit of COMSTech and LRBT team. It visited Niamey during third week of November last year and conducted 25 cataract surgeries, serviced and repaired all the faulty equipment and made it available for screening and cataract surgeries.



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From Coordinator General's Desk

Assistant Secretary General OIC for S&T, as well heads of various OIC institutions. COMSTech also had the honor of welcoming HE Dr. Muhammad Sulaiman Al Jasser, President of the Islamic Development Bank and his delegation at the COMSTech secretariat. In all these meetings, as well as during the 4th meeting of the steering committee for the STI 2026, tangible programs, partnerships arrangements, and financing mechanisms were discussed to implement the STI agenda in the light of Astana and Abu Dhabi declarations. COMSTech was also able to reach out to different

stakeholders for partnerships in its flagship programs such as Palestine Fellowships, Science in Exile, Health Africa initiative, virology and vaccine development program, and women in science. In all above efforts, our focus was to foster linkages and develop partnership for science based socio-economic development of the OIC region. After all the core themes of the 48th CFM (Building Partnership for Unity, Justice, and Development) include development which in the modern world is embodiment of science, technology and innovation. ♦

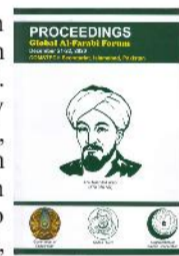
COMSTech Launches Proceedings of Global Al-Farabi Forum

COMSTech Launched Proceedings of Global Al-Farabi Forum. The launching ceremony held at COMSTech. Coordinator General COMSTech, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary said that this is very important to celebrate the contributions of great Muslim scholar, Abu Nasr Al-Farabi. He said that proceedings present best writings on the contributions of Al-Farabi. The objective is to build the legacy of this great scholar.

Dr. Naazir Mahmood said that the proceedings of Al-Farabi forum contains multi-dimensional aspects of work and life of the great scholar - Al-Farabi. He proposed that it should be translated into many other languages so that a vast number of people can get benefit from this account. Dr. Naazir said

that we can learn four things from this composition. First, live a very active life, second, transform from speech community to discourse one, third, convert from discourse culture to composition culture to write your discourse, inculcate culture of openness and tolerance to nurture culture of debate and learning from each other, fourth, spend more in science - science includes both material and social sciences.

Dr. Khurshid Hasanain, Advisor COMSTech introduced the Global Al-Farabi Forum and its proceedings. ♦



Niger authorities are highly satisfied with the performance of



COMSTech-LRBT team and requesting for regular visits of the ophthalmologists to conduct cataract surgeries. These visits are part of COMSTech program of health and higher education for Africa.

The objectives are to provide free high-quality sight-restoring cataract surgeries, provide post-operative treatment, reduce blindness related poverty and eliminate reliance on assistance of others, build the capacity of local health professionals during the campaign to identify eye problem, screen, and provide care. Layton Rahmatulla Benevolent Trust (LRBT) is the largest NGO of Pakistan, fighting blindness and transforming lives. COMSTech is an OIC Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation headquartered in Islamabad with the objective to enhance scientific and technological cooperation among OIC member states to achieve socio-economic development in the Muslim world. ♦



COMSTech and MSTF Sign MoU

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organizations in areas of mutual interest with the focus on the value that can be achieved through working in collaboration to achieve the shared aims and objectives.

Both organizations will jointly promote cooperation, consult with each other on identifying best practices in the use of technical cooperation methodologies in the areas of science and technology, socio-economic development, rapid industrialization, and related areas of common interest.

Both organizations will exchange documentation and information in their respective fields of competence, implement programs and projects to develop the technological and scientific capacity of OIC member states, and jointly apply for funding opportunities available from domestic and international sources to develop the technological and scientific capacity of OIC member states.

Mustafa Science and Technology Foundation and COMSTech also signed a joint young scientists' fellowship program agreement to support the young scientists with the cooperation of prestigious scientific and research institutes of reputable companies in Islamic countries. The program will support young scholars and technologists by providing them 6 to 12 month long fellowships. ♦

1st COMSTech International Virtual Conference on Neuroscience

COMSTech organized 2-day 1st COMSTech International Virtual Conference on Neuroscience. Prof. Dr. Mohammed Wasay from the section of Neurology, The Aga Khan University welcomed the participants of the conference. He said that this is a great start and I am thankful to Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary for his vision. He said OIC region is a very important part of the world. It has 1.9 billion population out of 7 billion world population which is more than 25%. He said that neurological health issues of OIC region are extremely important, they contribute 10% of health care problems in OIC states. Dr. Wasay said it is very important that we learn, train and improve the care of neurological disorders. COMSTech & OIC could be a great help in improving neurological disease care in OIC, he mentioned. He said that a lot of training, education and improvement in neurological care is required, especially in middle and low income African and Asian countries. Dr. Wasay concluded that this is an introductory conference to discuss neurological issues and existing capacity in Asia and Africa.

Coordinator General COMSTech, Prof. Choudhary said that the importance of neuroscience is now globally recognized. He said that Dr. Wasay has contributed not only in training in the field of neuroscience but also has contributed in raising awareness about neurological problems and the importance of research in this field. Prof. Choudhary said that this conference is a curtain raiser for many activities which COMSTech is planning in different OIC countries in this field. He said that COMSTech is meant to undertake S&T as a vehicle for development and we all understand that the S&T is the driver of change, without science and technology no country can move forward in any aspect of life. Prof. Choudhary said that we plan to network scientists by focusing on linking neuroscientists, and creating virtual network of institutions working in the field of neuroscience.

This 2-day conference consisted upon five sessions spanning over two days. Each session contained five to seven lectures from world renowned neuroscientists. Participants from more than 20 OIC member states attended this conference online.

During the conference experts from Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Albania, Malaysia, Turkey, Egypt, UAE, Oman, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey gave talks and discussed prevailing different neurological diseases care related issues and current status along with jotting down the way forward to mitigate the challenges currently being faced by OIC member states. ♦



Webinar on Epigenetics

COMSTech organized a webinar on "Epigenetics, The Immortal Kiss of our Grandparents" online which was delivered by Prof. Dr. Rana Dajani, Professor of Biology and Biotechnology at Hashemite University, Jordan. Dr. Dajani talked about the intricate relationship between trauma and resilience from a biological point of view. She discussed theory and practice of conducting research within the humanitarian context of refugees in Jordan. She outlined a journey of discovery from basic surveys to bio-markers and beyond. Dr. Dajani said that we always talk about scientists from the west or in the past and celebrate them, which is good, but I think today we are in need of celebrating scientists who are living with us so that they can inspire us as a true role model and be inspired to think big. Dr. Dajani urged every scientist to mention scientists in their presentations, who have inspired

them and share their names so that world can know about them. She also talked about human displacement crisis and related physical and mental health crisis being faced by the displaced communities. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary said in his introductory remarks that we know Dr. Dajani as a scientist, activist, humanist and someone with great insight about real issues which humanity face today. Dr. Choudhary said her out of the box problem solving approach is impressive and optimistic. Dr. Rana Dajani is Palestinian-Jordanian molecular biologist, professor of biology and biotechnology at Hashemite University. She is member of the United Nations Women Jordan Advisory Council and has been honored with number of prestigious awards. ♦



Public Lecture on Microbial Biofilm Formation

COMSTech organized a public Lecture on "Microbial Biofilm Formation and its Importance as a Drug Target" delivered by Prof. Dr. Ute Römling, Professor of Medical Microbial Physiology, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden. Dr. Römling thanked the President of Pakistan and the Coordinator General COMSTech for inviting her to Pakistan and said that I am very pleased to be here. She presented the work of her team on the biofilm formation and its importance as a drug target. She said that biofilms are matrix-enclosed bacterial populations adherent to each other and/or to surfaces or interfaces. She said that 60 to 80 percent of human bacterial infections are caused by bio-film forming bacteria. Dr. Römling mentioned that biofilms are tolerant against antibiotics and immune response. She talked in detail on the topic in her one-hour long lecture. The Coordinator General COMSTech, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary introduced the speaker to the audience and said that I am extremely pleased to introduce Prof. Dr. Ute Römling. I am very fascinated from the talent and the

spirit of Prof. Dr. Ute Römling. She is a renowned scientist, COMSTech distinguished scholar and also chairs a faculty at international center of chemical and biological sciences. Prof. Ute is very well known in the field of biomedical sciences particularly in the field of infectious diseases. Her research focuses on the molecular mechanism of biofilm formation. This was hybrid event. A number of researchers participated in-person at COMSTech and many from OIC states participated online. ♦



COMSTech Announces Award Winners 2021

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COMSTech award for best research paper in physics won by Mohd Ikmar Nizam Bin Hj. Mohamad Isa, Faculty of Science & Technology, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. ♦

Lebanon Envoy Calls on Coordinator General COMSTech

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universities and institutions of COMSTech Consortium of Excellence. Both the dignitaries discussed the possibilities of the establishment of COMSTech focal center in Lebanon for Arab region to coordinate COMSTech activities

and enhance further science and technology cooperation among OIC Arab member states. Mr. Khatib appreciated COMSTech programmes and the visionary leadership and thanked for offerings of research fellowships for Lebanon nationals

and the membership of COMSTech Consortium of Excellence offered to five Lebanese universities. He welcomed the establishment of COMSTech focal center for Arab region in Lebanon and assured full support from his office for this initiative. ♦

COMSTech and IUIU Uganda Sign MoU

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a programme in association with IUIU through which young researchers/ students from IUIU and different least developed OIC member countries from Africa may visit Pakistan and conduct research for 6 to 12-month duration. COMSTech will also arrange the visit of distinguished scholars to IUIU to deliver lectures, conduct workshops and training courses. The MoU enables IUIU to get consultancy from

COMSTech Advisory Council. IUIU will be able to collaborate in organizing national and international events such as workshops, conferences, symposia, and exhibitions in different fields. IUIU will become the member of COMSTech Consortium of Excellence along with registration on COMSTech technology portal. IUIU will support COMSTech in organizing medical training in the fields of ophthalmology and

Webinar on Metabolomics Gateway for Milestone Discoveries

COMSTech organized a webinar on "Metabolomics Gateway for Milestone Discoveries in the Prehistoric and Post Genomic Era" which was delivered online by Prof. Dr. Mohamed Ali Farag of Cairo University, Egypt. Prof. Farag said that the metabolomics is the analysis of the cellular processes based on the chemical processes. He said metabolomics is useful in food production in establishing the chemical make-up of food and quality control between different rounds of production. Prof. Farag said it can be used in medical research to help understand the progression of diseases and to assess the impact of a person's diet and metabolism. He also talked about functional food as well. ♦

Prof. Farag described the history of metabolomics. He said that what we know in science is like the ice-berg in the ocean and not the whole thing. He said that the ability to sequence the whole plant and human genomes has established that our knowledge with respect to gene function is rather limited. The lecture provided an overview of metabolomics and discussed its complementary role within system biology. The webinar was attended by students, researchers, scientists, and academicians from the OIC member states. ♦



Workshop on Research Integrity in Clinical Trials in Cairo

A 2-day International Workshop on "Research integrity in clinical trials – challenges and solutions in low and middle income countries" organized by UEARS in collaboration with COMSTech, Assiut University, and Granada University in Cairo, Egypt. COMSTech distinguished scholar Prof. Dr. Khalid Saeed Khan of Universidad de Granada, Spain was one of the conveners of the workshop. The objective of the workshop was to help devise solutions for the challenges faced in clinical trials by low and middle income countries and to impart knowledge and training about research integrity. ♦

The value of clinical trials depends on the quality of information produced and the relevance of the data to address public health needs. There are many less-developed countries that do not have well-prepared medical infrastructure and little or no experience in conducting trials. To overcome these challenges this 2-day training and development workshop in the area of research integrity in clinical trials is organized. The workshop spanned over two days consisting upon four sessions and 31 scientific lectures delivered by renowned experts in the field. Each day ended with general discussions. ♦

Yemen Envoy Calls on Coordinator General COMSTech

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H. E. Mohammed Motahar Alashabi, welcomed the offer of Coordinator General COMSTech to start this capacity building programme for Yemeni nationals and offered full support to this initiative from the Embassy of the Republic of Yemen. COMSTech-CCoE Yemen Programme includes 50 fellowships for Yemeni nationals. These fellowships are being offered by member institutions of COMSTech Consortium of Excellence (CCoE): International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS) (University of Karachi), The University of Lahore, Lahore, and Health Services Academy (HSA), Islamabad. The ICCBS has offered 15 fellowships, whereas 15-20 fellowships have been offered by The University of Lahore and Health Services Academy Islamabad each. Yemeni nationals holding Masters, PhD and Postdoc degree or currently enrolled at these levels are eligible to apply for these fellowships. The objective of this programme is to provide high quality state-of-the-art training to Yemeni nationals so that they can serve their nation, as well as train and prepare young generation for future. ♦

OIC Organs Chart the Way Forward for New S&T Initiatives

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The Assistant Secretary General OIC for S&T Ambassador Askar Mussinov addressed the meeting and shared the vision of the OIC as elaborated in the Abu Dhabi declaration of the 2nd Summit. He emphasized the need for identifying ways to expand the impact of STI Agenda by increasing the participation of member states in the various initiatives of the steering committee. He stressed the need of an increased focus on enhancing the scientific and technical capacities of the less developed member states, particularly in Africa. The members of steering committee appreciated the efforts of COMSTech for coordinating the implementation of the STI Agenda and preparing the various reports on the progress and the way forward. ♦

It was decided that the steering committee would constitute expert groups on various disciplines to review the efforts of the committee and also to provide expert advice to member states in respective disciplines. It was decided that an online platform will be established that will contain updated information on ongoing and planned initiatives of members of the steering committee. The matrix of proposed actions for the next few years was presented and explained by the Coordinator General COMSTech. The participants of the meeting discussed it and showed their willingness to participate in selected thematic actions. The meeting concluded with the closing remarks by the Assistant Secretary General OIC and the Coordinator General COMSTech with the resolve to enhance cooperation and identify the ways and means for increasing the participation of member states in the new initiatives of the steering committee. ♦

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Prof. Choudhary also briefed the Secretary General about the major programs and activities of COMSTech in African OIC member states including: COMSTech-IFS research grants to young African scholars, COMSTech Consortium of Excellence Research/Training and Fellowship Program, COMSTech Scholarships and Research Fellowships for Women Scientists in least developed countries in Africa, UNESCO-TWAS-COMSTech Science in Exile Fellowship Programme for displaced and refugee scientists; and Eye camps, neurocritical and dermatology camps along with workshops in Niger, Gambia and other African countries. The Secretary General OIC appreciated the role of COMSTech under the dynamic leadership of the Coordinator General COMSTech and assured full support of the OIC General Secretariat. ♦



News from OIC Member States

EMIRATES MARS MISSION SHARES SECOND TRANCHE OF HOPE PROBE'S SCIENTIFIC DATA

DUBAI(UNA-OIC)- The Emirates Mars Mission, the first interplanetary mission undertaken by an Arab nation, has released the second tranche of observations to the global audience of scientists, researchers, educationists and enthusiasts.

Over 76 GB of raw data has been uploaded to the EMM Science Data Centre and is available at <https://sdc.emiratesmarsmission.ae> as part of the second batch of scientific observations collected by the Hope Probe. The data represents the core result of the scientific mission to explore the climate and atmosphere on Mars. It includes information, images and insights collected by the state-of-the-art scientific equipment carried by the Hope Probe between 23rd May and 31st August 2021. This is part of the EMM's commitment to publish

scientific data collected by Hope every three months.

The first set of data from the Hope Probe, collected between 9th February and 22nd, May 2021, was shared in October 2021. The first data release included unique images of Mars showing vast structures at a range of wavelengths suggesting a higher-than-expected variation in atomic oxygen density and pointing to unusual levels of atmospheric turbulence.

The first data set received significant interest from scientists, researchers, and space enthusiasts. During the first ten days of the publication of the data on the project's website, around two terabytes of data, including 1.5 terabytes of images, were downloaded.

Omran Sharaf, Project Director of the Emirates Mars Mission (the

Hope Probe), said, "The release of the second batch of scientific data collected by Hope Probe reflects the Emirates' goal of making the observations freely available globally.

The Hope Probe is carrying three state-of-the-art instruments: the Emirates Exploration Imager (EXI) camera to capture high-resolution, digital color images of the Red Planet to measure ice and stratospheric ozone in the lower atmosphere; the Emirates Mars Infrared Spectrometer (EMIRS) to measure temperature and the distribution of dust, water vapour and ice clouds; and the Emirates Mars Ultraviolet Spectrometer (EMUS) to study oxygen and carbon monoxide levels in the planet's thermal layer, as well as the presence of hydrogen and oxygen in the upper atmosphere. ♦

COMSTECH Playing Leading Role in the Implementation of OIC STI Agenda 2026, Foreign Minister of Pakistan



The foreign minister of Pakistan Mr. Shah Mehmood Qureshi, while addressing the 48th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers held in Islamabad on March 24, 2022, said that tremendous work has been done by our collective platforms. Mr. Qureshi said that COMSTECH has been instrumental in enhancing cooperation and coordination in

scientific and technological fields through nurturing partnerships, building capacity and starting joint research programmes.

He said that COMSTECH is playing the leading role in implementation of OIC STI Agenda 2026. Mr. Qureshi said that Pakistan is pleased to host the COMSTECH headquarters in Islamabad. ♦

Mauritania Unveils Research and Innovation Strategy

The West African nation of Mauritania has unveiled its first five-year strategy (2022-26) to use research and innovation as a lever for promoting national development in line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The strategy was prepared by the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States and funded by the European Union. It was unveiled and launched in Nouakchott and online on 16 December 2021.

The strategy aims at making research and innovation a lever for socio-economic transformation, employability for university graduates and achieving SDGs along with implementing the objectives of the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024, and the

African Union's Agenda 2063, 'The Africa We Want'.

To achieve the goals, the strategy calls for strengthening private-sector participation, promoting open science and open innovation along with building bridges between research, industry, society and higher education as well as fostering the mobility of researchers within the research and innovation ecosystem and reducing the gender gap, especially in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The strategy also includes the strengthening of the research and innovation governance system, support for the incubation and emergence of start-ups, facilitating the set-up of university-industry alliances and promoting international cooperation to support

the reform of the national research and innovation system.

In addition, the strategy calls for increasing the budget allocated to research and innovation to between 0.3% and 0.6% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2026, compared to approximately 0.1% currently. The AU target is 1% of GDP.

Besides enhancing investment in human capital to mobilise the necessary skills and knowledge in terms of research and innovation priorities, the strategy will also focus on creating a "Mauritanian research space", the mobilisation of the diaspora, the valorization of the researcher's profession, and masters and doctorate training associated with clusters and sectoral centres of excellence, among others. The budget for implementing the strategy is about €45 million. ♦

Making Nigeria Regional Hub for Manufacturing Vaccines

Abuja (TheGuardian): Minister of State for Health, Dr. Adeleke Olorunnimbe Mamora has called on the Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria (PSN) to work with the Federal Government towards making Nigeria a regional hub for vaccines manufacturing in Africa.

He stressed the need to make Nigeria self-sufficient in the production of finished pharmaceuticals and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs). Speaking at the inauguration of a new president and investiture of

112 new fellows of the Society in Abuja, Mamora observed that the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the country cannot continue to rely on the import of about 70 per cent of her gross domestic need of finished pharmaceuticals and APIs.

The medical doctor insisted that Nigerians must collectively change this narrative by making the country self-sufficient in the production of finished pharmaceuticals and APIs stressing that the Ministry is determined to achieve this and looks forward to partnering with PSN. ♦

Current Biology Journal Publishes UBD's Research on Bats and Pitcher Plants

The research of Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) on the relationship between insectivorous bats and carnivorous pitcher plants in Borneo has been featured in the Cell Press journal, Current Biology. The research was led by Professor Dr. Ulmar Grafe, assisted by UBD graduate in biological sciences and BruWILD president, Lin Ji Liaw, along with international collaborators from German Universities.

The research showed that the pitcher plants and bats share an intriguing reciprocal relationship where the plants offer the bats a cool place to roost free from parasites and other competition, while the bats keep the plants well-fertilised with their droppings. It was found that the plants have special structures that act as acoustic reflectors to reflect the bats' ultrasonic calls back to them. Such adaptation of the plants eases the bats' search for their plant partners in the cluttered forest.

The study began with Prof Ulmar Grafe's discovery of bats roosting inside pitcher plants. He and his team of researchers began exploring the relationship between the two. Their findings—that the carnivorous plants offer bats a place to roost in return for their nitrogen-rich droppings—helped to explain something that had vexed pitcher plant researchers: those plants, *Nepenthes hemsleyana*, are rather poor compared to their relatives at attracting insects.

Both being relatively rare species, it has been a mystery to researchers how *N. hemsleyana* and the bats, *Kerivoula hardwickii*, find each other in their crowded habitats. Upon further inspection,

the study revealed that the back wall of the pitcher plants is formed like a parabolic dish, which helps reflect ultrasonic calls back to the bats.

Behavioral experiments showed that the bats respond to those sounds echoed back to them from the plants. Bats were better at finding partially hidden pitcher plants when their reflectors were intact. The bats also more often chose unmodified pitcher plants as the best places to roost.

This research publication in Current Biology journal represents a significant achievement for UBD in terms of its international scientific impact. Current Biology is widely valued among life scientists for its unique blend of important research papers and informed, lively commentary. According to Thompson Reuters Journal Citations Report, it was rated five-year impact factor of 10.134 in 2014.

UBD's Institute for Biodiversity and Environmental Research and the Faculty of Science have provided the outstanding framework of a discovery-based science curriculum that has allowed Lin Ji Liaw and other students to participate and contribute to such research. Brunei Darussalam, being strategically located in one of the world's biodiversity hotspots has attracted international researchers to collaborate with scientists in UBD to make important discoveries and conduct innovative research. Through its international network, UBD encourages its students to expand knowledge by collaborating with and learning from researchers from around the world. ♦

Glimpses of Meetings of Coordinator General COMSTECH at the Occasion of 48th Session of Council of Foreign Ministers of OIC States



With H.E. Dr. Mansour Ali Saeed Bajash
Deputy Foreign Minister, Republic of Yemen



With H.E. Riyad al-Maliki
Minister of Foreign Affairs, State of Palestine



With Ambassador Zubairu Dada
Minister of State, Federal Republic of Nigeria



With H.E. Ambassador Youssouph DIALLOU
Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Senegal



With H.E. Dr. Muhammad Al Jasser
President IsDB and Chairman of IsDB Group



With H.E. Coulibaly Drissa, Ambassador of
The Republic of Ivory Coast in Saudi Arabia

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