



COMSTECH News

June-2020

ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION STANDING COMMITTEE ON SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COOPERATION

From Coordinator General's Desk



Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary
H.I., S.I., T.I.

Never in the history of humanity, science and technology have been deployed so promptly and effectively as in case of global fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

While it took years to develop even testing methods for HIV-AIDS, it was only a few weeks, PCR based tests were developed and used globally for testing and tracking of SARS-COV-2 infected patients. Global lockdown and complete failure of interdependency regime have forced all nations, small or big, to quickly employ institutional and human resources for indigenization of much needed items (PPEs, ventilators, disinfectants, etc) to handle unfolding health crises.

Most pleasantly many of the nations have achieved significant success in these endeavors. This not only boost their national confidence on indigenous science capacity, but also pave the way for post-COVID socioeconomic developments.

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OIC General Secretariat Interacts with the New Coordinator General COMSTECH to Discuss Various Activities

In the framework of coordination between the various OIC organs and institutions, the OIC General Secretariat and COMSTECH Secretariat held a video-conference on 16 June 2020 to interact with the new Coordinator General of COMSTECH and review the activities being carried by the two organs in the field of Science & Technology in the context of the prevailing circumstances. H.E. Askar Mussinov, Assistant Secretary General for Science & Technology represented the OIC General Secretariat while H.E. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General COMSTECH, represented COMSTECH Secretariat.

In his remarks, Ambassador Askar Mussinov congratulated Prof. Choudhary upon his appointment as the new Coordinator General of COMSTECH. He underlined the role of COMSTECH in promoting scientific and technical cooperation among the Member States and commended the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the support and the conducive environment it provides to COMSTECH. He pointed out that in the face of unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19, all efforts of the OIC and its institutions ought to be on helping Member

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OIC, WHO and COMSTECH Discusses Formation of Regional Working Group on Health

Officials of WHO-EMRO-OIC Working Group, and COMSTECH held a video meeting on 1st July 2020 to discuss the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic in the OIC countries of the region. The immediate focus of the planned Working Group would be to build institutional capacity of the OIC member states to combat the virus, including training of health workers, standardization of indigenous medical technology and clinical trials etc. In the longer run, the group would address other pressing and widespread public health issues of OIC member states.

The Coordinator General COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary expressed the full support of COMSTECH for realizing the goals of the planned Working Group and offered to host its activities with the support of OIC and WHO. The meeting was attended by Dr Jaffar Hussain Syed, Chef

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Coordinator General COMSTech Meets President of AJK

Coordinator General COMSTech, H. E. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary had a meeting with the President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), H. E. Sardar Masood Khan at Kashmir House, Islamabad, on Thursday, July 1, 2020. The implementation of various Inter-Islamic initiatives, including training programs in future sciences by engaging leading experts from the OIC region and beyond were part of discussions. The Coordinator General invited the President AJK to visit COMSTech headquarters which was generously accepted by the President. Coordinator General also presented the COMSTech shield to the President. ■



COMSTech Networks OIC Labs to Develop Diagnostic Kits for COVID-19

To network OIC institutions for the development of diagnostic kits for COVID-19, the Coordinator General COMSTech, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary had a virtual meeting with 22 scientists and heads of the virology diagnostic laboratories in Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Azerbaijan, Gambia, Sénégal, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Egypt, and Azerbaijan. The meeting was aimed at exploring avenues of intra-OIC collaboration for capacity building of the laboratories.

The participants of the meeting emphasized the need of assessing the current available facilities, resources and workforce, equipping the labs with minimum standards, supporting technology transfer, training of technicians and ensuring the availability of skilled manpower, and initiating collaborative projects. All participants offered their full support to COMSTech intra-OIC cooperation initiative for coping with the current and any future pandemics.

Responding to the suggestions of the participants Dr. Choudhary offered two online training courses in

collaboration with the International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences, Karachi, and National University of Science and Technology, Islamabad, this year for building capacities of the scientists in testing and developing diagnostic kits for COVID-19.

To further enhance testing capacities of OIC member states, COMSTech has submitted a proposal to Islamic Development Bank which aims to enhance testing capacities of the targeted countries by developing RT Loop-mediated Isothermal Amplification (LAMP) and Antibodies (IgG/IgM) based detection kits for the SARS-CoV-2 diagnosis. These kits can be used without sophisticated diagnostic infrastructure. COMSTech in collaboration with the International Centre for Chemical and Biological Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan is planning to help the OIC institutions in developing the mentioned kits. Seventeen OIC institutions have already shared their interest in benefiting from this opportunity. ■

H.E. Ambassador of Uzbekistan Visits COMSTech

His Excellency Lt. Col. Saadulla Tashmatov, Acting Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan visited COMSTech on Monday, July 06, 2020 and met with the Senior Officials of COMSTech.

Prof. Dr. Khurshid Hasanain, Adviser COMSTech shared with the Ambassador, some previous activities organized jointly including the "First OIC Robotics Challenge" organized in October 2019 at Tashkent, Uzbekistan and new proposal of developing Technology Parks.

Mr. Aftab H. Zaidi, Director HR & Administration COMSTech apprised the Ambassador about new initiatives and programs undertaken by COMSTech and shared a list of programmes and activities.

H.E. Lt. Col. Saadulla Tashmatov informed that the Deputy Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan would like to have an online meeting with H.E. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General COMSTech with the coordination of Uzbekistan Embassy in Islamabad. ■



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OIC, WHO and COMSTech Discusses Formation of Regional Working Group on Health

De Cabinet, World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Office, EMR, Cairo, Egypt, and Dr. Yagob Yousef Al-Mazrou, Secretary General, the Saudi Health Council and Chairman, Islamic Advisory Group on Polio Eradication, Dr. S. Khurshid

Hasanain, Adviser COMSTech, Mr. Ifran Shaukat, Director General (S&T), OIC General Secretariat, Mr. Abdunur M. Sekindi, Professional Officer, Science & Technology Affairs Department, OIC General Secretariat. ■

COMSTECH and TUBITAK Join Hands for Capacity Building of OIC Member States

Coordinator General COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary had a virtual meeting with the Executive Vice President of Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK), Prof. Dr. Orkun HASEKİOĞLU, on 16th June 2020 at 1500 hrs. Ms. Khazima Muazim, Programme Manager, COMSTECH also attended the meeting.

Both dignitaries decided to extend support and partnership in holding capacity building initiatives in areas of science, technology and engineering. These will include joint holding

of thematic workshops, and providing research scholarships for OIC countries. TUBITAK offered support to COMSTech in technicians training in Pakistan and least developed OIC member states. It was decided to invite SESRIC to join technicians training initiative. COMSTech and TUBITAK agreed to work together to ensure availability of sustainable support for STI projects in future. It was mutually decided to conduct strategic review of various STI initiatives in OIC countries. ■

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OIC General Secretariat Interacts with the New Coordinator General COMSTECH to Discuss Various Activities

States to face these challenges. In this regard, Amb. Mussinov outlined the efforts made by the OIC General Secretariat and relevant OIC institutions to help the Member States in their fight against COVID-19. He also briefed about the recommendations made by the extraordinary meetings of OIC Steering Committee on Health held on 09 April 2020 and the OIC Executive Committee at the level of Foreign Ministers held on 22 April 2020 respectively. He underlined the potential role that COMSTECH can play in the implementation of many of the decisions and recommendations made by the said meetings. Amb. Askar informed that as a follow-up to the above and in the framework of closer coordination with international partners, the OIC General Secretariat held a meeting with WHO/EMRO during which potential areas of cooperation were discussed. The two sides agreed to continue working closely by establishing a joint Working Committee to identify critical areas of cooperation between the two Organisations.

Amb. Askar also called for coordinated efforts with COMSTECH to ensure effective and timely implementation of the OIC STI Agenda 2026 adopted by the First OIC Summit on Science & Technology held in Astana, in September 2017. He noted that it is important to think of new mechanisms to reach out to the Member States as COVID-19 has already disrupted the established practices. He underlined the importance of engaging Member States and seeking their mandate for the activities carried out in the domain of S&T through the established platforms of the Executive Committee and the General Assembly.

Prof. Choudhary appreciated the leadership of the OIC General Secretariat for the early recognition of the danger of Covid-19 and embarking on sensitizing the Member States on the appropriate measures to stem its spread. He further pledged to provide the needed scientific input in the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of both the extraordinary meeting of SCH and the extraordinary video-conference of Executive Committee on Covid-19. He highlighted the efforts of COMSTECH in the fight against Covid-19 including identification of clinical trials/interventional studies in some of the OIC Member States against COVID-19 and their publication on COMSTECH website. COMSTECH

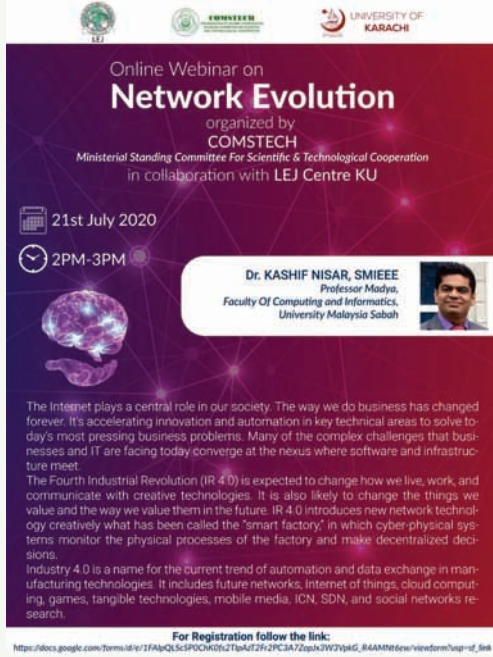
also organised a virtual seminar on the topic “Pakistan Randomized and Observational Trial to Evaluate Coronavirus Treatment (PROTECT)”. He welcomed the ongoing engagement between the OIC General Secretariat and WHO saying that OIC can greatly benefit from WHO as a leading health agency at the global level.

Prof. Choudhary pointed out that COMSTECH recognises the importance of the implementation of STI Agenda 2026 and the need to generate a number of actions and activities that can be reported to the 2nd OIC Summit on Science & Technology whenever it is held. He was happy to note that eight OIC institutions regularly send their reports to the COMSTECH on the actions they carrying out in the implementation of the STI Agenda. He promised to convene the meeting of the Steering Committee as soon as the circumstances allow to redefine their focus given the prevailing situation of COVID-19 pandemic. He also admitted that the Executive Committee and General Assembly meetings of the COMSTECH are long overdue and expressed commitment to convene them at the earliest opportunity possible. ■



COMSTECH Webinars

UPCOMING



For Registration:

<http://www.comstech.org/online-eval-flyer.aspx>

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From Coordinator General's Desk

From S&T applications I regard this “transforming the calamity into opportunity”.

COMSTECH working with its massive network of institutions, and distinguished scholars has initiated a large number of initiatives to accelerate this science based transformation through capacity building programmes.
(www.comstech.org).

COMSTECH is also stocktaking best practices in OIC countries against the pandemic. In my humble understanding our achievements of today will prepare us for future health challenges and help us to contribute in global health security initiative as equal partners. COMSTECH is here to help you, and to help the Ummah. ■

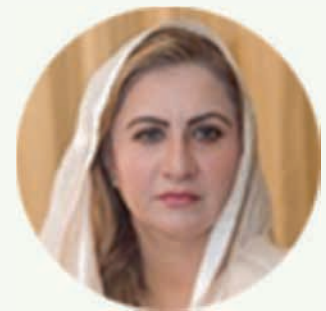
FOREGONE



Webinar on
Status of STI in the OIC Region
By H.E. Prof. Dr. Adnan Badran
Former Prime Minister of Jordan
Chancellor, University of Petra

Watch complete lecture on:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqTbnJfHXUY>

Webinar on Pakistan Randomized and Observational Trial to Evaluate Coronavirus Treatment (PROTECT)''



By Prof. Dr. Ghazna Khalid
MNA and Member Task Force of MoST,
Pakistan on COVID-19

Watch complete lecture on:
<http://www.comstech.org/seminar-covid-19.aspx>

Webinar on COVID-19 Epidemiology Evidence Based Policy and Prospects for Vaccine



By Prof. Dr. Saad B. Omer
Director of the Yale Institute for Global
Health, and Professor of Medicine and
Epidemiology at the Yale University

Watch complete lecture on:
<http://www.comstech.org/seminar-covid-19.aspx>



Webinar on COVID-19 Pandemic and Related Health Issues

By Prof. Dr. Wasim Jafri
Professor of Medicine, Consultant
Gastroenterologist & Hepatologist
Aga Khan University of Health
Sciences, Pakistan

Watch complete lecture on:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j3nSgl10HSQ>



H.E. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary called on the Chairman HEC, Dr. Tariq Banuri on 2nd July 2020. He thanked Dr. Banuri for leading COMSTECH with excellence and dedication during the interim period and shared current activities and future plans. During the meeting, several joint initiatives between COMSTECH and HEC were discussed.



Dr. Abdur Rashid, Director, DRAP and Dr. Ghazna Khalid Siddiqui MNA and Member, Task Force of Ministry of Science and Technology of Pakistan on COVID-19 had meeting with Coordinator General COMSTECH Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, in his office.



Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General COMSTECH met with the honourable Lt. Gen. Naweed Zaman, Rector of National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Islamabad, Pakistan on 16th June 2020. The dignitaries discussed opportunities of mutual interest, and agreed to extend cooperation to build a strong collaboration mechanism to deal with emerging challenges of the post-COVID-19 world.



H.E. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General COMSTECH met with Mr. Muhammad Naeem, Chairman Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission on Monday, 29th June, 2020 and deliberated on several collaborative projects for capacity building of OIC Member States in S&T.



Coordinator General COMSTECH met with H. E. Mr. Muhammad Azam Khan Swati Minister for Narcotics Control.



H.E. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General COMSTECH met with H.E. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan on Thursday, 4th June, 2020. Mr. Muhammad Kamran Akhtar, Director General (ACDIS) and Mr. Tariq Karim, Director General (EC & OCI), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) were also present in the meeting.

On July 9, 2020, Coordinator General COMSTECH Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary and Dr. Khurshid Hasanain, Adviser COMSTECH held a video-conference with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan Mr. Furkat Sidikov, the state and prospects of strengthening Uzbekistan's cooperation with COMSTECH in science and technology amid the COVID-19 pandemic were discussed during the conversation.



H.E. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General COMSTECH met with Mr. Shoaib Ahmed Siddiqui, Federal Secretary, Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunications of Pakistan on Thursday, 4th June, 2020.



H.E. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General COMSTECH met with Maj. Gen. Amer Ikram, Executive Director, National Institute of Health (NIH), Islamabad, Pakistan on Thursday, 4th June, 2020. The matters related to joint collaboration between COMSTECH and NIH were discussed in detail and agreed to start various joint activities.





Government of Pakistan
MoST & MoITT



Robot Assistants

1st COMSTECH Showcasing of Artificial Intelligence and IoT Products & Services: AI & IoT for Pakistan

August 4-5, 2020
COMSTECH, Islamabad



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