

CIIT, UNESCO ink agreement to establish chair

ISLAMABAD: UNESCO and COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT) on Thursday inked an agreement to establish UNESCO Chair on 'Knowledge Systems for Integrated Water Resources Management' at the Institute's Wah Campus.

The signing ceremony, held at the Ministry of Science and Technology, Islamabad, was presided over by the Minister for Science and Technology Zahid Hamid. The UNESCO Director General Dr Irina Bokova, and the CIIT Rector Dr S M Junaid Zaidi, signed the agreement on behalf of their organisations. The ceremony was witnessed by Ministry of Science and Technology Secretary Kamran Ali Qureshi; COMSATS Executive Director Dr Imtihan Elahi Qureshi, UNESCO Resident Director to Pakistan Dr Kozue Kay Nagata, Pakistan National Commission for UNESCO Secretary-General Amna Imran Khan, as well as other high officials of the ministry and affiliated departments; UNESCO; COMSATS Secretariat; and CIIT.

The minister welcomed Dr Bokova and briefly highlighted the role his ministry is playing for the promotion of science and technology in the country and introduced various departments and sections under his ministry. He noted his ministry's recent initiatives on enhancing technical cooperative activities and viewed the recently adopted National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (2012) of Pakistan as a step in the right direction for national development. In his brief remarks on the occasion, the COMSATS executive director expressed his organisation's desire to have long-term partnership with UNESCO based on synergy, complementarity and willingness. While introducing COMSATS as a high level forum, he noted that COMSATS advocates S&T related South-South Cooperation as means to socio-economic development. He informed that COMSATS has 18 S&T Centres of Excellence, including a full-fledged university, CIIT, affiliated to the organisation giving it leverage to play an important international role.

Dr Qureshi recounted his recent visit to UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, in connection with the 37th Session of General Conference, and meeting with the UNESCO Assistant Secretary General for Natural Sciences, Prof Gretchen Kalonji. It was informed that Prof Kalonji had endorsed having stronger ties with COMSATS and recognised its important role as an inter-government organisation. Dr Qureshi requested Dr Bokova to duly consider concluding a cooperation agreement with COMSATS, a draft of which, he noted, had been submitted to UNESCO earlier. Sharing her views on the occasion, the Dr Bokova reiterated UNESCO's pledge to work with the government of Pakistan to elevate the level of knowledge and expertise in the country. UNESCO supports initiatives that aim at S&T advocacy, knowledge sharing and excellence in higher education. She also pledged support to COMSATS, especially for activities related to science,

technology and innovation, which she considered pivotal for the future development frameworks. She said that this signing ceremony is a testimony of the importance UNESCO gives to science, technology and innovation.

The establishment of UNESCO Chair is a milestone in the history of CIIT since it can now be ranked among a select group of institutions focusing on water resources management. The purpose of the chair shall be to promote an integrated system of research, training, information and documentation on water resources management, facilitating high-level international collaboration for researchers and teaching staff of the university and other institutions in Pakistan with those in other parts of the world.

Source: <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/business/07-Feb-2014/ciit-unesco-ink-agreement-to-establish-chair>