



# ECOSF NEWSLETTER



## 29<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC) held in Tehran, Iran



The 29<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was held at ECO Secretariat in Tehran, Iran on 17-20 December 2018. The Meeting was attended by the delegations of all the 10 Member States, the Observers and as well as by the ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated Bodies.

In the opening session, the ECO Secretary General H.E. Ambassador Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour in his opening remarks, welcomed the ECO Member States, Observers and Specialized Agencies, Institutions & Affiliated Bodies to the 29th RPC Meeting in Tehran. The ECO Secretary General highlighted the significance and role of RPC as an effective platform to deliberate on the important issues and provide recommendations to address various challenges in the region. He urged the Member States to actively contribute to the meeting and provide strategic inputs for developing meaningful projects for the ECO region in order to realize the ECO Vision 2025.

As per the usual practice, the Chair of RPC meeting is elected from the Member State which holds the Chair of Council of Ministers (COM). As the



current Chair of COM is held by Tajikistan, the Ambassador of Tajikistan to I.R. of Iran H.E. Ambassador Nematullo Emomzoda was elected as the Chairman of 29th RPC. In his opening statement, H.E. Mr. Emomzoda called for adopting collective ECO regional efforts to address the challenges for upholding peace, stability and prosperity and economic development to achieve the ECO vision 2025 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the ECO region. Subsequently, the Heads of Delegations of the ECO Member States, the Observers and the ECO Specialized Agencies, Regional Institutions and Affiliated Bodies made their statements, elaborating on the activities, projects and progress achieved by member states and institutions since last RPC Meeting.

On behalf of ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF), Engr. Khalil Raza Scientific Officer ECOSF participated in the meeting; he was later on joined by Prof. Syed Komail Tayebi the Executive Director (Designate) of ECOSF.

Read more: <http://eco4science.org/29-RPC>

### ECOSF delegation led by Executive Director (Designate) of ECOSF called upon the Secretary General of ECO at ECO Secretariat in Tehran



During the 29<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Regional Planning Council (RPC) of ECO, Executive Director-designate of ECOSF Prof. Sayed Komail Tayebi along with Engr. Khalil Raza Scientific Officer ECOSF called upon the Secretary General of the ECO H.E. Ambassador Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour at his office in Tehran on December 20, 2018. Prof. Tayebi apprised the Secretary General of various programmes and activities being carried out by the Foundation to promote Science, Technology and Innovation in the ECO region. On behalf of President ECOSF Prof. Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro, Engr. Khalil Raza conveyed a congratulatory message to the Secretary General on joining the ECO and requested his personal support to strengthen the Foundation. H.E. Ambassador Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour welcomed the delegates and stressed that ECO Specialized Agencies including ECOSF are very important organs of ECO to support and develop human resource needed to boost socio-economic development in the ECO region. The Secretary General appreciated the efforts undertaken by the Foundation and assured that ECO Secretariat will continue to support and strengthen the ECOSF to provide necessary technical and scientific input with guidelines to respond to the local and regional challenges of ECO Member States.

**14<sup>th</sup> PSBMB Biennial Conference on “Molecular Biosciences: Research and Innovations” held at KIBGE, University of Karachi, Pakistan**

Pakistan Society for Biotechnology and Molecular Biology (PSBMB) organized 14<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference on “Molecular Biosciences: Research and Innovations” at Dr. A. Q. Khan Institute of Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering (KIBGE), University of Karachi on December 9-12, 2018. The conference aimed to provide an opportunity to meet and share ideas with experts and key leaders in molecular sciences, and to provide a platform to the participants to interact with internationally renowned experts on recent advancements in molecular biosciences. The conference presentations promoted research and education in several key areas of biochemistry and molecular biology.

The Director General KIBGE Prof. Dr. Abid Azhar welcomed the Chief Guest and participants of the conference, followed by speech by the Vice Chancellor of the University Prof. M. Ajmal Khan. Subsequently, Prof. S. N. Hasnain Biochemist of University of Karachi delivered the Professor Mohammad Ata ur Rahman memorial lecture on biochemistry. He mentioned that Professor Rahman was keen to promote research culture in Pakistan. He also mentioned that the faculty of the Institute and the PSBMB working tirelessly to promote research base work and studies.



The renowned nuclear Scientist of Pakistan and a metallurgical engineer Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan as Chief Guest expressed his feeling by saying that, Pakistan has a lot of natural resources and with serious commitment and determination this country could be like Turkey and Malaysia if not better than them within span of five years only. He observed that Pakistan has tremendous talent to progress if the expertise of competent individuals and groups are utilized “In Pakistan, we will get best persons in their respective fields but we just need to properly use their abilities”, he said.

The Conference was comprised of numerous sessions over three days with eminent speakers from across Pakistan. ECOSF invited and sponsored participation of Dr. Sorouch Sardari, the Director of Pasteur Institute in Tehran- Iran.

Read More: <http://eco4science.org/PSBMB>

**4<sup>th</sup> STEP under the aegis of MSTF organized in collaboration with Sultan Qaboos University in Muscat – Oman**

The 4<sup>th</sup> Science and Technology Exchange Program (STEP) in Islamic Countries under the aegis of Mustafa (PBUH) Science and Technology Foundation (MSTF)-Iran was organized in collaboration with the Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) on December 2-5, 2018 at SQU in Muscat – Oman.

The program was based on the theme of “Health, Energy and Water: Current and Future Status”. The forum aimed to review current challenges, predict future and find solutions in the vital sectors of health energy and water. The sessions addressed critical gaps for developing technology in Islamic countries.



The STEP Symposium which is held annually in one of the Islamic Countries offers a wide range of joint cooperative research opportunities and creates a platform for in-depth discussions and exchanges of strategic experience to OIC's countries in the field of Science and Technology. Under MSTF, the Mustafa Prize is a top science and technology award granted to the top researchers and scientists of the Islamic World biennially. The Prize is awarded in four categories, namely “Life and Medical Science and Technology”, “Nanoscience and Nanotechnology”, “Information and Communication Science and Technology”, and “All areas of science and technology”.

The forum was opened by Dr. Salim Al Harthi, Professor in Physics at SQU and Chair of the Organizing Committee of the 4th Science & Technology Exchange Program whereas Dr. Rahma Ibrahim Al Mahrooqi, SQU Deputy Vice Chancellor for Postgraduate Studies & Research delivered the welcoming speech and said Muslim nations and scholars have a proud history of research and scientific advancement that stretches back centuries. “While the golden age of Muslim scholarship is often described as ending in the middle of the 13th century, it is only necessary to look around today to realize that research has received a new impetus across Muslim countries and societies the world over. Nations as geographically and socially diverse as Oman, Iran, Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Morocco, to name a few, continue to place a heavy emphasis on the value of research and innovation within their borders, regionally, and internationally. Each boasts strong research infrastructure, funding mechanisms, support policies, and educated populations that are actively engaged in driving research across academic fields forward.



Prof. Rassoul Dinarvand, Member of the Board of Directors of Mustafa Science & Technology Foundation (MSTF) said that the Foundation seeks to raise the status of scientists in the Islamic world through capacity building and creation of network among science and technology institutions for the benefit of human kind. Prof. Saeed Sarkar, Secretary-General of Iran Nanotechnology Initiative Council gave the keynote on “Nanotechnology status in Islamic countries”. Prof. Sarkar observed that though the scholars in Islamic countries do outstanding research in nanotechnology, international collaboration between researchers is not up to the mark. “The percentage of collaboration between nanotechnology scientists worldwide is 65% whereas among Muslim researchers it is only 40%. The scientists should work together, share knowledge and resources for the benefit of the societies”, he said.

Prof. Jackie Ying, NanoBio Lab, Singapore; and Prof. Mohammad Amin Shokrollahi, EPFL, Switzerland who have been awarded Mustafa Prize, shared their success stories in 4th Science & Technology Exchange Program.

President ECOSF Prof. Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro was invited as a renowned Muslim Scientist for Exposure of Industries to Scientists' Achievement (EISA) and a participant in 4th STEP, whereby he displayed the technology developed by him and co-workers; on which he obtained a US Industrial Patent; "Storage of Entomopathogenic Nematodes- a biopesticide" developed by the authors. Dr. Soomro also participated in panel discussions and MSTF meeting on finalizing the Bylaws of and International Advisory Board of MSTF.

It is pertinent to mention that over 80 scientists from 20 countries as well as 200 academics, students and scholars from Oman gathered under one roof to participate in the 4th round of STEP. STEP was launched in 2015 by MSTF as part of its plans to enhance collaboration among scientists. The event is held on an annual basis, but upon the request of Pakistan's University of Karachi, an extraordinary round of STEP is scheduled to be held in Pakistan from February 27th to March 2nd next year.

**Sultan Qaboos University held an A2A formal meeting of President ECOSF Prof. Soomro with the Leadership of College of Agriculture and Marine Sciences**

During the 4<sup>th</sup> STEP forum in Muscat Oman, the organizers arranged formal A2A (Academia to Academia) meetings of visiting scientists/experts with the faculty of Sultan Qabus University. An A2A meeting of Prof. Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro was organized with the Dean of College of Agriculture and Marine Sciences and faculty members of the Crop Sciences Department of the College, on December 2, 2018.

Prof. Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro was welcomed by the Dean Prof. Abdullah Mohd Al-Sadi and Head of Department of Crop Sciences Dr. Rhonda Janke. Prof. Soomro visited the department and met faculty members of College. The officials shared the objectives and vision of the College and Department of the Sultan Qaboos University which are to be the top applied biosciences colleges in the Middle East region and recognized internationally for excelling in agricultural and marine science education and research while contributing substantially to national and regional development. The sustainable utilization of the Sultanate's renewable agricultural and marine resources for food production, food processing and conservation, are the main focus of the College of Agricultural and Marine Sciences (CAMS), they shared.

Prof Soomro thanked the management for the arrangement of meeting with SQU officials. He then briefed the programs and objectives of ECOSF and its international linkages. He also shared his experiences in applied agriculture crop protection and Organic Agriculture and encouraged the hosts for developing collaboration between ECOSF and Sultan Qaboos University and relevant institutions in ECO member countries for S&T based Economic Development.



**With the Dean and Head of Department of Crop Sciences of the College of Agriculture and Marine Sciences of SQU**

**Prof. Soomro Exhibits in Exposure of Industries to Scientists' Achievement (EISA) held during 4<sup>th</sup> STEP in Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat-Oman**

During the 4<sup>th</sup> Science and Technology Exchange Program (STEP) organized by Mustafa Science and Technology Foundation (MSTF) at the Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) Muscat Oman 2-5 Dec 2018, a sideline activity; "Exposure of Industries to Scientists' Achievement" (EISA) was held. EISA is a platform to provide an environment for players in the industries to meet companies and investors along with technologists and scientists who have breakthrough in products and services from their scientific activities. The first edition of EISA was held in 2017 in Tehran and the second round hosted by Sultan Qaboos University focused on "Health, Energy and Water". The objective of EISA is to facilitate matchmaking process between industries and scientists, especially in Islamic countries, and to expand the related markets and increase in financial gains of related parties.

President ECOSF Prof. Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro was especially invited to exhibit his invention in EISA "STI without Borders" and share his experiences of "Academia-Industry Liaison" during the 4th STEP conference. The invention of Prof. Soomro is Entomopathogenic Nematodes and their Storage. The invention relates to method of prolonged storage of the species of entomopathogenic nematodes belonging to



the genera of *Steinernema* and *Heterorhabditis* for use as bio-pesticides wherein storage in surfactant solution or antimicrobial solution on sterilized polyurethane foam allows maintaining infectivity of at least 50% of the organisms for six months at 10-15 C storage conditions.

A good number of Omani entrepreneurs and Academia/participants of STEP4 visited the exhibition and learnt about the invention. Prominent among them was the CEO of "Oman Technology Fund" along with his team. It is pertinent to mention that Muscat is a good market for Organic Agriculture food products, and such biopesticides stand a better chance of use in Oman.

**Thar Education Alliance organized the Laar Science Festival in Thatta- Pakistan**

Laar Science Festival was organized by Thar Education Alliance (TEA), Laar Education Campaign, Shell Pakistan, Pakistan Alliance for Math and Science (PAMS) and Child Rise with the support of District Government of Thatta and ECOSF at Thatta Sports Complex, Thatta City in South of Pakistan on December 14-15, 2018.

Objective of the Laar Science Festival was to provide an opportunity to rural students and student from far flung areas around Thatta to learn about the latest practices and advancements in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education. The foremost objective of the festival was to promote a culture of inquiry and hands-on learning in the country's education and broaden the horizon of students and their families.



Provisional Ministers and Parliamentarians from the region witnessed of the event. Mr. Taimur Talpur, Minister of Science and Technology (Sindh) encouraged Laar Science Festival organizers to spread such waves around for possible change. He promised

to establish science centres in the region in collaboration with School Education and Literacy Department. A large number of teachers, entrepreneurs, science specialists and government officials as well as parents and small and medium business people attended the event including Deputy Commissioner of Thatta district and Senator Ms. Sassui Palijo.



President ECOSF Prof. Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro and Dean Faculty of Computer Engineering of the Mehran University of Engineering and Technology (MUET) Jamshoro attended the festival as panellists in a discussion on the importance of STEM education and IBSE approach for teaching and learning STEM. During his speech he admired the contribution of provisional and private stakeholders for organizing science festival in Thatta. The two experts said that bringing the students from remote areas to mainstream and giving them STEM or STEAM education is very important for corporate social Development. President ECOSF shared the programmes of STEM-IBSE being promoted by ECOSF and its international partners and networks and invited the local organizers to benefit from them. They also appreciated the participation of small and medium business development institutions of Government and business people. Afterwards, a session on Climate Change and Education was conducted wherein Prof. Sarfaraz Hussain Solangi the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Sindh University, Thatta Campus shared the global situation with particular reference to water and sea levels around the coastal areas of Thatta. A session on promotion of small business “Be your own boss” was also held wherein some business persons shared their success stories for the young students.

The festival showcased scientific models and projects from over 50 schools and colleges. Laar Science Festival was attended by over 7,000 students, teachers, entrepreneurs, science specialists and government officials in the two days.

In the lead-up to the Laar Science Festival, an assessment test for mathematics and science for students of grades VI-XII was conducted on December 9 in Badin, Sujawal and Thatta districts. Over 20,000 students participated in this test, of which the best scoring candidates were awarded prizes.

**President ECOSF had a rare interaction with Dr. A.Q. Khan, *Nishan-e-Pakistan* the Great Scientist and Pride of Pakistan**

President ECOSF Dr. Manzoor H. Soomro had a rare interaction with Dr. A.Q. Khan, the celebrated scientist, engineer and the one of the pioneers of Pakistan’s nuclear programme in Karachi after the opening of a conference on “Molecular Biosciences” on 2 December 2018. Dr. Soomro briefed Dr. Khan about the establishment of ECOSF and its on-going programmes for promotion of STI and IBSE in the ECO Region. Dr. Khan very appreciated the initiatives of the Foundation and encouraged Dr. Soomro to emphasise on capacity of member states in emerging technologies and the STEM education at schools.



### President ECOSF called on the renowned Scientist of Pakistan Prof. Dr. Atta-ur-Rahman, FRS

While, on holidays in Karachi, Prof. Dr. Manzoor H. Soomro President ECOSF called upon the renowned scientist of Pakistan Prof. Dr. Atta-ur-Rahman, FRS on December 10, 2018 in his laboratory at the International Centre for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS), University of Karachi. During the meeting, President ECOSF briefly introduced the Foundation and its goals & objectives and the on-going programmes. Prof. Soomro also shared with Professor Atta that ECOSF in collaboration with IAP SEP and La main a la pate Foundation under the aegis of Academy of Sciences of France, has been implementing the "Inquiry Based Science Education- IBSE" for STEM teaching, in Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Iran since 2015, 2016 and 2017 respectively. He further shared that since 2017, ECOSF has developed strong cooperation with China Association for Science and Technology (CAST) and its Children and Youth Science Center (CYSC) in Beijing for promotion of STEM-IBSE and Teenager Maker Camps; whereby ECOSF mobilizes young students and their teachers from 10 ECO member countries including Pakistan to join activities, Olympiads, competitions and camps in China under the Chinese "Belt & Road" Initiative. So far in two years, some 76 students and teachers from ECO countries have participated, Dr. Soomro said. He further said that in his personal capacity, Prof. Soomro has been elected as Vice President of the "Belt and Road Science Education Coordinating Committee" responsible for capacity building of school teachers.



Prof. Soomro emphasized that a strong STEM base and good quality STEM education is very much needed at grass root level to ensure quality higher education and innovation leading to scio-economic development. For realization of this objective, President ECOSF proposed formation of a working linkage among Universities, Teacher Training Institutes/Schools and Industry, as Industry too, needs STEM-conversant skilful workforce. He also shared that in May 2017 and April 2018, ECOSF together with HEC Pakistan, French La main a la pate Foundation, IAP SEP and Pakistan Academy of Sciences (PAS) had organized a couple of International Forums on Science education at HEC Islamabad. One in 2018 was themed: "Quality SCIENCE Education at Schools- A Must for Quality Higher Education & Economic Development". Therein, Academia at Higher Education, School Teachers, Students of Universities and schools, Policy Makers, Industry and Media along with IAP SEP Chair (Prof Lee Cheong from Malaysia) and its Global Council as well as PAS President had participated. The report along with my note was also sent to present Chairman HEC for further steps in this regards.

President ECOSF reminded Prof. Atta that Economic Cooperation Organizations (ECO) Region of 10 countries; Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, holds a great potential market for Pakistan, especially for the knowledge economy strengths including higher education human resources and Industry; because a new consumerist Middle Class is growing fast especially in Central Asia and in this context, the only catalyst organization present for the promotion of STI based economic development is, the ECOSF. If strengthened and patronised well, ECOSF can help Pakistan a lot especially when the Foundation in addition to member states, have good collaboration with Chinese institutions and the fact that three of the China-supported Economic Corridors pass through ECO Members- Pakistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan.

### Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) organized the 11<sup>th</sup> South Asia Economic Summit under the theme of 'Corridors of Knowledge for Peace and Development'

11<sup>th</sup> South Asia Economic Summit was held under the theme of 'Corridors of Knowledge for Peace and Development', in Islamabad, Pakistan, from 04 – 07 December 2018. It was organised by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI). Eminent Scholars, policy makers and economists from all around the world gathered to highlight the importance of knowledge for peace and stability. On behalf of ECOSF, Engr. Khalil Raza participated in the inaugural session of the summit.



SDPI Executive Director Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri in his welcoming address, shared that one of the objectives of this 21st edition of Sustainable Development Conference (SDC) is to highlight the importance of knowledge connectivity among culturally and academically rich regions. CPEC has the potential to link South Asia to China and Central Asia. However, in order to get maximum benefit out of this economic corridor, Dr. Suleri said, Pakistan needs to build a knowledge corridor with China and Central Asia.

Finance Minister of Pakistan Mr. Asad Umar was the Chief Guest of the event. Finance Minister urged for stronger integration of Member States of South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to untap the potential and achieve the economic and infrastructure boost in the region. "If we promote the intra-regional trade and took step in the right directions, we can meet the need of the people and bring people out of poverty", he added. Mr. Umar also shared that that country's economic situation is far better as exports are increasing, imports are decreasing, remittances are increasing and as a result the current account deficit is shrinking.



Dr Shamshad Akhtar former Caretaker Minister for Finance of Pakistan stressed that the regional connectivity among the countries is vital to promote development of the region. She said that China's Belt and Road Initiative was important as it could play critical role in sustainable development in the region. She said with the improved connectivity through road, railways, air, sea, and digitization, the cost of doing business would significantly reduce and ultimately it would help development of the region where a huge population with extreme poverty lived.



**Upcoming Events posted on ECOSF website and Facebook page****Persian Gulf University Winter School 2019**

The international program titled "winter school for students and fresh graduates of process and petroleum engineering" on 4-13 February 2019 in Persian Gulf University (PGU). The objectives of this program include, but not limited to getting introduced to novel techniques and technologies in process and petroleum engineering, potentials, activities, capabilities and scientific achievements in PGU, visiting selected giant gas and petrochemical plants in Iran, as well as cultural tours to historic cities of Bushehr and Shiraz. This program is planned for international students and fresh graduates of chemical, process, and petroleum engineering. The cost of program is 500 Euros paid by cash upon arrival in Bushehr and includes registration, accommodation, food, course materials, central laboratory, Shiraz and Bushehr city tours, entrance tickets for historic and cultural places, and transport inside Iran (Bushehr, Assaluyeh, Jam, and Shiraz). However, it does not include the visa and flight costs

Read More: <http://eco4science.org/PGU-winter-school-2019>

**Call for Nominations of Experts – Assessment of Invasive Alien Species**

Governments and organizations are invited to nominate experts from a diversity of disciplinary backgrounds and gender, in order to ensure a balanced team of experts. Interested experts (Nominees) who would like to seek nomination by a Government, are encouraged to contact their IPBES National Focal Point (<https://www.ipbes.net/national-focal-points>) regarding any country-specific processes or deadlines and are requested to fill out their application form by no later than **11 January 2019**. Nominators (governments or organizations) should approve the applications and submit their nominations by **1 February 2019**. Early nominations ahead of the deadline are encouraged. Experts will be selected according to the IPBES rules of procedure during IPBES 7, taking place from 29 April to 4 May 2019 in Paris, France. Experts will be informed of their selection in June 2019.

For more information and details, visit: <http://eco4science.org/assessment-of-invasive-alien-species>

**The Yidan Prize 2019: Announcement**

The Yidan Prize, the world's largest prize in education, is now open for nominations:

- Find out more about the announcement [here](#).
- Sign up for the Yidan Prize Summit 2018 [here](#).
- Nominate for the Yidan Prize 2019 [here](#)

Read More: <http://eco4science.org/Yidan-Prize-1>