



Introduction to ECOSF

The ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF), an intergovernmental organization based in Islamabad- Pakistan was established in December 2011 as Specialized Agency of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO-www.ecosecretariat.org). ECOSF is an important body for promotion of scientific and technological collaborative research leading to economic development among its 10 member countries; viz., Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan.

ECO Science Foundation functions as a reservoir of highly skilled scientific and technical human resource and facilitates the conduct of goal oriented scientific and technological research projects among the member states; wherein the private industry/end-user of research results, would join in from the start. In addition, holding of collaborative scientific seminars, conferences, fairs and exhibitions resulting in generation of economic and social activities, for the benefits of the people of whole ECO region.

Appointment of the President ECOSF

Prof. Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro assumed the full responsibilities of ECOSF as its founder President on 3 June 2013. Dr. Soomro possesses a diverse experience in the fields of scientific research and management in various capacities including as head of organizations.

Message by the President ECOSF

Prof. Dr. Manzoor H. Soomro
Order of Academic Palms (France)

As the Founder President of the ECO Science Foundation, it is my pleasure to address the readers of ECOSF's first edition of Newsletter.

The Foundation was established in Islamabad-Pakistan on 20 December 2011 and is operative.



I congratulate the people and governments of member states, the ECO Secretariat, Tehran-Iran, for this land mark development. The Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan through the Ministries of Science and Technology and Foreign Affairs deserve a special mention for hosting and initially financing this Intergovernmental Organization.

To pursue the overall goal of the ECO in the era of knowledge based economic world, the ECOSF as a Specialized Agency of the ECO, is mandated to promote scientific and technological research collaboration and other relevant activities among the member states, leading to socioeconomic development in the region. The Foundation has thus established its Science and Technology Fund (S&T Fund) for financing collaborative research projects on competitive basis.

In addition, to strengthen the science base of future generations and the region's economy, the Foundation aims to promote science education at school level, using the Inquiry Based Science Education (IBSE) approach- *La main a la pate*. In this respect the global institutions; such as the *La main a la pate* Foundation of France, International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre (ISTIC)- Malaysia and Science Education Program (SEP) of the Inter-Academy Panel (IAP) have already been brought on board, and an IBSE capacity building workshop for ECO Region is planned in 2014 in collaboration with sister institution- the ECO Educational Institute (ECOEI), Ankara- Turkey and some Pakistani institutions.

I consider the role of international organizations and UN agencies such as; UNESCO, UNEP, UNIDO, FAO and IPBES, of great importance and would like to emphasize on working together with them and more, by building on each others' strengths promoting synergies and complementarities. I welcome intentions to cooperate & collaborate by the national institutions within ECO region, as well as the international organizations around the world.

The Foundation, in a short span of time, has been accredited as an Observer/Stakeholder of the Intergovernmental Science and Policy Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) based in Bonn, Germany. We have nominated experts on various Task Forces of IPBES and look forward to playing a stronger role in the IPBES domain in the ECO Region.

ECO Science Foundation participates in the "23rd Meeting of Regional Planning Council (RPC) of ECO" on 6-8 May, 2013 at ECO Secretariat, Tehran

On behalf of ECOSF, the Focal Person in Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF) Dr. Syed Lal Shah attended the "23rd Meeting of Regional Planning Council (RPC) of ECO" held on 6-8 May, 2013 at ECO Secretariat, Tehran, I. R. Iran. Participation in the meeting remained very successful as the achievements of ECO Science Foundation despite of no funds were much appreciated and other actions to be taken by member states were emphasized upon nicely at the forum..

French Award (9 July 2013)

The French Ambassador to Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Philippe Thiebaud decorated President ECOSF/Chairman PSF Prof. Dr Manzoor Hussain Soomro with French civil award *Les Palmes Académiques* (the Order of Academic Palms) as *Officier* (Officer) in recognition of his efforts and contributions in the field of science, technology education cooperation on July 9, 2013 at the Embassy of France in Islamabad- Pakistan.

The award was conferred upon him at an impressive ceremony. Federal Minister for S&T of Pakistan, Mr. Zahid Hamid, Federal Secretary for S&T Mr. Akhlaq Ahmad Tarar, members of PSF Board of Trustees, Dr. Soomro's colleagues, friends and family witnessed the proud moment at the French Embassy when Ambassador Thiebaud decorated Dr. Soomro with the award. The appointment of Soomro as "Officer" of the *Order of Academic Palms* recognized his dedication to the promotion of science and flourishing cooperation among PSF and several French academic institutions through his work during the past four years..

Dr. Soomro's dedication and efforts for the Pak-French Programme played a significant role in the successful cooperation between the two friendly countries. The programme, which has been ongoing for the past four years, includes annual travelling expos across the country and the inquiry-based science programmes in schools in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. These projects have been aimed at bringing state-of-the-art scientific knowledge to the Pakistani public and encouraging students to continue their studies and contribute to research and development.

Dr. Soomro said that the programme included teacher training and promoting science in 35 public and private schools in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. He said that with the success of the pilot project, they hope to scale it up to other cities such as Karachi. The best part of the programme was the partnership and the patronage that helped us to meet and learn from one another, he added.

Speaking on the occasion, S&T Minister H.E. Mr. Zahid Hamid said that the programme should be introduced in other cities as well. "I was very impressed to see the will of the students, particularly girls who wanted to learn about science," said Ambassador Thiebaud. Pakistan and France share a common objective in terms of promoting science, he added.

The Academic Palms is a distinction initiated by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1808 to reward scholars from the Universities of Paris. It was subsequently extended to individuals who contributed to French culture and education. Since 1955, the French Ministry of Education has awarded it to personalities in the educational field who have shown outstanding devotion and accomplishments for the promotion of education.



Advocacy Activities

Advocacy is very important for any new organization, hence concerted efforts are continuously being made to advocate the cause of ECOSF at various forums. In this respect, courtesy calls were made on host country's senior Government officials, Policy makers, Ambassadors/Diplomats of ECO member states, UN and other International Agencies, Donors and Diplomats of Developed/aid giving countries. Similarly, media coverage of ECOSF activities is also being pursued. The efforts will be continued during 2014 as well. Some of the major advocacy activities are reported hereunder.

ECOSF President's Meetings with Ambassadors of ECO Member States

During the period, President ECOSF, Prof. Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro held meetings with Ambassadors and Heads of Missions of ECO Member states, viz., Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Iran based at Islamabad and apprised them about the aims and objectives the Foundation as well as its current activities and future plans. The Ambassadors were also emphasized upon actions pending on the part of their countries; to follow up the ratification process, nomination of Focal Points & Members of Executive Committee and payment of mandatory financial contribution as well as voluntary contribution to Science & Technology Fund.



Meeting with H.E. Mr. Sherali S. Jononov, the Ambassador of Tajikistan on 20 August 2013



President ECOSF (left) meets with Dr. Ismatullah, the Deputy Head of Uzbekistan Mission of Uzbekistan on 21 August 2013



President ECOSF (right) calls on the Ambassador of Turkmenistan H.E. Mr. Atadian Movlamov on 26 August 2013



President ECOSF briefs the Ambassador of Kyrgyz Republic about ECOSF plans (26 Aug. 2013)



Prof. Soomro discusses areas of mutual interest with Turkish Envoy H.E. Mr. Babar Hizlan (2 Sep 2013)



President ECOSF calls on to the Ambassador, Republic of Azerbaijan (3 Sep 2013)



President ECOSF calls on to the Ambassador, Islamic Republic of Iran (3 Sep 2013)

Meeting of ECOSF President with Embassy of France Officials (18 Dec 2013)

President ECOSF had a meeting on 18 December 2013 with Ms. Martine HERLEM-HAMIDI and Mr. Chaouki BOUTHAROUITE, the Counselor and Science, Technology & Education Attaché respectively, of the Embassy of France in Pakistan. The purpose was to discuss possible support of French Republic for technical of their *La main a la pate* Foundation and financial support to ECOSF for launching Inquiry Based Science Education (IBSE) programme in the ECO region. The two senior officials of the Embassy agreed in principle to support for any scientific workshop wherein participation of French experts can be sponsored by the French Embassy.

Scientific Activities

International Congress of Zoology



A 3-days International Congress of Zoology was jointly organized with many other organizations including UNESCO, Pakistan Science Foundation and Pakistan Zoological Society from 2-4 April 2013 at the Convention Centre Islamabad, Pakistan. Over 1500 participants including those from UNESCO, IUCN, WWF participated.

President ECO Science Foundation inaugurated International Conference on Wireless Sensor Networks for Developing Countries



The President ECOSF was invited as Chief Guest to inaugurate the above mentioned international conference on 24 April 2013 at Mehran University of Engineering and Technology, Jamshoro- Pakistan. The President in his augural address, also introduced the ECO Science Foundation and encouraged the participating scientists to interact with their counterparts in other ECO member states for initiating collaborative S&T research and education programmes.

Participation in Education Conference at Eskisehir- Turkey (5-7 Sep 2013)

Representative/Focal Person of ECOSF participated in "1st International Conference on Education linked with the 22nd National Educational Sciences Congress" held in Eskisehir, Turkey for the Period from 1 Jan to 31 Dec 2013 from 5-7 September 2013, organized by ECO Educational Institute and Ministry of National Education, Turkey. The activities of ECOSF were highlighted at this forum and matters regarding further collaboration among specialized agencies of ECO such as ECO-EI and ECI were discussed.



Dr. S. Lal Shah, Focal Person ECOSF (2nd left) participated in Education Conference held at Turkey ((May 2013)

Participation in British Council's Global Education Dialogues- South Asia Series- Colombo Sri Lanka



Participation in British Council's Global Education Dialogues- South Asia Series in London-UK

The second session of the series on Higher Education Policy was held in British Council London in Sept (23-24), 2013. The President/Chairman PSF as invitee of British Council participated in the event. Topic of the 2nd session was "Critical Issues, Credible Research, Crucial Discourse". All expenses were borne by the British Council.

The President ECOSF/Chairman PSF as an invited speaker, participated in the first of the series with the theme "Policy Dialogue on Transforming Higher Education in South Asia", organized by the British Council and partners at Colombo, Sri Lanka, June 18-19, 2013. The President made a presentation on "Collaboration or Competition- the Reality on the Ground" and contributed as a panelist in the session on above topic. All expenditures were borne by the British Council.

Participation in Seminar: "ISTIC Return Home to UNESCO" Paris (27-30 Sep 2013)

The President ECOSF as an invited speaker participated in a seminar organized by the International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre (ISTIC), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and UNESCO at the UNESCO Headquarters Paris on Sept 27, 2013. The seminar was entitled, "ISTIC- Return Home to UNESCO" to review the progress of ISTIC during last five years and consider plans for the next five years. The seminar was chaired by the DG UNESCO Ms. Irina Bokova and attended by ISTIC Team and permanent delegations to UNESCO of some 66 countries. The President ECOSF made a presentation entitled, "**ECOSF-ISTIC-UNESCO Linkages for the People of ECO Region**" wherein, it was proposed that ECOSF can be declared as an Inquiry Based Science Education (IBSE) Hub for ECO Region. The proposal was agreed by the ISTIC and they in return proposed to sign MoU with ECOSF for collaboration and invited the President ECOSF to join the ISTIC Board of Governors as an Honourable Member and contribute on behalf of ECOSF. The gesture was appreciated and agreed upon in principle by the President ECOSF. Prof. Soomro has since been elected as Member of ISTIC



ISTIC Return Home to UNESCO Seminar at UNESCO-Paris
(President ECOSF (1st Right) & ISTIC Team with DG UNESCO – 27 Sep 2013)

5th SACAM Meeting in Islamabad (26-27 Nov 2013)

The two-day meeting of South Asia and Central Asia MAB Network was organized by Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST), Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF), Pakistan Museum of Natural History (PMNH) and UNESCO where participants from Network member states; Pakistan, India, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka participated in the meeting. UNESCO also well represented in the meeting. The ECOSF President as Chairman of Pakistan Science Foundation had earlier planned this meeting and made all the arrangements; however, due to his other pre-occupations and relinquishment of PSF Chair, he only participated in concluding and discussion session. Theme of the meeting was, harmonization of community livelihoods with biodiversity conservation in the context of biosphere reserves, new trends in Man and Biosphere Reserves (BRs) etc. The chair of the SACAM was handed over by Iran to Pakistan for the next two years.

21st Meeting of ECO Council of Ministers (COM) held in Tehran – Iran (24-26 Nov 2013)

The 21st Meeting of the ECO Council of Ministers (COM) was held in Tehran on 26 November 2013. Foreign ministers of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkey and Adviser to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Minister of Economy of Turkmenistan, Deputy Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan and Ambassadors of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan represented their respective countries during the meeting. The Council of Ministers' Meeting was preceded by the Senior Officials' Meeting on 24-25 November 2013.

The Council of Ministers (COM) represents the highest decision making body of ECO and is composed of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Member States. The Council, which meets annually, is primarily responsible for formulating policies, strategies, and approving work programmes of the Organization. It also has the responsibility of reviewing and adopting the reports of the Regional Planning Council, Council of Permanent Representatives and ECO Specialized Agencies

The meeting was inaugurated by H.E. the President of Islamic Republic of Iran Mr. Hassan Rouhani. In his opening speech, the President welcomed the participating delegations and expressed his country's commitment to the regional cooperation. He also called for reforms encompassing the institutional, structural and planning aspects of the Organization in the coming period, to render it more effective.

The President ECOSF made his statement highlighting the progress of ECOSF. ECOSF budget for 2013 was also approved in the meeting. After the inaugural, the COM meeting was chaired by the Foreign Minister of Iran.



Group Photo of ECO member states ministers at 21st Council of Ministers (COM) meeting (26 Nov 2013)

President ECOSF participating in Meeting
21st COM and SOM (24-26 Nov 2013)

Experts Meeting on Climate Change and Biodiversity (29-30 Nov 2013)

ECOSF in collaboration with ECO Secretariat, ECO-IEST Tehran, Ministries of Science & Technology and Climate Change, Government of Pakistan organized the “**Experts Meeting on Climate Change and Biodiversity**” from 29-30 November 2013 in Islamabad, Pakistan in line with the decision of the 23rd RPC Meeting. All the expenditures on local hospitality were borne by the ECOSF. The meeting was opened by the Secretary to Government of Pakistan for Science and Technology, who supported the idea and emphasized on networking of experts in the region.



Mr. Kamran Ali Qureshi, Federal Secretary, Ministry of S&T, Pakistan making the inaugural speech

Prof. Dr. Manzoor H. Soomro, President ECOSF making the welcome speech



From left to right: President ECO-IEST Dr. Asghar Mohammadi Fazel, President ECOSF Prof. Manzoor H. Soomro, IG Forests/Focal Point- Pakistan Syed Mehmood Nasir and Director Environment- ECO Secretariat Mr. Orkhan Zevnalov

The technical part of the two day meeting was chaired by the Inspector General of Forests, Ministry of Climate Change, Government of Pakistan. Mr. Syed Mehmood Nasir.

The representatives of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and the Republic of Turkey delivered their presentations/statements encompassing their countries environmental policies, programmes, challenges, projects and activities carried out in the field of environment particularly on climate change and biodiversity issues.



Group Photo of the Participants of ECO Experts Meeting on Climate Change and Biodiversity at Islamabad (29-30 Nov 2013)

The participants agreed that in order to generate and disseminate the environmental awareness, there is a vivid need for improved communication strategy among the ECO Member states at national and regional levels. They urged that there is a need to enhance exchange of information, technology and sharing best practices among all stakeholders of the ECO Member states at national and regional levels.

ECOSF Accredited as Observer/Stakeholder of the IPBES (14 Dec 2013)

Observer/Stakeholder on Intergovernmental Science and Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystems (IPBES) and was invited to participate in the Platform's 2nd Plenary Session held in Antalya Turkey from 9-14 December 2013 preceded by stakeholders forum on 7-8 December. The President ECOSF Prof. Soomro participated in the Plenary, he also attended and made interventions in the Stakeholders Meeting on 8 Dec 2013. Main task for the Stakeholders was to discuss and improve the "Stakeholders Engagement Strategy" and review the Work Program of IPBES for next five years 2014-18. [<http://www.ipbes.net/stakeholders.html>]. The IPBES will invite all member governments and stakeholders to nominate experts on IPBES panel for various deliverables. It will provide an opportunity to all ECO member states to nominate experts from the ECOSF forum as well.



EvK2CNR meets ECOSF (19 Dec 2013)



EvK2CNR Committee – High Altitude Scientific and Technological Research's Team Leader, Mr. Ashiq Ahmad Khan along with his team called upon the President ECOSF Prof. Dr. Manzoor H. Soomro and shared their activities. They showed their desire to work in collaboration with ECOSF in the field of biodiversity & climate change, research and education.

The Ev-K2-CNR Committee is an autonomous, non-profit association, which promotes scientific and technological research in mountain areas. Particular emphasis is placed on the Hindu Kush – Karakorum – Himalaya region and work in the countries of Nepal, Pakistan, China (Tibetan Autonomous Region) and India. However, they are engaged in mountainous areas of numerous other countries as well.

President ECOSF warmly welcomed the EvK2CNR team and shared the aims and objectives of ECOSF and about member states of ECO. President ECOSF also responded positively and said that the Foundation is willing and open to scientific collaboration within the ECO region as well as with other international organization outside the ECO Region.

After sharing each other's interests, both the parties agreed that they will study each other's objectives and activities in depth and will meet again when Mr. Agostino Da Polenza – Legal representative and President of EvK2CNR visits Pakistan.

President ECOSF Prof. Manzoor Soomro decorated with Gold Medal (21 Dec 2013)



The University of Sindh, Jamshoro- Pakistan recognized the contributions of the President ECOSF Prof. Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro in the field of Science, Technology and Education and awarded him a Gold Medal in the University Convocation- 2012 held on 21 Dec 2013. The medal was awarded by the Senior Minister of Education of Sindh province and the Pro-Chancellor of the University, H.E. Mr. Nisar A. Khuhro.

Prof. Soomro has been decorated with the prestigious Gold Medal by the University of Sindh in recognition of his contributions made in the field of science, technology and education. The citation of Prof. Manzoor Soomro was read on the occasion which highlighted his contributions in Pakistan and abroad.

Dr. Soomro is also the pioneer scientist who in 1989 had intercepted an exotic fungal disease – “Powdery Scab of Potato” in Potato Seed imported from the Netherlands. More studies were subsequently done on the problem by Dr. Soomro and his team. He also pioneered diagnosis and identification of Banana Bunchy Top Virus (BBTV) in Pakistan during 1992. Dr. Soomro has so far to his credit, 187 publications including books and book chapters, six Industrial patents and numerous science documentary films. He has also pioneered in Pakistan the Inquiry Based Science Education (IBSE) – “*La main a la pate*” in collaboration with the Academy of Sciences, France and the Embassy of France in Islamabad.

ECO Science Foundation and CAB International to work together in the ECO Region (27 Dec 2013)



ECOSF and CABI (Central and West Asia) will work together for empowerment of farming communities and conservation of biodiversity in the ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization) region, it was agreed in principle by the leadership of the two international organizations. The Regional Director of CABI- Central and West Asia Dr. Babar E. Bajwa based in Rawalpindi- Pakistan called upon the President of ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF) Prof. Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro in his office to explore the possibilities of collaboration between the CAB International and ECOSF.

The President welcomed the Director CABI and explained the aims and objectives of ECOSF and its makeup. He also shared his wisdom with Director CABI as to how the two organizations can build on each other's strengths and collaborate for the good of the people especially the farming/agricultural communities in the region. The discussions led to agreement in principle for working together by the two organizations. It was decided therefore to interact with CABI Headquarters and draft a MoU for formalizing the collaboration when the ECOSF is in position to embark upon research funding.