



ECOSF NEWSLETTER



Corona Virus - COVID 19: Situation in Numbers in the ECO Member Countries

Country	Total confirmed cases due to COVID-19	Total confirmed deaths due to COVID-19
Afghanistan	56,454	2,484
Azerbaijan	261,713	3,567
Iran	1,890,000	62,665
Kazakhstan	297,472	3,232
Kyrgyzstan	88,538	1,500
Pakistan	672,931	14,530
Tajikistan	13,308	90
Turkey	3,320,000	31,537
Turkmenistan	-	-
Uzbekistan	82,869	629
ECO region Total	6,683,285	120,234

Date Stamp: March 31, 2021

Source: <https://ourworldindata.org>

Note: So far, no case has been reported in Turkmenistan.

14th Summit of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) held virtually

The 14th Summit of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was held virtually on March 4, 2021 under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the honourable President of the Republic of Turkey. It was inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Imran Khan, the honourable Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan being the previous Chair. The Chair was handed over to Turkey being the host of the Summit. All the ten ECO Heads of States and the ECO Secretary General, as well as the ECO Observers, including the President of Turkish Cypriot State, Secretaries General of the Turkic Council and International Energy Charter were present in the Summit. The event, convened under the theme of 'Regional Economic Cooperation in the aftermath of COVID-19'.

H.E. Prime Minister Imran Khan in his inaugural speech congratulated Turkey on successfully organizing the Summit during these challenging times. He highlighted the regional and global health and economic consequences of Covid-19, and elaborated Pakistan's 'people and poor-centric approach' to tackle the pandemic. The Prime Minister highlighted his 5-point plan to provide fiscal space to developing countries to deal with the adverse socio-economic impacts of the Covid-19.





H.E. President Erdoğan, while acknowledging the significance of ECO for regional development, emphasized on the early implementation of ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) and other progressive initiatives aimed at pushing the process of development in the region. He noted that the COVID-19 pandemic gravely damaged the global economy and trade, straining on the existing healthcare system. President Erdoğan said: “we can only win the fight against this global debacle through strong solidarity, regional and international cooperation.” He underscored that during Turkey’s Chairmanship of the Organization, the country had remained focussed on consolidating the organization and advancing regional cooperation.



During the Summit, it was decided that the next ECO Summit Meeting will be hosted by Turkmenistan in November 2021 and thus the Chair was passed on to Turkmenistan. The honorable President of Turkmenistan, H.E. Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov assumed the chairmanship of the ECO for 2021. The ECO Heads of States/Governments extended felicitations to H.E President Berdimuhamedov assumption of responsibilities as the new ECO Chair.



After assuming the chairmanship of of ECO, H.E. President of Turkmenistan expressing thanks for the assigned responsibility, assured of his country’s complete support to secure the organization’s overall aims and objectives. Voicing the priority vectors of cooperation within the framework of Turkmenistan’s chairmanship of the ECO, he underlined his country’s intention to promote the organization’s work, focussing on the development of economic, cultural and humanitarian ties. He added that unfolding of the trade, transit-transport, energy, industrial and communication potential of the ECO would remain in the center of Turkmenistan’s strategy during their chairmanship of the Organization. President Berdimuhamedov considered the establishment of economic corridors as a system of sustainable routes for the movement of goods, services, investment and industrial cooperation as well as energy corridors for diversification of energy resources supplies in the region, as Turkmenistan’s key mission, with participation of Member States. He underscored that the essence of cooperation amongst ECO Member States was the geographical and historical ties, shared traditions, customs and values.

The ECO Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour briefed on the ECO's recent developments made in the organization's priority areas of cooperation, including trade & investment, transit-transport, energy, tourism as well as activities and engagements for enhanced economic connectivity in the region. He also illuminated the finalization of latest reform process to enhance the sense of owner/partner-ship amongst all Member States, as well as ECO's fresh approach for making the organization more project and result-oriented.



Thar Science Festival – 2021 held successfully by TEA, ECOSF and Local Government of Tharparkar

Two-day Thar Science Festival- 2021 was organized by Thar Education Alliance (TEA), ECOSF and District Government of Tharparkar in collaboration with other national/international organizations on 26-27 March 2021 at Mithi, Tharpakar, Pakistan. Students especially a large number of female students participated in the event and presented their scientific models. It was amazing to see the talent of students from a backward area!



The event was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner of Tharparkar District Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sohoo who appreciated TEA and other organizers for arranging such events to promote science education. Mr. Verji Kolhi Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Sindh and Dr. Mahesh Kumar Malani Member of National Assembly of Pakistan also attended the Festival and visited the stall set by the students show casing their scientific talent.

As reported by TEA, 11781 persons from all walks of life attended the event. Among them, more than 10000 were students/children from public and private schools who showcased different science models on COVID-19, solar energy, solar system, water reservoirs, human skeleton and others. The passion of the students for science was fantastic. Visiting people were praiseworthy about the scientific talent of Thari students.

Different science organizations like Pakistan Science Club, Pakistan Science Foundation with their talent farming mobile lab, Robo-Tech, Ejaad- Tech also placed their stalls and performed their experiments, PAF-KIET and NAMAL University also placed their stall at the event along with their books stalls. Different sessions on enabling access and quality of girls in post primary grades, data driven campaign, champion for change, COVID-19 and its impact on socio economic condition, STEM education were organised. Panel discussions were also arranged wherein; experts, educationists and policy makers discussed the promotion of science education in the area and beyond.

The event provided an opportunity to the students and local people to demonstrate their talent and develop innovative techniques and networking for future collaboration.

The participants expressed their joy and said that these kinds of festivals, events should be held more frequently and in more geographical regions to promote work in the fields of science, technology and innovation throughout Pakistan. Such actions will ensure future need of scientific human resource and development of the country on sustainable basis. Some clicks of the event are shown below:



8th ECO Ministerial Conference on DRR held Virtually (March 17, 2021)

The 8th ECO Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) was held virtually on March 17, 2021. Interior Minister of Turkey H.E. Mr. Suleyman Soylu chaired the conference. The meeting was jointly organized by Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD), Ministry of Interior of Turkey and ECO Secretariat. The Ministerial Conference was attended by Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of Turkey H.E. Mr. Ismail Çatakli, Acting President of AFAD Mr. Hamza TASDELEN and ECO Secretary General H.E. Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour. Relevant Ministers/Deputy Ministers and representatives from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan also attended the conference. President ECOSF Prof. Manzoor H. Soomro represented the Foundation in the Meeting.



In his speech at the conference, Mr. Soylu said that even the developed countries do not know what to do in the face of the epidemic disaster that has been forgotten for almost 200 years, which has led to migration, terrorism and violence in the first quarter of the 21st century. He further said that what has happened in the field of masks and vaccines shows the need for a new definition of globalization. Pointing out that an

invisible virus caused a warning and serious travel restrictions all over the world and that the prosperous countries who thought they could overcome any problem, were the countries most affected by the epidemic. Mr. Soylu stated that the world should globalize not for money, but for security, peace and brotherhood.

Secretary General of ECO Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour appreciated the Ministry of Interior and AFAD of Turkey for hosting the event and thanked the honourable participants on attending the event. He emphasized the need for coordinated efforts to mitigate the disaster risk in ECO region.

The Ministers/ Deputy Ministers/ Representatives of other ECO Member Countries also highlighted the disaster risks of their respective countries and called for a comprehensive and result oriented efforts in the wake of COVID-19.

It is pertinent to mention that the ECO Region is one of the most disaster-prone regions of the world. Most countries in the Region are highly vulnerable to disasters such as; earthquakes, floods, landslides and droughts. Over the past two decades, there has been a steady increase in the incidence rate of disasters in the ECO Region. During 2000-2015, about 333 natural disasters were reported in ECO Region that cumulatively affected more than 70 million people. The majority of the 470 million ECO Region's inhabitants live in the moderate to very high risk earthquake hazard areas. During this period, assets damaging accounted for more than US\$ 31 billion.

First Joint Symposium of the Rectors of ECO Member-State Universities- ECOSF Co-organizer and Contributor

The first ever joint symposium of the Rectors of ECO Member Countries was organized by Allahmeh Tabataba'i University of Iran in collaboration with the ECO Secretariat and ECO Specialized Agencies, including the ECO Science Foundation. Over 30 rectors and heads of universities from the ECO Member States participated in the event and recognized the significance of innovative and pragmatic approaches for enhanced regional cooperation in the field of education. On behalf of ECOSF, President Prof. Manzoor Hussain Soomro participated in the symposium.



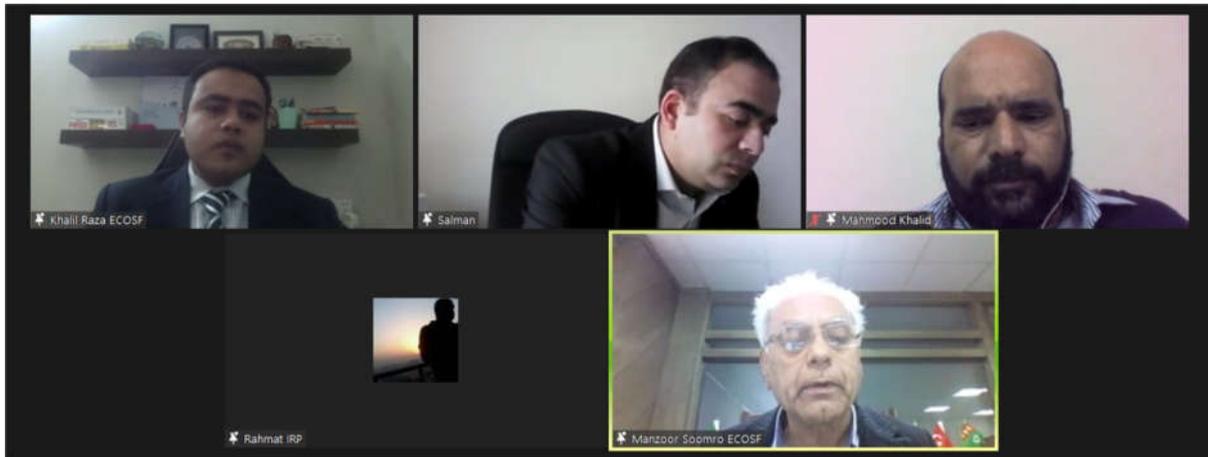
During the inaugural session, the ECO Secretary General Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour delivered his opening speech and thanked the organizers for providing an opportunity to the relevant stakeholders, academics and intellectuals for exchanging views in order to meet the challenges of the contemporary world in the field of education and research. Dr. Soleimanpour highlighted the importance of close cooperation among the ECO Member States in education and research for realization of the Organization's strategic goals.

President ECOSF Prof. Manzoor Hussain Soomro in his speech emphasized that Higher Education is one of the key drivers of growth performance, prosperity, and competitiveness for national and global economic development. Universities and other higher educational institutions not only deliver tertiary education and ongoing skills training, but also provide a conducive research environment that produces innovations with valuable commercial applications, he added. Prof. Soomro underlined that higher education sector remains critical for ECO Member Countries for developing essential human cognitive and capacity building of people at all stages of their careers.

At the end of the symposium, a special discussion was wherein the participants shared their views and experiences for enhanced regional cooperation in the field of education and research in the wake latest challenges of the globalized world.

Governance & Taxation: Rethinking Competitiveness of Sialkot- ECOSF, IRP and University of Sialkot jointly organized the virtual session during Innovation Summit- Sialkot 2021

ECOSF in collaboration with Institute of Research Promotion (IRP) and University of Sialkot organized a virtual session on “Governance & Taxation: Rethinking Competitiveness of Sialkot” on March 24, 2021 during the Innovation Summit Sialkot 2021. The session brought together renowned public policy and taxation experts who deliberated talks on measures to improve competitiveness of Sialkot (an export oriented industrial city of Pakistan) through effective governance and taxation framework. Engr. Khalil Raza Scientific Officer ECOSF was the session organizer and moderator.



The focus of this session was to demonstrate the strengths of Sialkot as a model important economic and industrial hub city of the country. Through exports, Sialkot-based small and medium industries are earning foreign exchange amounting to more than \$2.5 billion annually to strengthen the national exchequer.

Mr. Rahmat Ullah, Executive Director - Institute of Research Promotion (IRP) in his presentation highlighted the productive role of Research and Development (R&D) tax incentives which have become important policy instrument for product and process improvement. He underlined the significant need for cross collaboration amongst the government, academia and industry which is essential to boost market competitiveness through effective R&D tax mechanisms.

Dr. Mehmood Khalid, Senior Research Economist at Pakistan Institute of Development Economist (PIDE) emphasized that the government should facilitate the

Session Organized by: **ECO Science Foundation**

Governance & Taxation: Rethinking Competitiveness of Sialkot

DATE: March 24, 2021 **TIME:** 12:05PM-01:50PM (GMT+5) **ZOOM JOINING ID:** 869 - 2999 - 9166

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Keynote Speakers

- Dr. Mahmood Khalid**
Senior Research Economist, PIDE
- Muhammad Salman Aslam Darr**
Strategic Investment Analyst, Investment Climate Reform Unit.
- Mr. Rahmat Ullah**
Executive Director IRP

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investors to invest in new projects as well as in the expansion of existing industrial concerns to help promote industrialization in the country. Dr. Khalid recommended for simplifying filing requirements, tax codes to reduce compliance cost that could help boost the revenue collection and inclusive growth. He further said that excessive documentation and compliance requirements serve as barriers to improve taxation and negatively affect the economic activities. He also said that distinction between a filer and a non-filer through rate differential has not been worked well in Pakistan. Rather, it has established a premium for being a non-filer!

Mr. Muhammad Salman Aslam Dar, Strategic Investment Analyst, Investment Climate Reform Unit underscored that Sialkot has a great potential to achieve tremendous growth with adequate governance and tax incentives especially for the local businesses in Sialkot. He said such interventions could also be replicated in other cities of Pakistan. Mr. Dar proposed some interventions for improving competitiveness for Sialkot, which could further boost the innovation and exports in the country. In order to achieve these objectives, a strong collaboration amongst major institutions and stakeholders is the key, he concluded.

University of Tehran and ECOSF co-organized the 2nd the International virtual congress on Medicinal Leech

School of Biology, University of Tehran in collaboration with ECOSF co-organized the 2nd the International virtual congress on Medicinal Leech and Its Applications, from 3rd to 4th March 2021. Prof. Masoumeh Malek an expert in leech farming and management was the Principal Organizer.

The objective of this congress was to provide a common platform for the students, researchers, industry, physicians and policy makers, who hold keen interest in a wide range of subjects related to medicinal leeches and their applications. A large number of scientists, researchers and experts on the subject, including scholars from the ECO Member Countries participated in the conference.

Distinguished scholars shared best practices and country-wide experiences with varying approaches to sustainable exploitation of medicinal leech. The topics of congress centered around hirudotherapy, hirudiculture, pharmaceutical products, stock assessment and conservation, entrepreneurship, market and export challenges, biotechnology, veterinary hirudotherapy, leech biology, genetics and leech diseases. The conference also raised awareness on overexploitation and illegal trade of medicinal leeches.



1st Conference on STEMS at Islamia University of Bahawalpur held on 30-31 March 2021– President ECOSF joined as a Key Note Speaker on STEM Education via IBSE for Socio-Economic Development

The first ever Conference on Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Social Sciences (STEMS) was organized on 30-31 March 2021 by the Islamia University of Bahawalpur (IUB). It was a multi-thematic conference held under hybrid sessions and featured more than 160 papers by national and foreign delegates on science, technology, engineering, mathematics and social sciences.

Speaking in the conference Vice Chancellor of IUB Prof. Athar Mahboob said that the multi-thematic conference is a unique opportunity in the history of the university where educators and researchers from universities, colleges, schools, industrial and commercial, cultural and information and other public and private institutions would share their experiences in their fields. He further said that more effective solutions to various problems are possible through multi-thematic teams.



In the inaugural session of the conference, Prof. Muhammad Ashraf, Pro Vice Chancellor IUB, Prof. Saiqa Imtiaz Asif, VC of Government Sadiq College, Women’s University, Bahawalpur and Prof. Manzoor Hussain Soomro, President ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF) participated. Prof. Soomro made a key note presentation entitled, **“Inquiry Based Science Education for Sustainable Social and Economic Development”**. In his talk, Prof. Soomro said that Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education plays a vital role in economic and social development through boosting human productivity and scientific and technological innovation. Today, all nations are competing to build smart and quality human resource and Pakistan can also achieve its goal and vision of a ‘knowledge economy’ and boost industrial development by promoting quality STEM coupled with Arts and Social Sciences education in the country, he added.

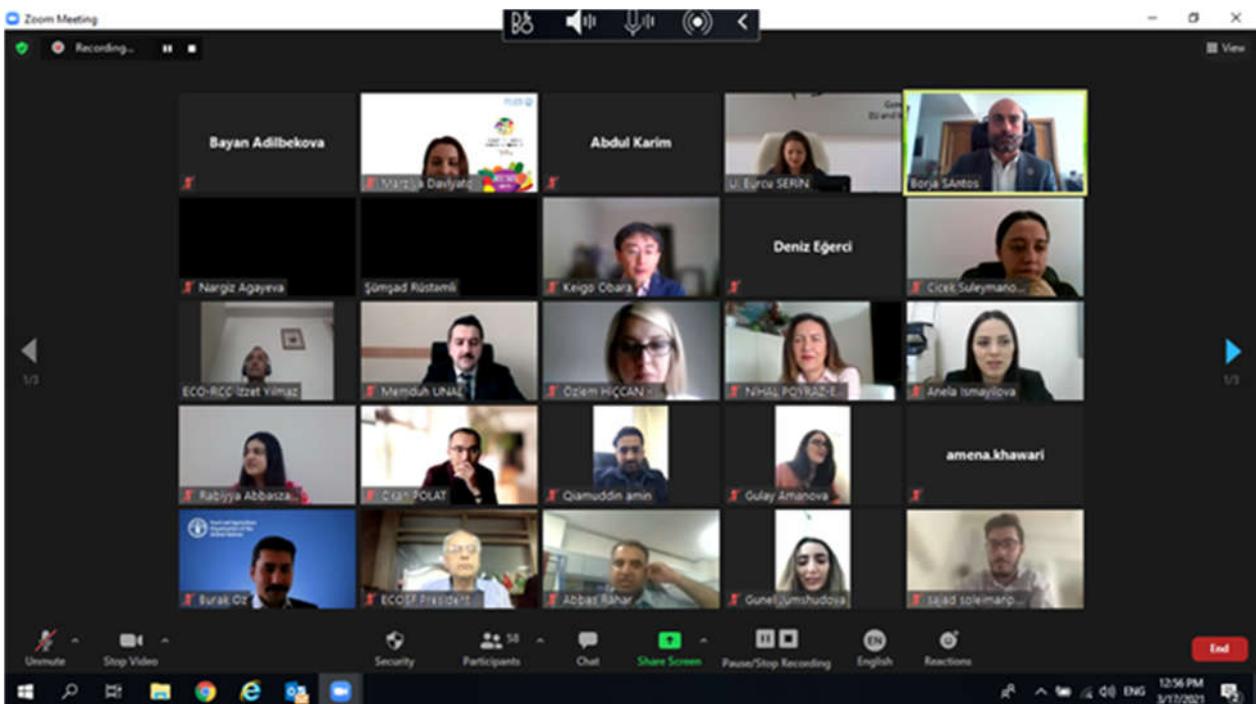


Prof. Soomro shared that ECOSF has been promoting the IBSE approach and developing the capacity of science educators in the ECO region, including Pakistan.

Prof. Dr. Saiqa Imtiaz Asif, Vice Chancellor, Government Sadiq College, Women’s University, Bahawalpur and participated. On the second day of the conference, 6 parallel sessions were held in which papers on medicine sciences, engineering, commerce and management and arts and social sciences were presented.

Two-day Introductory Training on Project Cycle Management (PCM) for ECO Regional Food Security Programme held virtually by ECO-RCC

A two-day virtual introductory training on Project Cycle Management (PCM) was organized by Economic Cooperation Organization Regional Coordination Centre for Food Security (ECO-RCC) on 16-17 March 2021 for the representatives of ECO countries, within the scope of a project to strengthen the ECO-RCC. On behalf of ECOSF, President Prof. Manzoor Hussain Soomro and the Assistant Director Mr. Ghulam Abbas Rahar participated in the event.

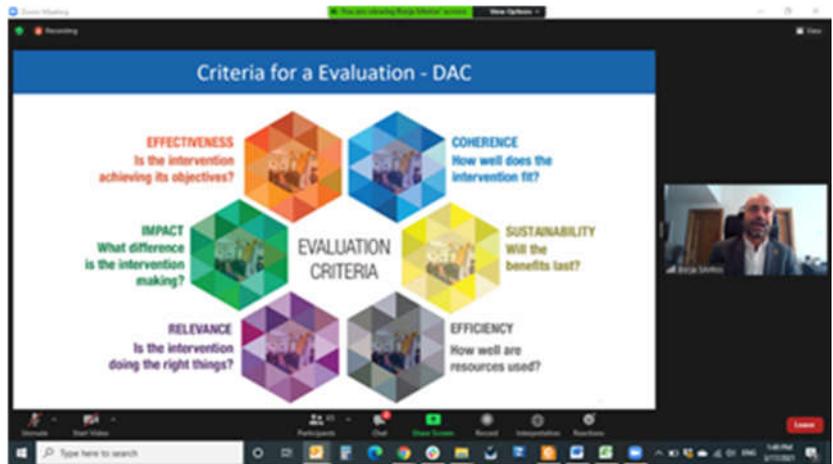


Mr. Volkan Güngören, ECO-RCC Coordinator and Deputy General Director for Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Turkey opened the workshop. Mr. Güngören emphasized the importance of project cycle management to successful implementation of projects designed to meet the needs of the ECO region, noting that without proper planning even the best ideas can be wasted.

The workshop was facilitated by Dr. Borja Santos Porras, a professor from IE University in Madrid, Spain, with extensive experience in leadership, problem-solving and public policy. Ms. Sumiter Broca, Senior Officer in FAO Sub-regional Office for Central Asia in her remarks explained that the training teaches both basic and new approaches to PCM users. These different approaches help users to break down complex problems into their root causes and identify possible solutions.

The training provided an opportunity for participants to learn the basics and tools of PCM, which are essential for developing and implementing projects. In addition, the training introduced the participants to some new approaches to project management including the Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA).

This training also aimed to improve capacities to support implementation of the new ECO Regional Programme for Food Security. In particular, it was designed to support the development of projects to alleviate food insecurity in the ECO region, where about 13% of the population is still food insecure.



3rd ECO Expert Group Meeting on Disaster Risk Reduction organized virtually by AFAD -Turkey and ECO, ECOSF attended as an Invited Speaker

3rd ECO Expert Group Meeting on Disaster Risk Reduction was jointly organized virtually by Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD), Republic of Turkey and ECO Secretariat on 9-10 March 2021. The meeting was attended by the experts, scientists, from ECO countries working in the field of earthquake and disaster management.

The meeting was opened by Mr. Hamza Tasdelen, Acting President of AFAD. He welcomed the distinguished guests and hoped that two day meeting would bring some concrete proposal to mitigate the disaster risk posing threats to ECO region.

During the technical sessions, the renowned experts participated. They included; Mr. Nihan Karacameydan, Head of Working Group, Department of Information Systems and Communication, AFAD; Dr. Mostafa Mohaghegh, Senior Coordinator, Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management (APDIM), Mr. Sinan Demir, Head of Working Group, Department of Planning and Risk Mitigation, AFAD; Mr. Fatih Kiliç, Geophysics Engineer, Ministry of Environment and Urbanization; Mr. Hans Guttman, Executive Director, Asian Disaster Preparedness Center; Mr. Andrew Bower, Programme Officer, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction; Mr. Mehmet Akif Alkan, Head of Working Group, Department of Planning and Risk Mitigation, AFAD and others. The experts discussed the following important topics/themes:

- Innovation in Disaster Management (New Technologies and Approaches)
- Local Level Strategies and Risk Management Approaches
- Importance of Training in Disaster Risk Management

Prof. Manzoor Soomro, President ECOSF in his talk said that Climate Change is a serious global threat and poses complex challenges for sustainable development for our future generations. Melting of glaciers, sea level rise, intense heat waves and increase in global temperatures are clear and visible signs of climate change. These extreme events increase the frequency and probability of disasters. He added that ECO region is also one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world and is exposed to various types of natural hazards and disasters, resultantly, ECO region has incurred losses on an average of a staggering more than 2 billion US dollars due to natural disasters. Therefore, disaster risk management and mitigation are vital components to climate change adaption measures in the ECO region. He further added that education, especially the science education including the science of disasters, must play an essential role in preparing the present and future generations to understand climate change and to be adequately prepared to adapt to and mitigate its impacts. For raising awareness, promoting

knowledge and skills-development, science education is an essential component and a catalyst for responding to global climate change, he added.

Prof. Soomro further said that a few countries have already undertaken possible measures to include a number of aspects of climate change in school curricula and in their respective national development agendas. For instance, the La main à la pâte (LAMAP) Foundation of France, a strategic partner of the ECOSF based in Paris with a primary intent to improve the quality of teaching of science through inquiry-based approach at schools, has included climate change education. LAMAP recently launched the Office of Climate Education (OCE) in Paris which has a mission to integrate climate change education at school level. This could be potential model for the ECO region as well. Prof. Soomro emphasized that using this platform, we must identify the most important, most suitable, and innovative Disaster Risk Reduction tools that can contribute to reducing disaster risks and preparing for future disasters in the ECO Region. He named a few technological innovations, such as Geographic Information System (GIS) and remote sensing, drones, social networking service, doppler radar, information and communications technology (ICT) and disaster resilient materials which are extremely effective and have already contributed to reducing disaster risks worldwide.

In the end, he shared following key actions for Climate Change Education:

- Ensure effective learning and deep understanding of the subject matter, climate change education should be integrated across school curricula
- Promote climate change education, it is crucial to strengthen teachers' and educators' capacities to deliver accurate information, promote critical thinking about and take action on climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Governments and concerned stakeholders to develop lifelong training programmes for teachers who must have the necessary skills with which to deliver education on sustainable development and climate change.
- Develop and showcase effective national climate change education programmes
- Strengthen partnerships and opportunities for scaling up climate change education around the globe
- Identify innovative ways of scaling up and engaging all stakeholders
- Solicit commitments from policy makers and the education community

President ECOSF was appreciated for his comprehensive talk and suggestions to tackle the disaster risk management on a long term basis. It is pertinent to mention that this expert meeting was an exercise of preparation for the 8th Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) that was subsequently held on 17 March 2021.

Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro, President ECOSF visited the Sindh Rural Support Organization (SRSO) Project Sites in Districts Larkana and Khairpur in Sindh Province-Pakistan (March 10-12, 2021)

While travelling in Sindh province of Pakistan on a private visit, Prof. Manzoor Soomro, President ECOSF visited the Sindh Rural Support Organization (SRSO) projects sites in Larkana & Khairpur districts and had a meeting in the Headquarters in Sukkur from 10-12 March 2021. The visit was taken up on especial request of the Chairperson of SRSO to review the on-going activities of SRSO for improvement of socioeconomic conditions of rural poor population in the light of his experiences. Dr. Soomro was given an exposure to the on-going projects; where he interacted with participants/beneficiaries of the projects and activities as well as the SRSO staff and finally paid a visit to SRSO Head Office in Sukkur for briefing and feedback. A brief report on the visit in his own words, is highlighted below.



Activity- 1 (10-03-21)

Travelled to Larkana District Office of SRSO, met the District Manager and the Community Nutrition Officer of Taluka Bakrani. After initial briefing, visited the Village Organization (VO) and Farmer Field School (FFS) Ishaq Khuharo and had meeting with Agriculture Entrepreneur. The FFS is for training the poor farmers to grow vegetables in their backyard/kitchen gardens and also to keep goats in order to consume nutritious vegetables and pure goat milk so as to improve nutrition level of themselves and their children. The technical support how to conduct FFS is provided by the Agriculture Officer who joined the meeting. The District Manager Larkana and the Regional General Manager (RGM) also joined in the meeting. The Agriculture Entrepreneur man and his wife along with other VO member ladies were present.

According to FAO-UN and my personal experiences as Team Leader of an FFS lead Cotton IMP Programme in Asia, “the FFS approach is an innovative, participatory and interactive learning approach that emphasizes problem solving and discovery based learning. FFS aims to build farmers’ capacity to analyze their production systems, identify problems, test possible solutions, and eventually encourage the participants to adopt the practices most suitable to their farming systems”. FFS can also provide an opportunity for farmers to practice and test/evaluate sustainable land use technologies, and introduce new technologies through comparing their conventional technologies developed with their own tradition and culture.

A Farmer Field School brings together a group of farmers, livestock herders or fisher folk, to learn on how to shift towards more sustainable production practices, by better understanding complex agro-ecosystems and by enhancing ecosystem services. A FFS group meets regularly during a production cycle, setting up experimentation and engaging in hands-on learning to improve skills and knowledge that will help adapt practices to their specific context. The FFS empowers individuals and groups to move towards more sustainable practices and improve livelihoods. Hailing from a rural farming community, I personally believe that “FFS is a better tool for promoting technological adaptation among the rural communities who may not know how to read and write, which leads to sustainable rural development and prosperity of the poverty-stricken people”.

On 11-03-2021, three SRSO projects sites in District Khairpur were visited for interaction with the Community Organizations under the Peoples’ Poverty Reduction Program (PPRP) funded by Government of Sindh and implemented by SRSO. Brief report on field visit and the interaction with beneficiaries is shared below.

Activity- 2)

I along with District Manager SRSO Khairpur participated in the Village Organization (VO) & Business Development Group (BDG) meeting at Village Meenhoon Khan Jamro, Union Council Daraza in Tehsil Gambat. The VO representative made a presentation and elaborated all the interventions of PPRP/SRSO being done in the village through the VO. After the VO presentation on BDG, Community Investment Fund, Income Generating Grant and Vocational Training Program, the beneficiaries present in good number s full of enthusiasm, were



interacted with and asked questions about various interventions and their benefits to the community. The beneficiaries enthusiastically answered and defined the way they are utilizing the inputs/contributions of SRSO.



I was very pleased with responses and explanations by the reasonably well organized women members of the VO. I highly appreciated the women for their joint efforts for their own empowerment using a bottom-up approach with the technical and financial support of SRSO.

I then visited the BDG’s Grocery Shop and checked the record of business. He felt pleased with the comments of Group members for developing their

economic system through BDG Grocery Shop. He suggested them some improvement actions especially for record keeping, market linkages, communication & market skills and other ways of buying/selling. Efforts of the villager women were much appreciated for building a Grocery Shop under the BDG within their community.

Activity- 3



Next stop was Village Simno Ujjan, Union Council Shaheed Saleem Ahmed Khari in Tehsil Gambat; where we attended the VO and BDG meeting. The VO representative gave a briefing on the intervention of Peoples’ Poverty Reduction Program. Afterwards, opinion of the beneficiaries receiving the support of Community Investment Fund, Inter-Generating Grant for Vocational Training Program and BDG was sought. Each person nicely explained the process of receiving benefits from Micro investment plan for execution of the interventions. The role of well-organized women for uplifting themselves was much appreciated. Subsequently, the BDG’s Garment & Cloth, and Ladies’ Accessories shop was visited. The group members shared their business execution. The members told that all the items in the shop were purchased by BDG members from regional market of Sukkur. They showed record registers of the material and the cash flow of the business. There seemed quite a room for improvement in the program; particularly in terms of stock taking and determining the demand and the most selling items.

Read more: <http://ecosf.org/SRSO>

Prof. Manzoor Soomro appointed as an Overseas Editorial Board Member of the China Science and Technology Education Magazine

Prof. Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro, an eminent Pakistani Scientist and President of ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF), has been appointed as an overseas editorial board member of the China Science and Technology Education Magazine.

Prof. Soomro is an expert in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Management and proponent of Inquiry Based Science Education (IBSE) for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in the ECO Region and beyond. He is the Vice President of the Belt and Road International Science Education Coordinating Committee (BRISECC) under the patronage of China Association for Science and Technology (CAST) and the Children and Youth Science Center (CYSC) of China. Earlier, he was also appointed as a Distinguished Overseas Expert of the China Association for Science and Technology (CAST).

Previously having served as Chairman of Pakistan Science Foundation and an expert in FAO of United Nations, Dr. Soomro is also a Member of the Governing and Advisory Boards of numerous International Centers and Learned Bodies including; ISTIC Malaysia, IRIS Iran, IAP SEP Global Council, Asian Innovation Forum & Asian STI Think Tanks Network (ASTN) and the B&R STI Think Tanks Network. He is also a winner of the *Order of Academic Palms* award of the French Republic in 2013 in recognition of his contributions in developing STI and Science Education cooperation between Pakistan and Republic of France. He serves as Member of International Advisory Board of *La main a la pate* Foundation of France, which promotes non-formal science education in many countries.



ECOSF joined hands together with UNESCO and WFEO in celebrating the World Engineering Day 2021

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in partnership with World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO) virtually celebrated the World Engineering Day (WED) on March 4th, 2021 with the theme ‘Engineering for a Healthy Planet.’ It is celebrated worldwide on 4th March of each year since 2020.

World Engineering Day offers an opportunity to highlight engineers’ achievements and to improve the public’s understanding of how engineering is central to modern life and sustainable development. Several heads of engineering institutions, universities, engineers and businesses from across the world joined and celebrated the event.

On behalf of ECOSF, Prof. Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro and Engr. Khalil Raza Scientific Officer participated in the event.

This year’s event marks the launch of UNESCO’s second engineering report, 10 years after its first report on “Engineering for Sustainable Development: Delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals. This report highlights the crucial role of engineering in delivering the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, shows how inclusive and gender equitable engineering profession can bring about new perspectives and thus respond to the shortage of engineers, showcases of engineering innovations for implementation of the SDGs.

UNESCO Director General H.E. Ms. Audrey Azoulay in her message emphasized that none of ground-breaking inventions would have been possible without a contribution of the engineering professionals. She further called for global co-operation with stakeholders to promote engineering to help achieve SDGs. There is a great deal to be done specially to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals in developing countries to ensure that everyone has access to clean water, sanitation, reliable energy, and other basic human needs, she added.



WFEO President Prof. Gong Ke underscored for the need to engage with government and industry to address the need for engineering capacity and the quality of engineers around the world and develop strategic frameworks and best practices for the implementation of engineering solutions for sustainable development. He further said that celebration of World Engineering Day is about promoting engineering as a career and how it is an opportunity to change the world for better.

The report is available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000375644.locale=en>

Message by Prof. Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro, President ECO Science Foundation on World Engineering Day – March 4th, 2021



It gives me an immense pleasure to congratulate the engineering community on World Engineering Day on March 4th, 2021. The World Engineering Day for Sustainable Development was proclaimed by UNESCO in 2019. It is celebrated worldwide on 4th March of each year since 2020. This year the theme of this day is "Engineering for a Healthy Planet"

Read more: <http://ecosf.org/World-Engineering-Day-1>

A Joint Communiqué of the InterAcademy Partnership and the Global Young Academy

Reducing the impact of COVID-19 on inequalities in higher education: A call for action to the international community



A Joint Communiqué of the InterAcademy Partnership and the Global Young Academy

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected higher education systems across the world. In April 2020, the International Association of Universities (IAU) conducted a survey across 400 universities in over 100 countries to assess the impact of COVID-19. Over 97% indicated that the pandemic had impacted the way learning and teaching were conducted, including closures.¹ The inequalities that were already present in the system have been exacerbated by the pandemic and we believe this must serve as a catalyst for systemic change. The unfolding challenges and opportunities differentially affect students, instructors, administrators and institutions. **The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened inequalities in higher education by reducing flexibility and mobility, constraining access to resources, and limiting in-person development opportunities.** This communiqué highlights some of the most pressing challenges and opportunities for higher education systems globally surrounding inequalities. It concludes with recommendations to university administrators, policymakers, research funding agencies, and academies on priority actions to harness the lessons learnt during the pandemic to reduce the long-term impacts of COVID-19 on higher education systems.

It is pertinent to mention that Prof. Manzoor Hussain Soomro is among the reviewers of the Communiqué.

Read more: <http://ecosf.org/Reducing-the-impact-of-COVID-19>

UN-DESA webinar on "Building Food and Water Security in an Era of Climate Shocks" - President ECOSF joined in

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) in collaboration with Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Program (WFP) hosted a webinar on "Building Food and Water Security in an Era of Climate Shock" on 24 March 2021. It was attended by large number of scientists, researchers, academia and the students. Prof. Manzoor H. Soomro, President ECOSF also attended the webinar.

The webinar looked at how climate change is affecting people's access to water for sufficient,



safe and nutritious food. Discussion during the session centered on the cross-cutting issues such as financing, governance, gender, energy, data and statistics. Mr. Qu Dongyu, Director-General of the FAO of the United Nations was the key note speakers. Mr. Dongyu highlighted that productivity gains, good governance and a coordinated holistic policy framework are the three major entry points for action to address water and climate-related challenges in agriculture.

Climate change is increasing variability in the water cycle and distribution, reducing predictability of both availability and demand, affecting water quality, exacerbating water scarcity and disrupting the livelihoods of millions of rural people who depend on agriculture, the Director-General said.

Earlier Mr. Liu Zhenmin, UN Undersecretary General for Economic and Social Affairs emphasized that freshwater resources are becoming increasingly scarce as a result of population growth, urbanization, industrial development and changing lifestyles and diets, constraining capacities for effective adaptation to climate change and jeopardizing the sustainability of many ecosystems.

Mr. Amir Abdulla, Deputy Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP) underlined that agriculture is the main user of freshwater resources and necessarily must have a central role in comprehensive approaches to improving water efficiency. He further said that policy coherence is important for the agri-food system both as a user of water and also as a potential contributor to climate change mitigation.