

STATEMENT ISSUED AT THE MEETING ON WATER-RESOURCES

Management and conservation of water-resources are fast emerging as critical issues facing today's world and need to be tackled through a collective and sustained effort by all countries. Most of the countries in the South, including Pakistan, are facing serious problems of mismanagement of its precious water-resources and lack of co-ordination among various establishments dealing with water-resources research, planning and development. It is in the vital interest of Pakistan to formulate, issue and implement a "National Water Development and Management Policy" at the earliest possible time. The delegates to the COMSATS 1st Meeting on water stress the need to respond to the frequent advice by the President, General Pervez Musharraf, to formulate mechanisms for better management of the continuously depleting water-resources in Pakistan and fill the need to strictly follow water-conservation strategies, in response to recent changes in regional and global climatic patterns. It is strongly felt that South Asian countries, specially Pakistan, need to make and implement short-term, intermediate-term and long-term measures to manage sustainable water-supplies for drinking, agricultural and industrial purposes, to boost their national economy.

The long-term strategies are costly, but can be optimized from economic view point. The long term strategies, including formulation of a regulatory framework on groundwater abstraction, construction of large storage dams, better flood and drought forecasting mechanisms and resolving water-distribution problems between regions and provinces, need to be given top priority in order to solve the water-availability and water-quality problems. The delegates to the conference also observe that planning, development and management of Water-resources is an exclusive subject with the Federal Ministry of Water and Power; the Chief Engineering Adviser, the Pakistan Council for Research in Water-Resources (PCRWR); the Center of Excellence in Water-Resources at Lahore; Irrigation Research institute, Lahore; and the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (at PINSTECH), Islamabad. The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and the Federal Ministry of Planning & Development are also closely associated with the Water-Resources Development & Management issues. These

organizations can contribute in determining the direction of the program, the priorities, the grouping of the subjects, and in laying down some broad guidelines for the water-resources development and management issues in Pakistan.

The participants also highlight the need to improve the existing statistics on subsurface water and glacial melts and to put in place a dependable drought-forecasting programme. The delegates also feel the need to build as many reservoirs as possible, along the major water-courses and rivers in Pakistan to tap flood-flows and conserve water for national needs. The continuity of the National Water-Quality Monitoring Programme, initiated by the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR), is to be ensured and the National Environmental Quality Standards (NEQS) should be effectively enforced. Specifically, the NEQS for drinking water should be formulated. The expert delegates strongly feel the need for introduction and use of nuclear techniques, in conjunction with classical non-nuclear techniques, for water-resources development research, water-use efficiency and water-quality evaluation.

The participants thank the COMSATS for organizing this first and highly successful meeting to bring forth problems of water-resources limitations in Pakistan and their solutions, and urge COMSATS to continue to hold water-related meetings, seminars, conferences and national / regional level training-workshops for educational and planning purposes and to create an awareness among people about the water-related issues. COMSATS is expected to constitute a high-level multi-disciplinary panel of top professionals in the water-sector, both at national level and at regional level, to help and resolve many complimentary concurrent activities in the water-sector development and management. COMSATS is also expected to take a lead in seeking perusal of recommendations and in setting the trend for implementation of suggested solutions to mitigate water-sector problems in Pakistan and in the South. COMSATS intends to hold similar water meetings on annual basis.