# Recommendations and Conclusions from AASSA Regional Workshops and Meetings, 2019

The Association of Academies and Societies of Science in Asia (AASSA) works to enhance collaboration and cooperation among academies, societies and scientists in Asia and Oceania. Since its inauguration in 2012, the Secretariat has been hosted by the Korean Academy of Science and Technology (KAST).

AASSA is the regional affiliated network in the Asia-Pacific of the InterAcademy Partnership (IAP), which is a global network of more than 140 national, regional and global academies of science, medicine and engineering.  AASSA collaborates with academies in IAP's three other regional networks, namely EASAC (Europe), IANAS (North- and Latin-America) and NASAC (Africa), on actions that support the special role of science and provide independent evidence-based advice to policy makers as they seek solutions to address the world's most challenging problems.

This document pulls together the key conclusions and recommendations from four regional meetings and workshops organized by AASSA and its member academies during 2019.

**1. Regional Workshop on 'Science Breakthrough: Paid News, Fake News and Ethics'**

**20-22 February 2019 in New Delhi, India**

**In collaboration with the Indian National Science Academy (INSA), and CSIR-National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (NISCAIR)**

○ Key recommendations

- Media literacy and information literacy programmes should be strengthened to combat the menace of paid and fake science news

- Scientists should reach out to the media and help the media to deliver the outcomes/results from labs in accurate reportage and enhanced coverage because scientific research in labs is not generally communicated by the media and it does not seem to be a priority of the media.

- Science Academies have an important role to play in communicating scientific developments to the masses, especially the children and in keeping stronger networking for strengthening different organizations and individuals

- The damages inflicted by the spread of fake science news should be further studied.

- There is a need to identify and stem the spread of misinformation and disinformation

- In preparation for possible unethical self-promotion in health communication, it is advised for medical councils and other related bodies to play a more proactive role in curtailing paid news and prevent unethical practices.

- In order to deliver accurate information on disaster, risk communicators should be educated about the need for accurate but sensitive reporting of disaster information.

- It is highly needed to reorient science communication in order to engage the public in it.

- Prior to dissemination of new scientific information to the public, authentication and verification should be done and adopted in science communication programmes.

- It is advised to establish communication academy and provide children with onsite training on science education.

- Conclusions

  - Following the presentations and discussions during the workshop, the conclusions are as follows:

    - Integrity in reporting and validation is key to combat fake science news

    - In order to improve the current challenges and situations caused by paid and fake news, it is necessary to make joint efforts among the stakeholders – scientists, journalists, policy-makers as well as the public.

- Also, it is required to make the feasible plans in the short term and the long term

## 2. Regional Workshop on 'Managing Urbanization in Asia'

**25-26 June 2019, in Colombo, Sri Lanka**

**In collaboration with the National Academy of Science of Sri Lanka (NASSL)**

○ Key Recommendations

- Reformulation of state policies, ideally safeguarded by constitutional reforms, to promote planned urbanization rather than ad hoc planning, avoiding 'urban-bias' in decision-making, ensuring public access to information (e.g. waste disposal, epidemics, air quality, noise pollution etc.) and improvement of urban governance with a constitutional oversight mechanism

- Efficient urban planning aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals using science-based sustainable approaches to planning (considering the entire ecosystem for optimal use of resources) as an alternative to popular 'utopian' models from early 20th century Europe, including public participation and seeking international views. Furthermore, urban planning must be sensitive to technological innovations

- Improve urban management with effective government intervention (providing the social houses) to manage the forces of urbanization, and equally Governments should give priority to implementation of plans, rather than continuous planning

- Encourage the compact cities including building of high-rises adopting green environment technologies with recreational centres, interconnected transport, walking tracks and bicycle lanes to promote physical activity, waste management using new technologies, measures to reduce atmospheric pollution, health care, and introducing urban agriculture to make urban areas more livable and such planned development to actively foster healthy lifestyles in the urban inhabitants, improved resilience to disasters and impacts of climate change

- Include promotion of health and wellbeing in urban areas as a central goal in policymaking and urban planning

- Urban development should be broad-based on the concept of 'multiple capital cities' to include small and medium towns. The development of such towns should be pursued as 'Service Centres' for their hinterlands and the medium towns should also be encouraged as alternative targets for rural-urban migrations. Low income urban settlements should be an integral and rightful part of the city's economy and social structure. Ethnic mixture in housing and settlements should be promoted to reduce segregation

- Empowering the urban management agencies with better autonomy, fiscal powers, technical and human resources including income-deriving strategies (e.g. composting, recreational

parks)

- Investment in Research and Development on Urbanization including assessing the feasibility of providing affordable housing, and transferable development rights

- Development of efficient public transport systems/ICT to encourage work at home

- Create public awareness of urbanization issues with special reference to access to reproductive health and contraception for countries with high population growth

- Improve social infrastructure in villages to reduce migration to towns.

○ Key achievements

- The workshop identified several drivers of urbanization: economic; social and cultural; environmental; and politics and governance aspects.

- The workshop recognized the potential for urbanization to catalyze and facilitate economic growth, human development and wellbeing in a sustainable manner.

3. **Regional Workshop on 'Complementary Medicine as an Answer to Challenges Faced in Achieving Sustainable Goals in Health'**

**19-21 August 2019 in Islamabad, Pakistan**

**In collaboration with the Pakistan Academy of Sciences (PAS)**

○ Impact and outcome of the workshop

- Development of education materials like proceedings based on the potential role of herbal medicines in sustainable development

- Abstracts and proceedings of the conference are made available

○ Recommendations

: The following recommendations are based on the presentations and discussion during the conference and are in line with the strategies recommended in the WHO 2014-2023 Strategies Frame Work.

- Establish Higher Education and Research to enhance quality and expand the knowledge base of Traditional and Complementary Medicine (T&CM)

- Integrate Traditional Medicine with Primary Health Care(PHC) in WHO's traditional medicine strategy 2014-2023's Strategic Objective 3('to promote universal health coverage by integrating T&CM services into health care service delivery and self-health care by capitalizing on their potential contribution to improve health services and health outcomes, and by ensuring users are able to make informed choices about self-health care'). The

following recommendations are given to achieve the objective 3 of the WHO's traditional medicine strategy

    a. Recognize HRH crisis as a health policy priority and consider T&CM integration in PHC as one of the strategic objectives for addressing the crisis;

    b. Build TCM knowledge base to inform policies and strategies

    c. Review and revise existing regulations to strengthen safety, quality and effectiveness of TCM therapies and practices;

    d. Review and revise TCM Training curricula to include some essentials of modern health care.

- Additional recommendations relevant to Pakistan and some other Asian countries are:

    a. Suppliers of medicines based on natural products must ensure that harvesting of the products from the animal/organism species providing the source compounds is sustainable or the animals are domesticated in order to meet demands.

    b. Many species are endangered because of their health benefits. Efforts must be made to eliminate illegal trade in such endangered species. Such efforts should include an awareness campaign about the scientific basis for 'no medical efforts' of such produces, e.g. donkeys, rhino horn, tigers, rhinoceroses, sea horses and pangolins.

## 4. Regional Workshop on 'Crop Biotechnology for Sustainable Agriculture'

**23-24 September 2019 in Seoul, Korea**

**In collaboration with the Korean Academy of Sciences and Technology (KAST)**

○ Key recommendations

- To solve global problem of humanity such as global climate change, hunger, energy and global warming along with other environmental and health problems, current importance of modern biotechnology integrated with traditional farming is expected to increase in the years to come

- As if animal biology and biologists were very popular and important in the years of 1980, presently, in post-genomic era, the plant biology in general and biotechnology in particular have gained an important ground to play a role and responsibilities to cope with adverse effects of global issues mentioned above.

- Development of the ecological and human friendly genetically modified (GM) crops should be emphasized in the climate change face.

- The new breeding technologies including the genome editing should be used in a more

efficient way and they must be continuously developed to generate the new and better crops with desired traits to meet food and nutritional security.

- Given its big importance, regional and international collaborations as to share the technology, know-how and experiences among membership countries must be supported and strengthened more and more on the basis of deep trust.

○ Key achievements

- Recommendations will be utilized by international agencies and governments

- Awareness-raising on Crop Biotechnology including current status of research on food and nutrient security in Asian countries, the role of Biotechnology as a cutting edge tool for sustainable development, etc.

- Support for cooperation between scientists and countries and for the regional sustainable food and nutrition security

- Publication of a special issue in the journal of "Plan Biotechnology Reports"