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Dr. Anirban Pal the Convenor of the IORA-RCSTT Coordination Centre on Medicinal Plants (ICCMP)

Dear Colleagues,

Deeply honored Ladies, and Gentlemen,

I am deeply pleased to join you again as Director of IORA-RCSTT in the Training Programme on “Documentation, Good Agricultural Practices, Biotechnological tools and Techniques, Quality Control, Bioprospection and Product Development of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Native to the Indian Ocean Region”

I would like to express my appreciation to the CSIR-CIMAP and ICCMP for hosting this prestigious event and my special thanks go to the Ministry of External Affairs of India for its continuous support of the programmes focused on Medicinal Plants and for its valuable role in this direction.

The global herbal medicine market was valued at USD 151.91 billion in 2021 and the market is projected to grow from \$165.66 billion in 2022 to \$347.50 billion by 2029. The global covid 19 pandemic faced people to look for herbal traditional treatments which lead to unexpected market gain. Medicinal plants play a vital role for the development of new drugs. According to WHO, nearly 25% of modern medicines have been derived from plants being used in traditional medicine. Many others are synthetic analogs fabricated on model compounds isolated from plants. and now WHO has recognized herbal medicine as a crucial component of primary health care. For decades the practitioners of traditional herbal medicine have been verbally passing on instructions as to how to prepare medicine from herbs.

Plants remain a potential source of therapeutic agents and also serve as the raw material base for the extraction of semisynthetic chemical compounds such as cosmetics, perfumes, and food industries. Because of the evidence-based research conducted on herbal medicine over the years, the 21st century is witnessing a paradigm shift toward the therapeutic standardization of herbal drugs. Their efficacies have been supported and confirmed through many in vivo clinical trials. It is worthwhile to note that novel approaches and current insights into herbal medicine research have made a great impact on herbal remedies to compete enough in mainstream biomedical science.

Please let me continue my address with a brief introduction to RCSTT.

The IORA Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer (RCSTT) was established on 28 October 2008 under the recommendation of the Academic Group of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), approved in the 7th meeting of the IORA Council of Ministers, held on 7-8 March 2007 in Tehran, Islamic Republic of IRAN, and MOU dated 23 June 2008 between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the IORA Secretariat, Mauritius.

The IORA RCSTT follows the aims and objectives of supporting applied research, policy and human resource development programme as well as supporting the development of new technologies, cooperation, commercialization, and transfer of technology among the IORA Member States and Dialogue Partners, focusing on the development of all kinds of applied science related technologies, carrying out related analytical research on technology policy, marketing opportunities, and possible joint venture among the Member States and Dialogue Partners, networking among the key stakeholders.

The IORA RCSTT is mandated to connect the Member States by knowledge sharing and technology diffusion to shift the technological divide and to reduce the disparity in terms of economic growth and social welfare among the region.

Creating technology development hubs and focal points among the Member States, preparing and implementing multilateral cooperation models such as concentrating on the existing technologies in the region and improving and commercializing them using the common market in the region is the main purpose of the establishment of IORA RCSTT Coordination Centers. The establishment specific Coordination Centers in the Member States and Dialogue Partners is an effective initiative of IORA RCSTT for power sharing in various areas of science and technology in the IORA region and share the authority of the Centre with the IORA Member States to enhance technology transfer and commercialization in the IORA region.

THE IORA RCSTT'S COORDINATION CENTRE ON MEDICINAL PLANTS

On February 24, 2018, the IORA RCSTT signed an MOU with the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants, Lucknow (CSIR-CIMAP) for the establishment of a Coordinating Center focused on promoting scientific and technical cooperation and collaboration in specialized fields of Medicinal Plants.

The draft of the signed MOU had been discussed and endorsed by the 19th Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) held in Durban on 16-17 October 2017.

The idea for establishing this Coordination Centre had been gradually formed in the previous conferences and meetings around the subject of medicinal plants in the IORA region. To mention a few, the following could be referred to:

- I. THE REGIONAL EXPERTS MEETING ON "HERBAL MEDICINE PROCESSING" JUNE 19-21, 2010 - TEHRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN**
- II. "THE FIRST MEETING OF MEDICINAL PLANTS FOCAL POINTS OF IORA RCSTT CUM EXHIBITION", SALALAH – SULTANATE OF OMAN, 23-25 JUNE, 2014**
- III. THE SECOND MEETING OF MEDICINAL PLANTS FOCAL POINTS OF IORA RCSTT CUM EXHIBITION, 18 – 19 MARCH 2015, LUCKNOW – INDIA**
- IV. THE THIRD MEETING OF MEDICINAL PLANTS FOCAL POINTS OF IORA RCSTT, May 10 – 12, 2017, Jakarta, Indonesia**
- V. Training Programme on "Diversity, documentation, Gene banking and Database for Medicinal Plants" for IORA Member Countries, November 25 to December 01, 2018, Lucknow - India**

And today we are witnessing the next valuable step taken by CSIR-CIMAP to hold this training course. I wish a great success with this training course and I hope it can meet all its defined and expected goals. In this regard, on behalf of RCSTT I would like to draw your kind attention to the following recommendations:

- 1- To renew the list of MP National Focal Points of the IORA Member States and Dialogue Partners to establish the MP Network to address the IORA challenges in various areas of Medicinal Plants including policy-making, standardization, formulation, research, cultivation, collection, storage, processing, manufacturing and marketing.
- 2- In the research Area, we should focus more on the new aspects of the applications of transcriptome sequencing in medicinal plants and introduce the methods of transcriptome sequencing and analysis, their applications in medicinal plant research, and potential development trends. Also, we should focus on the research and application progress of transcriptome sequencing in the areas of the mining of functional genes in medicinal plants, development of molecular markers, biosynthetic pathways of secondary metabolites, and developmental mechanisms of medicinal plants
- 3- To invite the private sector stakeholders of medicinal and aromatic plants to join the above network to enhance and develop MP commercialization.
- 4- To hold annual exhibitions, workshops, and training courses in volunteer countries to strengthen the MP's knowledge and expertise in the IORA region.

Thank you again for giving me this opportunity to attend this important event and I wish great success for all of you at this great programme.