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Editorial

PAS-ANSO Strategic Planning for Epidemic and Pandemic Preparedness

Under the ANSO (Alliance of International Science Organizations) collaborative research grants (ANSO-CR-PP-2021-05), we arranged the first event "MAAP-PAS-ANSO hybrid workshop on ecosystem restoration: one-health and pandemics" (June 05, 2022; on the occasion of world environment day) at Pakistan Academy of Sciences, Islamabad. The workshop stresses communication and collaboration for sustainable health (human, animal, and environment) and gauged issues related to the health of the planet [1]. Under the same project, the second event "ANSO-PAS-MAAP conference on the epidemic and pandemic preparedness" (December 05-07, 2022) was organized at the Pakistan Academy of Sciences, Islamabad. The three days event emphasizes more scientific efforts and brainstorming to discuss strategies for controlling the current COVID-19 pandemic as well as future epidemics, pandemics, and emerging pathogens. The conference abstract book highlights the resource persons and their thoughts (in the form of abstracts and their biographies) [2]. Selected articles are published as a special issue in the Proceedings of the Pakistan Academy of Sciences: Part B. Life and Environmental Sciences. Moreover, the conference proceedings and recommendations have also been published in the special issue.

The third event which was organized under the project is "ANSO-PAS workshop on biological safety and risk management" (December 23, 2022) at the Department of Biotechnology, Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad. The workshop discussed bio-risk management in scientific/educational institutions, dual-use research of concern, risk assessments; and practical exercises were performed on different aspects like donning and doffing of PPE, waste/spill management in the lab., using biological safety cabinets in the laboratory, transportation and/or packing of infectious material, and certain scenario-based exercise for laboratory biosecurity.

In addition to the above-mentioned events, wet-lab experiments are being performed under the ANSO project, and bats-associated beta-coronavirus were reported for the first time from Pakistan [3]. Keeping in view, emerging/re-emerging infectious diseases (EIDs) as a major threat to public health, and bats as potential carriers; we are looking forward to more collaborations in further assessing the bat-viromes through high throughput sequencing (HTS), next-generation sequencing (NGS) and/or metagenomics techniques.

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