

1 *A Look Back on What We Have Proposed*

The main tasks of this Commission, as our Chairman has regularly reminded us, have been large and general ones. We were charged to examine the “overall vision” of the Aga Khan University as it was set forth more than a decade ago, and, looking at what has happened in the world since then, to say if and how that vision needed to be changed. Having confirmed or re-focused the vision of what AKU should be, we were to say how the vision might be realised in the next twenty or thirty years, in programmes of education, research, and service.

The original vision does not, in our view, need any basic change. AKU is to be a private, autonomous, Muslim university, open without discrimination to all qualified applicants, and devoted to the needs of the developing and Muslim worlds. As a small institution it has to be, as our predecessors said, “distinctive in substance or quality or both” if it is to be important in these worlds; and this has meant that in the midst of the present abundance of higher education it ought not try to be a “big conventional university with the familiar array of schools and faculties”. AKU should be a university with unique qualities but not so idiosyncratic that it cannot easily be recognised as a distinguished institution according to the standards in instruction, research and academic leadership by which universities are normally judged.

The challenge of fulfilling this vision for AKU has not lessened in the decade since it started. The pace of change has accelerated, in the accumulation and proliferation of knowledge, and in the social, economic, and political settings AKU must face. An institution that wishes to share in pushing outward the frontiers of knowledge must now run fast just to keep these frontiers in sight. The challenge and the rewards before AKU in keeping the pace and being a productive centre of research and high quality education have certainly grown; and they are heightened by the lagging we have found persisting elsewhere in the developing and Muslim worlds’ higher education and research. The changes in the boundaries and the character of these worlds have also brought new potential and significance to AKU’s work. The recourse to market economies and private

institutions in development strategy opens broader perspectives of influence for quality private institutions like AKU, and the search for deeper understanding of development poses challenges for research and analysis in AKU. With the present emphasis on open economies the developing world must be more tightly engaged with the rich industrial economies and with globalisation and migration the Muslim world is no longer simply a subset of the developing world. AKU's work thus may increasingly be significant for the whole world.

We have seen AKU making a strong start toward realising the vision set for it and laying a base from which this Commission could confidently project an ambitious future. AKU has established itself as an independent institution of integrity and quality, tackling some of the issues facing Pakistan but not losing its sense of commitment to wider purposes for the developing and Muslim worlds. The support the University has had from His Highness the Aga Khan and the Ismaili community throughout the world has underscored its special and firmly international character. It has encouraged the Commission to propose that AKU becomes a much broadened and widely dispersed university in the next quarter century.

The future AKU we have proposed will be a highly distinctive institution. It will be a Muslim university both in its special attention to Islamic civilisations and the problems of the contemporary Muslim world and in the pervasive influence of the traditions of Islamic civilisations and learning in its work. We expect it to be notable for its creative methods of teaching and learning and for its devotion to the needs and advancement of women. It will combine strength in research with devotion to high quality education and service, and it will do so in carefully selected modes and in subject matter that sprawls over the boundaries of conventional academic disciplines. A review of our proposals in Section VII above shows that the future AKU we conceive will not have many of the familiar schools and faculties of universities; it will not have law, or engineering or management schools. It will still, however, be a very broad university, ranging over the fields of knowledge from the sciences to the humanities and from attention to the urgent, practical needs of humanity to its more spiritual and intellectual

needs. It will, to fulfil its high ambitions, have to be firmly on the "information superhighways" of the world, maintaining strong and wide-ranging networks of ties to many universities and other institutions. We hope that AKU's future teachers, researchers, and students will be driven by their curiosity and ambition to keep extending what is studied in AKU, and that they will realise His Highness's vision of a happy balance of the spiritual and the technocratic in what AKU does.

The Commission has, as charged, kept its gaze mostly on what AKU might be in the long run. But we have also given thought to the start toward this future, with results we describe briefly before concluding.

2 *Starting Toward the New AKU : Next Steps Ahead*

2.1 In earlier sections of this report we have given some indications of the sequence and timing in which we think new developments in AKU should occur. And in the previous Section VIII on governance and finance we have made proposals on how the new phase in AKU's history might be guided and directed. We have not, however, drawn together what we think can and should be done in the next decade or so. That is the concern of these paragraphs.

2.2 We believe AKU should grow in an orderly way over the coming years, holding faithfully to the missions set for it. A periodic exercise such as was entrusted to the Harvard Committee in the early 1980s and has been given to us as the Chancellor's Commission in this decade may serve to affirm the University's long-term aspirations and say what is needed to keep moving toward them. In the intervals between such exercises there will inevitably be much detailed planning and development. We have given in Section VIII our views on the governing structures we think will be needed to guide AKU both over the long run and in the immediately coming years. If the proposals we have made for AKU's future are to be followed seriously, we foresee the need for : (1) appropriate attention by the Chancellor and Board; (2) sufficient capacity at senior academic and executive levels to undertake a vigorous planning and development process, and (3) engagement of the faculty and staff in the shaping of plans and programmes.

2.3 We have concluded that the development of the University in its new phase should proceed under its existing Charter and Board. We assume that the Strategic Planning Committee of the Board will add to its responsibilities in monitoring the recommendations of the Medical Centre Committee similar responsibilities for such recommendations of this Commission as the Chancellor may choose to accept. As its present Chairman, Professor Bell, has reminded us, these important monitoring functions cannot be executive functions, which must lie with the senior administration.

2.4 We have recommended the early appointment of a senior officer, tentatively designated a Director of Planning, to work together with the Acting Rector, the President of the University Centre, and the Director-General of the Hospital (when relevant), in the next steps of planning and development of the University. In our view, it is clear that the many duties now falling on the existing senior leadership make it imperative that additional strength be available soon at this high level if orderly planning is to occur. We have had lively debate in the course of the Commission's meetings on the pattern of development that might occur in response to this Commission's recommendations. In one view, effort would be concentrated on a single new component at a time; in the opposing view, the whole strategy of future development should be kept firmly in view, lest it be lost or over-powered by preoccupation with a particular new venture and the continued development of what already exists. Though in recommending that the Institute of Islamic Civilisations be given first attention, we have proposed an order of concrete effort, we also believe it essential that new developments be kept in a strategic framework.

2.5 The concern the Commission has had that the existing parts of the University in the Faculty of Health Sciences and the IED might inhibit the development of new parts is one we think has been justified. A glance at the sections of our Report dealing with the future of the Faculty of Health Sciences and IED and the large place we foresee for them in the AKU of 2025 will show ample reasons for this concern. If these parts of the University are as lively and forward-looking as we hope they will be, they will certainly be constantly pressing for new developments. We have said that the Commission's concerns of these matters have been eased by the broad outlook of

the new Acting Rector on the future of AKU, and also by the views we have found prevalent in the faculty, particularly as we heard them at the time of our Karachi meeting in May of this year. We still feel, however, that it will be necessary to have a locus of initiative and planning for the University as a whole if parts yet unborn are to have proper opportunities to develop. Given the dispositions of the Acting Rector and President, we are confident that the addition of the new senior officer we are recommending, whose responsibilities would be precisely to keep the general development of the University in view, will assure the kind of strategic outlook we think essential. We would hope that, working together and with the Strategic Planning Committee of the Board, these officers may deal in a judicious way with the flow of new initiatives that will come from the existing parts of the University while advancing the planning and development of new ones.

2.6 We conceive that new initiatives will involve fairly extensive feasibility and planning studies, undertaken by appropriate task forces. These will require recruitment and organisation of the necessary talent and continuing attention once such task forces are at work. Not many exercises of this sort can be mobilised and supervised at a given time. Both for these administrative reasons and for financial reasons the Commission has given much thought to the sequence and timing of new developments in AKU. A rough sequence has been indicated in Sections VII and VIII of our report. It would have :

- the Institute of Islamic Civilisations in the first starting position;
- some developments within the Faculty of Health Sciences, in expanding research, in building Health Policy and Management from the beginning already approved, and making first moves toward a preliminary year, would probably fall next in line with already planned developments in IED;
- the Institutes of Human Development and Economic Growth, and further growth in IED would be next to start, and be no farther delayed than administrative and financial constraints would dictate;
- the start of the Faculty or College of Arts and Sciences would not come until the end of the first decade ahead, and perhaps even later, while the Institute of Human Settlements would be deferred to a still later time.

2.7 We can thus envisage that after a decade or so AKU would have become a distinctly broader and more diversified university while continuing to grow in its original commitments to the health sciences and education. **But what can be done in the next ten years or so will necessarily be constrained by available funding.** We recall that MCC found the Faculty of Health Sciences still needing additional funding through the remainder of the 1990s even without the additions we are proposing, and its recommendation of a “realignment” of the Medical College was recognised to involve additional costs not accurately assessed. The additional senior officer and the planning exercises we are proposing will add additional costs before new programmes actually start. And there should also be early movement toward the strengthening of the informational and communication resources of AKU, its educational methods, and its efforts in the advancement of women that we have urged. We should suppose that as much as \$ 500,000 per annum will have to be found to provide for these purposes.

We have, in the immediately previous section of this report made some fairly optimistic projections of growth of AKU’s endowment and other resources in the long run. In the short run, the prospects are distinctly more limited. Remembering the additional capital and endowment still needed by the Faculty of Health Sciences in this decade, the build-up of income from endowment for support of new departures in AKU (even within the Faculty of Health Sciences) will be slow. It thus seems evident that the start of new programmes in the first decade ahead will have to depend heavily on consumable gifts, special grants and other income. We have at various points seen encouraging prospects for such support but we must recognise the uncertainties in timing that dependence on such start-up funding implies. The build-up of endowment and other income in the second decade ahead should permit more vigorous expansion, and AKU should be prepared toward the end of the first decade to move ahead later at a faster pace; but it cannot trust to endowment income to undergird growth in the years now immediately before it.

We are anxious to see the programme of development we have laid out for AKU’s future be initiated promptly and proceed as rapidly as possible. But we must recognise that there are likely to be disappointments and delays which may

mean that AKU will not be as far along after 10 or 15 years as we had projected. Our Chairman likes to speak of the “resistant medium of time”. We should hope that when AKU’s leaders find the going sticky they will not abandon one or another of the components we have proposed but stretch out the schedule for launching them.

3 *Envoi*

It is a sobering experience to review what will be required, in the next few years and later, for AKU to fulfil the vision of its mission that was set by its Founder and that we have affirmed for it here. For AKU to become what we intend and expect it to be will take talents and commitments far beyond the ordinary. Starting new and high quality parts of the University will require intellectual and educational vision combined with entrepreneurial skills and energies. Those who launch the many enterprises we see ahead will only be successful with wise and faithful support of the Chancellor, the Board, the Rector, his colleagues, the present faculty and staff of the University, and those everywhere who put their confidence in AKU.

If the tasks ahead are large and demanding, they are balanced by the extraordinary, historic opportunity that now lies before this University. AKU is rising as a new institution at a time when university education and research are in disarray in the parts of the world that specially concern it. There can be no question but that the developing and Muslim worlds need better institutions of higher education and research than they now have. They need these institutions not only to help bring more prosperous and rewarding lives to their peoples; they need them also to build the convictions of dignity and worth that counter bitter descents into alienation and extremism. And the world needs universities based in the Third World to which it can turn for wisdom and authoritative knowledge.

The Chancellor of this University is rightly proud to remember that his ancestors established a historic university in Cairo a thousand years ago. AKU now has a historic opportunity to serve the Muslim world, the developing countries, and indeed the whole world in times of troubling need. In the new century that will soon begin, we look forward to AKU standing forth as a creative source of education and enlightenment in a world where such institutions are too rare and sorely needed.