

# Media Update

3 August 2016

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## FAO

Press Release

### **FAO Conference Room Named as “Dr. Iftikhar Ahmad Memorial Conference Room”**

A simple and solemn ceremony was held to name the main conference room at the FAO Representation premises in Islamabad after the late Dr. Iftikhar Ahmad.

This gesture is FAO Representation in Pakistan’s own way of paying tribute to the services of Dr. Iftikhar Ahmad to the Agriculture Sector in Pakistan.

Mr. Sikander Hayat Khan Bosan, Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research declared the conference room officially named “Dr. Iftikhar Ahmad Memorial Conference Room” at the commemoration ceremony.

Inaugurated on September 5, 2013 by the honourable minister Bosan himself, the Conference Room serves as an important and most frequented venue for major events such as conferences, workshops, trainings and meetings involving stakeholders in the Agriculture Sector of Pakistan.

Speaking at the commemoration ceremony, Federal Minister Bosan said “Agricultural research is crucial for a country like Pakistan and there is a need for more professionals following late Dr. Iftikhar Ahmed’s example.

I commend FAO for making this effort to commemorate late Dr. Iftikhar Ahmed’s work for the Agriculture sector by naming an important part of the FAO premises after him.”



Mr. Patrick T. Evans, FAO Representative in Pakistan took this initiative to name the conference hall after late Dr. Iftikhar Ahmad to pay tribute to his services for not only FAO but also the entire Agriculture Sector in Pakistan.

Addressing the ceremony Mr. Patrick T. Evans paying tribute to Dr. Iftikhar's services said "Dr. Iftikhar had always helped us do a better job. He strengthened the work of many agricultural bodies in Pakistan."

He also reminded guests that Dr. Iftikhar was responsible for the construction of this FAO premises and we want to keep his memory alive.

Former Federal Secretary Mr. Seerat Asghar appreciating FAO's gesture to dedicate its conference room to Dr. Iftikhar said "Dr. Iftikhar sacrificed his entire life for the Agriculture sector in Pakistan. His departure is a loss for the country."

The ceremony was well attended with FAO staff, PARC and NARC staff in presence including Dr. Iftikhar's family members.

## Background

Dr. Iftikhar Ahmad passed away on June 3, 2016. He was serving as Senior Policy Advisor at FAO at the time of his death.

During his illustrious career, he served as Chairman, Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) and also held a number of prestigious positions including Member at Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) and Director General, National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC). He wrote more than 300 publications and held membership of 22 societies and professional bodies.

He is survived by two sons and a daughter.

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# UNICEF

## Press Release

### **Breastfeeding; a key to sustainable development** **Health minister calls for all segments to promote breastfeeding**

**ISLAMABAD, 29 July 2016** –As part of the ongoing celebrations to mark the World Breastfeeding Week, the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination and UNICEF held an event here today, to raise awareness regarding the benefits of breastfeeding to improve the health status of children and for the prevention of stunting in their early life.

The event was attended by the Minister of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination Mrs. Saira Afzal Tarar, UNICEF Representative to Pakistan Ms. Angela Kearney, the United Nations Resident Coordinator Neil Buhne, Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan Mrs Margaret Adamson, diplomats, members of civil society and a large number of healthcare providers.

Speaking at the event, the Minister of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination, Mrs. Saira Afzal Tarar expressed her commitment to the mission of restoring breastfeeding as it is one of the most important rights of young children, one which guarantees their health and wellbeing throughout life.

“With the launch of the Infant and Young Child Feeding Strategy 2016, we are working to create awareness among the masses regarding appropriate feeding practices that are essential for the nutritional status, growth, development and survival of infants and young children,” said Mrs. Tarar. “Infants should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life, and thereafter should receive nutritionally adequate and safe complementary foods while breastfeeding continues up to two years and beyond as ordained in the Holy Quran.”

The new Infant and Young Child Feeding Strategy includes the revitalization of sub-national Infant Feeding Boards, bodies designed to ensure that children and their families are not exposed to false advertising and promotion of so-called breast milk substitutes. Formula use is at an all-time high in



Pakistan, at 42 per cent which costs millions of rupees to the families, who are misguided by false advertising and even healthcare practitioners at times.

“Pakistan has an alarmingly low rate of exclusive breastfeeding with only 38 per cent of children under six months of age being fed by their mothers,” said UNICEF Representative to Pakistan Ms. Angela Kearney while speaking at the event. “Promotion of breastfeeding is one of the most important public health interventions by UNICEF. We work closely with the government at both federal and provincial levels to protect and promote the practice of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a child’s life.”

Some 77 million newborns – or 1 in 2 – are not put to the breast within an hour of birth globally, depriving them of the essential nutrients, antibodies and skin-to-skin contact with their mother that protect them from disease and death. Progress in getting more newborns breastfed within the first hour of life has been slow over the past 15 years, UNICEF data shows.

In Pakistan, where neonate and infant mortality rates are high, early initiation of breastfeeding within the first hour of birth can make a vital difference for the child’s chances of survival. The longer breastfeeding is delayed, the higher the risk of death in the first month of life. Delaying breastfeeding by 2-23 hours after birth increases the risk of dying in the first 28 days of life by 40 per cent. Delaying it by 24 hours or more increases that risk to 80 per cent.

“Exclusive breastfeeding rates are lowest amongst the educated women belonging to upper socio economic strata,” noted Dr. Tabish Hazir Professor and Head of Paediatrics at Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences and Principal Investigator, ARI Research Cell, South Asian Infant Feeding Research Network. “Bottle feeding rates are highest amongst working women, upper social strata, urban residence and women seeking care with health professionals. There is need to employ behaviour change strategies to discourage this trend by reaching out to women from all educational and social backgrounds.”

Globally, only 43 per cent of infants under six months old are exclusively breastfed. Babies who are not breastfed at all are 14 times more likely to die than those who are fed only breastmilk.

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### **About UNICEF**

UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere. For more information about UNICEF and its work visit: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

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