

Media Update

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UNESCO

Press Release

Free, independent and pluralistic media is crucial for fostering freedom of expression and access to information

Critical Minds for Critical Times: Media's role in advancing peaceful, just and inclusive societies — the global theme for 2017 was highlighted through interactive roundtable discussions at World Press Freedom Day 2017 in Peshawar.

Peshawar: To mark the 2017 World Press Freedom Day, UNESCO Pakistan jointly with the European Union, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Embassy of Sweden, in collaboration with the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication of the University of Peshawar organized the World Press Freedom Day celebration in Peshawar.

The event highlight major factors that hamper or enable freedom of expression and access to information in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and overall Pakistan, and to propose tangible measures and recommendations to foster these rights in the country. Over 70 participants including academic staff and students of the university, officials, journalists, the United Nations and partners joined the event to mark the celebrations.

In his welcome remarks, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Abid, Pro-Vice Chancellor welcomed the participants and extended his gratitude to UNESCO, development partners, and the Department of Journalism & Mass Communication for organizing the event. He called upon media professionals to pursue journalism with sheer professionalism and dedication.

Ms. Vibeke Jensen, UNESCO Representative to Pakistan in her opening remarks highlighted that media is one of the most powerful ways to



disseminate information, change perceptions, and break stereotypes. Media, is used to inform, to mobilize, and to create and strengthen accountability; but “with this power also comes responsibility, Ms. Vibeke reminded the audience, “On the side of media to disseminate reliable and independent information. And on the side of government institutions to guarantee safety and space for freedom of expression.”

Ms. Mahrukh Jabeen, is a reporter of Tribal News Network (TNN) and the first woman journalist from FATA. Ms Jabeen highlighted the difficulties of female journalists who work in the field, while expressing that despite all challenges, she is still determined to pursue her career as a journalist.

Ms. Farzana Ali, Bureau Chief of Aaj Television, equally described the challenges faced by female journalists in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. She argued for the need to increase women representation in media particularly on decision-making level in the media houses.

The inaugural session was followed by dynamic roundtable discussions on three main topics –Gender in Media, Investigative Journalism and Stress, and Social Media– which were moderated by experts on the themes. The discussions led to relevant recommendations, summarized below:

1) **Gender in Media:** Increase women representation in media outlets, including at the decisionmaking level. Develop and implement appropriate legislations for providing female media professionals a secure working environment.

2) **Investigative Journalism and Stress:** To define investigative journalism and ‘national interests’ aligning it with proper code of conduct by journalists and setting up press council to address the journalists’ concerns.

3) **Social Media:** Increase digital literacy and public awareness on the positive use of social media.

Ms. Anne Marchal, Deputy Head of the European Union on the occasion extended her gratitude to all the participants and quoted the message of High Representative, Federica Mogherini, on behalf of the European Union that free and responsible press is vital for sustainable democracy and development and EU is determinant to promote these rights.

Ms. Jeannette Seppen, the Dutch Ambassador on this occasion said that the World Press Freedom Day is a celebration and commemoration of the achievements of journalists of who laid their lives in the line of duty.

Download event photographs here: <https://we.tl/zc6dgulS1J>

Media Contact: Riaz Karim Khan, UNESCO Islamabad, r.khan@unesco.org,
+ 92 (0) 345 5858 956
