

# Media Update

3 May 2018

## UNESCO

Press Release

### Press freedom and trustworthy information keeps power in check and preserves democratic processes

***Keeping Power in Check: Media, Justice and the Rule of Law – the global theme for 2018 was highlighted through interactive panel discussions at World Press Freedom Day 2018 in Islamabad***

Islamabad: To mark the 2018 World Press Freedom Day, UNESCO Pakistan jointly with the European Union, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Embassy of Sweden organized the World Press Freedom Day celebration in Islamabad.

The event engaged 70 participants including university students, journalists and media workers, civil society organizations, government officials, UN counterparts and representatives of international community in a discussion on importance of a free and independent media. The main segment of the event were debates held on subthemes of online speech regulation and the role of social media in the times of elections.

In his welcome address, His Excellency EU ambassador Jean-François Cautain reminded it is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of World Press Freedom Day and called for a moment of reflection. The Ambassador further added, “Free press is the key to peace, free press is the key to justice, free press is the key to stable democracy. Looking at the state of press in any country is looking at how a country is doing when it comes to state of human rights and the state of democracy.”

Mr. Shafqat Jalil, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and Heritage, in his opening remarks acknowledged the relevance of media in context of upcoming general elections in Pakistan: “The independence of



media and provision of justice are inseparable. As a free media is fundamental to check misuse or abuse of power and building the capacity of journalists enables them to act as a watchdog.”

The following points were raised during:

### **Debate 1: Does online speech need regulation and / or self-regulation?**

- Repercussions of excessive regulation or lack of it and how censorship can be counterproductive
- Citizen versus state online regulation
- The importance of online speech by making it possible for the public to hold governments accountable and the need to respect the citizens' prerogative to access or not access information
- Opportunity for marginalized groups to raise their voice
- Self-censorship could greatly reduce the options on table for deliberation

### **Debate 2: Debate 2: Social media in times of elections: friend or foe?**

- Social media is not only a friend during elections but throughout the democratic process as it makes our leaders more accessible and accountable
- Social media is pervasive and helps to bring pressing issues to light
- Social media is an equalizer making it relevant for elections
- Social media can fill the gap left by the mainstream media and give coverage to independent candidates and women
- Recently around the globe, social media has also played a manipulative role in times of election and the ubiquity of rapidly circulating news on social media makes it extremely difficult to verify news and fake news
- Social media and online platforms are not ideologically neutral and can be led by corporate interests and agendas

Following the debates, Mr. Neil Buhne, UN Resident Coordinator in Pakistan in his remarks pointed out that in the face of rapidly changing nature of social and mainstream media, it is important to, examine how these changes can have positive or negative effects in Pakistan. He said that in the light of recent attack on journalists in Kabul, press freedom is more relevant than ever. Her Excellency Ms. Ingrid Johansson, the Swedish Ambassador for Pakistan closed the ceremony noting that the diverse audience present at the event symbolized the universal relevance of and commitment to media freedom: “Online speech and social media has become part of everyday life and gives

us unforeseen possibilities to receive and share information, yet these new media platforms also face new types of challenges. However, we must safeguard and appreciate this scrutinizing institution of media, because it makes our societies more effective and enlightened.”

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## UNDP

### Press Release

## Youth hold dialogue with mainstream political parties to shape 2018 election manifestos

### ***Political Parties unveil key features of youth issues in their forthcoming 2018 Election Manifestoes***

Islamabad, May 3: UNDP Pakistan and PILDAT organized a Youth Dialogue with Political Parties on Inclusion of Youth Issues in Political Manifestos for 2018 Elections in which representatives of ten major political parties of Pakistan engaged with youth representatives in a robust discussion on how political parties could shape their 2018 election manifestos to reflect youth's priorities and aspirations.

The dialogue was attended by senior parliamentarians and political leaders, including Ms. Sadia Sharif, Central Information Secretary (Women) PML-N; Syed Nayyar Hussain Bukhari, Secretary General PPP; Mr. Shafqat Mahmood, MNA PTI; Maulana Abdul Wasay, MPA, Leader of the Opposition in Balochistan Assembly and Ms. Shahida Akhtar Ali, MNA, JUI-F; Mr. Farid Paracha, Deputy Ameer JI and Dr. Ishaque Baloch, Senior Vice President National Party.

Whereas youth speakers included Mr. Waleed Bizenjo, Former Member Youth Parliament and Former Youth Prime Minister; former Advisor to Chief Minister Balochistan; Advocate Saad Mohammad Chaudhry, Head of Youth



Wing, Pakistan Workers Federation; activist of the Trade Union movement; Mr. Daniyal Hassan, Former Member Youth Parliament Pakistan; Ms. Sadia Sadullaj Khan, IT Entrepreneur; Mr. Basil Nabi Malik, Advocate; Former Member Youth Parliament; former Youth Prime Minister; Ms. Mehrunisa Malik, Chief Operating Officer and Co-Founder, Saaf Suthra Sheher; Mr. Shaheer Niazi, Scientist whose work has appeared in the prestigious *Royal Society Open Science* journal; part of Forbes 30 Under 30 Asia 2018, Mr. Ejaz Abbasi and Mr. Muhammad Mustafa, former members of Youth Parliament Pakistan.

In his welcome address, Mr. Ahmed Bilal Mehboob, President PILDAT, said that youth constitute 31% of Pakistan's more than 207 million population, while approximately 46% of the country's total electorate today comprises youth. "Effective political and civic participation by youth is a pre-requisite for successful peaceful and sustainable democracy and effectiveness of sound democratic institutions in Pakistan," he said. "As parties prepare their 2018 election manifestoes, it is important that they place a special focus on the issues facing youth of the country."

In his opening remarks, UNDP Country Director, Mr. Ignacio Artaza, said that "Pakistan currently has the largest generation of young people ever recorded in its history. This dialogue is taking place at an important juncture in Pakistan's history, as the nation prepares for its third consecutive general election this year. Our recently launched Pakistan National Human Development Report finds that investments in the youth of the country are amongst the best investments that can be made in Pakistan's future. The three most important investments that can be made to empower youth are Quality Education; Gainful Employment; and Meaningful Engagement. Therefore, it is UNDP's unequivocal belief that investment in youth can bring a transformative shift in the socio-political and economic development trajectory of Pakistan."

Youth representatives identified issues of revival of students' unions, lack of quality of education homelessness and sexual exploitation of children, lack of availability of clean drinking water across Pakistan, *madaaris* to introduce standard curriculum alongside religious education, requirement of development focus on peri-urban and rural youth, career counselling services in educational institutions, counter-terrorism, entrepreneurship opportunities as well as investments in scientific education, business and investment. Youth representatives also emphasised that youth bulge should not just be addressed in the sense of economic dividend but also as a democratic

dividend which requires that parties promote, strengthen and defend the fundamental right of citizens to right to information and media.

Party representatives appreciated the candid review and input by youth representatives on their respective 2013 manifesto pledges and underscored the need for youth to hold the parties to account on the implementation of their manifesto pledges using their right to vote in the upcoming General Election. Each party agreed that youth holds the key to the future of democratic governance in Pakistan and therefore investments in human and youth development, education and vocational training and facilitation for entrepreneurship and employment must be made in their respective upcoming manifestoes for 2018 General Election. Party representatives, however, cautioned that the issues of youth can not be delinked from the national scenario of reducing fiscal space for human development. Among the participating political parties, 3 parties, namely the PPP, JI and PML-Q, unveiled specific commitments for youth in their upcoming 2018 Election Manifestoes.

The one-day consultative policy dialogue was part of the UNDP Pakistan's national Youth Empowerment Programme (YEP) being implemented in Pakistan. The lynchpin of UNDP's youth-led development approach in Pakistan is to create platforms for meaningful interactions between young people and key policy actors such as government, parliament, media, academia, and civil society with the aim of promoting inclusion of their voices in the policymaking processes.

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