

Media Update-2

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PRESS RELEASE

Good Laws and Practices for Open Societies: Powering Sustainable Development with Access to Information

Islamabad, 27.09.2018 : To mark the third international Day for Universal Access to Information, UNESCO jointly with the European Union, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Embassy of Sweden organized the IPDCtalks in Islamabad on September 27th, 2018.

The event engaged 115 participants from different walks of life. The event included talks and panel discussions on roles of free media, duty bearers and right holders in promoting access to information.

Ms. Vibeke Jensen, UNESCO Representative for Pakistan welcomed the participants and emphasized that access to information is essential for inclusion and dialogue. Ms. Jensen stated that the implementation of exemplary RTI laws in KP and Punjab could bridge the gap between duty bearers and right holders. She further added, "Rapid changes in technology have created new capacities for sharing and accessing information, with greater opportunities to empower citizens."

Mr. Khizar Shah, Director (Press), Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and Heritage, in his opening remarks said that access to information is essential for good governance and democracy and media plays a critical role in the process. Mr. Shah said, "Further deliberation is needed to build capacity of public servants to promote a culture of proactive disclosure and openness." He also reiterated the government's commitment to freedom of expression and access to information.



Speakers and panelists presented data on access to information, communication channels and their penetration in different areas and its effect on political participation. Innovative and crosscutting initiatives that foster public access to information were presented and discussed from the perspective of duty bearers and media. Panelists shed light on existing state mechanisms to promote accountability and role of RTI commissions complimented by civil society research, advocacy and awareness raising. Student groups, youth startups and CSOs also presented their ideas and innovative approaches to promote access to information as right holders. The innovations included an open data portal, augmented data software, a compliance-tracking website, animations for social awareness, and an RTI tracker.

Deputy Head of Delegation Anne Marchal delivered the concluding remarks at the event, noting the importance of access to information in terms of accountability, participation and transparency, which are the pillars of democracy. H.E. also stated, "Availability of information encourages participation in democracy and openness enables citizens to take part in decision making." She concluded in hoping that the event would increase awareness on right to information and encouraged participants to ponder on opportunities to seek information.

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