

# Media Update

11 July 2019

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## UNFPA

PRESS RELEASE

### World Population Day 2019

Today (11 July 2019) is globally celebrated as World Population Day. The theme this year's World Population Day is **“25 years of the ICPD: Accelerating the Promise”**, focusing on the unfinished business of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in 1994 in Cairo. Twenty-five years have passed since that landmark conference, where 179 governments recognized that reproductive health and gender equality are essential for achieving sustainable development.

The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination in collaboration with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Department of International Development (DFID) jointly marked World Population Day at an event in Islamabad. The event was well attended by government representatives, members of parliament at federal and provincial levels, heads of diplomatic missions, representatives of development sector and private sectors organizations, representatives from United Nations agencies, and media.

The first half of the event was an inaugural session. Dr. Zafar Mirza, Minister of State for Health shared his remarks on the World Population Day 2019 and Pakistan's current population scenario while Dr. Sania Nishtar, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister / Federal Minister for Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation, addressed the event as the key Note Speaker.

Mr. Mirza opened his remarks by sharing his views on the theme of the World Population Day “The theme of the 2019 WPD reminds us that countries that are behind, including Pakistan, should accelerate and achieve the promise.” In his remarks, Dr. Mirza reaffirmed Governments' strong commitment to the recommendations approved by the Council of Common Interests (CCI) to stabilize population growth and to the population dynamics in the country.



"Population is a great asset," He said; "but at the same time, if we do not utilize its potential properly, it can become a liability." Dr. Mirza concluded his remarks by appreciating the contributions from UNFPA and Government partners to Pakistan's achievements to date, "However, we have a long way to go and we must work together" He added.

Dr. Nishtar extended her full support to Dr. Mirza and the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination in realizing the herculean task of stabilizing the population growth; "We cannot talk about the problems anymore, we need to start talking about solutions. We need to revise the business model, to ensure all women who want to access family planning commodities, are able to reach them at all health units across Pakistan. Our approach should be transformative and disruptive." She added "Politicians and opinion leaders are shy to talk about family planning and that has to change. Population is the biggest national security threat and it needs unprecedented attention."

Remarks were also shared by Ms. Lina Mousa, UNFPA Representative, and Ms. Kemi Williams, Deputy Head of DFID. Ms. Mousa highlighted Pakistan's demographic opportunities in her remarks. "Pakistan has some of the greatest demographic opportunities for development in the world as a growing youth population enters adulthood. The demographic dividend can only be achieved with adequate investments in the education and skills of youth, harvesting the fruits of long-term human capital development. To open the window of opportunity for the demographic dividend, Pakistan needs to reduce fertility and invest in the growing youth "bulge" entering the labor force."

Ms. Williams shared DFID's commitment to support Pakistan's population growth strategy in her remarks; "Rapid population growth is a major challenge for many countries across the world, including Pakistan and the situation is likely to get worse if urgent action is not taken. The UK is committed to support Pakistan's plans to manage its population growth. DFID Pakistan, through its Delivering Accelerated Family Planning programme is making family planning services accessible to men and women across the country."

The second part of the event featured a Panel discussion moderated by Mr. Javed Jabbar, former Senator, on what has changed in Pakistan since ICPD. The participants of the Panel are Champions of Change, who have broken barriers in the context of population policy and family planning in Pakistan

and have significantly influenced the population and development landscape in the country.

The Panel included Ms. Attiya Anayatullah, former parliamentarian and adviser on *Population Welfare* to President of Pakistan, Ms. Shahnaz Wazir Ali, former parliamentarian, educationist and Sitara-e-Imtiaz recipient for her services to education, Mr. Muzaffar Mehmood Qureshi, Resident Director Green Star Social Marketing, and Prof. Nizam Uddin, Pro- Rector, University of Central Punjab.

The Panel shared reflections on their work related to the ICPD agenda since all of them attended the Conference. They discussed major breakthroughs for sexual and reproductive health and rights in Pakistan and other achievements with regards to the ICPD Programme of Action. The discussion was concluded with the Panel stating their views on the top emerging issues that are critical to invest in more for the country on the way forward.

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