

Media Update

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PRESS RELEASE

UNDP and UNFPA Celebrate International Youth Day 2019 in Islamabad

Islamabad | 26 August 2019: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) jointly commemorated International Youth Day 2019 in Islamabad, at a youth event held in collaboration with the Government of Pakistan and organized by School of Leadership today.

This year's theme for International Youth Day, "Transforming Education", highlighted the efforts to make education more relevant, equitable and inclusive for all youth, including efforts by youth themselves. The event examined how governments, young people and youth-led and youth-focused organizations, as well as other stakeholders, are transforming education and how these efforts are contributing to the achievement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It featured interactive sessions with youth participants on health education, entrepreneurship and future of work in Pakistan where youth leaders shared their experiences and success stories and encouraged other youth to become actively in the national development process.

The inaugural session of the event featured remarks from the Resident Representative a.i. of UNDP and the Officer in Charge of UNFPA followed by youth representatives and representatives of the from the Higher Education Commission. The Chief Guest for the event was the Minister for Economic Affairs Division, Mr. Hammad Azhar.

Mr. Ignacio Artaza, UNDP Resident Representative a.i., shared his views on inclusion of youth and how it is a key to a peaceful and prosperous Pakistan. He said, "There is no institutional mechanism to formally link young people



with power actors in the government and politics. They lack public spaces for open dialogue on political, social, and economic issues of Pakistan. Young people feel deprived of meaningful opportunities to contribute to the public debate on important issues that shape their lives. It is important the we understand the challenges and issues youth face and make them an integral part of the decision-making process.”

Ms. Ana Maria Leal, Representing UNFPA at the event, spoke about the need to invest in youth, which constitutes of the highest percentage of the country’s population among other demographic groups, to capitalise on the development opportunity it presents: “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 invest in the education needs of the growing youth “bulge” entering the labour force.”

The Minister for Economic Affairs concluded that: “We have one of the youngest population in the world as 63 per cent of our population is under 35 years of age. This is the paradox for Pakistan, on one side we have an incredible asset, which can be the engine of growth and productivity for us, but on the other hand if we do not act now, this same youth will be the agent of extremism, frustration, crisis, drugs and instability in the country. The Government believes that the first step towards improving the situation is to invest in education. In the next five years, the Government plans to invest PKR160 million in education through the new segment of the country’s budget called the Knowledge Economy.”

The event was attended by UN and government officials, educators, civil society partners and over 200 young people from different walks of life, to share their work and views on the way forward for various stakeholders to improve the education quality and services in Pakistan.

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