UNESCO PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) marks International Day for Universal Access to Information in Lahore

Lahore, 26 September 2019 - Under its Multi-donor program on Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists, UNESCO Islamabad, commemorated the International Day for the Universal Access to Information (IDUAI) 2019 at Punjab University on Thursday, September 26, 2019. The event was organized in partnership with the European Union, Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands, Embassy of Sweden in Pakistan, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and civil society partner Digital Rights Foundation (DRF).

2019 is the fourth year of UNESCO marking the “International Day for Universal Access to Information” (IDUAI). On 17 November, 2015, UNESCO adopted a resolution (38 C/70) declaring 28 September of every year as International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI). IDUAI has particular relevance with the national development agenda as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in particular with target 16.10 which calls for ensuring public access to information and protection of fundamental freedoms.

The Ambassador of Sweden, H.E. Ms. Ingrid Johansson and the Ambassador of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, H.E. Mr. Wouter Plomp gave opening remarks and emphasized the need for recognizing the importance of access to information for strengthening democracy. Deputy Head of mission at European Union Delegation to Pakistan, Ms. Anne Marchal also attended the event. The speakers included key officials and civil society actors including Mr. Zahid Abdullah, the Federal Information Commissioner; Mr. Mahboob Qadir Shah, the Punjab Information Commissioner; Anoosha Shaigan from Courting the Law; Mr. Nabeel
Qadeer and Usama Khilji from Bolo Bhi. The event provided students an opportunity to engage with practitioners and discuss the right to information in the context of marginalized communities and equality in accessibility.

UNESCO Representative Pakistan, Ms. Vibeke Jensen gave closing remarks and reiterated that inclusivity was the key to achieving sustainable development goals and ensuring access to information for all is an integral part of the process.

UNAIDS PRESS RELEASE

Go Further partnership reaches over half a million HIV-positive women with cervical cancer screening in its first year

The United States’ PEPFAR program, the George W. Bush Institute, Merck and UNAIDS are aiming to end AIDS and cervical cancer in Sub-Saharan Africa within a generation through an innovative public-private partnership

NEW YORK, 25 September 2019—On the margins of the 2019 United Nations General Assembly, former President George W. Bush and Ambassador Deborah L. Birx announced that the Go Further partnership to end AIDS and cervical cancer has reached over half a million HIV-positive women with cervical cancer screening and treated thousands of women for pre-invasive cancerous lesions in its first year. The partnership aims to reduce new cervical cancer cases by 95 percent among the estimated 3.8 million HIV-positive women who live in eight high-burden African countries.

At the Bloomberg Global Business Forum, President Bush, Mrs. Laura Bush, and Ambassador Birx met with His Majesty King Mswati III of Eswatini, The Right Honourable Dr. Thomas Thabane of Lesotho, His Excellency President Peter Mutharika of Malawi, The Honorable Michael Bloomberg, CEO of Bank of America Brian Moynihan, and others.

"We strongly believe that by helping these leaders save lives in their countries it makes the world a better place and makes America more secure,"
President Bush said. "We have many leaders here all of whom are taking the lead, all of whom are responsible, all of whom are measuring results. It's important for the American people to know that the results are astounding." "The future of each of your countries depends on all of your citizens—men and women—taking care of their health," Mrs. Bush added.

"Go Further is helping women in Africa to lead longer, healthier lives,” said Ambassador Birx, M.D., United States Global AIDS Coordinator and Special Representative for Global Health Diplomacy, who leads PEPFAR. “By leveraging the robust health care delivery platforms in Africa strengthened through over $85 billion in total U.S. government global HIV/AIDS investments, we will protect millions of HIV-positive mothers, daughters, aunts, and grandmothers—who are alive and thriving with HIV treatment—from the threat of cervical cancer.”

Launched in May 2018, Go Further is an innovative public-private partnership between the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the George W. Bush Institute (Bush Institute), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), and Merck (known as MSD outside of the United States and Canada). For maximum impact, the partnership focuses on reaching HIV-positive women in countries with among the highest HIV prevalence and cervical cancer incidence rates in the world.

“Go Further builds on the Bush Institute’s longstanding initiative to support women in Africa by scaling efforts to save more lives,” said Holly Kuzmich, Executive Director of the Bush Institute. “Healthy and empowered women contribute to healthier families, communities, and countries, and this partnership is proud to invest in high-burden nations to improve women’s health and economic futures, reduce suffering, and expand the reach of care.”

An estimated 100,000 women are diagnosed annually with cervical cancer in Sub-Saharan Africa. Without treatment, 62 percent of these women would be expected to die from the disease. Additionally, women who are HIV-positive are five times more likely to develop invasive cervical cancer. To address these risks, Go Further is increasing access to the human papillomavirus vaccine to prevent cervical cancer, expanding the availability of vital cervical cancer screening, and providing treatment for women most vulnerable to developing cervical cancer. With minimal additional investment, these low-cost interventions can save millions of lives and help secure global gains against HIV/AIDS.
“At Merck, we are committed to addressing the health care needs of women in the developing world and are proud to partner with PEPFAR, the Bush Institute, and UNAIDS on Go Further,” said Carmen Villar, Vice President, Social Business Innovation, Merck. “Through this partnership we are addressing cervical cancer in HIV-positive women in Sub-Saharan Africa, one of the populations most heavily impacted by cervical cancer, not only through screening and treatment but also through prevention.”

“To save a woman’s life by providing access to treatment for HIV, yet she dies from cervical cancer because she hasn’t had access to cancer screening is unacceptable,” said Gunilla Carlsson, Executive Director a.i. UNAIDS. “The Go Further partnership is critical to ensure that HIV and cervical cancer services are integrated and available to the women and girls that need them most.”

The Go Further strategy builds on seven years of collaboration between PEPFAR and the Bush Institute and evolves the partnership to save more lives.

Learn more about Go Further at www.gofurther.org, and follow the partnership on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

The U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PEPFAR is the United States government’s response to the global HIV/AIDS epidemic, which has invested over $85 billion since 2003 – the largest commitment by any nation to address a single disease in history. Through the compassion and generosity of the American people, PEPFAR has saved 17 million lives, prevented millions of HIV infections, and helped transform the global HIV/AIDS response. For more information, please visit www.pepfar.gov, and connect with PEPFAR on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

George W. Bush Institute
Housed within the George W. Bush Presidential Center, the George W. Bush Institute is an action-oriented, nonpartisan policy organization with the mission of developing leaders, advancing policy, and taking action to solve today’s most pressing challenges. For more information, please visit www.bushcenter.org.
The United Nations Charter sends a clear message to us all: put people first.

The first words of the Charter -- “we the peoples” – are a summons to place people at the centre of our work.

Every day. Everywhere.
People with anxieties and aspirations.

People with heartbreaks and hopes.

Above all, people with rights.

Those rights are not a favour to be rewarded or withheld.

They are an endowment for simply being human.

Across the first half of my mandate, I have had the good fortune to meet people around the world – not in gilded meeting rooms, but where they live and work and dream.

And I have listened.

I have heard families in the South Pacific who fear their lives being swept away by rising seas…

Young refugees in the Middle East yearning for a return to school and home…

Ebola survivors in North Kivu struggling to rebuild their lives…

Women demanding equality and opportunity…

People of all beliefs and traditions who suffer simply because of who they are.

And so many others.

We are living in a world of disquiet.

A great many people fear getting trampled, thwarted, left behind.

Machines take their jobs. Traffickers take their dignity. Demagogues take their rights. Warlords take their lives. Fossil fuels take their future.

And yet people believe in the spirit and ideas that bring us to this Hall.

They believe in the United Nations.
But do they believe in us?
Do they believe as leaders, we will put people first?
Because we, the leaders, must deliver for we, the peoples.
People have a right to live in peace.
One year ago in this room, I spoke of winds of hope despite the chaos and confusion of our world.
Since then, some of those currents continued to move in promising directions.
Against the expectations of many, elections unfolded peacefully in Madagascar, the Maldives, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to name just a few.
Greece and the Republic of North Macedonia resolved their decades-long name dispute.
Political dialogue in Sudan and the peace process in the Central African Republic have brought renewed hope.
And a long-sought step forward has just been taken on the political path out of the tragedy in Syria, and in line with Security Council resolution 2254.
As I announced yesterday, an agreement has been reached with all parties [involved] for a credible, balanced and inclusive Syrian-owned and Syrian-led Constitutional Committee.
My Special Envoy just left Damascus after finalizing the last details with the Government and the Opposition. The United Nations looks forward to convening the Committee in Geneva in the coming weeks.
But Excellencies,
Across the global landscape, we see conflicts persisting, terrorism spreading and the risk of a new arms race growing.
Outside interferences, often in violation of Security Council resolutions, make peace processes more difficult.

And so many situations remain unresolved, from Yemen to Libya to Afghanistan and beyond.

A succession of unilateral actions threatens to torpedo a two-state solution between Israel and Palestine.

In Venezuela, four million people have fled the country -- one of the largest displacements in the world.

Tensions are elevated in South Asia, where differences need to be addressed through dialogue.

And above all, we are facing the alarming possibility of armed conflict in the Gulf, the consequences of which the world cannot afford. The recent attack on Saudi Arabia's oil facilities was totally unacceptable.

In a context where a minor miscalculation can lead to a major confrontation, we must do everything possible to push for reason and restraint.

I hope for a future in which all the countries of the region can live in a state of mutual respect and cooperation, without interference in each other’s affairs – and I hope equally that it will still be possible to preserve the progress on nuclear non-proliferation represented by the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

From day one, I have emphasized prevention, mediation and a surge in diplomacy for peace to address the crises we face.

Consider the lives we can save by intensifying our investments to sustain peace around the world.

Across some of the most troubled corners of the world, some 100,000 UN peacekeepers protect civilians and promote peace.

Through the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, we are strengthening our effectiveness and efficiency and we are renewing partnerships with troop- and police-contributing countries, host countries and regional organizations such as the African Union and the European Union.
I am also proud of the work of our humanitarians easing suffering around the world. Fully half of all international relief aid is channeled through the United Nations – ensuring that millions receive protection, food, medicine, shelter, water and other life-saving forms of assistance.

This year alone, in brutal attacks and other circumstances, we have lost at least 80 peacekeepers, humanitarians and others, all of whom gave their lives serving the United Nations trying to better the lives of others. I honour their service and their sacrifice.

We have bolstered our counter-terrorism architecture and defined new strategies to tackle violent extremism and address root causes while respecting human rights.

And I have put forward a new disarmament agenda to advance global peace.

In the near term, the “New Start” agreement must be extended; we must work to address the heightened threat posed by ballistic missiles; and ensure a successful 2020 Review of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The situation on the Korean Peninsula remains uncertain. I fully support the efforts towards a new summit between the President of the United States and the leader of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

And at this time of transition and dysfunction in global power relations, there is a new risk looming on the horizon that may not yet be large, but it is real.

I fear the possibility of a Great Fracture: the world splitting in two, with the two largest economies on earth creating two separate and competing worlds, each with their own dominant currency, trade and financial rules, their own internet and artificial intelligence capacities, and their own zero sum geopolitical and military strategies.

We must do everything possible to avert the Great Fracture and maintain a universal system – a universal economy with universal respect for international law; a multipolar world with strong multilateral institutions.

People have a right to security in all its dimensions.
Every measure to uphold human rights helps deliver sustainable development and peace.

In the 21st century, we must see human rights with a vision that speaks to each and every human being and encompasses all rights.


It would be a mistake to ignore or diminish economic, social and cultural rights.

But it would be equally misguided to think that those rights are enough to answer people’s yearnings for freedom.

Human rights are universal and indivisible. One cannot pick and choose, favouring some while disdaining others.

People have a right to well-being and dignified standards of life.

With health, housing and food.

Social protection and a sustainable environment.

Education – not only to learn things but to learn how to learn and prepare for the future.

And decent jobs, especially for young people.

These rights permeate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

And they are among our best tools for preventing conflict.

Yet we are not on track.

Inequality is exploding.

Our global economy generates great flows of income, but this prosperity is captured by a small number of elites.
It is a sad fact of our world today that one’s chances of leading a life free of want and in full human dignity still depend more on the circumstances of one’s birth than one’s innate capacities.

Today’s Sustainable Development Goals Summit -- and Thursday’s dialogue on financing – are opportunities to ramp up ambition, including by utilizing the promise of technology and innovation as recommended by the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation that has concluded his report.

As was emphasized at yesterday’s Climate Action Summit, the climate emergency is a race we are losing – but it is a race we can win if we change our ways now.

Even our language has to adapt: what once was called “climate change” is now truly a “climate crisis” … and what was once called “global warming” has more accurately become “global heating”.

We are seeing unprecedented temperatures, unrelenting storms and undeniable science.

Ten days ago in the Bahamas, I saw the ruin caused by Hurricane Dorian.

That aftermath is a mere prelude to what science tells us is on its way.

But something else is on its way – solutions.

The world is starting to move – not yet fast enough but move in the right direction -- away from fossil fuels and towards the opportunities of a green economy.

The Climate Summit highlighted some of the solutions we need to scale up in order to dramatically reduce emissions, keep temperature rise to 1.5 degrees and reach carbon neutrality by 2050.

But we are not yet there.

We must build on this momentum, and do much more to be able to defeat climate change.

People have a right to the fundamental freedoms that every country has promised to uphold.
Yet today, we are at a critical juncture where advances made across the decades are being restricted and reversed, misinterpreted and mistrusted.

We see wide-ranging impunity, including for violations of international humanitarian law.

New forms of authoritarianism are flourishing.

Civic space is narrowing.

Environmental activists, human rights defenders, journalists and others are being targeted.

And surveillance systems expand their reach day by day, click by click, camera by camera, encroaching on privacy and personal lives.

These breaches go beyond the breakdown in rules governing the behavior of states and businesses.

They are also playing out at a deeper level, shredding the fabric of our common humanity.

At a time when record numbers of refugees and internally displaced people are on the move, solidarity is on the run.

We see not only borders, but hearts, closing -- as refugee families are torn apart and the right to seek asylum torn asunder.

We must reestablish the integrity of the international refugee protection regime, and fulfil the promises of responsibility-sharing set out in the Global Compact on Refugees.

We must also build on the landmark adoption of the first-ever Global Compact on Migration last December.

That means strengthening international cooperation for safe, orderly and regular migration, and countering the smugglers and criminals who enrich themselves on the backs of vulnerable people.

All migrants must see their human rights respected.
Around the world, alienation and distrust are being weaponized.

Fear is today’s best-selling brand.

That is why I launched two initiatives.

First, a UN system-wide strategy to tackle hate speech.

Second, an action plan to support efforts to safeguard religious sites and uphold the right to religious freedom.

Religious, ethnic and other minorities must fully enjoy their human rights.

That requires a strong investment in social cohesion to ensure diverse communities feel that their identities are respected and that they have a stake in society as a whole.

To those who insist on oppression or division, I say: diversity is a richness, never a threat.

It is unacceptable in the 21st century for women and men to be persecuted because of their identity, belief or sexual orientation.

We must also secure the rights of vulnerable and marginalized people.

This year I launched the first United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy.

And, of course, the world’s most pervasive manifestation of discrimination affects fully half of humankind: women and girls.

Let’s never forget gender equality is a question of power.

And power still lies overwhelmingly with men – as we see from parliaments to boardrooms, and even this week in the halls, corridors and meeting rooms of the United Nations.

We will shift the balance when we truly see women’s rights and representation as our common goal.
That is why I have worked to ensure gender parity at the United Nations, together with regional balance. Today we have achieved parity in my Senior Management Group and among those who lead UN work at the country level.

I will not let up until we have reached gender parity at all levels at the UN -- and full equality for women and girls around the world.

That means continuing to push back against the pushback against women’s rights.

It means calling out a troubling commonality in terrorist attacks, extremist ideologies and brutal crimes: the violent misogyny of the perpetrators.

And it means stepping up our efforts to expand opportunity.

At present trends, it will take two centuries to close the gap in economic empowerment.

We cannot accept a world that tells my granddaughters that equality must wait for their granddaughters’ granddaughters.

As we continue all this vital work and more, I have launched ambitious reforms to make the United Nations more effective. I count on you to place our organization on sound financial footing.

In an ever more divided world, we need a strong United Nations.

Next year we will mark the 75th anniversary of the United Nations -- a critical moment to renew our common project.

The problems we face are real.

But so is hope.

As we strive to serve people, we also can be inspired by people.

Over the past two and a half years, I have spent time with young African girls learning to code…

With teachers equipping young people with new skills for the future…
With entrepreneurs in many fields leading the world, innovation by innovation, into the green economy.

They and so many others are helping to build the future we want.

Their aspirations and their human rights must always be our touchstone.

We are here to serve.

We are here to advance the common good while upholding our shared humanity and values.

That vision united the founders of our Organization.

At a time of division today, we must re-connect with that spirit.

Let us restore trust, rebuild hope and move ahead, together.

Thank you.