

## World Press Freedom Day 2014 commemorated

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Islamabad organized the World Press Freedom Day (WPDF) 2014 at Islamabad. The event was officially launched by Dr Kozue Kay Nagata, Director UNESCO Islamabad with participation of officials of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, journalists, students and representatives of the development partners, United Nations and Media Development Organizations and Federations.



Dr. Nazir Saeed, Secretary for Information, Broadcasting and National Heritage while addressing the gathering said that draft version of the Right to Information Law was prepared with consultation of all stakeholders including the opposition parties and would be presented for next cabinet meeting for approval. New law would provide more freedom and right to access for media professionals. He said the government was undertaking serious steps for the protection and safety of the media workers and media houses, adding further an independent commission would be formulated to resolve the issues related to media.

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United Nations Resident Coordinator in Pakistan, Timmo Pakkala said independent, free and pluralistic media was important for protecting and promoting the fundamental rights and journalism provides a platform for informed discussion across a wide range of development issues – from environmental challenges and scientific progress to gender equality, youth engagement and peace building. He said that the UN under the leadership of UNESCO and all stakeholders working together to create a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers around the world.

Addressing the gathering, Dr Kozue Kay Nagata said that UNESCO supports this Day to emphasize the importance of freedom of expression and free flow of diversified opinions in all forms of media. She this year agenda was timely and vital for democracy, transparency and sustainable economic development. "There is a greater linkage between press freedom and safety of journalists and achieving MDG and advancing post-2015 development agenda, the perception and image of Pakistan can only be bolstered if a free press with responsibility exists

which would further help the country for creating a healthy environment for convincing donor countries, boosting foreign investment and trade, tourism and cultural industry and the formation of competent human resources in the country”, Dr Nagata added.

Speaking on the occasion, prominent editor and journalist, M Zia Uddin said Pakistani had vibrant media in comparison to other Muslim States and the rest of the world. He said the media in Pakistan had been through a critical time of extreme censorship and media control and that the journalists were confronting serious reporting challenges as the whole country became a war zone. He said that the ongoing media scenario in the country was the problem within the house which would be resolved accordingly. While speaking as a panelist he said it was the responsibility of the editor to be careful about the immediate safety of the staff and for this special environment training and safety measures for field staff were important.

Ahmer Bilal Sufi, Lawyer and Ex- Law Minister while highlighting the journalistic codes and ethics said that according to anti terrorist law, no media outlet was allowed to cover activities of banned outfit while Pakistani media regularly covering such stories. The event was later opened for the panellist’s discussion. Those included were, Ihsan Ghani, Director General, National Police Bureau Islamabad; Ahmer Bilal Sufi, Iqbal Khattak, Senior Journalist/Media Professional and member of the Pakistan Coalition on Media Safety (PCOMS).

Ihsan Ghani, Director General, National Police Bureau Islamabad said that the a media cell established in the Ministry of Interior for hearing and addressing all issues pertaining to journalists and media workers safety. He said that a hotline will also be established in police stations for responding to journalist’s safety issues. He emphasized that proper coordination needed between the journalists and police as well as improvement in criminal justice and investigation system for providing timely justice to victim journalists of any violence, act or threat. During the panel discussion, Iqbal Khattak said that Pakistan was one of five countries where UN Plan of Action on Safety of Journalist and the Issues of Impunity had been implemented and still a lot need to be done. He said the recent attack on Hamid Mir, provided us the opportunity to think on different directions and realize our weaknesses. He said ethical journalism was directly related to the safety and security and with the help of United Nations and media stakeholder, right to freedom of expression seems hopeful in the future. UNESCO is the sole UN specialized agency with a mandate to defend and promote freedom of expression and press freedom. The Organization commits to raise awareness among member states, civil society and others partners on the safety of journalists issue, and urges governments to investigate acts of violence and threats against media professionals and thus end the phenomenon of impunity.

**Source:** <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/islamabad/04-May-2014/world-press-freedom-day-2014-commemorated>