

# METRO KARACHI

## UNESCO observes World Down Syndrome Day in Karachi

By Staff Reporter

KARACHI: UNESCO in collaboration with Pakistan Down Syndrome Association commemorated World Down Syndrome Day in a local hotel in Karachi. A large number of activists for the Rights of Persons with disabilities, representatives of media and Civil Society organizations participated at the event. The United Nations has declared 21st March as 'World Down Syndrome Day' in 2012 and it was the first time that this day has been celebrated in Pakistan by UNESCO and Pakistan Down Syndrome Association. PDSA is linked with Down Syndrome International- DSI, which is globally engaged in raising awareness about the rights of people with Down syndrome.

While reading the message of UNESCO's Country Director to Pakistan, Dr. Kozue Kay Nagata, Mr. Kazi Ayaz Mahessar, Provincial Coordinator of UNESCO in Sindh, highlighted the importance of early intervention through Early Childhood Care and Education in the development of children with Down syndrome. He said that persons with disabilities are often seen as the objects of pity and misfortune and are often left helpless on their own or with their parents. However, referring to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by United Nations in 2006 and ratified by Pakistan in 2011, he said that Convention embodies a paradigm shift in which persons with disabilities are no longer regarded as objects of charity and welfare, but as persons with equal rights and dignity



who can make an enormous contribution to society. While emphasizing the importance of inclusive education, early intervention for children with Down syndrome and their education in mainstream education system, he said that after the ratification of CRPD, it is now the responsibility of State to provide equal opportunities for learning and for work to the persons with Down syndrome and disabilities.

He said that UNESCO, being the specialized Agency of United Nations, is working for the well-being and human rights of all people. Mr. Ghulam Nabi Nizamani, Chairperson, CBR Asia Pacific Region, stressed the importance of engagement of Right-based organizations in raising awareness about the persons with Down syndrome and disabilities. He called the attention of Government for ensuring equal treatment and fundamental rights of persons with disabilities. Mr. Abid Lashari President Pakistan Down Syndrome Association (PDSA) said that a congenital impairment caused by having an extra 21st chromosome, results in a flat face and short stature and mental retardation.

It is named after John Langdon Down, the British physician who described the syndrome in 1866

who first described the syndrome as impairment/Disability. Mr. Lashari said Down Syndrome children are unnoticed in Pakistan, there is dire need to declare Down Syndrome as 05th category of Disability in Pakistan. He said disability is not issue or problem but a different life style. The society must accept disability & ensure accessible environment & equal partnership in all walks of Life. Mr. Lashari told that the theme of the day is "Right to work". Down Syndrome children should be offered equal access of work options, should be engage in work opportunities.

Secretary Special education Mr. Abdul Aleem Memon said that Special education department is fully committed to deliver services to children with special needs. He said Down Syndrome children are treated in all centers of department which are fully equipped to facilitate Down Syndrome children. DPOs like PDSA are playing their role to achieve their rights, the department will fully cooperate with DPOs to remove stigma on disability. On the occasion Mr. Dileep Kumar from HANDS, Mr. Nabi Bux Shar President SDF, Mr. Manzoor Ali Mastoi, Muna Bhai and others also spoke on the occasion.