



## Press Release

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**Media Inquiries**

Phyza Jameel  
Communication Specialist  
UNESCO, Islamabad. +92 51 111 710 745 Ext 28  
[p.jameel@unesco.org](mailto:p.jameel@unesco.org), [www.unesco.org.pk](http://www.unesco.org.pk)

### **The potential of the new media in Pakistan, on World Press Freedom Day celebrations**

The World press Freedom Day Conference, co-organized by United Nations Educational, Scientific, Culture, and Communication Organization (UNESCO) and United Nation's Information Center (UNIC) with the National Press Club and Mishal Pvt Ltd along with leading practicing journalists, examined the present challenges and growing role of internet, the emergence of new media and potentials of cyber space in active opinion making for democracy in recent years.

Present on the occasion were eminent guests of the National Press Club, from a diverse background and all walks of life; Director/Representative UNESCO Ms. Kuzue Kay Nagata, Minister for Information and Broadcast, Dr. Firdous Ashiq Awan along with Athar Minallah, Amir Jahangir, CEO Mishal Pakistan and Afzal Butt President National Press Club opened the occasion.

“21st Century Media: New Frontiers, New Barriers”, the theme of this year's World Press Freedom Day, was celebrated on 3 May. The speakers at the conference included leading journalists, and representatives from press unions. The speakers discussed the growing potential of Internet and education, independent media and democracy, the emergence of new media and the rise in social networking and its impacts on political scenario of Pakistan. The gathering observed a minute long silence in memory of those journalists who had lost their lives since May 03 2010.

This year's World Press Freedom Day also marks the 20th anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration for the promotion of free and pluralistic media. The Declaration was adopted after a conference held in Windhoek (Namibia) on the development of a free African press. It emphasized the importance of an independent press for the development and preservation of democracy and economic development. Two years later, the UN General Assembly established World Press Freedom Day.

Ms. Kuzue Kay Nagata, Director UNESCO on importance of World Press Freedom Day, spoke of the opportunities and challenges digital media poses for the freedom of the press. Nagata emphasized on sensitizing the public on the importance of a free press and the freedom to express. The United Nations is dedicated to ensuring that the Internet becomes a truly global public resource, to which all have access and where all voices are heard. This underlines the importance of quality content, she further added.

A joint message by Ban Ki-Moon, United Nations Secretary-General; Navi Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director-General stated that the media revolution is triggering new debates about freedom of expression, about the nature of regulation, about the balance between expression and responsibility.

The keynote speech by the Information and Broadcasting Minister, Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan discussed about the sources for a democratic debate among the masses, who are now due to the advent of the internet and social media platforms are in a very unique and powerful position to demand accountability and facilitate transparency and efficiency in governments. She stressed that the protection of freedom of expression is key to strengthening the institutions and democracy in Pakistan.

The National Press Club Islamabad-Rawalpindi, a supreme representative body of journalists, hosted the event. President National Press Club, Afzal Butt said that 2010 was one of the deadliest years for the journalists in Pakistan, losing over twelve lives. He said the community still suffers from violence and threats. He called on the Government to do everything to protect the safety of the journalists

Among the panelist, Amir Jahangir CEO Mishal Pakistan, a strategic communications company highlighted impact of virtual communities in countries with a significant proportion of a youth population. Political alliances and configurations, Jahangir said will be defined by the young Pakistanis as the technology continues to evolve. He said these communities would demand a more pluralistic and tolerant environment.

This year, the focus of the Press Freedom Day is to celebrate the potential of the Internet and digital platforms contributing to freedom of expression, democratic governance, and sustainable development.

The occasion calls on member States to reaffirm and implement their international commitments to guarantee and promote freedom of expression on the Internet and to remind civil society organizations, individuals, and other relevant stakeholders of their central part in furthering the Internet as a global public resource.