

PRESS RELEASE

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Creative entrepreneurs and policy makers in Pakistan committed to developing Pakistan's creative economy and ensuring realisation of the potential of UNESCO's 2005 Convention

Islamabad: Policy makers and creative entrepreneurs in Pakistan's metropolitan cities of Karachi and Peshawar are starting to formulate cultural policies to strengthen their creative industries.

As part of the country-wide awareness raising process, UNESCO Islamabad organised a high-level conference on creative economy and sustainable development based on the **UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions today in Islamabad.**

The total exports of cultural goods from Pakistan have increased over the years from US \$60 million in 2004 to US \$437 million in 2013, according to a recent UNESCO UIS report on the "[Globalization of Cultural Trade](#)", and now experts and creative entrepreneurs are looking at ways to build on this success.

Ms. Vibeke Jensen, UNESCO Representative to Pakistan in her opening remarks said that connectivity in Pakistan via mobile phone grew from 13 million in 2014 –the first year Pakistan had 3G and 4G connectivity-- to over 26 million in 2016. With more than 67% of Pakistan's population under the age of 30, and a growing middle class, this mobile digital revolution is an opportunity for the country to leap the digital divide with other nations and develop its domestic market for diverse creative goods and services.

The conference also highlighted the importance of public interventions. *"If smart investment and appropriate public interventions are made for the creative sector and also in the fields of communication, broadcasting, infrastructure, education, regional development, the creative sector could be further strengthened for the benefit of all, and Pakistan's robust and competitive, future-focussed, 21st century, creative economy will emerge, projecting a dynamic image of Pakistan across the world," said Ms. Jensen.*

The conference brought together over 30 young Pakistani creative entrepreneurs. Many of them are already successful entrepreneurs, while others are just starting off. They represent a bright, innovative and promising force for Pakistan's socio-economic development.

Ms. Fouzia Saeed, Executive Director, Lok Virsa, while addressing the audience extended her gratitude to UNESCO for organising a series of consultations and workshops on culture and creative sector. UNESCO is enjoying credible relations with the government of Pakistan and providing such platforms, can help the government to devise a strategy on culture. She stressed that culture and the creative sector should not be a hobby but rather a part of the creative economy which could generate livelihoods. She said that the honourable Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Nawaz Sharif, has promised to announce a cultural policy for Pakistan. She said that Pakistan has had a diverse culture spreading over the years shaping civilisation, religion, languages, which need further transformation. She said that Lok Virsa is a vibrant platform that is providing opportunities to different communities to celebrate their cultural events.



The conference was led by UNESCO's International Expert, Andrew Senior who underlined that the digital technology has changed the world since 2005, the year the Convention was adopted. He underlined today's conference provided platforms for creative entrepreneurs and policy makers to exchange aspirations and discuss needs and challenges to encourage changes in policies to meet their needs.

The conference concluded with the creation of a network of young creative entrepreneurs of Pakistan who are committed to establishing partnership with various stakeholders to promote the creative sector in Pakistan. A resolution was also presented by the entrepreneurs during the conference:

Thank you to CKU, UNESCO and the Government of Pakistan for giving us the opportunity to get together under the project "UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions". We, the creative entrepreneurs commit to stay together and work to advocate for the rectification of the convention. To continue to network among ourselves and other stakeholders to find new ways of developing policies and creating projects to allow creative business to flourish in Pakistan. We would like to request the Government to recognize, promote and facilitate the creative entrepreneurs through specific policy making and reform, special measures and targeted long term inclusive planning. We stay committed to serve as ambassadors of the country on creative forums both nationally and internationally.

The workshop was organized under a project funded by the Danish Development Cooperation Agency (CKU) to raise awareness about UNESCO's 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and the importance of developing policies for the creative sector. The 2005 Convention is an international treaty that recognizes the distinctive nature of culture as an important contributor to economic and social development. It's hoped that Pakistan will also soon ratify the 2005 Convention following this process to bolster creative industries across the country.

Read more: [Promoting the Creative Industries in Pakistan for Long Term Development](#)

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Media Contact:

Riaz Karim Khan, Programme Officer (CI), UNESCO Islamabad, r.khan@unesco.org,
+ 92 (0) 345 5858 956
