



06.02.2014 – UNESCOPRESS/ISB

President Mamnoon Hussain conferred Hilal-i-Pakistan to UNESCO's Director-General Irina Bokova

Ms. Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director-General was conferred Pakistan's highest Civil Award, Hilal-i-Pakistan by the President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Mr. Mamnoon Hussain at President House today. The Director-General, who is in Pakistan as a State Guest on a two-day visit to Pakistan, extended her gratitude to the President and the Government of Pakistan for extending the honor and acknowledging UNESCO's efforts for and contribution to development initiatives in Pakistan. During the first day of her visit, Ms. Bokova called on various Ministers and high officials of Government of Pakistan, United Nations Country Team in Pakistan, diplomats and representatives of the civil society organizations.

As part of her schedule, she met with the students of Islamabad College for Girls. While addressing the young students of the college, Ms. Bokova stressed on bringing together two pillars for country's future-empowering girls and education for sustainable development terming them the key to the future of all countries for a more sustainable and just world. "Since wars start in the minds of men, it is the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed", Ms. Bokova further added referring to the Constitution of UNESCO. She maintained that the importance of education was the most potent for positively shaping the values, skills and knowledge for building resilient societies and also education for sustainable development is vital for achieving all of our goals – from protecting biodiversity and responding to risks, to managing scarce resources for the benefit of all.

At the concluding session, Ms. Bokova inaugurated a special rainwater harvesting system at the Islamabad College for Girls and planted a tree in the college as part of UNESCO's ongoing collaboration with Islamabad Girls College on sustainable development project.

Later during the day, Director General signed a memorandum of understanding MOU with Minister of State of the Ministry of Education, Trainings and Standards in Higher Education, Mr. Muhammad Balig-ur-Rehman, on the Malala Funds-IN-TRUST for Girls' Right to Education. Malala Fund is aimed at expanding and improving education and safe environment for all children in Pakistan particularly girls.

During the press conference, Ms. Bokova appreciated the challenging role undertaken by the Ministry of Education in the context of post 18th constitutional amendment of undertaking coordinating role for the National Plan of Action to accelerate education related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). She appreciated the efforts for progress on the achievement of

the Education for All (EFA) goals, promotion of technical vocational and educational Training (TVET) as well as higher education, literacy and non formal basics education for out-of-school children. She also admired Minister of State for Education for his contribution to the 37th Session of UNESCO General Conference.

Director General UNESCO also called on the Federal Minister of Science and Technology and other senior officials at the Ministry of Science and Technology. On this occasion, Ms. Irina Bokova and Mr. Junaid Zaidi, Rector, COMSATS signed the agreement between the two organizations on the establishment of UNESCO Chair on Knowledge Systems for Integrated Water Resources Management at COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (WahCantt. Campus, Pakistan).

Ms. Bokova during her visit went to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH). She applauded the COMSTECH's mission on helping members' states to strengthen their individual and collective capacities in science and technology.

A youth forum was also organized in the honor of Ms Irina Bokova at National University of Science and Technology. Irinia Bokova said that, UNESCO is committed to working with member states to establish peace education and the development of civil society, mobilizing young people in a multiethnic society with an understanding of how to relate to cultural diversity. She said that questions about equity and equality, social inclusion, diversity and its impact on social cohesion, aspirations of young people, and revolutionizing impact of new communication technologies on all spheres of life are being faced in every society and that she is fully convinced to think and act upon for mutually working together towards these important elements.

Mr. Muhammad Asghar, Rector, National University of Science and Technology (NUST) lauded UNESCO's efforts under the leadership of Director General UNESCO, Ms Irina Bokova. Mr Asghar concluded by saying: "dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples, are based upon respect for commonly shared values. We fully support UNESCO's initiatives for building peace and harmony through education, science and culture".

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