

# INTERNATIONAL THE NEWS

## **UNESCO greets MNAs for getting the bill passed**

Mandated to support and coordinate the achievement of Education for All (EFA) goals, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Friday organized an event to congratulate the MNAs for getting the bill on right to free and compulsory education passed.

This bill guarantees free quality education for approximately 70,000 out-of-school children in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). Last July, the Bill known as “Right to Free and Compulsory Education Bill 2012” was passed by the Senate.

On this significant achievement, talking to the members of the parliament Dr. Kozue Kay Nagata, Director UNESCO Islamabad said, “The passing of the Bill itself is a historic milestone towards Education for All in Pakistan. What matters is not only the result but also its process, that was fully participatory and consultative involving politicians of all parties, civil society and other stakeholders. The process demonstrated how an all-party consensus could be built through a democratic and participatory approach to addressing an issue of national importance. Here I would like to underscore that the Bill was not initiated or formulated with the routine bureaucratic process. This legislation is unique in the sense that it has been initiated by people’s representatives supported by all political parties.” Although at this stage the passed bill applies only for children in Islamabad Capital Territory, Article 25-A of the Constitution and the Parliamentarians of National Assembly unanimously called upon all provincial governments to pass similar legislation in their respective constituencies.

Two years back, UNESCO had facilitated preparation of the draft Bill on the Right to Free and Compulsory Education, on the request of Senate Standing Committee on Education and initiative of its Chairman, Senator S. M. Zafar. The draft Bill was reviewed and submitted to the Senate last year, which was passed by the Senate of Pakistan back on 9th July 2012.

According to UNESCO’s Education for All Global Monitoring Report (GMR) released last month, there are 5.1 million out-of-school children in Pakistan, of which 63% are girls, where as there are 7.2 million out-of-school adolescents in Pakistan. This adopted bill now awaits president’s assent to be implemented in Islamabad in its full spirit.