

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **HIGH LEVEL EXPERT GROUP CONFERENCE ON “PREVENTING DRUG ABUSE IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS: FOSTERING REGIONAL COOPERATION & PARTNERSHIP” HELD AT ISLAMABAD FROM 11-13 FEBRUARY 2019**

A High Level Expert Group Conference on “Preventing Drug Abuse In Educational Settings: Fostering Regional Cooperation & Partnership” from 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> February 2019 at Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) followed by a one day training session on “Preventing Drug Abuse in Educational Settings” on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2019 at ANF Academy, Islamabad. The events were convened in the context of national campaign for implementation of Pakistan’s brokered UN Resolution on “Strengthening Efforts to Prevent Drug Abuse in Educational Settings” adopted during 61<sup>st</sup> Session of UN Commission on Narcotics Drugs (CND) in March 2018. The conference was aimed to conclude a solid framework and promote exchange of experiences and good practices at regional level in collaboration with regional partners, local stakeholders and educational institutions to protect the youth from the menace of drugs.

The conference was attended by representatives from UNODC, Senior Officials from Regional Countries: Afghanistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, representatives from Foreign Office, Ministry of Narcotics Control, Ministry of Federal Education, Ministry of Health Services Regulations and Coordination, Higher Education Commission (HEC) and Anti Narcotics Force.

The conference took stock of the existing challenges of drug abuse in educational institutions, shared regional perspectives, exchanged best practices and adopted appropriate recommendations to effectively curtail this menace.

The conference was followed by Training Session at ANF Academy, Islamabad on 13 February 2019 which was attended by participants from regional countries, representatives of ministries and departments of Government of Pakistan, heads and faculty members from educational institutes. The conference culminated at the training session in which all the delegations along with representatives of various educational institutions participated and shared their experiences to counter the spread of this menace among students / youth.

This Training Session was unique in its nature and an ice breaker on such an important subject. Comprehensive presentations were delivered by UNODC regarding how

to implement evidence-based interventions and strategies and results of the implementation of evidence-based programmes in educational system globally. The follow up group exercise for identification of drug use prevention programmes in educational settings, challenges and best practices were also excellent thought provoking opportunity to the participants.

DG ANF Major General Muhammad Arif Malik HI (M) during his concluding remarks highlighted the gravity of drug abuse in educational settings and various strategic measures at policy and tactical level initiated by Government of Pakistan like suggesting amendments in the Control of Narcotics Substances Act 1997, effective coordination amongst all stakeholders, focused enforcement measures in collaboration with Police and other LEAs, inclusion of essays on drug abuse in curricula and focused awareness campaigns against drug abuse in educational settings. DG ANF appreciated the participants for their valuable input, mutual discussions and for adoption of recommendations for implementation in the light of regional perspective of participating countries. In the end, he re-affirmed that ANF would continue shouldering its responsibilities in saving our youth from the abuse of illicit drugs and striving hard for providing them a Drug Free Society.

