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## Pakistan radio stations establish a community of peace

June 23, 2010

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#### By Saadia Khalid

Islamabad - In a landmark development in Pakistan's expansive media landscape, over 50 FM radio stations across the country have established a formal community of peace and pledged to use the airwaves to promote peace, development and social empowerment in local communities.

The establishment of The Radio Partnership for Peace, the first initiative of its kind across Asia, was announced in Islamabad over the weekend at the largest summit of FM radio stations in Pakistan's history.

The Radio Partnership of Peace comprises 60 participating FM radio stations, 51 of which were represented by their senior management at the 19 June summit where they committed to promoting peace and harmony through constructive radio programming. And in coming months, the envisaged partnership will encompass all 130 FM stations currently on air in Pakistan.

Building consensus on promoting peace is the first step in a long journey that will also include a series of trainings for radio journalists, talk show hosts and producers on how to mediate debates about contentious issues on their shows and steer them toward constructive dialogue.

The summit included independent radio stations, government-run FM stations, university campus stations and other community stations such as the FM stations run by the Islamabad Traffic Police. The summit was conducted by Intermedia, an independent Pakistani media support organisation specialising in advocacy,

research and training on media issues.

Stations from all regions of Pakistan – including Balochistan, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Sindh and the federal capital, Islamabad – were represented. This was the first time that stations from these regions gathered in one place to share their rich experiences and develop ideas to improve professional standards of the burgeoning sector.

The stations at the summit discussed at length the positive role of FM radio in community service across Pakistan in recent years and discussed various ways to strengthen this role and raise the profile of this positive phenomenon both nationally and internationally. In a joint declaration, over 50 FM radio stations stated: "We, the FM radio stations in Pakistan, emphasise that we have a key role to play in the development of Pakistan by promoting peace in local communities. We support the initiative of a collective effort to raise the profile of the FM radio sector in Pakistan as the people's medium. We pledge to promote empowerment of communities by being a voice of peace, education and development."

The summit also formally launched "Radio for Peace Building", a project supported by the international conflict transformation organisation, Search for Common Ground (SFCG), which will be implemented by Intermedia and Uks, a research, resource and publication centre dedicated to the cause of gender equality and women's development.

The project aims to establish a web portal to showcase the richness and diversity of the FM radio sector in Pakistan, essentially serving as a platform to share success stories, various radio programme ideas and other developments in the sector. It will also promote The Radio Partnership of Peace as a united voice of peace and development in local communities across Pakistan.

Representatives of all 51 radio stations present at the summit also signed a Memorandum of Understanding which, acceding to the demand and support of the summit, states that Intermedia and Uks will offer a range of services, facilitation, training and technical assistance to the current and future members of Radio Partnership For Peace.

• Saadia Khalid is a reporter with The News International in Islamabad. This article is distributed by the Common Ground News Service (CGNews) with permission from Intermedia.

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