



Press Release

Dr. Umar Saif Awarded UNESCO Chair for Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICTD)

Lahore, April 18, 2018

World renowned Pakistani Computer Scientist, Dr. Umar Saif has been appointed as the UNESCO Chair for using Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICTD). The establishment of the UNESCO Chair is an acknowledgement of Dr. Umar Saif's work in the field of using IT for Development. This is the first international UNESCO Chair in the field of ICTD and will help Pakistan become a center of excellence in using Information Technology for development, especially use of technology to address the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

“This UNESCO Chair is a huge honour for Pakistan and is a recognition of our work in using technology to solve problems of the developing-world, including access to education, low-better healthcare, technology-enabled agriculture practices, rural Internet connectivity and digital financial inclusion,” said Dr. Umar Saif during a press meet here today. He added, “this Chair will help Pakistan become a global hub of ICTD and the use of technology to address the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).” Through this UNESCO Chair, ITU will establish collaborations with world-leading universities such as United Nations University (UNU), Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) and the University of Washington.”

Previously Dr. Umar Saif became the first Pakistani to be named as one of the top 35 innovators in the world by MIT Technology Review (TR35) in 2011, and a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum in 2010. Dr. Umar Saif is also the only Pakistani who has received the Google Faculty Research Award, Mark Weiser Award, MIT Technovator Award and Microsoft Research Digital Inclusion Award. Dr. Umar Saif was also awarded the British Council Outstanding Alumni Award in 2017. Dr. Umar Saif received Sitar-e-Imtiaz by Pakistan Government in 2014 and has been named among the most influential Muslims in the world in 2014-2018.

Many international experts have congratulated Dr. Umar Saif on the award of the prestigious UNESCO chair. According to Dr Richard Andersen from University of Washington, “Umar Saif, as one of the founders of the ICTD field, is uniquely qualified to hold the chair with his thought leadership and record of entrepreneurial accomplishment.” Dr. Roni Rosenfeld of CMU said that “Dr. Umar Saif is a leading global expert in the field of ICTD and through this Chair, he would have an opportunity to make Pakistan a center of excellence in using technology to address the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs).” Dr. Michael Best of the United Nations University stated that, “Dr. Umar Saif is an ideal person to hold this Chair, with a strong international reputation for scholarship and policy impact across the ICTD discipline. Being situated in Pakistan, it gives the Chair a powerful perspective on the potential IT have to enhance development, create positive social change, and improve peace and security.”