**Legislators Call for Reforms in Punjab Assembly Rules of Procedure**

LAHORE, October 21, 2016: The Legislative Support Group (LSG) of the Punjab Assembly met on Friday and endorsed Free and Fair Election Network’s recommendations for improvement in legislatures’ effectiveness.

The first meeting of the LSG, attended by 24 Members of Punjab Assembly, vowed to review and reform the Punjab Assembly Rules of Procedure framed almost two decades ago in 1997. The LSG comprises lawmakers belonging to all parties represented in the Punjab Assembly and is supported by Trust for Democratic Education and Accountability-Free and Fair Election Network (TDEA-FAFEN).

FAFEN shared a set of recommendations with the members of LSG for enhancing role of the standing committees, ensuring implementation of Assembly’s recommendations, developing mechanism to track government assurances and improving transparency of Assembly business, participation and attendance of legislators.

PML-N provincial lawmaker Ayesha Javed said that Punjab Assembly had recently adopted some amendments to Rules of Procedure but still there was need for further reforms. She said lawmakers from all parties should cooperate with each other to get the much-needed reforms approved. She appreciated FAFEN’s efforts to improve parliamentary transparency and effectiveness.

PTI legislator Asif Mehmood urged the LSG members to make concerted efforts for improvement in legislature’s effectiveness. He said the democratic culture was yet to take roots in Pakistan and there was much room for improvements in the Assembly’s rules and procedures.

PML lawmaker Sardar Vikas Hassan Moakal observed that Rules of Procedure were often overlooked during the proceedings of the Assembly. He was of the opinion there was also need for enforcement of existing rules besides the reforms. JI lawmaker Dr. Waseem Akhtar stated that the Assembly should make the parliamentary functionaries’ attendance public.

Leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Assembly Mian Mehmood-ur-Rashid, Chairman Committee on Privileges Chaudhry Iqbal, senior leader of Jamaat-e-Islami Farid Paracha and lawmakers from PML-N, PTI, PML and JI also participated in the meeting.

The wide-ranging recommendations for legislative reforms address several issues that hinder Assembly’s effectiveness. The proposals presented before LSG have been prepared after five years’ observation of Assembly proceedings and consultations with lawmakers, political parties and Assembly Secretariats.

A number of new initiatives are required to make the management of Assembly business more efficient and robust. The use of modern technology has also been stressed to facilitate the lawmakers and the Assembly Secretariat.

The low attendance often disrupts the Assembly sittings and there is need to enhance the role of Speaker to ensure minimum presence of lawmakers to give credence to the Assembly decisions.

The standing committees need to be empowered, as a major part of the legislative and representative functions is carried out in these committees. Currently, the committees cannot meet more than twice a month and lack powers to appoint sub-committees.

The measures have also been suggested to increase the members’ participation in the Assembly business and make the proceedings as transparent as possible. The Assembly must maintain a public record of its business which will enable the citizens to stay informed on the performance of their representatives and build their confidence on democratic institutions.

A comprehensive mechanism should be in place to track the government assurances given to the House on various parliamentary interventions. These recommendations for parliamentary reforms will help foster strong and sustained engagement between the people and elected representatives for promoting a vibrant democratic culture.