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**Press Release**

**FAFEN Forms Caucus on Parliamentary Reforms**

ISLAMABAD, April 29, 2015: With the aim to strengthen democracy in the country, Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) has formed a caucus on parliamentary reforms which will work towards bringing necessary improvements in the parliamentary procedures.

In this regard, the first meeting of the caucus – comprising various parliamentarians, journalists, civil society members and former officials of the Senate and National Assembly – was held at a local hotel on Wednesday.

The meeting covered three major issues of parliamentary reforms; providing support services to legislators, enhancing the Parliament’s authority and increasing the citizens’ confidence in the legislatures.

The caucus members appreciated FAFEN’s initiative to bring necessary amendments to the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate and National Assembly for smooth and effective functioning of the Parliament. They noted that the recommendations originating from the caucus will help foster strong and sustained engagement between the people and elected representatives and promote a vibrant democratic culture in the country.

The participants agreed that the lawmakers should be given appropriate support services – such as research staff and office space to carry out their legislative and oversight roles in an effective manner. They also highlighted the importance of parliamentary supremacy, adding that the Parliament should be strengthened to take its own decisions based on the aspirations of the citizens.

The members also stressed the need to have capacity building/training sessions for legislators, especially those elected for the first time, to understand parliamentary processes.

Furthermore, the participants suggested inclusion of two members each from the provincial assemblies in the caucus in order to introduce similar amendments to the parliamentary rules and procedures at a provincial level. They also agreed to meet again during the third week of May to devise a strategy for implementation of recommendations proposed during the session.

The participants included MNAs Shafqat Mehmood (PTI), Aisha Sayed (JI), Naeema Kishwar Khan (JUI-F), Kishwar Zahra and Dr Fouzia Hameed (MQM); former Senator Haji Adeel (ANP); former MNAs Riaz Fatyana (PTI), Nadeem Afzal Chan (PPPP) and Humayun Saifullah Khan (independent member), former Senate Secretary Iftikharullah Babar and civil society members Farzana Bari and Amer Ejaz Butt.