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**Press Release**

**FAFEN Launches Campaign to Open Up Electoral Reforms’ Committee**

ISLAMABAD, August 27, 2015: Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) has launched a public campaign to open up the proceedings of the Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reforms for greater transparency and ownership of the citizens, says a press release issued on Thursday.

FAFEN has urged the Speaker of the National Assembly to direct the Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reforms and its Sub-Committee to allow interested citizens and media to attend their meetings as closed door sittings do not inspire public confidence in the process and the product.

To draw public support for this initiative, FAFEN launched a public petition on its website ‘fafen.org’, urging citizens and other stakeholders to sign the petition for opening up the parliamentary committee to ensure that the process of reforms is transparent, meaningful, realistic and reflective of popular aspirations.

FAFEN believes elections act as the lynchpin in a democracy and any changes to the electoral system require public discourse and debate for a broader public ownership. Unless diverse social and political groups share at least a minimum common reforms agenda, any future changes in the laws will be subject to public questioning and censure, having implications on the legitimacy of elections as well as its results.

Equally important is an intense engagement of provinces and its assemblies in any reforms process in line with the spirit of the 18th Constitutional Amendment. Consultations with provinces will not only improve public confidence in the reforms process but also enhance their ownership among people and the federating units.

FAFEN, therefore, urges the Speaker of the National Assembly to open up meetings of the Parliamentary Committee and its Sub-Committee for media and public; the Committee upload all reforms proposals received from public, political parties, Election Commission of Pakistan, civil society organizations, media groups, bar associations and other relevant stakeholders on parliamentary websites; the Committee hold public consultations across the country to understand the popular perceptions about elections and solicit proposals from public and the Committee engages media in generating public discourse on electoral reforms.

The citizens’ petition has been addressed to the Speaker of the National Assembly and copied to Chairman, Senate; Deputy Chairman, Senate; Deputy Speaker, National Assembly; Chairperson, Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reforms; Chairperson, Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Electoral Reforms and all Members of Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reforms.