Civil Society Joins Hand with ECP to address Women Under-registration Issue

ISLAMABAD, March 13, 2016: The civil society groups operating in various parts of the country have decided to extend a supporting hand to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in bridging the gender gap in the electoral rolls, says a statement issued here on Sunday.

The decision was made in a consultation of civil society groups organized by the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) that welcomed the establishment of a working group at the ECP on gender and disability and Commission’s acknowledgment that more than 11 million eligible women voters are still missing from the electoral rolls.

The consultation deliberated upon the possible reasons for under-registration of millions of women voters and strategies to address them. The civil society groups offered the ECP, which was represented in the consultation, an active support in identifying the missing women voters and engaging other stakeholders, including media, political parties, NADRA, corporate sector and communities with high under-registration for early registration of missing women voters.

The consultation noted with grave concern that around 11.67 million women voters were missing from the voter lists mainly because they have not been provided with Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) yet. FAFEN’s analysis shows that the gap has widened by 68,000 voters since General Election 2013.

The consultation emphasized that efforts should begin on war footing as less than two years’ time was left before the ECP conducts the next General Elections in 2018. It is, therefore, pertinent that the ECP should take all appropriate measures which could help the missing women voters registered at the earliest.

The civil society consultation hoped that ECP’s working group on gender and disability would act quickly to address the issue of under-registration.

The consultation urged the ECP to formalize a comprehensive coordination mechanism with NADRA for effective support in finalizing accurate and complete voter lists and initiate voter registration campaign with special focus on women to ensure that maximum women voters are registered to take part in the electoral process.

The group also emphasized the need for engaging with NADRA with special focus on citizen registration of women from marginalized sections of society and relax its documentational requirements for that purpose. Also, the consultation decided to engage in advocacy for bringing amendment in law to incorporate the consent of a fresh voter on address of vote registration at the time of applying for CNIC.

The civil society consultation was attended by a group of 14 civil society organizations, officials of ECP and representatives of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Commission on Status of Women.