Balochistan Speaker Appreciates FAFEN’s Efforts to Regulate Assembly Proceedings

ISLAMABAD, November 11, 2016: Speaker of the Balochistan Ms. Rahila Hameed Khan Durrani has appreciated the efforts of the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) for parliamentary reforms that are aimed at improving the performance of elected institutions in their basic functions of legislation and executive oversight.

At a meeting with FAFEN’s team at her chambers on Friday, Speaker Durrani said that the Rules of Procedures and Conduct of Business of the Balochistan Assembly are in the need of improvement and that the Assembly has already started the reforms process. She said that FAFEN’s reforms proposals were being reviewed by the relevant standing committee before their consideration by the Assembly.

FAFEN has prepared a draft of Model Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business for the Provincial Assemblies on the basis of evidence collected through observation of the parliamentary proceedings over the past years. The rules are meant to improve transparency, executive oversight, responsiveness, accountability and effectiveness of the provincial legislatures.

The main features of the draft model rules include mechanism to encourage citizens’ participation in law and policymaking through public hearings; online agenda submission for members of provincial assemblies; simplified procedure for submission of Calling Attention Notices and Questions; improved oversight of government assurances to the assemblies; and timely provision of Information (attendance records, vote records, proceedings of the house and committees, legislative and non-legislative business documents) on Assembly website.

Earlier, FAFEN team attended the meeting of the assembly’s Legislative Support Group (LSG) and briefed the members of the group on the Model rules. Five members belonging to PML-N, PkMAP and JUI-F participated in the meeting. The legislators expressed keen interest in FAFEN’s proposed amendments and vowed to introduce them in the Assembly to bring the Balochistan Assembly at par with other provincial legislatures.

Sardar Raza Muhammad Barech, Advisor to Chief Minister on Law and Parliamentary Affairs, acknowledged the absence of important parliamentary tools in the rules of Balochistan Assembly such as “Calling Attention Notice” and “Zero Hour” and informed FAFEN that amendments have already been moved in the Assembly rules to introduce these interventions. PkMAP lawmaker Agha Syed Liaqat Ali called for strengthening the standing committees to improve the quality of legislation and representation of public issues.