****

**FAFEN Lauds Balochistan Assembly’s Move to Amend Rules of Procedure**

ISLAMABAD, November 3, 2016: Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) has welcomed the Balochistan government’s initiative to amend the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of the Balochistan Assembly, which provides for the Calling Attention Notices.

Currently, Balochistan is the only province where assembly rules do not permit the Members of the Provincial Assembly to raise issues of urgent public importance through Calling Attention Notices. The amendment to introduce the Calling Attention Notices was moved by Advisor to Chief Minister on Law and Parliamentary Affairs Sardar Raza Muhammad Barrech during the first sitting of its 35th session on Wednesday. The amendment proposed insertion of a new chapter (Chapter VII-A) in the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business 1974 which provides for submitting Calling Attention Notice in the Balochistan Assembly. The House referred the amendment to relevant standing committee for further discussion.

Under new chapter, any member may call the attention of minister concerned to any matter of public importance in the province through Calling Attention Notice with the permission of the Chair. A member can raise one notice per sitting that can be taken and answered within 15 minutes after the Question Hour and not more than two such notices shall be included to the agenda list for a sitting while the Speaker may change the day and time for taking notices.

FAFEN has termed the amendment a major step forward in improving the representational and executive oversight functions of the Balochistan Assembly. The amendment is in line with the model rules of procedure and conduct of business for the provincial assemblies that FAFEN has drafted with the objective of improving transparency, executive oversight, responsiveness, accountability and effusiveness of the provincial legislatures. FAFEN has already discussed the draft rules with the Speaker Rahila Durrani, Home Minister Sarfaraz Bugti and members of Balochistan Assembly.

The main features of the draft model rules of procedure 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.