

Pakistan-India Legislators and Public Officials Dialogue on Sharing of Experiences on Governance and Democracy

December 12, 2015; Dubai, UAE

Joint Statement

1. **The second round of Pakistan-India Legislators and Public Officials Dialogue on Sharing of Experiences on Governance and Democracy** was convened in *Dubai, UAE* on *December 12, 2015* to share lessons among two countries on each others' **Local Government System and Anti-Corruption Mechanisms and Institutions to Address the Problems of Corruption.**
2. The Dialogue brought together senior participants including MPs, practitioners and subject-experts from two countries who shared experiences of each country's system in an informed and reform-oriented discourse.
3. At the outset, participants from both sides expressed embarrassment that owing to the state of relations between Pakistan and India, the two sides had to huddle in a third country venue for sharing of lessons. Participants underscored the urgent need to improve conditions allowing for free dialogue and sharing of good practices among citizens of Pakistan and India.
4. Sharing of good practices on two key subjects once again underscored the critical need for regular dialogues and discussions among Pakistani and Indian citizens especially on areas that help improve the lives of citizens in two countries.
5. Participants appreciated the efforts of PILDAT, in partnership with Lokniti-CSDS, in facilitating the exchange of good practices and asked that the exchange must be broadened to include more areas of governance and democracy.

Local Government Systems in India and Pakistan

6. While sharing models of Local Government systems in place across Pakistan and India, including the Panchayati Raj/ Local Government system, participants noted that the two countries face strikingly common challenges in functioning of the Local Government systems.
7. The two sides agreed that a strong legal provision is needed for continuity of Local Government systems to ensure that elections to Local Governments take place at regular interval. The inclusion of such a provision in the Indian Constitution has ensured continuity of the Local Government systems in India.
8. Both sides stressed that power to lower tiers should be meaningfully devolved to the lowest effective level. Similarly, allocation of resources needs to be governed effectively through the Provincial/State Finance Commissions.

9. Participants also stressed that continuity of Local Government system is one basic requirement in strengthening the democratic structure and making it more effective.
10. The provision of minimum educational qualifications to contest Local Government elections in some Indian States was discussed. Concern was expressed that such a provision might lead to the exclusion of large number of women and disadvantaged sections from the Local Government System and run counter to the principle of inclusion. On the other hand, it was recognised that educated representatives would be an asset to efficient local government.
11. Large election expenses were considered a major challenge in Pakistan and India which tend to exclude large segments of populations from contesting election. Participants believed that creative solutions were required to address this challenge.
12. The significant increase of women in Panchayati Raj has had a great impact in India. Participants noted that distinct solutions are being applied in some Indian States in enhancing meaningful women participation in Local Government systems. Such good practices are worthy of consideration in Pakistan's Local Government systems in which an average of 33% representation of women has been legislated. Delegates also believed that women still need to overcome social and cultural barriers and require various forms of support in both countries.

Anti-Corruption Mechanisms and Institutions to Address the Problems of Corruption

13. The two sides lamented the low ranking of both Pakistan and India on Corruption Perception Index and an indifference/acceptance of sorts by the public of the prevalence of corruption in two countries.
14. Both sides believed alongside effective institutions, the two countries require stronger affirmation by people that the rule of law shall prevail and a continuous strengthening of the accountability mechanisms.
15. Participants stressed wider and more effective implementation of citizens' right to information in the two countries leading to greater transparency and empowerment. Participants from Pakistan believed that in Pakistan, the revised bill on Right to Information must be brought in the Parliament for passage while provinces including Sindh and Balochistan must also urgently introduce reformed RTI laws.
16. Delegates agreed that political parties must also open themselves up for greater transparency by the citizens. Zero tolerance for corruption among their own rank and file and while choosing candidates for various elections by the parties will provide required impetus to effective anti-corruption in two countries.
17. Pro-active role of civil society, use of smart technology and focus of the media on curbing corruption can also be useful in effectively addressing problems of corruption.

With **Syed Naveed Qamar**, MNA (NA-222, Hyderabad-V, Sindh, PPPP), Chairman, National Assembly Standing Committee on Railways, in the chair, delegates from **Pakistan** included (*in alphabetical order by first name*) **Mr. Arbab Muhammad Asim Khan**, District Nazim Peshawar, PTI, KP; **Mrs. Mahtab Akbar Rashdi**, MPA, (RSW-156, Sindh, PML-F); **Mian Mehmood ur Rashid**, MPA, (PP-151 (Lahore-XV), Punjab, PTI) Leader of the Opposition; **Engineer Qamar-ul-Islam Raja**, MPA, (PP-5, Rawalpindi-V, Punjab, PML-N); **Mr. Said Rehman**, Director, Local Governance School, Peshawar, KP, **Maj. (Retd.) Syed Burhan Ali**, Director General-NAB, Punjab and **Senator Taj Muhammad Afridi**.

Under the leadership of **Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar**, MP, Rajya Sabha, INC, delegates from India included (*in alphabetical order by first Name*) **Mr. Aryadan Shoukath**, Ex-Panchayat President and Former Municipal Chairman, Nilambur, Kerala; **Mr. Ashutosh**, Spokesperson AAP; **Mr. Bharat Bhushan**, Editor, Catch News; **Mr. Bhupinder Singh Hooda**, MLA, INC and former Chief Minister Haryana; **Dr. Sharan Prakash Patil**, MLA, Karnataka, INC, Minister for Medical Education, Government of Karnataka; **Mr. Mahendra Jeet Singh Malviya**, MLA, INC, former Cabinet Minister, TAD/Public Grievance Redressal/Technical-Engineering Education/Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, Rajasthan; **Dr. Sukhbilas Barma**, MLA, INC, former Indian Administrative Service; former Chairman, former Chairman, 3rd Finance Commission, West Bengal; **Mr. V.D. Sathesan**, MLA, INC, Member, Kerala Legislative Assembly; **Dr. Nupur Tiwary**, Faculty Member, Indian Institute of Public Administration New Delhi, India and **Ms. Nandana Reddy**, (Karnataka) Panchayati Raj Activist, Convener of the Grand Panchayat Hakkottaya Andolona.

Experts who joined the Dialogue from Pakistan and India included **Mr. Shahid Hamid**, Senior Advocate Supreme Court of Pakistan, Former Governor of Punjab and former Federal Minister; **Prof. George Mathew**, Chairman, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi, India and **Prof. Jagdeep Chhokar**, founder and trustee, Association for Democratic Reforms New Delhi, India, former Professor and Dean, Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, India.

The PILDAT team included **Mr. Ahmed Bilal Mehboob**, President, **Ms. Aasiya Riaz**, Joint Director, and **Ms. Shahira Khan**, Projects Officer while **Mr. Nitin Mehta**, Research Officer, represented the Lokniti-Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), New Delhi, India.