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March 6, 2009

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PAKISTAN: POLITICAL PARTIES WANT CONSULTATION ON APPOINTMENT OF NEW CEC

ISLAMABAD – Representatives of six major political parties voiced their desire for consultation on the selection of the next Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), corrections to the voters' list and the electoral reforms package currently being developed by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

At a roundtable organized by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) in Islamabad, party representatives stressed the need for the new CEC to have the support of all the political parties as a fundamental requirement to build confidence in the electoral process.

There was consensus that the president of Pakistan should appoint the next CEC through a consultative process in line with the "Charter of Democracy," which states: "There shall be an independent, autonomous, and impartial election commission. The prime minister shall in consultation with the leader of opposition forward up to three names for each position of chief election commissioner, members of election commission, and secretary to Joint Parliamentary Committee, constituted on the same pattern as for appointment of judges in superior judiciary, through transparent public hearing process. In case of no consensus, both Prime Minister and Leader of Opposition shall forward separate lists to the Joint Parliamentary Committee for consideration. Provincial election commissioner shall be appointed on the same pattern by committees of respective provincial assemblies." The term of the current CEC expires March 15.

The party representatives also raised serious concerns about flaws in the electoral list and unanimously approved a recommendation for comprehensive and effective collaboration between ECP and the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) in order to maximize the considerable public resources of NADRA. The participants agreed that ECP and NADRA should engage in intensive collaboration and jointly present options to political parties and other stakeholders within a period of six weeks for future voter registration systems in order to ensure a complete and accurate voters' list.

Finally, the party representatives stressed that the ECP must conduct formal consultations with political parties and other stakeholders on the electoral reforms package they are currently developing prior to submitting it to the Prime Minister. As key stakeholders in the electoral process they believe the ECP should formally consult and consider their feedback and concerns

about past elections prior to finalization of their proposals in order to develop a comprehensive package of reforms that will have the support of the political parties.

Senior leaders from Pakistan Peoples Party, Pakistan Muslim League-N, Pakistan Muslim League (Q), Awami National Party, Muttahida Qaumi Movement and Pakhtunkhawah Mili Awami Party participated in the roundtable.

NDI is a nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization that has supported democratic institutions and practices in every region of the world for more than two decades. For more information about NDI, please visit our website, www.ndi.org.

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