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■ FEMALE CANDIDATES & VOTERS

International monitors to observe general elections

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Not only the number and situation of women voters and women candidates would be observed during the upcoming elections, but different aspects of women involved in the administration of elections will also be monitored by national and international monitors.

An MoU in this regard was signed by Director Gender Concerns International (GCI) and Aurat Foundation on Thursday. Under this initiative, 15 international and 50 local observers will monitor the coming elections from gender angle. "We also monitored 2008 elections, but it was on a small level. This time we are planning to make it more organised and effective," Director Gender Concerns International (GCI) Sabra Bano at a press conference organised to announce a joint collaboration of GCI and Aurat Foundation for the monitoring of 2013 general elections in Pakistan from a gender perspective.

Sabra said GCI is an international gender and development organisation that has conducted a series of unique GEM Missions successfully monitoring elections exclusively from a gender perspective in Tunisia Morocco and Libya. "We will have international observers mostly from all these countries and also other Arab countries so that Muslim countries can learn from the experience of each other," she said. "Emerging leadership of women in Arab world can learn many lessons from the successes of women right movement in Pakistan." AF and GCI have joined hands to establish Gender Election Monitoring

(GEM) Mission for this purpose

The prime objective is to ensure that the gender agenda is addressed by the newly elected government and women's political participation is promoted in post-election Pakistan. According to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two organisations, Gender Concerns International and the Aurat Foundation will implement the advancement of the political participation of women in Pakistan by building the capacity of women's organisations and women in civil society organisations and leaders. Other core steps will include building the capacity of 50 or more domestic observers to monitor the 2013 elections in Pakistan from a gender perspective, strengthening women's self-organisations and ensuring interactions between women's organisations and female Parliamentarians. The activities will also include national and international gender lobby and advocacy training. AF and Gender Concerns International have agreed to take joint responsibility for delivering future project outcomes and to maintain the highest standards of professional ethics and conduct in the overall performance of their duties.

Speaking on this occasion, Manager Legislative Watch Group, AF Professor Farkhanda Aurangzeb said that the aim of this initiative is to motivate women for political participation. She said that not only the number and situation of women voters and women candidates would be observed under this project, but the different aspects of women involved in the administration of elections will also be monitored.