

Friday, April 05, 2013

Int'l standards in observing elections

CITY REPORTER

ISLAMABAD—Leading organisations have endorsed the use of international observation standards for the upcoming general elections at a conference in Islamabad Thursday.

The Aurat Foundation, Free and Fair Elections Network (FAFEN), Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) and Special Talent Exchange Program (STEP) all pledged to use internationally recognised methodology for their own observation work.

The methodology, defined in the Declaration of Global Principles for Non-Partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations, is endorsed by 180 independent election monitoring organisations in

over 75 countries around the world.

Khawar Mumtaz, Chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women, opened the conference by commending Pakistani organisations for taking this important step towards ensuring credible election observation: "Accountability and transparency in elections are a two way street – we expect it from the election commission, and we equally seek it from observers who should be transparent and share the standards being used."

The standards, which will be used by national and international observer groups to monitor and assess the general election, are an extension of the obligations and commitments Pakistan made under the Uni-

versal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). These treaties include the obligation to facilitate election observation.

International organisations attending the conference voiced their support for the pledge, including United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Democracy Reporting International (DRI), National Democratic Institute (NDI) and various citizen election observation groups from Asia, the Middle East and Southern Africa.

Hussain Naqi, the National Coordinator of the HRCP, said that the HRCP plans to monitor the elections in the 56 constituencies which are sensitive in the context of human rights violations.