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Passage of women rights bill lauded

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ISLAMABAD—Civil society members gathered on Thursday to discuss the future strategy following the passage of the 'Prevention of Anti-Women Practices (Criminal Law Amendment) Bill 2011' through parliament. Speakers, at the meeting, hoped that Senate would also pass the historic bill without any delay.

The meeting was arranged by Aurat Foundation's Legislative Watch Programme for Women's Empowerment to express joy on the passage of women's rights bill that specifically targets forced

marriages, marriages to the Holy Quran and denial of the right of inheritance. Dr Donya Aziz, Member National Assembly (PML-Q), was the chief guest of the conference. "The supporters of the bill faced a lot of resistance and there were arguments that the punishment should be minimised," said the author of the bill while sharing the account of the struggle before the bill could be turned into law. She said that "any amendment proposed by the senators or concerned civil society organisation would be welcomed" and also told that the lawyers from the lower courts shall also be consulted re-

garding the bill in order to make it a perfect piece of legislation. Anis Haroon, Chairperson, National Commission on the Status of Women; Senator Nilofar Bakhtiar; Tahira Abdullah; Samar Minallah; Rehana Hashmi, Executive Director, Sisters Trust and Naeem Mirza were among the speakers at the meeting. The speakers while lauding the efforts of the current government for introducing women protection bills such as the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Work Place Act 2010, also noted that the authorities have been slow when it comes to the implementation of the bill.