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## Women rights activists demand implementation of CEDAW

ISLAMABAD  
STAFF REPORT

A press conference was held at National Press Club on Thursday by Democracy Reporting International and Aurat Foundation to propagate women's involvement in political and public life of the country.

For the fulfillment of women's rights to participate in the country's political and public life, Pakistan's government should implement its commitments under 'Convention of Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women' (CEDAW), said Farkhanda Aurangzeb, a women rights activist and representative of Aurat Foundation.

"Pakistan ratified CEDAW in 1996 but despite passage of many years there are a lot of areas where it is not

implemented. Significant problems in Pakistan persist with regards to participation of women as voters as well as candidates," she added.

During the press conference a report titled 'Women's Participation in the upcoming Elections 2013' was unveiled. The report showed that at present, total seats of MPs in both National Assembly and Senate at 446, out of which 77 are reserved for women and total seats held by women are 93 because 16 women MPs are elected in the National Assembly (NA). Percentage held by women MPs is 19.3% which is 10.7% less than the 30% target, said the report.

The report said 41 more seats are required to meet the target. Per criteria, eight more women seats are required to meet this goal in NA, 15 in KP Assembly, 36 in Punjab Assembly, and

20 in Sindh Assembly. During the session, Aurangzeb also suggested the political parties to nominate women candidates in constituencies where they are likely to win. According to the report, only 5.8% seats are held by directly elected women in the NA, 1.9% in Balochistan Assembly, 2.7% in Punjab Assembly, 0.7 % in Sindh Assembly while no woman has been directly elected in KP.

The report also recommends that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) provide publicly accessible gender-disaggregated data, broken down by administrative units in order to enable effective scrutiny of women's political participation; and that political parties be required to publicly provide regular and

standardised information about the number and proportion of women in executive and leadership positions. Consultations with women's groups could also be carried out to discuss how legislation and administrative regulations can be improved to facilitate greater participation of women in the electoral process, it added.

Speakers at the conference proposed political parties should take steps to empower women through their participation in political and public life. Madiha Farhan, a DRI envoy said equal electoral participation is essential for legitimacy of the democratic process. Maria Rashid of Rozan stated the report offered crucial recommendations for Pakistan to fulfill its international obligations with regards to women's political rights.