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Poll assessment
**National observers
 need to follow
 international standards**

**Speakers pledge
 to observe polls
 according to
 recognised methods**

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As the country ratifies the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) for free and fair elections, the role of national election observation organisations becomes all the more relevant. This was the crux of a conference on "International Standards in Election Observation" at a hotel on Thursday.

Local organisations and international associations of citizen observation groups attended the conference. They pledged to observe elections according to the recognised methodology defined in Declaration of Global Principles for Non-Partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organisations.

Democracy Reporting International (DRI) Director Vladimir Pran said, "The standards used by international and domestic observer groups to assess elections are an extension of the commitments that Pakistan has made under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and ICCPR.

These treaties include the obligation to facilitate election observation."

Reverend Gift Moerane from the Southern African Development Community Election Support Network, highlighted some factors that election observers need to take into consideration. "It is imperative that election observers visit polling stations. Also it is important to sensitise people of their right to vote. Encouragement is the key," he said.

While Ichal Supriadi from Asian Network for Free Elections underscored smooth elections, "all of Asia right now has their eyes on Pakistan. It will set a great

example if free and fair elections are carried out," he said.

Meanwhile, Telibert Laoc, from National Democratic Institute, introduced the Declaration of Global Principles for Non-Partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organisations which has been endorsed by 180 independent election monitoring organisations in over 75 countries around the globe.

European Union Election Observation Mission Deputy Chief Observer Hannah Roberts, emphasised the

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HRCP Coordinators Director
Husain Naqi

International Standards in Observation of the 2013 elections.

"We are not only here for the current elections but also for the future elections."

Meanwhile, HRCP Coordinators Director Husain Naqi said, "media, especially electronic persists on damning the politicians, constantly condemning them." The HRCP is planning to monitor the elections in those 56 constituencies which are sensitive in the context of human rights violation.

Aurat Foundation CEO Naeem Mirza streamlined the basic duties of the observer groups. "The process of scrutiny has begun. The Supreme Court and election commission are observing the political candidates, and we are observing them in return. Also nothing could be more relevant than the right of vote of women. It's a constitutional right which has not been practiced in Pakistan," he said.