

13TH MEETING OF THE FORUM OF PAKISTAN OMBUDSMAN (FPO)

The 13th meeting of the Forum of Pakistan Ombudsman (FPO) was held on 22nd October, 2014 at Boat Club Karachi. Mr. AbdurRauf Chaudhry, Federal Tax Ombudsman, who is also the President of FPO, chaired the meeting which was attended by 8 Ombudsmen and the representatives of Ombudsman offices in the country.

After opening remarks by the Chair, Mr. Abdul Khaliq, Secretary of the Forum presented the agenda items. The participants approved the minutes of the 12th Meeting which was held at FTO Secretariat, Islamabad on 10th March, 2014. The initiatives taken as well as planned for the sustainability of the Forum was appreciated. The Forum was also informed about the actions taken so far on the implementation of the decisions of the Islamabad Declaration, adopted by the Conference on "Networking of Ombudsmen in the OIC Member States" which was held on 28-29th April, 2014 at Islamabad. The Forum requested the Provincial Ombudsman Punjab to approach the Provincial Government to issue an Ordinance for adoption of FOIR Act, 2013 in first instance, followed by promulgation of an Act so that this precedent could help in taking similar initiative by the other Provincial Governments.

The Secretary of the Forum also apprised the meeting about the actions already taken as well as in some cases in process regarding the twenty-six Recommendations framed out in a Workshop on the Challenges of Ombudsmanship, held last year.

Following decisions were unanimously taken in the meeting:

- A Committee was formed to distribute the funds of IDF – World Bank Project among the Ombudsmen Offices for future spending and achieving the objectives in line with the findings of Studies conducted under the above project.
- A Concept Paper for Development Partners, presented during the meeting, may be placed before the above-mentioned Committee so that a unified policy could be adopted while negotiating financial assistance from the donors.
- The Forum will engage a senior Lawyer to defend the statutory privileges of all the Ombudsmen in the Country regarding grant of Stay and issuance of Contempt Notices, in the light of FOIR Act, 2013.
- Video Conferencing facilities should be established at least in one of the Regional Offices at a station out of the funds of IDF World Bank Project so that other Ombudsman Regional Offices may also take the benefit of this facility for closer interaction and efficient running of their official business.
- The facilities available in the Regional Offices of an Ombudsman at a station should mutually be shared with the Regional Offices of other Ombudsman on the same station and instructions on this account may be issued to all concerned at FPO's level.
- A Writ Petition may be filed either before the Islamabad High Court or Sindh High Court, as deem appropriate, for grant of Judicial Allowance to all the employees of Ombudsmen Offices in the Country on the same analogy of Tribunals and Courts. Cost on such court cases, including the Stay and Contempt cases, will be shared by all FPO Members.
- A Summary shall be moved by the Federal Ombudsman through Wafaqi Mohtasib and Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs requesting therein that after promulgation of FOIR Act, 2013, every Insurance Company shall fall under the jurisdiction of the Federal Insurance Ombudsman.
- A Summary may be moved at the level of the President of FPO for seeking approval of the Prime Minister for grant of Second Pension to the Federal Ombudsmen on completion of their tenure as is admissible to the Auditor General of Pakistan and Judges of the Supreme Court/High Courts.
- Next meeting of the Forum, to discuss the methodology of approaching the respective Provincial Governments in connection with issuance of Ordinances for adoption of the Federal Ombudsman Institutional Reforms Act, 2013 followed by promulgation of Acts by the Provincial Assemblies, will be held in the office of the Provincial Ombudsman Punjab at Lahore during November, 2014.

PICTORIAL GLIMPSES OF 13TH MEETING OF THE FORUM OF PAKISTAN OMBUDSMAN, HELD ON 22ND OCTOBER, 2014 AT BOAT CLUB KARACHI

