

September 23, 2010

**Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani, MNA**  
Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan  
Prime Minister House  
Islamabad

**Subject: Debate in the National Assembly based on PILDAT Analysis of the MNAs' Assets Declarations**

Sir:

I am writing to you with reference to the debate in the National Assembly yesterday, as covered in the media today, about legislators' perceptions of the PILDAT Analysis of the MNAs' Assets Declarations.

PILDAT firmly believes in a strong Parliament as a key institution of democracy. All of PILDAT's work as a Pakistani indigenous institution has been to strengthen democracy and strengthen Parliament. We have been making modest contributions in this regard since 2002 which are recognized and appreciated by you and your colleagues across party lines from time to time, for which we remain grateful. On September 15, 2010, the International Day of Democracy, we released a *Report on Mid-Term Assessment of the Quality of Democracy in Pakistan*, based on the analysis and assessment by a non-partisan Democracy Assessment Group. I attach the Executive Summary for you that was released to the media. The key message of the report is that:

- i. Status of Constitutional and institutional arrangements of Democracy are comparatively better today than in most parts of our history.
- ii. We have the basic ingredients of Democracy in place such as an independent Judiciary, independent and diverse media, a **sovereign and inclusive Parliament** in which the **opposition is given an important role** and a free open civil society.
- iii. There have been major accomplishments of democracy during the past 2 ½ years including Restoration of Judiciary; Unanimous passage of the 18<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment; 7<sup>th</sup> National Finance Commission (NFC) Award; a more effective Public Accounts Committee; Recognition of the Role of Opposition in the Parliament and the Provincial Assemblies; Constructive Role of the Opposition; Aghaz-e-Huqooq-e-Balochistan package and the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order, 2009, etc.
- iv. State of governance, rule of law, accountability and integrity in public office are not satisfactory and need urgent improvement.
- v. A democratic Pakistan alone is a secure Pakistan.
- vi. The way forward for Pakistan is to sustain, refine and strengthen the democratic system.

PILDAT has been carrying out analysis of the MNAs' declared assets since 2002 based on the declarations of assets by MNAs that the Election Commission of Pakistan publishes every year in the form of a Gazette of the Federal Government for the information and use of general public. Our analyses are carried out so as to *contribute to the process of transparency that every MNA adheres to* in keeping with the provisions of Section 42A of the Representation of the People Act 1976 and Section 25A of the Senate (Election) Act 1975. The analysis is carried out with the objective to make the data, so painstakingly provided by each MNA, accessible to the public in a comprehensible format.

In using the data provided by representatives themselves, PILDAT neither attempts to verify the information provided by the legislators, nor do we attach a value judgment about the sources. The declarations are only analysed to demonstrate and highlight underlying trends among parties, provinces and individual legislators. The 3 PILDAT Reports published to-date analyzing assets

declarations by MNAs<sup>1</sup> aim to translate the information from abstract figures to easily understood data, putting the information available to the public in perspective.<sup>2</sup> We believe that a greater transparency about the elected officials strengthens Democracy and Democratic Institutions, a goal which we think we share with you.

In the report released on September 14, 2010, there is neither a categorical statement nor any insinuation that MNAs' assets constitute any ill-gotten wealth or assets have increased due to corrupt practices. We do not even maintain that wealth increase in itself is a questionable activity. Our intent, as evident from our reports, has not been to malign the elected representatives in any way. The report merely carries analysis based on facts without any value judgment. Contrary to the media reports and the media outrage, our analysis merely indicated that the average value of an MNA's assets has increased three folds from the 12th National Assembly to the 13th National Assembly or in other words an average MNA of the current (13th) National Assembly is twice as rich compared to his/her counterpart in the previous (12th) National Assembly. In fact we have highlighted the increase in assets within this Assembly since 2008 is nominal, i.e., only 9.5%.

We hold our elected representatives in the highest esteem and can not think of bringing them into disrepute. At the same time, we hold dear the principles of transparency and public's right to information and accountability for a vibrant sustainable democracy. To draw the conclusion from our report that we are in any way maligning or weakening democracy, or that we have alleged that MNAs' assets have increased or decreased due to corrupt practices is unfortunate and not based on facts. As an honourable public representative, you, and other public representatives, are entitled to your views, just as all citizens are. We, however, find it hurtful that misperceptions about our analysis have led to an outrage that has no basis in facts.

As our reports carry a disclaimer that any error in the report is not deliberate, and we are open to further scrutiny and clarification as and where needed, if the reports have in any way contributed to mis-reporting of facts or have hurt the sensibilities of any one, we deeply regret that and are ready to correct where a specific error is brought to our notice.

Through this letter, we wish to correct the mis-perception carried in debates and discussions in the Assembly. We sincerely hope that we have been able to put the facts in perspective. In the end, I wish to assure you that you will find PILDAT a dependable ally in strengthening democracy and democratic institutions in Pakistan. Our track record of past 8 years speaks for that.

Sincerely,



Ahmed Bilal Mehboob  
Executive Director

Cc:

- Federal Cabinet Members
- Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister of Pakistan

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<sup>1</sup> The PILDAT Report Series **How Rich are Pakistani MNAs?** available at the PILDAT website, include:

1. **How Rich are Pakistani MNAs?** Comparative Analysis of Assets Declarations by the MNAs for the Years **2007-2008** and **2008-2009**
2. **How Rich are Pakistani MNAs?** Comparative Analysis of Assets Declarations by the MNAs for the Years **2006-2007** and **2007-2008**
3. **How Rich are Pakistani MNAs?** Comparative Analysis of Assets Declarations by the MNAs for the Years **2002-2003** to **2005-2006**

<sup>2</sup> The net worth of an MNA's assets is calculated as being the total assets of each MNA, his/her spouse and children, deducting his/her and his/her immediate family's liabilities. In the one case of a married couple, both of whom are elected MNAs, their total declared assets as a family are divided equally between them.