

September 23, 2010

Honorable Dr. Fehmida Mirza, MNA
Speaker
National Assembly of Pakistan
Parliament House
Islamabad

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

Madam Speaker:

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.

As you are aware, PILDAT has remained dedicated to strengthening the Parliament, its sovereign status, an effective discharge of the roles and responsibilities of individual legislators and committees. We have worked together with you when you sat on the opposition benches and continue to support the efforts to strengthen Parliament today as you hold the highest Parliamentary office in the country. All of PILDAT's work as a Pakistani indigenous institution has been to strengthen democracy and democratic institutions. 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 than in most parts of our history.
- ii. Today, 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. A democratic Pakistan alone is a secure Pakistan
- iv. The way forward for Pakistan is to sustain, refine and strengthen the democratic system

We wish to place on record through your office that 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 ¹ aim to translate the information from abstract figures to easily understood data, putting the information available to the public in perspective.²

¹ 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**

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%.

A reference has been repeatedly made that why PILDAT does not carry out a similar analysis of the assets held by other segments of the society such as Military, Judiciary, Bureaucracy, etc. We believe in and have always demanded greater transparency for all segments but we do not have access to data as the law currently provides for making public assets declarations of only the elected legislators' assets. If the Parliament frames a law to make public the assets statements of other public officials, a similar analysis about them will also follow, if not by us, by another think tank. 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 so that you can correct your records. We sincerely hope that we have been able to put the facts in perspective. We will be happy to call on you at a time of your convenience to further discuss and clarify if needed. 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: Honourable Deputy Speaker National Assembly of Pakistan
- Honourable Leaders of the Parliamentary Parties in the National Assembly
 - Honourable Chairman and Deputy Chairman Senate of Pakistan
 - Honourable Leader of the House, Senate of Pakistan
 - Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Senate of Pakistan

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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**

² 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.