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SALIENT FEATURES OF THE ISLAMABAD DECLARATION 2024



The 18th Speakers' Conference, held in Islamabad, which brought together Speakers and Presiding Officers from Pakistan's National and Provincial Assemblies, the Legislative Assembly of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), and the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly (GB) successfully concluded today. The joint resolution known as the "Islamabad Declaration", reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to being a Federal, Islamic, democratic, and welfare state, recognising the Constitution as the supreme law. It emphasized full implementation of constitutional principles to secure citizens' rights, ensure equitable provincial participation and strengthening democratic governance.



The Conference underscored the importance of parliamentary supremacy, ministerial accountability and revising government rules to align with the Constitution, ensuring better governance and adherence to democratic norms. Concerns were raised

over the growing influence of populism, marked by social media slander, fake news and derogatory rhetoric, which threaten democratic values and foster polarization. The Declaration called for restoring civility, mutual respect and constructive dialogue in politics to rebuild public trust in democratic institutions.

The Conference identified pressing challenges such as climate change, terrorism, socio-economic disparities and technological transformation. It stressed the need for collaboration among federal and provincial legislatures to address these issues collectively. Modernizing parliamentary operations through cutting-edge technologies like artificial

intelligence and digitisation for improving efficiency and accessibility.

The Declaration reaffirmed solidarity with the Kashmiri people, condemning Indian atrocities in occupied Jammu and Kashmir and calling for the implementation of UN resolutions on their right to self-determination. It also urged the United Nations to enforce a ceasefire in Gaza, ensure humanitarian aid for Palestinians, and hold Israel accountable for violations of international law. Concrete steps included harmonizing legislative procedures, empowering forums on women, children, youth and SDGs. The Declaration emphasized engaging academia, media, civil society and think tanks to promote inclusive legislation and oversight.

Plans to transform the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS) into a Center of Excellence for legislative research and capacity-building were announced. New forums, such as an Association of Public Accounts Committees and an Association for Secretaries of legislatures, were proposed to enhance financial oversight and procedural excellence. Adopted on December 20, 2024, the Islamabad Declaration reflects a unified commitment to upholding constitutional principles, fostering regional peace through parliamentary diplomacy and advancing Pakistan's democratic framework. The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Assembly's offered to host the 19th Speakers' Conference in 2025 which was graciously accepted.



PIPS, CPA & IR related Matters

- The mandate of Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services (PIPS) shall be expanded to include AJ&K and GB through amendments to the PIPS Act, 2008, granting them permanent membership.
- Orientation sessions for newly elected Members shall be organized in collaboration with PIPS, while mandatory staff courses, similar to NMC and SMC, will be introduced.
- Legislatures shall be included in initiatives like IP5 through PIPS to enhance legislative support.
- The matter of partnerships with international donors/NGOs was referred to the Secretaries' Committee, recommending involvement of the Economic Affairs Division (EAD) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA).
- The Pakistan National Group of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (PNGCPA) shall be formed, with its Secretariat established in the National Assembly, Islamabad.
- Provincial Assemblies and the AJ&K Legislative Assembly will be represented in international conferences, bilateral visits and Kashmir Committee delegations.
- Efforts to highlight the Kashmir issue internationally will be intensified with MoFA's involvement, ensuring AJ&K Legislative Assembly representation.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

- Government shall facilitate the issuance of diplomatic/official passports for Speakers, Deputy Speakers, current and former Members, their spouses, and senior officers of all legislative Assemblies.
- A technical forum shall be established to facilitate knowledge sharing, online linkages for collaborative research, and exchange programs for parliamentary officers.
- Equal perks and privileges will be ensured for members and staff across all the Assemblies of Pakistan for uniformity.
- Administrative decisions of the Executive shall not be binding on the Parliamentary Secretariats. The matter, including the role of the Finance Committee, was referred to the Committee of the Secretaries for further deliberation.

Other decisions included the immediate constitution of Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of National Assembly. The protections and immunities of lawmakers were also discussed. It was also decided to establish a committee of Speakers and Secretaries, meeting as needed, for follow-ups of this august forum's recommendations for continuity.



NATIONAL MEET ON "ERADICATING POLIO: A COLLECTIVE EFFORT FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE"

Major outcomes from the National Meet on the Parliamentary Caucus on Child Rights include the following:-

- Focus on addressing the religious spectrum, specifically in madrassas. Major religious scholars to conduct polio drives to gain the trust of their followers.
- National and provincial Ullemā conferences to be held to align religious leaders with the polio campaign.
- Arrange a meeting with health ministers from all parties, provinces, GB and AJK to show political unity and send a strong message that politicians and religious leaders are aligned.
- Local leaders and politicians in South KP must address the issue, particularly in areas that are hard to reach due to security and terrorism challenges.
- Request for support from relevant forums to tackle these challenges.
- Strong advocacy from all political representatives is essential to

overcome resistance.

- Continued efforts to address misconceptions about the vaccine.
- Address Security challenges preventing polio workers from accessing certain areas need urgent attention.
- Local ownership and involvement of community leadership are critical for success.
- Focus on increasing coverage and routine immunization in affected areas.
- The central government must take ownership, especially in supporting polio workers and martyrs in the line of duty.
- Synchronize campaigns with Afghanistan to ensure seamless cross-border vaccination efforts and to secure border areas.
- Afghanistan to conduct house-to-house campaigns in border areas rather than site-to-site campaigns.
- Ensure that campaigns in Pakistan and Afghanistan are harmonized to avoid any gaps.



National Meet of Parliamentary Task Forces on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the 18th Speakers' Conference

The Parliamentary National Meet on SDGs addressed the progress, challenges and opportunities for advancing SDGs at both the national and provincial levels. The discussion concentrated on the recent amendment to Pakistan's Constitution, particularly the introduction of Article 9A, which guarantees the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, closely aligned with SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 14 (Life on Land).

The Convener praised the visionary leadership of the Hon. Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq in establishing a task force in the Parliament, making Pakistan the first country in the world to take such an initiative. Pakistan's stance on climate justice at COP29 was thoroughly examined. He highlighted the recognition Pakistan received from the international community and the global failure to meet its commitments regarding the loss and damage fund. The importance of engaging provincial governments in climate solutions was emphasized, particularly highlighting the proactive measures taken by the Chief Minister of Punjab.

The discussion delved deeply into the challenges faced by the provinces, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, including melting glaciers, air pollution and noise pollution. It concluded that addressing these issues requires joint efforts across all regions. Establishment of a provincial forum was suggested for regular meetings among all provinces to facilitate exchange of knowledge and best practices. It was suggested that the federal task force visit regional task forces, not only to develop strategies for achieving sustainable development goals but also to facilitate the exchange of best practices and knowledge sharing.



NATIONAL MEET ON WOMEN PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUSES (WPCS)

The National Meet of Women Parliamentary Caucuses held an interactive dialogue to highlight the importance of equitable public financing as a tool for sustainable development and gender equality. Following recommendations were made:-

- Women in reserved seats should be allocated development funds to launch programs aimed at improving their constituencies.
- In the PSDP, any scheme that does not address the needs of women should not be approved by the Assembly.
- Women entrepreneurs should be provided with a loan of Rs. 1 million for any startup.
- There should be a gradual increase in Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) funding to support women.
- Laws related to the protection of women should be incorporated into the curriculum for awareness.
- A national meeting of parliamentary caucuses be held before the budget to examine the budget from gender lens.
- Awareness campaigns on inheritance laws to educate women about their rights and contribution towards changing societal mindsets.
- Revisiting the Nikahnama by including the National ID Card number of women to trace their age, with the aim of discouraging underage marriages.



NATIONAL MEET ON YOUNG PARLIAMENTARIANS FORUM

A National Meet of Young Parliamentarians' Forum (YPF) held an interactive session at the 18th Speaker Conference to highlight the importance of active youth engagement and to create opportunities for youth. YPF can provide an excellent platform for parliamentarians to bridge the gap between the youth and the legislatures. Key discussions focused on the following:-

- To establish a complaint cell at PIPS for youth.
- To activate the "Parliamentary Youth Ambassador Program" with the assistance of PIPS.
- To create a conducive environment for post legislative scrutiny of universities at both national and provincial assemblies.
- To include the Constitution in the syllabus of universities.
- To formulate policies and to chalk out strategies for creating opportunities for youth empowerment.
- To enact laws for youth welfare and well being to specifically counter the spread of disinformation.
- A specialised course on trainings of Parliamentarians must be initiated.
- To utilise social, electronic and print media as a major reach out tool for youth.
- To conduct legislative mapping of laws and policies concerning youth empowerment.
- To promote data driven, evidence based policies.



Picture Gallery



Joint press statement

1. Commitment to uphold the Constitution of Pakistan.
2. Commitment to safeguard parliamentary supremacy, fundamental rights, and strengthen democratic norms across all levels of governance
3. Constructive dialogue, mutual understanding, and an enduring respect for difference of opinion.
4. "The Treasury may have its way, but the Opposition must have its say.
5. Focus on issue-based parliamentary interventions, addressing the pressing needs of the people.
6. Invoke the well-established role Speaker as a mediator and impartial facilitator.
7. "Charter of Parliamentary Ethics and Decorum".
8. Article 9-A of the Constitution to combat climate change
9. Counter terrorism through comprehensive legislative and policy measures
10. Harmonization of rules of procedure across Legislatures
11. Institution of Whips in line with international best practices
12. Association of Public Accounts Committees
13. National Group of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)
14. Resolution of issue of Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir and the State of Palestine
15. Call for a ceasefire in Gaza and the urgent withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces
16. Formalizing parliamentary forums on women, children, SDGs and youth.
17. Draw on shared research and expertise to address emerging challenges.
18. Modernize parliamentary operations through IT reforms
19. Engagement with Academia, Students, Media, CSOs and NGOs.
20. Transform PIPS into a Center of Excellence
21. Recommend to the Board of Governors of PIPS to broaden its mandate by extending services to the AJK and GB Assemblies.
22. Establish the Association of Secretaries of the Legislatures



COMMITMENT GOALS

