

Conference on Networking of Ombudsmen in OIC Member States

Today there are 12 Ombudsmen in Pakistan including three for Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace. In April 2011 the Forum of Pakistan Ombudsman (FPO) was set up comprising all Ombudsmen with the objective of improving coordination among the members and standardizing their practices, as also for raising their capacity and enhancing the quality of their service-delivery. In view of its significance, need is felt to establish Ombudsman Institution in all the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states and strengthening it through sharing of knowledge, experience and ideas. It was in this context that the proposal to establish networking of Ombudsmen in the OIC member states was put forward at the 39th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of the OIC held in Djibouti on 15-17 November, 2012, the need to develop synergies between OIC countries was emphasized in order to resolve the many problems that they faced. The Foreign Minister of Pakistan offered to host the first meeting of the OIC Ombudsmen in Pakistan, which was accepted by the CFM and the Secretary General of the OIC. Thus, the first Conference on the Networking of Ombudsmen (CNO) in OIC countries was held at Islamabad on April 28-29, 2014. The theme of the Conference was: "Strengthening the Institution of Ombudsman in OIC Member States by Sharing Knowledge, Experience and Ideas". There were also two sub themes, "Embracing Change;" and "Modernization, Cooperation and Synergy". The event was inaugurated by the President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan Mr. Mamnoon Hussain and chaired by Mr. Abdur Rauf Chaudhry, Federal Tax Ombudsman, who is also the President of the Forum of Pakistan Ombudsman. The concluding ceremony was graced by the speaker of the National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq. A galaxy of Ombudsmen from Islamic countries including delegates from member states got together and applied their collective wisdom at the first CNO in OIC Member States to deliberate on the theme and agenda items.

At the historical maiden CNO in OIC member states, 23 of the 29 countries having Ombudsman offices participated in the conference. A total of 48 foreign delegates participated in the event, making it a successful event with their wholehearted application. Through the landmark Islamabad Declaration, adopted unanimously by the historic Conference, The OIC Ombudsmen Association (OICOA) was established. A Steering Committee comprising members from

Guinea, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Morocco, Niger, Pakistan, Sudan and Turkey met under the chairmanship of Mr. Abdur Rauf Chaudhry, FTO and the President of the FPO, to take necessary measures for its functioning and of the Secretariat. In view of The Islamabad Declaration, its secretariat has been established in Islamabad, Pakistan and Mr. Abdul Khaliq, Secretary Federal Tax Ombudsman, has been appointed Secretary of the OICOA, secretariat. The Steering Committee will draft the constitution, by-laws, rules and procedures to govern the business of the association and finalize its report within one year of this conference session. Pakistan and The Forum of Pakistan Ombudsman deserve appreciation for hosting such a successful event and adding to the prestige of the nation.