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Press Release

Parliamentary Delegation from Pakistan to Visit the Parliaments and Parliamentary Budget Offices of Ireland and Austria with support from European Union

Islamabad, 24 January 2025 – The European Union Delegation to Pakistan hosted a pre-departure reception ahead of a visit of Pakistan's Parliamentarians to the Parliaments and Parliamentary Budget Offices (PBOs) of Austria and Ireland.

This high-level delegation, comprising 23 distinguished members, is led by the Chairman of the Senate of Pakistan. Representing Pakistan's diverse political leadership, the delegation includes the Speakers of the Provincial Assemblies, members of parliament from various political parties, as well as senior parliamentary secretariat officials.

The visit is organised under a 15 million euros European Union-funded project named *Support to Parliamentary Development in Pakistan* (also known as *Mustehkam Parlamaan*). Implemented jointly by GIZ International Services and the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS), the project focuses on enhancing parliamentary oversight, fiscal responsibility and inclusive and effective legislative processes.

The reception, hosted by **H.E. Dr. Riina Kionka, Ambassador of the European Union Delegation to Pakistan**, highlighted the EU's commitment to strengthening Pakistan's parliamentary democracy through this project. Addressing the gathering, the EU Ambassador remarked:

"The European Union has been a steadfast partner in strengthening Pakistan's democratic institutions. This visit offers a valuable opportunity for Pakistani legislators to learn from the successful practices of Austria and Ireland in establishing PBOs. They play a critical role in independent budgetary analysis and effective parliamentary oversight. We remain committed to support the assemblies' initiatives towards inclusive, transparent, and accountable governance in Pakistan."

The visit is a pivotal step in advancing Pakistan's legislative capacity, specifically in establishing an independent Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) to provide parliamentarians with professional, non-partisan, and in-depth analysis on the economy, budgetary and fiscal matters.

Hon. Mr. Yousaf Raza Gilani, Chairman of the Senate of Pakistan and Head of Delegation, stated:

"This visit reflects the enduring and close ties between Pakistan and the European Union, highlighting our shared commitment to fostering democratic governance and addressing common challenges. By learning from the successful Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) models implemented in Austria and Ireland, we aim to establish a framework in Pakistan that promotes transparency, accountability, and fiscal responsibility. This will empower our federal parliament and provincial assemblies with data-driven insights for more informed budgetary decisions. We extend our deepest appreciation to the parliaments of Ireland and Austria and their leadership for their invaluable cooperation and support. Their experiences will provide us with practical knowledge and best practices to guide the establishment of a PBO in Pakistan, strengthening our democratic institutions and enhancing responsible governance."

The visit will focus on observing the operational models of the Austrian and Irish PBOs, both established in the last decade, to address critical challenges such as budget transparency and parliamentary independence. Austria's PBO, established in 2012, enhances parliament's role in budgetary discussions through independent expertise, while Ireland's PBO, modelled on the Westminster system, provides a familiar framework for Pakistan's legislators.

H.E. Mrs. Andrea Wicke, Ambassador of Austria to Pakistan, noted:



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“The establishment of PBOs strengthens the accountability and transparency of governance. We are delighted to host Pakistan’s delegation and share Austria’s journey in creating an independent budget office.”

Mr. Declan Johnston, Deputy Ambassador of Ireland to Pakistan, emphasised:

“Well-informed and quality independent advice and analysis is crucial in facilitating any parliament to fulfil its mandate. Ireland’s Parliamentary Budget Office was established in 2017, and provides independent and impartial information, analysis and advice to our parliamentarians as they address the pivotal economic questions and issues of the day. We are very excited to have the opportunity to share our experiences with Pakistani parliamentarians, as they similarly seek to deliver high quality and effective economic legislation and policy for their constituents.”

The parliamentarians visit aligns with **Mustehkam Parlamaan’s** objectives of supporting the National Parliament and Provincial Assemblies in legislative capacity-building, oversight enhancement, and inclusive governance. It will also enable participants to develop an action plan for establishing a PBO in Pakistan, informed by best practices from Austria and Ireland.

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