



S A A P E

South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication

14 April 2009

Dear Member of the "Friends of Democratic Pakistan Group",

RE: Civil Society Concerns with regard to the Donor Conference in Tokyo on 17 April 2009

In view of the forthcoming donor conference on Pakistan, the South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE) would like to raise the following crucial concerns in relation to the aid that would be provided by donors to Pakistan.

We understand that the focus of the conference and of the **aid** will be on addressing the **security** and **stability** of Pakistan through the traditional military partnership and hence, the aid would be channelled substantially as **military aid** and not for **pro-poor socio-economic development** that is long overdue and the need of the hour in the country. This is clear from the recent EU-US Summit conclusions in Prague that the EU is committed alongside the US to "intensifying counter-terrorism cooperation" in Pakistan, while development took a backseat in the agenda. The country's military expenditure has always taken precedence over the social expenditure imperative for poverty alleviation; for instance, **the total defence budget for 2008-09 was increased by 6.8 per cent to Rs.296.1 billion while the combined budget for education, health, housing and social security amounted to a meagre Rs.36.3 billion.**

We strongly urge that any aid to Pakistan should be given in the context of development co-operation that contributes towards poverty eradication and sustainable development in the country. It is essential to understand that the root causes of extremism and political fragility prevalent in the country lies in social injustice, deprivation of basic human rights, weak democratic systems and lack of pro-people governance in the country. Civil society in Pakistan strongly believes that a military solution to the present structural problems is not a viable and sustainable solution. **We demand an end of militarism and militarisation that only destroys the lives and interests of the common people of Pakistan!**

Now, since a democratically elected civilian government is in place, Pakistani civil society demands that the government should promote **transparency, accountability** and ensure **human rights** of every individual without any discrimination. The **freedom of media** and **independence of judiciary** that has helped in ensuring the democratic rights of peoples should be guaranteed and properly institutionalised. **Therefore, donor support and**



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assistance should be provided for a sustainable civilian government that is also transparent and accountable to the people of Pakistan.

Pakistani civil society also believes that the existing discriminatory laws in the country have the most detrimental impact on women who constitute more than half of the population. This problem is further aggravated by the current wave of religious extremism in the country. In addition, the approach of a military solution to the problem by the donors has only undermined human security in the country that again leads to further victimisation of women and children, the most vulnerable sections in Pakistan. **We therefore demand the repeal of all discriminatory laws as well as separation of religion from the state and we urge the donors to support civil society in this regard.**

Lastly, we urge both the donors and the government to duly consult civil society – especially women’s rights organisations - as a key stakeholder in all dialogue and decisions with regard to national concerns and issues that are of equal importance to the citizens of the country and ultimately have direct impact on their lives. This will be a positive step towards supporting the growing, united and broad-based civil society movement engaged in promoting people’s rights as well as ensuring that donor policies and aid does not have a negative impact upon the rights of ordinary citizens, especially women and children, in the country.

We hope that our concerns and recommendations will be duly considered.

With best regards,

Dr. Arjun Karki
Regional Co-ordinator