

(Press Release)

Statement by the Election Observer Mission to Pakistan from the Government of Japan

May 12, 2013

1. The Election Observer Mission of the Government of Japan observed the election process in Pakistan from Thursday, May 9 to Saturday, May 11, 2013. The mission was headed by Mr. Nobuaki Tanaka, former Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, and consisted of 16 members: two officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, two experts from the University of Osaka and Hitotsubashi University, and eleven officials from the Embassy of Japan in Islamabad and the Consulate General of Japan in Karachi. The mission was divided into seven groups and conducted the observations in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Murree, Jhelum, Lahore and Karachi (two groups for Karachi).

2. Many people of Pakistan showed enthusiasm by casting their votes which is the proof that democracy is gradually taking hold in Pakistan.

3. This was the first general election in Pakistan that was conducted after the completion of the full five-year-term of the National Assembly. The election was a key test of the consolidation of democracy in Pakistan. In light of its significance, the Government of Japan extended a grant aid worth \$2 million through United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to support the electoral process in Pakistan, including (i) polling staff training, (ii) development of elections results management system, and (iii) voter education and public outreach.

4. The mission observed the election process at 95 polling stations covering 14 National Assembly constituencies in the above mentioned six cities. On the basis of its observations, the mission has made the following assessment. As the time and areas of the observations were limited, the assessment is based on what the mission witnessed, interviewed and encountered.

(1) Despite attacks against candidates by the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and some disturbances reported in a limited number of areas, the people of Pakistan have overcome difficulties and the election was conducted

by and large successfully and peacefully. This election was highly significant to the democratic process in Pakistan. On the other hand, the fact that more than 100 people got killed during the election period should be seriously considered. We express our sympathy for the victims and condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We expect the next administration to continue to tackle this issue.

(2) Throughout the election process, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) was consistently cooperative with the Japanese and other foreign observation missions, and our mission were able to freely visit all the polling stations except for the ones which were on the sensitive list in terms of security. We believe that our mission, along with other foreign observation missions, contributed to free and fair elections.

(3) To avoid rigging such as double voting, the voters' list with photos were made in addition to verification by ID cards, and the forefingers of those who finished casting their ballots were smeared with ink. These multiple identification measures could be appreciated. The introduction of the electronic registration process also contributed to avoiding double voting. Although the electronic registration process has partially caused inefficiency by creating long queue in polling stations, priority was put on fair elections, and a large number of voters turned up at the polling stations. The flexible extension of the closing time of voting by 1~3 hour(s) could be appreciated.

(4) As a whole, there were improvements in terms of fair elections, although some rigging of votes were reported. As far as our mission's observation is concerned, not even a small act of rigging was detected and this could be evaluated as a great advance towards democracy. In particular, it could be appreciated that many female voters appeared to the polling stations.

4. The Government of Japan hopes that this election will further consolidate democracy in Pakistan and its post-electoral political process will smoothly develop. The Government of Japan will continue to support Pakistan's efforts for the consolidation of democracy.