



Parliamentarians for Global Action

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PRESS RELEASE

PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR GLOBAL ACTION WELCOMES RECENT COMMITMENT BY BANGLADESHI CARETAKER GOVERNMENT TO HOLD ELECTIONS IN 2008 AND LIFTING OF RESTRICTIONS ON FORMER PRIME MINISTERS SHEIKH HASINA AND BEGUM KHALEDA ZIA

NEW YORK, April 26, 2007 Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) welcomes the recent undertaking by the Caretaker Government of Bangladesh to hold nationwide elections before the end of 2008 and its lifting of a ban on former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina from returning to the country. PGA is also pleased to learn that the Caretaker Government has no plans to send another former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia into exile.

PGA urges the Caretaker Government to follow-up swiftly with its April 12 commitment for elections in Bangladesh before the end of 2008 with the setting out of a detailed roadmap, including specific time frames for identification card issuance, voter registration and retention of independent election officials.

“Bangladesh is an important part of South East Asia and stability in the region. The commitment to elections in 2008 by the Caretaker Government is therefore to be welcomed. While obviously pleased and encouraged by this undertaking, I would also express the hope that there would be no slippage in the stated timetable for the restoration of democracy and the rule of law in Bangladesh” said Ross Robertson, MP (New Zealand), Chair of PGA’s International Council, who participated in a PGA Regional Seminar in Dhaka in 2006.

Similarly, and with this recent undertaking by the Caretaker Government, PGA expresses the hope that, as another concrete signal of its *bona fide* future democratic restoration plans, and in addition to the positive steps forward it has already taken, the Caretaker Government will announce an early date for lifting the State of Emergency imposed in Bangladesh four months ago in the wake of continued violence at the time.

“Open-ended States of Emergency, as have been declared in other countries in recent decades, have proven not to facilitate, but are obstacles and delaying factors in restoration of political normalization.” stated Naveed Qamar, MP (Pakistan), PGA Board Member and Deputy Convenor, PGA’s Peace & Democracy Programme.

Fulfillment of these aforementioned objectives will be a tangible way for the Caretaker Government of Bangladesh to demonstrate further its commitment to due process, transparency, human rights and basic democratic principles.

PGA urges all members of the international community to assist the Caretaker Government by whatever diplomatic and practical means are at their disposal, in the restoration of political normalization in Bangladesh in the coming months.

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NOTE FOR EDITORS

Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) is a network of over 1300 legislators from 117 parliaments worldwide engaged in a range of action-oriented initiatives that promote democracy, peace, justice and development throughout the world. Further information on PGA’s multifaceted initiatives and activities may be found at its website at www.pgaction.org