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Pakistan Aims for Top Position in the RTI Rating

A draft Right to Information Act prepared by the government of Pakistan has scored an astonishing 146 points on the RTI Rating, which would put it 11 points ahead of the next best right to information law in the world, namely that of Serbia (which has 135 points). The Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD) today issued a Note analysing the draft Act, pointing to a few areas where the draft could be tweaked to improve it even further.

“This is a remarkable draft RTI law”, said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of CLD. “It would be wonderful if the government of Pakistan were to pass such a strong law and we would then be very happy to work with them and other stakeholders to support implementation.”

Given the superlative score, there are clearly few weaknesses in the draft Act and most of the CLD comments relate to fairly technical matters. One area where improvements could be made, however, is to bolster the independence of the three-person Information Commission. Specifically, CLD recommends that:

- Commissioners be appointed by the President.
- There be prohibitions on individuals with strong political connections and civil servants from being appointed as Commissioners.
- There be stronger both requirements of expertise for and prohibitions on individuals with political connections from being appointed as a Commissioner.
- The budget of the Commission be approved by Parliament.

CLD urges the government and Parliament of Pakistan to move forward to adopt this excellent law, if possible after introducing a small number of amendments to make it even better.

The CLD Analysis is available at: http://www.law-democracy.org/live/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Pakistan.RTI_Note_Jul15.pdf and the draft Act is available at: <http://www.law-democracy.org/live/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Bill.15.07.12.pdf>.

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