**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF COMMON CAUSE SOCIETY HELD ON NOVEMBER 27, 2010 AT COMMON CAUSE HOUSE.**

**Participants**

Mr. Vikram Lal                               President

Maj. Gen. (Retd.) J.P. Gupta           Vice President

Dr. B.P. Mathur

Mr. Lalit Nirula

Mr. Kamal Kant Jaswal Director

Mr. Sarvesh Sharma Special Invitee

Mr. K.K. Jhingan Special Invitee

Mr. N.S. Chawla Special Invitee

**1. Confirmation of the minutes.**

Minutes of the Governing Council meeting held on April 20, 2010 were confirmed.

**2. Confirmation of circular resolutions.**

Circular resolutions dated July 5, 2010, August 18, 2010 and September 15, 2010 were confirmed.

**3. Presentation of the Society’s activities**

The Director apprised the Council of the progress made since its last meeting with respect to the thrust areas of the Society’s activities. The Council noted with satisfaction that the Ministry of Home Affairs seemed keen to take a lead in police reforms by formulating a new police law for the National Capital Territory of Delhi in conformity with the directions of the Supreme Court in Prakash Singh’s case and the spirit of the Model Police Act. The civil society coalition put together by Common Cause needs to persevere in its efforts and ensure that the remaining areas of concern in the MHA’s draft are addressed. After the introduction of the revised Delhi Police Bill in the Parliament, efforts should be focused on persuading a few carefully chosen states to undertake a revision of their police laws on the same lines. In this context, the Council suggested that an analysis of the new Bihar Police Act may be undertaken, as the leadership in Bihar, having reaped the electoral dividends of an improvement in the law and order situation, should be well disposed towards substantive police reforms.

**4. Strategies for key initiatives**

**Combating corruption**

The council endorsed the proposal to seek the assistance of the National Institute of Design in devising a logo/mnemonic for mobilizing popular support for the War on Corruption campaign. It was felt that considering the enormity of the problem of corruption, the campaign strategy has to be focused on a few concrete, high impact measures, such as

* operationalisation of the Prohibition of Benami Transactions Act, 1988,
* ratification of the UN Convention Against Corruption,
* abolition of the Single Directive regarding prior approval for CBI investigation against senior officers,
* amendment of Section 19 of the Prevention of Corruption Act to dispense with the requirement of prior sanction for prosecution in cases of demand and acceptance of bribes and possession of assets disproportionate to known sources of income,
* enactment of legislation for confiscation of illegitimately acquired properties of corrupt public servants. (on the lines of the Bihar law).

The Council underlined the importance of media mobilization in the campaign against corruption and other important initiatives of the society. It was felt that it would be appropriate to establish a regular channel of communication with selected opinion leaders and media personalities and provide them periodic briefs on various public causes being pursued by the society for use during their interventions in the public domain.

**RTI Portal**

The Council reviewed the progress of the initiative and agreed that a new collective entity should be established to set up and operate this facility and raise the resources required for it. The contribution of the Society may comprise an offer to host the facility in its premises on terms to be agreed upon.

**Administrative Reforms**

It was felt that the Society needs to persist in its efforts to bring about greater accountability and transparency in the system of appointments to constitutional, statutory and regulatory bodies, since the proper functioning of these institutions is predicated on the quality of the individuals nominated at their helm. In this context, the Council welcomed the move to file a PIL in the Supreme Court to challenge the appointment of the Central Vigilance Commissioner. It was also suggested that the support of the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament may again be sought for adopting a transparent procedure for appointment to the office of the Comptroller & Auditor General of India in accordance with international best practices.

It was observed that in the prevailing administrative culture, the acts of omission, which may be as consequential and reprehensible as acts of commission, generally go unpunished. As a result, the tendency to shirk responsibility and avoid making a decision gets reinforced. This lacuna must be plugged by amending the codes of conduct and the rules of discipline. A comprehensive proposal in this regard needs to be formulated.

**5. Other matters**

It waspointed out that the Council was meeting after a long gap. The Director explained that this delay was largely on account of the disruption caused by the relocation of the Society’s office consequent to the new agreement for the leased premises. It was agreed that a meeting of the Council will be held in January 2011 before the final meeting of the fiscal year to be held on March 6, 2011.

The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

(Vikram Lal)

President