**Minutes of the Meeting of the Governing Council of Common Cause Society held on February 28, 2012**

**Venue:** AIHDA, India Habitat Centre, LodiRoad, New Delhi

**Participants**

Mr. Vikram Lal                               President

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

Dr. Ashok Khosla

Mr. Lalit Nirula

Mr. Prashant Bhushan

Mr. Paranjoy Guha Thakurta

Ms. Madhu Kishwar

Dr. B. P. Mathur

Mr. Kamal Kant Jaswal Director

Mr. Surjit K. Das Special Invitee

**Minutes**

At the outset, the President informed the Council that the Director has agreed to the extension of his term till March 31, 2014. Members of the Council welcomed this development. The Director thanked the Council for the confidence reposed in him and undertook to spare no effort to live up to its expectations. The agenda of the meeting was thereafter taken up for consideration.

 **1. Confirmation of the minutes.**

Minutes of the Governing Council meeting held on November 14, 2011 were confirmed.

**2. Consideration of Circular Resolutions dated February 17, 2012.**

The Council considered the suggestions received from some of the members in regard to Circular Resolutions dated February 17, 2012 and adopted the following amended resolutions.

 **Resolutions**

Resolved to write off an amount of Rs. 4,885/- outstanding against Mr. Ashok Kumar tiwari, former Helper, Common cause.

Also resolved to delegate the power to write off doubtful recoveries up to an aggregate limit of Rs. 50,000/- in a year to the Director, Common cause.

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

Reviewing the Society’s activities since the last meeting, the Director apprised the Council of the efforts being made by Common Cause in concert with Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative and Foundation for Restoration of National Values to revive the campaign for the reform of the Delhi Police Act. Mr. G. K. Pillai, former Union Home Secretary, has agreed to lend his support to these efforts.

The Society has undertaken a detailed study of the Right to Information Rules framed by various High Courts and brought the provisions in conflict with the letter and spirit of the parent Act and the guidelines and recommendations issued by the Union Government and the Central Information Commission to the notice of the respective Chief Justices. This groundwork will prove to be useful for invoking the writ jurisdiction of the Supreme Court.

The PIL on decriminalization of politics formulated in collaboration with Public Interest Foundation has been filed in the Supreme Court. Notices have been issued to the Union of India and the Election Commission of India.

Based on the meticulous compilation of information by Campaign for Judicial Accountability & Reform and Centre for Public Interest Litigation on the transgressions of Justice K. G. Balakrishnan and his relatives, the Society has filed a PIL in the Supreme Court to seek a direction to the Union of India for making a reference under Section 5 (2) of the Human Rights Act, 1993 for holding an inquiry for his removal from the post of Chairman, National Human Rights Commission. The Court has asked the Union Government to respond to the averments made in our petition and indicate the action taken or proposed to be taken in the matter of the allegations against Justice Balakrishnan and his relatives.

Pursuant to the discussion in the last meeting of the Governing Council, it has been decided to hold a seminar on ‘Local Self-government: The Unfinshed Agenda’ with a view to raising public awareness of the gaps in the implementation of the constitutional scheme of democratic decentralization enshrined in the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments. The seminar is being organized in partnership with Institute of Social Sciences and is scheduled to be held on March 28, 2012. The central themes proposed to be addressed in the seminar relate to the gaps in the devolution of functions and resources to the local bodies and the challenges in empowerment and capacity building, both at the level of institutions and at the level of elected representatives, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The organizers have been able to line up an impressive array of speakers for the seminar.

Welcoming the initiative, the Council noted that it should signal the beginning of the Society’s long term engagement with the core issue of democratic decentralization. In this context, it was suggested that the debate need not limit itself to the actualization of the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments, but should also focus on alternative approaches to the imperative of returning power to the people and enlarging the scope of their direct participation in the processes of governance. The relevance of pre-British and traditional structures of self-governance and the Gandhian vision of Hind Swaraj was also underlined. The Council requested the Director to work out the modalities of organizing a serious debate on these issues.

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

 (Vikram Lal)

 President