**Common Cause, whose petition in the Supreme Court led to the appointment of India's first Lokpal, welcomes the move, though the process of appointment could have been more transparent and amicable**

New Delhi, March 19, 2019: Common Cause welcomes the decision to appoint Former Supreme Court judge Pinaki Chandra Ghose as India’s first Lokpal.

This appointment is a direct result of an Intervention Application filed by Common Cause through its counsel Prashant Bhushan on January 11, 2019, placing on record that the Search Committee had not held any meetings before December 13, 2018. In response to our petition, the Attorney General informed the Court on March 7, 2019, that the deliberations of the Search Committee were complete.  Subsequently, three panels of names for the appointment of the Chairperson, Judicial Member(s) and Non-Judicial Member(s) were forwarded to the Bench.

While we welcome the appointment of India’s first Lokpal in the absence of any national anti-corruption ombudsman currently, we feel the way this appointment has been made leaves much to be desired.

We also understand that the struggle to establish an independent authority to probe corruption complaints against top functionaries and public servants is ongoing for more than 50 years. As a result, we don’t want to undermine the value of this crucial appointment. Having said that, Common Cause also wants to point out that it would have been a gracious move by the outgoing government to include the leader of the single largest Opposition party in Lok Sabha in the Selection Committee. In addition, one cannot overlook the fact that Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge has rejected the invitation extended to him by the government to attend the Lokpal selection panel meeting. He declined the invitation citing that there is no provision under Section 4 of the Lokpal Act, 2013, for a special invitee to be a part of the Selection Committee.

Common Cause also wants to underscore that the selection process could have done with greater transparency by making public the names proposed by the Search Committee, as well as the grounds on which the panels of names have been chosen.

Common Cause has been fighting for the establishment of an independent and effective Lokpal since 1995, when we filed a petition relating to the enactment of the Lokpal Act. The organisation has been involved in a long-drawn battle in its bid to curb corruption and bring about transparency in the selection process of high profile institutional appointments.

Post the enactment of the Lokpal Bill on January 1, 2014, we protested the arbitrary nature of the Search Committee Rules by filing a PIL in the Supreme Court on March 5, 2014.

Common Cause has consistently soldiered on, fighting numerous legal battles to appoint an anti-corruption watchdog. Our call to eradicate graft and set up the office of the Lokpal wasn’t answered for the longest time, for which the reason cited by the government was the absence of a Leader of Opposition in the current Lok Sabha. Common Cause challenged this contention through a Supreme Court PIL. The Common Cause petition for the appointment of Lokpal was disposed in April 2017 with the Court maintaining that the Lokpal Act was a perfectly workable piece of legislation. When the government failed to appoint the Lokpal nine months after the Apex Court verdict, we went ahead to file a contempt petition seeking directions against the government’s wilful and deliberate failure to fully comply with the judgment.