The European External Action Service (EEAS), the foreign policy wing of the European Union, has officially assigned Ambassador Alexander Spachis, currently serving as the Head of Delegation of the European Union to Nepal to also represent the EEAS in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, assigned Dr. Spachis with the new responsibility through a letter addressed to Mr. Ahmed Saleem, SAARC Secretary General on 27th August, 2012.

During his meeting with Mr. Saleem Dr. Spachis said that he was honored to take up the additional responsibility and looked forward to strengthen the existing cooperation between the European Union and SAARC.

The letter addressed to the SAARC Secretary General states, “The European Union is pleased to participate in the SAARC and by designating Ambassador Spachis to serve as our lead representative we intend to strengthen our relationship. We look forward to continue working with you and SAARC member States with the objective to advance regional collaboration in South Asia.”

The European Union (EU) has joined hands with the Food and Agriculture Organization to set up three diagnostic laboratories to carry out tests for highly pathogenic emerging diseases found in livestock through the mobilization of funds worth EUR 8.8 million, of which 0.8 million has been put in by FAO. This activity is expected to contribute significantly to control Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), PPR and Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI).

The EU has set out to assist the endeavours of FAO and SAARC to establish the diagnostic laboratories to help them fulfil their potentials and thereby set up appropriate corporate structures to stem animal diseases posing a threat across the borders.

The EU contribution will come to an end in 2013, the pertinent task for the SAARC member states is now to pump in more resources and strengthen the network of laboratories and organize subsequent training to have real impact. The network of diagnostic laboratories is expected to contribute significantly to control the three diseases found in livestock and boost economic growth in the SAARC region.

According to a FAO information bulletin, 21.8 million animals are susceptible to FMD in Nepal as FMD is endemic in Nepal. Around 937 outbreaks on an average are reported every year and the estimated economic loss due to reduction in milk and meat production is US $ 66 million per year.
EU support to address chronic malnutrition could yield positive outcomes: Ambassador Spachis

The European Union has been contributing generously to assist countries suffering from problems related to nutrition. The EU-funded Maternal and Child Nutrition Security in Asia (MYCNsIA) project is a good example of EU support to the sector. Five countries in Asia – Nepal, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Lao PDR and the Philippines have been the targeted beneficiaries.

The European Union is contributing a grant of EUR 20 million to UNICEF to tackle under nutrition in five Asian countries where poor nutrition remains a major obstacle to development. Nepal has received EUR 3.2 million from the European Union for the period of 2010-2014. Part of the funding has been used to develop the evidence-based Multi-sector nutrition plan in close collaboration with other key development partners such as the World Bank, WFP and HKI, and to support the Government of Nepal to develop a comprehensive package of measures to prevent and address chronic malnutrition in women and children in the country, where pervasive child and maternal under-nutrition threatens to derail national economic development and growth.

Prime Minister Dr. Baburam Bhattarai unveiled the National Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan amidst a programme organised at the National Planning Commission hall on 20 September, 2012. The plan was prepared through the collaborative efforts of five key government sectors, under the chairmanship of the National Planning Commission.

Addressing the programme, PM Bhattarai said that the plan is not limited to addressing the problem of chronic malnutrition and measures for its prevention, but also considers the factors that limit the capacity of government institutions to implement it. Speaking at the programme, Deependra Bahadur Kshetry, Vice Chairman of the National Planning Commission said that malnutrition is implicated in more than half of the child deaths in Nepal – a proportion unmatched by any infectious diseases. He said that national GDPs could improve by 2 to 3 percent in poor countries through the success achieved in tackling malnutrition and under nutrition.

Dr. Alexander Spachis, Ambassador, Head of the European Union Delegation to Nepal participated in the inaugural function. He said that the problem of mal-nutrition could be best tackled through the concerted efforts of the relevant line ministries since the overlapping issues needed to be addressed jointly. Now that Nepal has such a plan for the next five years, it should contribute to reduce chronic cases of malnutrition by 20 percent, which would in turn have a positive impact in the nation’s economy in the long run.

EU-Nepal Joint Commission Meeting dwells on range of issues linked to Nepal's development

The Eighth EU-Nepal Joint Commission meeting took place in Brussels on the 19th of July. The meeting, which is held at regular intervals makes a thorough evaluation of EU-Nepal cooperation and also discusses about the future course of action.

The meeting held elaborate discussions on the state of development cooperation between the European Union and Nepal. It took stock of the existing political situation in Nepal and discussed about the possible ways of restoring normalcy and moving ahead to hold the elections to the Constituent Assembly at the earliest possible.

Foreign Secretary Durga Prasad Bhattarai pointed out that the EU was welcome to observe the elections but that the Election Commission would send out an official invitation. He referred to the useful EU EOM in 2008, whose recommendations were incorporated in the strategic plan and reiterated Nepal’s appreciation for EU support to the NPTF. As far as development cooperation is concerned, Nepal mentioned infrastructure, support for agriculture, food security, sustainable energy and agro fuels as priority areas. For larger infrastructure related projects, a recently signed Framework Agreement with the European Investment Bank will enable the Bank to start operations in the country. Both the sides agreed that the EIB involvement in Nepal would enable Nepal to develop its significant hydropower potential through a first project with an EIB loan of some EUR 40 million.

Nepal highlighted its role as chair of the LDCs and the importance of the Istanbul Programme of Action and expressed its appreciation of the EU’s support to the LDCs, as largest provider of ODA. Nepal sees the IPOA as a landmark achievement for the LDCs and has identified promotion of investments in LDCs alongside aid for trade as the best approach. Nepal also stressed that as the next host and future chair of SAARC in 2013, the government would work towards fostering regional cooperation. Nepal pointed to its strategic geo-political position and the great potential it saw with respect to increased FDI by both China and India. Nepal could become a major transit economy and operate as a transit corridor in the context of a larger Asian Highway Network.

On Human Rights, Foreign Secretary Bhattarai referred to the National Human Rights Commission which had been upgraded to a constitutional body. The GoN was making an effort to integrate HR in all development plans. On the Truth and Reconciliation Commission he stated that several models were being studied and there was a strong commitment of the GoN in having it established as soon as possible.
Practical Action and the EU join hands to help 4,000 informal waste workers

Over the last few decades Kathmandu Valley has witnessed rapid urbanization. The rural exodus, lack of jobs as well as lack of skills in a large part of the labour force, have created a substantial informal sector in which most workers are employed in low-paid jobs, often under very poor working conditions.

It is estimated that around 10,000 to 15,000 waste pickers, as well as 700 to 800 Kabadis (waste/scrap dealers), are engaged as informal workers in Kathmandu Valley. Often discriminated against, vulnerable to various life threatening diseases, and with no real social protection provisions available to them, these informal waste workers are one of the most marginalised groups in the Valley.

Together with Practical Action, the European Union is implementing the PRISM project (Poverty Reduction of Informal Workers in Solid Waste Management Sector) to address this situation. The project is directly targeting 4,000 informal waste workers (of which 35% women) working in five municipalities of Kathmandu Valley.

"Through the PRISM project, perceptions towards waste pickers are changing. It is a two-sided approach; waste pickers feel respected instead of rejected, and consequently see the community in which they live and operate differently. Urban waste pickers play an important role in keeping the city clean, their work has a positive impact on the environment and this is something that people are starting to understand," Dr. Rajendra Sherchan, Chairman of the Umamaheswar Community Health Centre says.

"People use to spit on us when passing by. They thought that we were eating, living and sleeping on piles of waste. Through PRISM I reevaluated my profession and the role I play in society. I am illiterate but with the saving project I hope to have enough money to open a business," Sangita Rai, a wet waste picker says.

The overall objective of the action is to enhance social protection and inclusion of vulnerable groups that depend on solid waste management for their livelihoods. The PRISM project is helping informal waste workers to increase their income and create a much safer working environment. Not only is the project providing access to healthcare, education and micro-saving, but in cooperation with Practical Action the groups have been organising street dramas, health camps, awareness raising campaigns and public service advertisements to reduce the waste picker stigma.

Approximately once every two weeks 43 different groups of waste pickers meet to share their experiences and discuss their futures. These meetings have become instrumental in creating a network of personal relationships that extends far beyond the project itself.
EU funded Human Rights projects bring smiles on the faces of conflict hit people in mid-west Nepal

Women of the Raji community in Chhinchu in mid-west Nepal seem to wear a look of confidence in their faces. They no longer harbour a feeling of shyness and speak up confidently on issues that are directly linked to their lives.

"Most of us used to hide our faces and were unable to introduce ourselves in public, let alone demand for our rights," says Bishnu Raji clad in her indigenous native dress. The reason for the inhibition was no other than the lack of confidence to put one's feelings into words and get involved in group interactions.

"Today, my story is different. I feel that I am a different person altogether since I can confidently speak up and share my views in public," says Bishnu with a note of thanks to the European Union for supporting the project 'Empowerment of Raji Women' being implemented by the 'Environment Development Society, Surkhet.'

The same holds true for other Raji women who are now regularly attending the Participatory Learning Classes (PLC). There are 19 households of the Raji community in seventeen VDCs of Surkhet district. They have been divided into eight clusters. Each cluster holds its own class where the members are made aware about the rights that they are entitled to get from the local authorities i.e. Village Development Committees, District Development Committees and also from others.

The project is being run with the grant provided under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Its primary goal is to raise awareness on human rights related issues and also developing leadership skills while organising Raji community for protecting their heritage and also supporting the marginalized communities to learn new skills and income generation programs that could come handy to earn their livelihood.

The Raji community, one of the marginalised communities in Nepal with members lacking education, has been making a living out of fishing along the Rapti river. They have been listed among the endangered communities whose culture, language and even their traditional resources and heritages are rapidly disappearing for lack of preservation.

The EU-funded project has been helping the Rajis to develop new livelihood skills since fishing, their traditional occupation is coming under threat, says Rudra Acharya, coordinator for the project.

Eight Rajis have been imparted with drivers' training while others have been getting training on sewing. Many have now received goats from the project, which could contribute towards earning them small profits. The Rajis have been encouraged to prepare a dictionary to promote their language and have also put together their traditional dress, which was nearly vanishing.

They have formed small savings and credit groups and are currently working on a plan for horticulture.

This is one among several EIDHR projects in mid-west Nepal which has taken up the challenge of working in close concert with the marginalized communities, the differently abled, underprivileged women and children, the so-called scheduled castes, single women and conflict-affected children.

The European Union has also been assisting the differently abled in Banke district to safeguard their rights through the local partner Disable Empowerment and Communication Centre (DEC-Nepal).

The project entitled 'Advancing Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities through Self-Initiatives and implementation of state services and benefits in Rural Community in Nepal' has been working in 10 different VDCs and 1 municipality of both the Banke and Surkhet districts.

"Many of us were looked down upon and discriminated by our fellow villagers who used to despise meeting us saying it would invite a bad omen," says Ghanashyam Tiwari, who is blind by birth and is now working as a change agent.

The EU funded DEC-Nepal project has brought about a wave of consciousness among the locals. Unlike in the past, people have started respecting those who are differently abled, Tiwari says with a tinge of satisfaction in his voice.

The DEC-Nepal has distributed wheel chairs to the differently abled to facilitate their movement. "I used to go to school walking despite having difficulties, my problems
were taken care of when DEC-Nepal gave me a wheel chair,” says Shyampati Tharu.

“We were suggested that we approach the VDC for funds set aside for the differently abled people and were told about the support that the government has decided to give to the differently abled,” she adds extending her gratitude to the EU funded project.

Around forty differently abled have received training on tailoring and five others are now able to operate computers. Many differently abled have received scholarships from the government to push ahead with their studies.

"Initially I was not aware that I was entitled to a fee waiver until DEC-Nepal informed me about it,” says Tharu who received Rs 5000 for her studies from government funds.

“We were not aware about the funds that were entitled to the disabled through the VDC, but recently we were able to receive a sum of Rs 50,000 to get some vocational training so that we can start our own business,” Madhav Tharu says.

The DEC-Nepal has been assisting the differently abled to make their identity cards so that they are entitled to get the state benefits meant especially for them.

There is a wave of consciousness on the rights of the differently abled that has come about in Banke following the intervention by the EU-funded project.

The European Union has joined hands with ADRA Nepal, Association for Social Transformation & Humanitarian Assistance (ASTHA), Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre (CWIN) and Nepal Human Rights Protection and Legal Service Centre (HRPLSC) to work for the cause of the conflict affected children and single women in different Village Development Committees of Rolpa district.

Many children in the districts were unable to continue their study during the conflict period. The European Union funded projects have come as a panacea to those children who harboured the dream of studying further in their career.

Some who are old enough have been able to receive skill-based training to earn their livelihood while they are at the same time pursuing their studies.

"I received three-month long training to work as a pressman with the assistance of CWIN and I am drawing NRS 6000 monthly working for the ‘Rolpa Samachar,” says Resham B.K.

He said that he had to quit studies while he was studying in grade six after he decided to join the then Maoist People’s Army. Juna Bahadur Nepali, works together with Resham in the same publishing house.

Yogita Budha Magar has re-joined school and received a scholarship of NRS 3,000 and now is studying in class nine. Many other children like Yogita expressed their acknowledgement to the European Union for helping them.

Beneficiaries of the EU funded projects are not confined to Liwang. Children who lost their parents during the conflict came from adjoining VDCs to Hwama VDC, an hour’s walk from Liwang to share their feelings.

ADRA and ASTHA have been working jointly on the EU funded project ‘Action for Social Inclusion of Children affected by Armed Conflict in Nepal (ASIC) in 10 VDCs of Rolpa.

Works related to psychosocial counselling with the survivors from the conflict period, holding of literacy classes, imparting of skilled based training to them through local resource persons and protection of child rights through the formation of Village Child Protection Committees (VCPC) have been taking place in the said VDCs.

"I have been very encouraged from the support that I have been given and have managed to come first in my class,” says Sanchita Budha studying in class seven. Sanchita lost one of her parents in the conflict and was not in the condition to give continuity to her studies.

One other project partner – HRPLC has been involved in re-organizing the conflict victims, helping them to have increased access to resources and imparting skill based training in Dhawang, Thawang, Uwa, Gam and Jailwang of Rolpa district.

Dhanamaya Pun, who is the chairperson of the network of single women in Dhawang walked for nearly three hours to come for the meeting with the stakeholders. She was excited when she learnt that there was a meeting being organised and thus braved a landslide while on her way to the meeting venue.

"We have received books and stationary for our children and are thankful to the EU-funded project,” she said in an excited voice.

She said that the single women were assisted by the project people to learn more about the rights that they were entitled to from the state and were encouraged to work jointly with other single women with the motto of ensuring common welfare of all.
Photo Feature

Ambassador Spachis addressing a programme organised by the Association of Political Science Students

EU information session on Science and Technology jointly organised with the EU Delegation to India

Delegates of the Greek-Nepal Friendship Association pay a courtesy visit to the Ambassador

Students learning about disaster risk reduction at an ECHO regional event

Mr. Christian Tousside of the EU Delegation to Nepal at a FAO-SAARC-EU event

Mr. Luís Navarro, Head of Operations joins Environment Minister Keshav Man Shukla at the launching of the EU funded project ‘Elimination of lead based paint

Ambassador Spachis handing over the EU-funded Renewable Energy Project to the Government of Nepal

The EU has joined hands with FNCCI to assist small entrepreneurs in Bhaktapur to adopt new technology that would make the production of beaten rice more sustainable
Council of the European Union appoints Stavros Lambrinidis as first EU Special Representative for Human Rights

High Representative of the European Union for Foreign and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, Catherine Ashton appointed Stavros Lambrinidis as the first ever European Union Special Representative for Human Rights on June 25.

Mr. Lambrinidis took office on 1 September and his mandate will run until 30 June 2014. His role will be to enhance the effectiveness and visibility of EU human rights policy. He will have a broad, flexible mandate, giving him the ability to adapt to circumstances, and will work closely with the European External Action Service, which will provide him with full support.

Speaking right after Mr. Lambrinidis’s appointment, EU High Representative Catherine Ashton said, “I am delighted to appoint Stavros Lambrinidis as the first EU Special Representative for Human Rights. Human rights are one of my top priorities and a silver thread that runs through everything that we do in external relations. This is therefore a key portfolio for the European Union and for me personally. With his talent and huge experience, Mr Lambrinidis will be a tremendous asset to us. I look forward to working with him in putting the protection and promotion of human rights and democracy at the heart of EU external action, and enhancing the coherence, effectiveness and visibility of our work in this field.”

Born in Athens, Mr Lambrinidis is an attorney, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece and a former Vice-President of the European Parliament. Between 2004 and 2009 he served as Vice-President of the Parliament’s Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee. Earlier in his career he was Chairman of the Committee for Human Rights in the Bar Association of Washington D.C.

Mr Lambrinidis will be the EU’s first thematic Special Representative. His appointment follows the adoption on 25 June 2012 of

the EU’s Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy. The Framework sets out principles, objectives and priorities, which are all designed to improve the effectiveness and consistency of EU policy as a whole in the next ten years.

They provide an agreed basis for a truly collective effort, involving EU Member States as well as the EU Institutions. The Strategic Framework also includes a commitment to a genuine partnership with civil society.

One of the commitments of the Action Plan is that the EU should give an account of its performance in its annual report on human rights and democracy in the world. This should present an opportunity to all stakeholders in EU policy, including civil society, to assess the impact of EU action and contribute to defining future priorities. The Action Plan covers the period until 31 December 2014.

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Mr Lambrinidis is an attorney, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece and a former Vice-President of the European Parliament. Between 2004 and 2009 he served as Vice-President of the Parliament’s Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee. Earlier in his career he was Chairman of the Committee for Human Rights in the Bar Association of Washington D.C.
EU Fact Sheet

Number of inhabitants (2010) 501,103,425
Number of official languages 23
Surface area of EU (Km²) 4,324,782
Gross domestic product/capita (2010) € 24,500

Average growth rate of real GDP per capita (2010) 2.3 %
Average unemployment rate (2010) 9.6 %

Date of the first European elections Jun-79

Average life expectancy in the EU27 (2010) 78.82 years

Biggest state (Surface) France
Smallest state (Surface) Malta
Most populated state Germany
Least populated state Malta

Three Main EU Institutions
European Parliament, European Commission, Council of the EU

Currency of the 17-member eurozone Euro

Source: eurostat_en

Published by Dr. Alexander Spachis, Ambassador, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Nepal

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