Dear Readers,

The 25th of March 2007 marked the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome, the cornerstone for the European Coal and Steel Community, and it is from the ECSC that the modern European Union emerged. The Union has now grown into a union of 27 Member States. It now unites the continent in peace and ensures a level of prosperity and stability previously unknown in the history of the European continent.

The need for an external representation for the newly formed European Union was apparent right from the start. When a transatlantic office was set up in 1954, the first foundation stone of the External Relations of the EU was laid. Today the EU is the World’s largest donor of development assistance, accounting for more than half of the world’s official aid. The external service has 130 Delegations presenting, explaining and implementing the EU’s external policy. Today Europe has a global reach, facilitating trade and development, supporting human rights and free elections in order to promote democratic values.

In this proud moment of EU’s 50th anniversary I would like to remember the special friendship that we share with Nepal. And thank all our readers for their continuous support to this publication.

Eduardo LECHUGA-JIMENEZ
Chargé d’ Affaires
5th Session of the EC-NEPAL Joint Commission

The Fifth Session of the EC-Nepal Joint Commission (JC) was held in Kathmandu on 14 February 2007. The meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Hira Bahadur THAPA, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Nepal and Mr. James MORAN, Director for Asia of the Directorate General for External Relations of the European Commission. The meeting was held in an open and cordial atmosphere. Both sides exchanged substantive views on the latest political situation in Nepal including the on-going peace process. They also discussed various ways and means to further strengthen the EU-Nepal relationship. The opening statements made by the two co-chairmen touched upon a broad range of issues pertaining mainly to the political, economic and social development of Nepal. The need to hold Constituent Assembly election as scheduled in a free and fair manner was underlined. In this context, the GoN’s request for EC electoral assistance was discussed. Both sides noted that the conclusions of the on-going EC exploratory mission would be critical in fielding possible EU election observers to Nepal.

The Nepalese delegation highlighted efforts being made to bring the on-going peace process to its logical conclusion. It also gave an overview of the various steps being taken by the GoN towards achieving the goal of an inclusive and participatory democracy in Nepal.

In response, the EC delegation expressed satisfaction with the way in which the on-going peace process is progressing and expressed confidence that its successful conclusion will help to establish lasting peace and democracy in Nepal. The EC side renewed its readiness to support Nepal’s transition to sustainable peace and democracy.

The Nepalese side informed the EC that the human rights situation in Nepal has markedly improved following the coming into power of the present democratic government. Its renewed commitment to work together with the UN Human Rights bodies including the Kathmandu Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights was commended by the EC. Both sides agreed that promoting and protecting human rights is an important factor for development, peace and stability.

As regards of the future cooperation, the EC stated that the Country Strategy Paper (CSP) covering the period from 2007 to 2013 would soon be finalized. It also sought indications from the GoN on the priority areas that could be incorporated in the CSP. It was agreed that future EC cooperation would mainly concentrate on education and peace building. Expressing its appreciation for the EC’s continuous support of Nepal’s development endeavours, the Nepalese side hoped that the level of assistance would increase substantially to enable it to meet the pressing challenges of reconstruction, rehabilitation and reintegration in the post-conflict era. In addition, the GoN requested the EC to join other donors in establishing a Peace Trust Fund. Economic and trade cooperation
High Level Visits

has also been recognized as a priority sector for EC-Nepal cooperation. The Nepalese side informed that all the procedure leading to the finalisation of the Horizontal Air Services Agreement proposed by EC would be completed soon.

Both sides underscored the importance of an early conclusion of the Doha Development Agenda and renewed their commitment to pursue this matter through bilateral, regional and multi-lateral efforts.

Both sides stressed the need to take stock of the many opportunities offered by the thematic and horizontal programmes for Asia which Nepal is increasingly utilizing. They underlined the need to give adequate publicity to these initiatives.

Both sides exchanged views on the process of regional cooperation including economic integration in South Asia under SAARC. The Nepalese side expressed the belief that the EU’s participation in SAARC as an observer would help enhance EU-SAARC relations.

On the long standing Bhutanese refugees’ issue, both sides underlined the need to resolve it without further delay. The Nepalese side expressed that the lasting solution to the problem lies in the repatriation of all refugees to their homeland with dignity and honour.

It was agreed that the 6th session of the EC-Nepal Joint Commission would be held in Brussels in September 2008. The Joint Commission meets bi-annually, alternately in Kathmandu and Brussels. It is mandated to review the implementation of the cooperation agreement signed between the EC and Nepal in 1995.

**Election exploratory mission**

Upon the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Nepal to the Delegation of the European Commission to Nepal, the European Commission conducted an exploratory mission from the 7th February to the 15th February 2007. The main aim of the exploratory mission was to gather information on the preparation for the upcoming Constituent Assembly election in order to facilitate the most efficient assistance from the European Union.

The EU team was structured in accordance with the main issues to be addressed: one is political whereas and the other one is logistical and security. Fragment of the exploratory mission dealing with logistics and security will hold meetings with Nepal Police and other relevant stakeholders to discuss the security and policing aspects of the preparation for the aforementioned election. While the political fragment of the exploratory mission will hold discussion with various political stakeholders like the Election Commission, political parties, representatives of government etc. The exploratory mission will also hold discussions with the UN, civil society organisations, political analysts, media and other relevant experts.
Fifty years ago six European countries came together to create a unique form of regional organisation. The objective was to ensure war would never again ravage the European continent, leaving a trail of death and devastation in its path. It has undoubtedly been a tremendous success. For fifty years its members have enjoyed unprecedented levels of peace, prosperity and stability. And so they have pushed it to go further. Over the years it has evolved to be much more than a simple trading bloc coordinating members’ trade policy and setting common tariffs. Now numbering 27 members, the European Union today is a political organisation active in all the areas that pose the greatest challenges to society in the 21st century. For countries around the world that means we are no longer just a trading partner. Now we are a strategic partner for issues as varied as international terrorism, climate change, HIV/AIDS, and resolving the world’s most entrenched conflicts.

In our relations with our international partners we project the values we believe have contributed to our own success. Our prosperity has grown out of a particular form of regional cooperation which has developed hand in hand with a deeper commitment to democracy, human rights and the rule of law. It is this experience, the secret of our own success, which we seek to offer to others.

The European Union acts in many different ways on the world stage, but a common EU foreign policy is a relatively new addition to our activities which we are still developing. We realise that sometimes makes it difficult for our partners to understand how to work with us. But even though we are not the most straight-forward of international partners, we are certainly one of the most influential. And our ambition is to contribute even more to the international community and to our partners around the world.

One frequently forgotten fact is that the European Union is already the world’s largest donor of international assistance. We currently provide 60% of the world’s official development assistance, the Commission alone provides over €7 billion. We aim to tackle poverty and provide humanitarian assistance wherever it is required.
We also deploy our resources to provide prosperity and stability to others. The EU has developed a unique set of skills in assisting countries in transition. Our expertise has been crafted by our experience at home helping the countries of Southern Europe and then Central and Eastern Europe make the transition to market economy and an open society. We now seek to use those skills elsewhere, to ensure others benefit from the same prosperity and stability.

Around the world the European Union has a dense network of formal agreements and over 130 delegations, including the one in Nepal, to cooperate with countries on issues like trade, energy, the environment, human rights and international organised crime. We have a growing range of foreign policy instruments available, not just our trade and aid policies, but also our rapid response to humanitarian emergencies, and our police and military missions. In strengthening our role in the world our task is to deploy these instruments as coherently and effectively as possible, whether that be in Lebanon, the West Balkans or the Democratic Republic of Congo.

We are already making a difference – by playing a part in finding a solution to conflict in the Middle East and trying to resolve the international stand-off over Iran’s nuclear intentions. We are leading by example on questions like climate change and energy security. All these questions will be at the heart of the international agenda in the months and years to come.

We believe that it’s only through partnership that solutions to these questions can be found. That’s why we put so much value on our relations with our partners around the globe, but it’s also why we are so committed to multilateralism. We fully support the institutions of global governance such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organisation. We want to work with our partners to strengthen those organisations and the rules-based multilateral order they uphold.

The EU is not a finished story. Our institutions and powers are still evolving and nowhere is that more true than in the area of foreign policy. But it is already clear that our partners see us as a different kind of partner than the purely trading partner we once were. They see the strategic value of greater cooperation with us, just as we see the strategic value of greater cooperation with them.

Similarly, the EU’s citizens expect their leaders to put Europe on the world map. They want us to create better lives not only for them and our neighbours but for everyone. So this is our objective for the next 50 years: using the achievements of the last 50 years - our wealth, peace and experience – not only to maintain our own standard of living, but also for the benefit of others.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner
European Commissioner for External Relations and Neighbourhood Policy
High Level Visits

Members of the European Parliament in Nepal

For second time within the past nine months Members of the European Parliament (MEP) paid visit to Nepal for a four-day visit from 21 March to 24 March 2007. The 5-member delegation was led by Mrs Neena Gill, the chair of the European Parliament’s Delegation for Relations with South Asia and the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (D-SAARC). The other members of the team were Lidia Geringer de Oedenberg, Robert EVants, Nrj Deva and Sarunas Birutis.

The visit of the MEPs focused on the political situation in the country in the run-up to the constituent assembly elections which were then scheduled to be held in mid-June. They also examined whether any progress could be made as far as the Bhutanese refugees are concerned. Two members of the delegation visited the refugee camps in eastern Nepal. “There need of all parties to keep with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and to respect it. A prosperous Nepal, where all people reap the dividends of peace, is a Nepal where citizens and the business community witness no intimidation,” said Mrs. Gill.

She further emphasised, “We are here to support parliamentary democracy and want to see a successful outcome to this process. That mainly depends on the population of Nepal feeling confident that it can participate freely in this process.”

During the three-day stay the delegation paid visit to key players such as Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, Minister for Foreign affairs and met with their counterparts from the interim Legislature Parliament. Election related questions were discussed with the Election Commission as well as of the civil society, media. They also paid visit to international organisations including SAARC, UNMIN, OHCHR, development agencies, diplomatic missions and EU Member States present in Kathmandu.

The discussions focus specially on the peace process, preparations for the Constituent Assembly elections and the Bhutanese refugee situation.

“We are here to support parliamentary democracy and want to see a successful outcome to this process. That mainly depends on the population of Nepal feeling confident that it can participate freely in this process.”
Celebrating the 50th Year

The European Commission Delegation to Nepal celebrated the 50th Anniversary with much fanfare too. The visiting Members of the European Parliaments were the guests among the 200 dignified guests that the Nepal Delegation hosted on 22 March 2007. In addition representatives of the Member States, other donors, Nepal government, civil society, international community etc. also attended the celebration. Nepal Delegation also printed the message of Mrs. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the European Commissioner for External Relations and Neighbourhood Policy in three most prestigious newspapers coming out of Kathmandu.

Congratulations !!!

The Chargé d’ Affaires of the European Commission Delegation to Nepal, Mr. Eduardo Lechuga-Jimenez was commemorated for his 20-year long service to the European Commission in February 2007. The European Commissioner for External Relations and Neighbourhood Policy Mrs. Benita Ferrero-Waldner presented the medal to Mr. Lechuga during the Forth Regional Seminar for Asian including Central Asia in Mumbai, India in. We here at the EC Delegation to Nepal congratulate his.

Addressing disasters before they strike

The European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO) organised a South Asian regional workshop on Disaster Preparedness on 18 and 19 April 2007 in Kathmandu. The workshop was participated by stakeholders from five South Asian Countries, - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan. The workshop mainly reviewed and identified best practices and lessons learned from some 24 projects implemented in South Asia in 2006/2007.

South Asia is one of the most disaster prone areas in the world. The current DIPECHO (the ECHO’s Disaster Preparedness Programme ) Action Plan for South Asia funded 6 million worth of activities in Nepal (9 projects/ 2.5 million), India (2 projects), Pakistan (5 projects) and Bangladesh (5 projects) additionally, pilot initiatives in Afghanistan (2 projects) were funded under regular ECHO Programming. The next DIPECHO Action Plan, which will be finalised following this high level meeting, may allocate 7.5 million for further projects in the region.
CALLS FOR PROPOSALS

Assistance to Vulnerable Groups and Communities Most Affected by the Internal Conflict (VCP)

Reference: EuropeAid/125-388/L/ACT/NP
Deadline for receipt of applications: 29 June, 2007

Specific objectives of the programme are to address the basic needs of vulnerable groups and communities most affected by the conflict by providing them with tangible direct benefits that contribute to local reconciliation efforts and promote group and local community empowerment in sustaining peace.

Activities that can be covered by the projects must address specifically the people most affected by the conflict, in particular youth, children and women, and in the poorest and strategically important areas of the country.

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is € 6,750,000.00 (approx. NPR 629,336,250.00) with that any grant awarded under this programme must fall between the minimum of € 500,000.00 (approx. NPR 46,617,500.00) and maximum of € 1,000,000.00 amount (approx. NPR 93,235,000.00.)

Nepalese non-governmental organisations, international non-governmental organisations and international organisations (including the UN) are eligible to apply for the funds. Applicants may act individually or in consortium with partner organisations.

To learn more please consult our website or contact us:
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