Dear Readers

The European Union (EU) over the years has acquired an identity of a goodwill partner that does not have any political interest in countries where it has been engaging in development cooperation. The EU is driven by the principle of solidarity, pursuit of peace and prosperity, which are the major components of its diplomatic relations with countries around the world. Since Nepal has also been pursuing the same components, it is natural for the EU and Nepal to have converging interests in creating a more equitable, prosperous and peaceful society. It is in this light that the EU Delegation to Nepal has been striving to become a trusted partner in key areas of development directly linked with the common people’s lives. There are no doubts in our minds that the less privileged Nepalese, living in difficult geographical terrains should also be able to feel the positive impacts of EU assistance to make the contributions more meaningful.

We have been eagerly working with the Government of Nepal and other stakeholders as well as various development partners for many years now, keeping in mind the above goal. The yearly budgetary allocations for development cooperation in this country currently stands at some 30 million Euros, a substantial growth compared to previous years. This amply speaks of the growing involvement of the EU in Nepal’s development endeavours.

We have been trying our level best to diversify our assistance to different development sectors and consolidate the bilateral partnership. The two key areas of cooperation which we are hopeful will give a far reaching message are no other than the ‘Renewable Energy Project’ and the projects under the ‘EU Food Facility’. The Renewable Energy Project (15 million Euros) has gathered momentum in the recent months and will start delivering the expected dividends starting early May 2010. The project, which aims to complete installation of solar panels in 21 remote districts of Nepal by the end of 2010, will hopefully stand out as a model of EU-Nepal development partnership.

Likewise, the projects being run in 18 different districts of Nepal, under the EU Food Facility comprise of 23.5 million Euros worth EU financial assistance in total. The projects which are to wind up towards the end of 2011 is being keenly monitored to ensure the attainment of the envisaged goals of laying the grounds for optimum farm productivity through the distribution of relevant training and improved seeds in 16 remote districts of west Nepal and two districts in central and eastern Nepal.

Apart from these two key projects, the EU will continue offering its assistance to the Nepal Government in achieving the twin targets of writing a new constitution and holding fresh and credible elections that would pave the way to form a new government. Since the fate of the peace process hinges on meeting these goals, all national and international forces must work in cohesion to achieve them without failure. Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to wish a very happy New Year 2067 BS to all Nepalese and development partners working with the EU. May the New Year mark a new beginning of EU-Nepal development partnership and give us all the needed perseverance to overcome all the hurdles on the way to ensuring a peaceful, prosperous and democratic Nepal.

Alexander Spachis
Ambassador
Head of the Delegation
European Union-Advocacy Forum partnership for torture free society

Medical practitioners from different parts of the country expressed their unhappiness over the existing format of documenting torture related cases. They all agreed that more space should be given in the forms submitted by investigating officers for documenting evidences.

“We do realize that the lack of a common format for documenting evidences is posing problems to doctors,” Dr. Harihar Wasti, forensic pathologist at Teaching Hospital under the Tribhuvan University said.

Dr. Wasti was addressing a workshop “Increasing Capacity in Medico-Legal Documentation and Investigation of Torture in Nepal” organised by the Advocacy Forum with support from the European Union at the Gokarna Resort from March 4 to 6.

Efforts are underway to develop a common consensus on the format for legal documentation of torture and discussions at the workshop would hopefully pave the way in that direction, Dr. Wasti said.

The workshop, third in a series, organised under the aegis of the ‘Advocacy Forum’ with the support of the European Union, envisages providing training to nearly 100 doctors in improving the medico-legal documentation.

The objectives of the workshop included capacity building of lawyers and doctors to better document torture, in particular interviewing torture survivors, as well as preparing and making use of medico-legal reports.

It also aimed at enhancing knowledge and raising awareness about international human rights standards and their practical application, as well as the consequences of torture from a medical, psychological and evidentiary perspective.

Promoting closer cooperation and understanding about mutual needs between doctors and lawyers and providing hands-on exercises for practical learning and promoting the use of photographic and other specialized materials that enhances the quality of the medico-legal documentation were the other objectives of the workshop.

The trainees comprising of doctors, legal practitioners, judges and police inspectors echoed a common expectation. Almost all said they wanted to broaden their horizon on the various aspects of ‘medico-legal documentation’ of torture and work towards developing a common format to facilitate the process of investigation.

Experience has it that, perpetrators of violence and torture go scot free in the absence of proper documentation of evidences. Hence it is vital for doctors to know about the legal implications related to documentation of details.

Dr. Wasti said that based on the deliberations and outcome of the workshop, a common format for documenting details related to a torture case would be developed by forging coordination with the Attorney General’s Office, Supreme Court and the Police Headquarters.

The EU supported project being run by the ‘Advocacy Forum’ is carrying out its activities in ten different districts of Nepal. Training doctors, lawyers and security personnel is one of the components of the project.

The European Commission provided a grant assistance of € 558,136.83 funded through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) for the project being run under the banner ‘Prevention of Torture in Nepal’. The objective of the project is to contribute to substantial reduction of incidents of torture and ultimately prevent torture from taking place. This will be achieved through an integrated intervention strategy focused on preventive police detention monitoring in areas with high risk of torture, documentation of cases and patterns of torture, the initiation of court cases to obtain redress, advocacy as well as awareness-raising among key stakeholders. The three year project that began in November 2008 will wind up in October 2011.

Shiva Bhandari is Project Manager for projects being run under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) at the development Co-operation Section of the EU Delegation. You can contact him at shiva.bhandari@ec.europa.eu
Stakeholders help policy makers to uphold their promises for stronger disaster risk reduction legislation

Nepal – a global hotspot for disasters- ranks 11th for the risk of earthquakes and 30th for water induced disasters among 198 countries of the world. The increasing frequency and intensity of disasters have been adversely affecting this Himalayan country. There have been massive community level efforts to mitigate the risks of disasters and better prepare for them at a village level, supported by the European Commission’s Humanitarian aid department (ECHO) through its humanitarian partners.

There is an escalating momentum in Nepal to ensure that the community led initiatives are embedded in a holistic legislative framework, which would include all aspects of disaster risk reduction.

A consortium of non-governmental organisations (NGO’s), United Nations agencies and the Red Cross / Crescent movement, supported by ECHO have launched a toolkit to increase the awareness and understanding of the elected policy makers in Nepal. The Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) toolkit includes key information regarding disasters, the context, success stories, legislations, international frameworks, and what needs to be done in Nepal in this regard.

Underpinning this are the repeated commitments by some of the most senior officials of the Nepal Government to have a strong disaster risk reduction legislation that is in line with internationally agreed accords, like the Hyogo Framework Action (HFA). The HFA assists the efforts of nations and communities to become more resilient to, and cope better with the hazards that threaten their development gains.

The current legislation in Nepal includes the National Calamity Act of 1982, which was revised in 1992. The Act and its amendments are more relief oriented - dealing with the aftermath of a crisis rather than the mitigation of the impact – although there were provisions made to have a disaster management bill. In 2009, the Nepal cabinet approved a national strategy to manage risks – a clear step towards realising the commitments to the HFA - however strategy is not legally binding.

In a country where climate change is playing havoc with its people the adage “disasters can affect everyone, and are therefore everybody’s business” rings true with greater urgency. Nepal could so easily uphold its leaders’ promises and include risk reduction as a primary component of legislation ensuring response, recovery and risk reduction into the government’s priorities on disaster management. The DRR Toolkit was launched to be catalyst towards this step.

Vice Chairperson of the Constituent Assembly Purna Kumari Subedi makes the DRR Toolkit public after it was launched in the capital in February. Dr. Alexander Spachis, Ambassador, Head of European Union Delegation to Nepal and Robert Piper, the UN resident representative for Nepal, jointly presented the toolkit to Subedi.
EU plays the role of guardian in improving education for Nepali kids

As a child I dreamed of picking ripe and juicy apples from a tree in our garden. I planted a seed and nurtured the sapling, but the tree wasn’t mature by the time we moved house…. I’m sure the family living there now are enjoying the delicious fruit it has produced.

Working in development is a bit like that too. You try to think ahead and plan well for the future and hope to leave good things in place that others will benefit from. If through my day to day work in the Delegation as an education adviser, I want to make a difference, then I have to think about the future. About the kind of knowledge and skills, attitudes and behaviours that young people will need to have lots of opportunities and make the most of their lives. And about what needs to be put in place now, to make sure that all young people, all girls and boys, wherever they live in Nepal, can go to school, stay in school and learn useful things whilst they are there.

That’s what the EU delegation support to education in Nepal is all about. Our funds and advice help the Ministry of Education to plan for enough well equipped schools, trained and talented teachers, interesting textbooks, teaching and learning materials and adequate water and sanitation facilities. Equally important is clear guidance, training and support for parents and the wider school community to enable everyone to play an active part in school management. With more than 30,000 public primary schools, a lot of planning, preparation and rupees are needed.

Over the last 2 years the European Union has provided Euro 18.5 million to support the Government of Nepal’s Education For All (EFA) programme Our funding and assistance has helped to boost the Government of Nepal’s own efforts towards achieving the Millennium Development (MDGs) www.undp.org/mdg/basics.shtml and the Education For All (EFA) goals www.unesco.org/en/efa/the-efa-movement/efa-goals.

What has the EFA programme in Nepal achieved? Well, there are more schools and classrooms than there were in 2004. There are more children in school and more girls and children from previously excluded groups in school. There are more and better trained teachers and there are more women teachers and teachers from janajati and other previously marginalised groups. There are more textbooks and more teaching and learning materials too. But there is still a long way to go. About 1 in 4 children who start school drop out in Grade 1 and many don’t learn a lot even if they stay to grade 5. Many children, perhaps ½ a million are still not in school. Some children need learning opportunities and support in an environment that allows them to work or to take time off. Others need extra support to help them to go to and stay at school.

The Delegation of the EU to Nepal plans to continue our funding and support to the new School Sector Reform Programme (SSRP) which is all about quality. Quality in a broad sense, not only student learning and achievement, but also teachers performance and professional development, availability of textbooks and teaching and learning materials, strong school buildings and adequate water and sanitation facilities. The Education For All – Fast Track Initiative has also approved USD 120 million to support the Nepal Government to implement the Schools Sector Reform Programme www.educationfasttrack.org

Good education opportunities give everyone the knowledge, skills and creativity to build a happy and productive life for themselves and their family. Nurtured well, today’s young children will grow and blossom into thriving, productive citizens of Nepal.

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No more dark days for Nepali folks in 21 districts once EU funded Renewable Energy Project acquires completion

Come 2011 and Nepalese living in 281 Village Development Committees will feel the blessings of science and technology in the form of solar power. With the tendering process already complete for the buying of solar energy equipment, there are positive signs that the gruelling and dark days for the village folks will come to an end. Health posts will not have to worry about power cuts amidst pressing odd hour requests for the treatment of a patient, who is badly in need of medical attention. Similarly, farmers in the villages will be able to irrigate their fields with solar power backed pumps and see their crop productivity soaring. Similarly, school children will be able to prepare for their exams and study without any hassles in the solar powered lamps. The list of those who will be experiencing a great deal of panacea from the European Union funded ‘Renewable Energy Project’ goes on.

The buoyancy gathered by the project is satisfactory and hopes about its timely completion are quite high. Amidst all the positive developments taking place, the ‘Alternative Energy Promotion Centre’ of the Nepal Government that is looking after the ‘Renewable Energy Project’ organised a media event on 14 of January, 2010. The motive was to provide the updates of the project to all the stakeholders and the intended beneficiaries.

On the occasion, Minister for Environment, Thakur Prasad Sharma thanked the European Union for extending the implementation period of the project until 2012. He hoped that the project would be completed within the set timeframe and the village folks in some of the most remote districts, having less or no potentials for any other form of energy, would benefit substantially in the days thereafter.

Dr. Alexander Spachis, Ambassador, Head of European Union Delegation to Nepal presenting an overview of the EU cooperation in Nepal said, the cooperation that started in 1977 with a funding of 2.6 million euros for a livestock project has grown manifold today.

The European Union has set aside 100 million euros in the form of assistance to be provided for various development projects in Nepal for the period extending from 2007 to 2013, Dr. Spachis said.

Dr. Dinesh Chandra Devkota, Member, National Planning Commission hoped that the project would be a great success in achieving its objectives and would play a significant role in poverty alleviation, environment protection, sustainable development, institutional development, business development and creation of entrepreneur culture in rural areas. He informed about the plans underway to replicate the model of the EU funded project in other villages of Nepal.

Meena Khanal, Officiating Secretary of the Ministry of Environment expressed her satisfaction over the activities conducted so far and the achievements made by the Renewable Energy Project. The completion of the procurement contracts for the PV equipment is a leap forward for the project, which is good news, Khanal said.

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PROJECT UPDATES & CONTRACTS SIGNED

Project on promoting Dalit rights winds up in three Terai districts

In keeping with the set goals of the European Union to wage a campaign against discriminatory practices within and beyond the frontiers of the EU Member States, the European Union has pursued the same goal in some of the Terai districts of Nepal. The EU joined hands with the Dalit NGO Federation (DNF) – an umbrella organisation of Dalit NGOs in Nepal and Care Nederland to run project activities in three districts – Nawalparasi, Rupandehi and Kapilvastu, almost all having a high concentration of Dalit population.

The project ‘Promote human rights and social inclusion of Terai Dalits in Nepal’ ran from January 2007 to December 2009 aiming at achieving equality in a spirit of mutual tolerance between so-called Dalit and non-Dalit groups in the society. The EU provided Euro 720,000 to the project that had an overall budget of 900,000 Euros.

The project was devoted to the task of monitoring and providing feedback on implementation of existing legal instruments and policies, and also the situation of violations caused due to customary practices and other discriminatory actions. Its primary objective was to work towards ensuring the political empowerment of the Dalits; strengthening their institutional capacity; promoting good governance; and improving policy implementation, monitoring and feedback.

The project successfully accomplished the scheduled activities. Some of its visible achievements were stepping up the awareness level among the Dalits on their rights, building their confidence to assert their rights apart from giving a fillip to their economic status through the launching of income generating activities.

On the institutional side, the project enhanced the capacity of the DNF to step up advocacy campaigns on Dalit rights and drew the government’s attention towards the discriminatory laws and rituals that have been subordinating the Dalits for many decades.

It also strengthened the monitoring feedback systems and processes for policy influence with specific focus on human rights violation and discriminatory actions against Dalits.

The literacy classes were instrumental in raising awareness on Dalit and Women rights issues. Observations of Human Rights Day, International Day Against Racism, International Women’s Day etc. also contributed to raising public awareness on the rights of the Dalits.

Publication and dissemination of bulletin, street drama focusing on different issues like child marriage, dowry system, equal treatment for son and daughter etc. in addition to Dalit issues also contributed to build social pressure to give equal treatment to the Dalits.

Capacity building activities helped in developing DNF local chapters as the effective actors in monitoring discriminatory practices and also for their prevention. The quarterly meetings held with DNF district chapters helped to enhance the effectiveness of the chapters in lobbying for Dalit rights.

Vocational training provided to potential Dalit people and the subsequent follow up for their employment have contributed to empowering and uplifting the Dalit communities. The project also provided saving and credit management training to different women groups.

Village level orientations held in partnership with local stakeholders have succeeded in enhancing their accountability and also getting their commitment on inclusiveness and non-discriminatory practices. The EU funded project also lobbied with district and government authorities at lower levels to bring to the forefront the issues of Terai Dalits.

Non-State Actors in Development (NSA)

EC awards six new grant contracts to NGOs to implement projects on education and peace-building in Nepal

The Non-State Actors in Development (NSA) programme was introduced in 2007; it succeeds to the NGO co-financing budget lines and provides support to development actions, to be implemented by nongovernmental and other civil society organisations, in close cooperation with the local communities and the most vulnerable population groups.
In Nepal, the NSA Programme aims to complement the EC’s 2007-2012 Nepal Country Strategy Paper (CSP) and other ongoing activities. The programme therefore supports actions aimed at promoting an inclusive and empowered society. It also aims to build the capacity of Nepalese Non-State Actors in participating in the definition of sustainable development strategies and implementation of actions aiming at poverty reduction.

Currently there are eleven ongoing projects under the NSA Nepal programme. New grant contracts were awarded in December 2009/January 2010 to six NGOs to implement projects in the area of education and peace-building. For instance, Handicap International is focusing its efforts on enabling the effective participation of persons with disabilities and their organisations in Nepal’s peace process, while South-Asia Partnership Nepal is implementing a community peace-building programme through the empowerment of women groups. Grants were also awarded to Naulo Ghumti Nepal, Voluntary Services Overseas, Rural Reconstruction Nepal and Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Reasearch Center to implement projects with the aim of providing access and quality education to poor and marginalised communities.

The new projects are primarily implemented in the Mid-Western Region of Nepal, but a few projects also decided to focus their efforts in the Western and Central Regions of the country.

The award notice for new projects is published on the website of the EU Delegation to Nepal: http://www.delnpl.ec.europa.eu/

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### European Union Delegation to Nepal enhances access to funding opportunities through information sessions

Delegation of the European Union to Nepal organized an information session for those seeking to apply for funding support under the ongoing Call for Proposals (Cfp). The two hour long interaction with the prospective applicants was fruitful in many ways as they were able to get the answers to many of their queries related to the call, the application procedure and the eligibility criteria among others. The overall objective of the interaction was to enhance access to funding opportunities available within the EU through the dissemination of call-related information. The interaction was focused on the recently launched local Cfp, under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Country Based Support Scheme (CBSS) 2009.

Following the publication of the Cfp, the Delegation organized information sessions in Kathmandu and also in eight other major towns covering the entire country. Around 300 potential applicants participated in these sessions. It was an opportunity for the participants to be familiar with the procedures and guidelines for accessing the funding opportunities and also getting clarifications on their immediate queries.

The participants appreciated the transparent and objective procedures followed for selecting applications. Participants acknowledged the accessibility that the Cfp. has increased further by securing some allocations for district based organizations. They however, suggested the European Union to simplify the procedures in view of the weak capacities at local level and the need and significance of their enhancement.

The Delegation has maintained a data base of those who participated in such sessions and also the ones who are in contact with the Delegation. This mechanism maintained for extensive dissemination of the available information may contribute to enhancing access to the forthcoming opportunities.

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We have realised the significance of our rights: the EIDHR project beneficiaries in Sindhuli district sharing the project impacts with EU Programme Manager during a field visit in January 2010.
Four INGOs receive European Union (EU) support to step up food security in 11 districts under 'EU Food Facility' project

Surveys from home and abroad carried out to assess the overall status of food security in Nepal have revealed that almost 16% of Nepal’s population are facing shortage of food in various parts of the country.

One other alarming revelation is that Nepal is sixteenth among thirty-one highly food deficit countries in the world and requires concerted efforts on the part of the concerned authorities to address the situation.

The year 2009 turned out to be an unfriendly year for the Nepalese farmers. Delayed or no monsoon coupled with landslides and floods triggered by unprecedented climate change patterns across the nation had a negative bearing in the overall food production scenario.

The dropping of production levels in turn came as a curse to the poor households in rural Nepal. All this combined led to substantial increase in the food prices triggering growing risks of hunger and starvation.

The need for a rapid response to the emerging and formidable food crisis around the world including Nepal was genuinely felt by the European Union, which led it to pledge an amount of one billion Euros in Tokyo in 2008. Nepal has been fortunate enough to receive 23.5 million Euros to address the growing threat of food insecurity that could invite a host of other problems such as poverty, hunger, disease and all the other social maladies linked with it.

“The four INGOs selected to carry out the programme in different districts with the support of the European Union will make the most out of their expertise and experience to address the deplorable food situation in rural Nepal,” Dr. Alexander Spachis, Ambassador, Head of the European Union Delegation to Nepal told the projects launching ceremony in January.

He said the EU does not have any form of hidden agendas or interest in Nepal. Its only goal is to assist Nepal in moving towards a more reliable and self-sustainable development and infrastructural framework.

Heads of the four INGOs, which received EU assistance to address the issue of food security sitting along with the head of the European Union Delegation to Nepal and officials from the National Planning Commission and Social Welfare Council at the Projects Launching Ceremony.
Dr. Spachis reminded the audience and the stakeholders that whether or not Nepal would be able to draw additional funds to address the food crisis would depend on how the rapid response to the growing threat would be addressed with the funds being provided for the period 2010/2011.

Apart from the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the World Food Programme, four other INGOs – Oxfam, Practical Action, Save the Children and Dan Church Aid have been selected through a competitive process to implement the projects under the ‘EU Food Facility’

Addressing the launching ceremony, Minister for Agriculture and Cooperatives, Mrigendra K.S. Yadav said the government is well aware of the food crisis and is planning for the required measures to address hunger.

Professor Subodh Narayan Jha, Member of the National Planning Commission (NPC) welcomed EU assistance to address the issue of food security. He said simply looking up to the donors for help would not be enough. The NPC must work towards putting into place plans to take ahead the process of commercialisation of agriculture from its existing subsistence nature.

The overall objective of the Food Facility is to address the negative impact of volatile food prices on food security of small-scale and marginal farmers through improved agricultural productivity and improved governance of the agriculture sector.

The four INGOs are implementing the project in 127 VDCs and four municipalities from 11 districts of mid and far western Nepal. These projects will benefit approximately 32,013 household equivalent approximately 200,000 people including vulnerable groups such as the poor, women, Dalits and ethnic minorities.

The combined budget of the four projects is 6,599,338 Euros equivalent to approximately Nepalese Rupees 659,933, 800 and the implementation period is between 18-22 months starting from December 2009 to October 2011.

The targeted 11 districts are located in the mid and far western development regions namely Humla, Mugu, Rukum, Rolpa, Accham, Doti, Kailali, Banke, Dailekh, Dadeldhura and Kalikot districts. The projects will be implemented through 13 local implementing NGO partners in close collaboration with the respective district government agencies and technical assistance provided by 3 technical INGO partners related to food security and livelihood enhancement at household and community levels.

The projects will be implemented by the target communities through local NGOs and in close collaboration with district government agencies such as the District Agriculture Development Offices, District Development Committees and Village Development Committee level and other local government line agencies.

These projects have been designed, funded and expected to increase agricultural production through the effective delivery of inputs (seeds and fertilizers, irrigation facilities), the provision of extension services and training, and alternative viable livelihood options including livestock support and agro-based and off-farm initiatives and improved governance of agriculture sector.

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**EU senses need of new dynamism in climate negotiations**

The European Union continues to stick firmly to its longstanding resolution that a global and comprehensive legal agreement remains the only effective way to reach the agreed objective of staying below two degrees centigrade increase in global temperature.

At the same time, it remains ambitious and constructive in the international negotiations. The EU remains steadfast on its proposition that a stepwise approach should be followed, building on the Copenhagen accord. The pledges made on emission reductions are insufficient to meet the crucial target of two degrees centigrade.

The negotiations need a new dynamic. The Bonn meeting on climate change concluded with an agreement to intensify the negotiating schedule in order to achieve a strong outcome in Mexico. Two additional sessions of at least one week will be held between June and November.

COP-2 in Cancun must produce concrete decisions and must address remaining gaps. The EU and its member states will implement their commitment to provide €2.4 billion annually over the 2010-2012 period for fast-start financing, and we remain committed to jointly mobilise US$100 billion per year by 2020 to help developing countries fight climate change.
Spain in the helm of the European Union for the first semester of 2010 from 1 January, 2010

France holds the local EU presidency on behalf of Spain until end of June

Spain took over the rotating presidency of the European Union from 1 January 2010 from Sweden. The main task of the country, which holds the presidency, is to organise and manage the work of the Council of the European Union where the Member States are represented.

This means that until 30 June, the Spanish representatives on the Council and its subsidiary bodies (committees and working groups) are responsible for setting the agenda and presiding over the approximately 3 000 meetings which will take place in Brussels and Luxembourg and the 300 that will be held in Spain.

For the first time, the European Council has a stable chair, coinciding with the beginning of the Spanish Presidency. This is a position created by the Treaty of Lisbon to give greater continuity to the work of the EU and Herman van Rompuy, the former Belgian Prime Minister, has been appointed for a two-and-a-half-year term, which can be renewed once. Van Rompuy will chair the European Council meetings, or European summits that bring together all 27 heads of state or government.

Holding the rotating office of Presidency requires carrying out duties of supporting the permanent presidency, which is responsible for representing the Council in its relations with third countries and international organisations and with the other European institutions, particularly the European Parliament and Commission. In practice, occupying the presidency implies building bridges between countries to enable the European agenda to move forward. The country that holds the presidency must carry out this work impartially and must not actively promote its own interests, nor those of any other state. In these few months, the government must do everything it can to resolve any differences which may arise between member states when it comes to making decisions, by presenting and negotiating compromise solutions. It must also be prepared to deal with unforeseen situations which require a rapid response from the EU.

For Spain, the presidency means an opportunity to extend its presence abroad, to influence world affairs and to cooperate with the most vulnerable countries. It is also an opportunity to bring the EU and its citizens closer together and give decisive impetus to European integration. The Spanish Presidency has set aside four main priorities during its six-month tenure. The first is the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, which raises many institutional questions, with the new High Representative for Foreign Affairs and the shift away from the focus on the rotating presidency.

Coherence of external action is a priority, to make the most of the creation of the new European External Action Service and the High Representative. The Spanish Presidency has expressed the need to speak with a harmonious chorus on the important issues, most of which have an international dimension, like the Copenhagen climate talks.

What might be of bigger interest to Nepal is that the Spanish Presidency has decided to give top priority to the issue of gender equality. This is an overarching theme, rather than a priority. In order to have a coherent, democratic society and achieve goals like combating climate change, then equality is a prerequisite. In terms of fundamental rights, countering discrimination is one of the highest priorities. During the Spanish presidency, events will be held focusing on equality and the position of women.

More information on the activities of the Spanish Presidency can be acquired by logging on to the website: www.eu2010.es
Barroso Commission-II: Right Jobs to Right People

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission announced the portfolios responsibilities for the next Commission in November 2009. The President held detailed consultations with all the Commissioners in order to assign the right jobs to the right people. The President believes that this team can deliver the agenda for change he set out in the political guidelines he presented in September 2009, following his nomination by all 27 Member States and before his approval as President of the next Commission by the European Parliament.

President Barroso said: “We have a European programme, and now we have a European team. On the basis of the nominations by the Member States, I have sought to design a College which can generate fresh ideas and new momentum on the biggest challenges we face in Europe today. This College will implement the political guidelines that I presented to the European Parliament. I am confident that this College will be decisive in steering Europe towards recovery and a sustainable social market economy that works for the people. I have put together a strong Commission to fill the enhanced role of Europe, including on the world stage, provided by the Lisbon Treaty. One of the key tasks of this College will be to give life to the new opportunities provided by the Lisbon Treaty.

The Commissioners-designate presented themselves in the hearings before the European Parliament in January 2010 to get the vote of consent of the Parliament.
Erasmus Mundus

A total of 16 students from Nepal, 12 of them males and four females have been selected to pursue their higher education in different universities in Europe under the 'Erasmus Mundus' Scholarship Programme for the year 2010-2011

**Congratulatory Message**

Dr. Alexander Spachis, Ambassador, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Nepal has congratulated all the successful students who have received the prestigious scholarship. Dr. Spachis hopes that the students would live up to the expected level of academic performance and serve as agents of change and development upon returning to Nepal after completing the course.

With the announcement of the latest batch of 16 winners, a close to 100 students, have so far received the scholarship starting 2006. The prestigious scholarship has enabled students from Nepal to explore their potentials and prepare themselves for the challenges ahead while serving different social and government sectors in the home country. Congratulations!

*Erasmus Mundus offers culturally enriching higher education opportunities for both European and Non-European students. For more information on the Erasmus Mundus scholarship, please check the link: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/index_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/index_en.html)*

Published by Dr. Alexander Spachis, Ambassador, Head of the Delegation
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With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December, 2009, we are now the:
Delegation of the European Union to Nepal

**Kindly update your records**