"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" – Article 1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

On December 10th the European Union (EU), together with the international community, marked Human Rights Day, the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted in 1948). This day highlights and promotes the achievements of human rights defenders, and emphasises the primary role that governments must play in enabling and protecting their role.

The EU sees human rights as universal and indivisible. It actively promotes and defends them both within its borders and when engaging in relations with non-EU countries. Human rights, democracy and the rule of law are core values of the EU and an integral part of its external relations. Embedded in its founding treaty, they were reinforced when the EU adopted the Charter of Fundamental Rights in 2000, and strengthened still further when the Charter became legally binding with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009.

The Union’s human rights policy encompasses civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. It also seeks to promote the rights of women, of children, of those persons belonging to minorities, and of displaced persons. The EU considers that adherence to those principles constitutes the prerequisite for peace and stability in all nations.

The period covered by this newsletter coincides with important steps forward in the peace process of Nepal. The EU has warmly welcomed the political changes in the country. An EU Declaration, released together with Norway and Switzerland, greeted the 7-Point Agreement of 1st November and the evolutions in the process of integration and rehabilitation of former Maoist Combatants. The agreement decided also on other contentious issues such as constitution drafting, power sharing or the dismantling of the semi-military structure of the Maoist’s Young Communist League (YCL).

A few weeks later, another EU declaration welcomed the extension of the Constituent Assembly and therefore, the opportunity to promulgate a new democratic and inclusive Constitution within the next six months. The statement stressed explicitly the needs for human rights to be respected and for the proposed Truth and Reconciliation Commission to meet the standards of international law. This step came at the same time as the Nepal visit of a delegation of the European Parliament for Relations with South Asia from the 23rd to the 29th of November to hold talks with Constituent Assembly members. The delegation expressed its satisfaction for the recent positive developments on the peace process and encouraged to strengthen the new Constitution in line with the international Human Rights instruments to which Nepal is a party.

In its aim to protect and promote human rights and democracy, the EU has developed a number of tools and instruments, such as political dialogues, guidelines, action at multilateral forum and financial instruments such as the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).

Throughout this period the EU has continuously stressed the need for human rights to receive appropriate attention in the peace process. The EU has been providing up to EUR 30 million (NPR approx 3.3 billion) annually in assistance to promote peace, stability and development in Nepal. In this context the EU is committed to use these instruments to continue its support and protection of the rights of the people of Nepal, such as combating caste based discriminations, protecting Human Rights defenders or combating violence against women.
Project Launches

The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) is providing support for the promotion of democracy and human rights in third countries since 2006. This initiative is the concrete expression of the EU’s intention to integrate the promotion of democracy and human rights into all of its external policies. With a €1.1 billion budget for 2007-2013, this instrument puts respect for human rights and democracy into a global context and focuses on four areas:

- Strengthening democracy, good governance and the rule of law (support for political pluralism, a free media and sound justice system);
- Abolishing the death penalty in countries which still retain it;
- Combating torture through preventive measures (like police training and education) and repressive measures (creating international tribunals and criminal courts);
- Fighting racism and discrimination by ensuring respect for political and civil rights.

The Delegation of the European Union to Nepal has recently launched six projects selected through country specific calls for proposal under the following objectives: a) strengthening the role of civil society in human rights and democratic reform, in facilitating the peaceful conciliation of group interests and in consolidating political participation and representation; and b) supporting actions on human rights and democracy issues in areas covered by EU Guidelines, including on the death penalty. Partners are international, regional and local civil society organizations with special expertise in this area:

- The regional organization Human Rights Protection and Legal Service Centre (HRPLSC) has launched a project to create a just, peaceful and human rights promoting society in Rukum and Rolpa districts. During the conflict, those districts were considered to be the Maoist headquarters, happening to be the worst-hit and badly affected by the conflict-related violence compared to other areas of the country. The project will strengthen capacity of conflict affected women and engage them in human rights and reconciliation promoting initiatives at the community level, and will make the concerned stakeholders responsive to the human rights claims made by the conflict affected people.
- The media is playing an important role in the promotion and protection of democracy and human rights.
- The EU is supporting an International Alert (IA) project which aimed to ensure a secure, responsible and independent media for the protection and promotion of human rights, democracy and peace in Nepal. This project will seek to strengthen responsible media practice and a policy environment that supports freedom of expression, independence of media and the security of journalists.
- The EU is also funding a project implemented by the local NGO Integrated Community Development Campaign (ICDC), which works in the sector of social mobilization and empowerment of the society, capacity building of local stakeholders through training, advocacy and lobby. This project will focus on protection and promotion of human rights of the marginalized communities and other community groups in 30 different VDCs of the Dhading district.
- Muslim women in Nepal are one of the most marginalized groups and have been deprived of equal rights as Nepali citizens faring far behind in terms of economic, political and social development. With the EU funded project ‘Empowering Muslim women for enhancing inclusive democratic reform and political participation’, Nepal Muslim Women Welfare Society (NMWWS) is contributing to improve awareness and capacity of Muslim women on human rights and democratic reform process and address their socio-political issues for improving their political participation and representation.
- Child Watabaran Center Nepal (CWCN) is implementing a project to protect the most vulnerable segment of urban poor in slum settlements of Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts. With different activities, such as awareness, capacity building, networking and support to victims, the project aim to create a community based protection mechanism of the basic human rights of the most vulnerable group of people, especially women and children.
- The EU is also funding a project to contribute to bring together the哈利yas of Nepal at national level and ensure their full rehabilitation and enjoyment of their human rights with respect and protection from the Government of Nepal and their communities. This project is implemented by CARE Denmark which is working with哈利yas at the community level through other interventions. The哈利ya system is one of the most several forms of bonded labour systems in Nepal.
Visit of Jean Lambert MEP, Chair, European Parliament Delegation for Relations with South Asia

Ms. Jean Lambert, Chair of the European Parliament Delegation for Relations with South Asia, arrived in Kathmandu on November 24th for a six-day visit during which she met a large number of leaders from across the Nepali political spectrum, and undertook a field visit to the Rupandehi and Kapilvastu districts in the Western Terai Region.

The purpose of the Delegation’s visit was to assess current EU-Nepal cooperation and to explore new areas of partnership to assist Nepal’s development. Moreover, it also gave the Delegation the opportunity to gain a direct view of the rapidly evolving political situation in the country.

Shortly after arriving, the Delegation kick-started work with a briefing lunch during which a number of issues relevant to today’s Nepal were discussed, including the human rights situation, the integration and rehabilitation of former Maoist combatants, the work and progress of the Constituent Assembly, the rise of Madhesh-based political parties, and the country’s international position at the crossroads of Indian, Chinese, European and American interests.

The first meeting was conducted with the Madheshi People’s Rights Forum Nepal (MPRF-N) and was marked by the party’s concern over the perceived lack of progress in the government’s response to Madheshi grievances. The Chair expressed understanding and said that the EU was interested in developing a closer working relation with the Madheshi parties.

It must be noted that mostly, the prevailing sentiment amongst the political leaders was one of optimism, even though they all agreed on the fact that there was still a long way to go before the successful completion of the peace process. While the Madheshis expressed hope for the federal restructuring of the state, Mr. Sushil Koirala, President of the Nepali Congress, Mr. Jhala Nath Khanal, Chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal – Unified Marxist Leninist joined the Delegation in welcoming the “historic” 7-point agreement and the latest progress in the integration and rehabilitation process.

The same general feeling was shared by Prime Minister Dr. Bhattarai and President Dr. Yadav, who both thanked the EU for its continued help and welcomed the Chair’s pledge that such help would continue in the future. They also noted that Nepali politics seemed to be increasingly driven by the search for consensus.

Over the course of the next days, the Delegation went on to meet with Mr. Neelkantha Upaty, Acting Chief Election Commissioner, Mr. Subash Chandra Nemwang, Chairman of the Constituent Assembly, Mr. Nilambar Acharya, Chairman of the Legislature-Parliament Constitutional Committee, and with Mr. Padam Bishwakarma, Chairman of the Legislature-Parliament International Relations and Human Rights Committee. Finally, it also had the chance to discuss the recent developments in the situation of refugees originating from Tibet and Bhutan with Mr. Stephane Jacquemet, UNHCR Representative for Nepal.

Saturday was an early morning as the Delegation met with several EU staff at Kathmandu airport to fly to Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha and thus a major pilgrimage destination and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The short flight across the hills was quickly completed, and upon arrival the Delegation met with UNICEF representatives to visit several EU-funded projects focused on education, nutrition and health. (See more in article of next page)
The Delegation from the European Parliament visited several EU-funded education and nutrition projects in the Rupandehi and Kapilvastu districts. Education is one of the EU’s three priority intervention sectors in Nepal, and therefore the mission visited the Narul Walum Islamia Primary School in Kapilvastu district. It is one of 52 madrassa schools in the district that have been mainstreamed into the government’s education system, but continues to thrive through the donations of the local Muslim community. The school teaches the Koran, in both Arabic and Urdu, as well as the government curriculum including English, Nepali, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. ‘The best indication that we did a good thing by mainstreaming is that of the 312 children studying in the school, 70 are non Muslims,’ said Mr. Mukhtar Mussalman, the Chief of the School Management Committee. “But we have shortages of classrooms and teachers,” added one of the teachers. “If we could overcome those challenges with support from the government, then the teaching and learning activities in our school would see a huge boost, and more of the enrolled children could attend classes on a more regular basis.”

The visit then brought the group further to the Jana Jyoti Primary School, which is located in a remote Rupandehi village and is supported by the Volunteer Service Overseas programme, which aims at promoting quality and inclusive education for out-of-reach children in Nepal”, at least until mid-2014. The Delegation members met with the children - who had been brought in on their free day - , their teachers, and two overseas volunteers from Britain and the Netherlands. Both had already spent one and a half years working at Jana Jyoti, teaching the children directly but also providing courses for the teachers.

In the area of nutrition, the EU has contributed a grant of £20 million to UNICEF to tackle under nutrition in five Asian countries, including Nepal, where poor nutrition remains a major obstacle to development. Nepal received €3.2 million from the EU for the period 2010-2014. This funding is being used to support a comprehensive package of measures to prevent and address chronic malnutrition in the country where pervasive child and maternal undernutrition threatens to derail national economic development and growth. UNICEF is working with the Government of Nepal to improve access to essential health and nutrition services of women during pregnancy and of children till the age of two. This period covering the first thousand days of life (that is from conception to two years of age) is known as the critical ‘window of opportunity’, when young children lose their chance to thrive cognitively and physically if poorly nourished.

The Delegation then met with health facility workers at Motipur village, Rupandehi district, to obtain an overview of the ongoing UNICEF-supported programme on micronutrient powders (MNPs). Rupandehi is one of six districts modeling delivery of MNPs integrated with infant and young child feeding (IYCF) to children aged 6-24 months. “We trained 1541 Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) to deliver Baal Vita (MNP), and they have so far reached 30,000 mothers with young children, 70% of the total” said Mr. Maheshwar Shrestha, Chief of the District Public health Office in Rupandehi during his briefing.

As the mission members met with the mothers and FCHVs (often illiterate women who are taught a level of training that permits them to give initial treatment to children who present certain symptoms, hence speeding up recovery and improving illness detection) who assist in the distribution of the MNP, it was clear that the programme ‘is working in improving the nutrition status of the children’. According to Ms Lambert, “even more impressive was to see the energetic dedication of the FCHVs who, despite their busy personal family commitments, seem to have worked extra hard to ensure that the children in their villages were better nourished.”

As of September 2011, a total of 10.2 million sachets of MNPs have been distributed to 66,603 children with an average compliance rate of 65%, among the six model districts. Qualitative evidence from the mothers has revealed that they are pleased with the impact of the MNP on their children’s growth.
Croatia Signs Accession Treaty to Become 28th Member Of the EU

On 09 December 2011 the Accession Treaty with Croatia was signed at a special ceremony held in Brussels. The signing of the Treaty paves the way for the ratification procedures that will allow Croatia to become the 28th member of the European Union (EU) from 01 July 2013. Croatia’s accession will complete the 6th wave of enlargement in the EU’s history, representing an important further step on the path towards a wider Europe “United in diversity”.

Over half a century, the EU has brought political stability and economic prosperity to its citizens. It has created a frontier-free single market and a single currency, the euro. It has reunited a fractured continent. The European Union is a major economic and commercial power and the world’s biggest donor of development aid to poorer countries. Its membership has grown from six to 27 nations, bringing the EU’s population to nearly half a billion.

Europe has always been home to different peoples and cultures. Every member state includes people from other countries — usually with close historical ties to the host country. The EU sees ethnic and cultural diversity as an asset, and promotes toleration, respect and mutual understanding.

Though richly diverse, EU countries are united in their commitment to peace, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. They seek to uphold these values in Europe and beyond, to build and share prosperity, and to exert their collective influence by acting together on the world stage.

Notwithstanding the fact that some countries in the EU are currently going through a difficult economic time, the EU remains firmly committed to supporting those countries in the world that are in need of development assistance — particularly the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The EU has reiterated its stance not to cut down economic assistance to these countries, irrespective of the existing hardships.

“The European Union hence will continue with its two-pronged approach of addressing the crisis at home and stepping up its support to the less privileged countries in different parts of the world, including South Asia,” according to Dr. Alexander Spachis, Ambassador, Head of the European Union Delegation to Nepal.

In addition to Croatia, which has already signed the Accession Treaty, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland and Turkey are candidate countries to join the Union. The EU gives substantial economic and practical assistance to candidate countries to help them prepare for membership.

Up to 10 years or more can pass from the time a country submits an application to its actual date of entry. Once a membership treaty is signed, it must be ratified by the European Parliament and by the national parliaments of the candidate country and of all EU member states.

Schengen enlargement: Liechtenstein becomes 26th member state

The idea of having an area for free movement within Europe was born on 14 June 1985. This area that practically abolishes all controls at national frontiers between many European nations is one of the success stories of the European Union, known widely as the Schengen area.

The first five countries to sign the Schengen agreement were Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

The gradual enlargement of the Schengen area has been very popular since it provides over half a billion European citizens including all third country nationals who are legally present in the Schengen area to enjoy the benefits of real free movement.

At the same time, every participating country has the right to perform checks on persons and customs checks anywhere inside its internal territory, as part of the everyday work of the police, customs and immigration control. Examples range from road traffic checks to the fight against organised crimes.

Recently Liechtenstein, a landlocked country in central Europe bordered by Switzerland to the west and south and by Austria to the east has become the 26th country to join the Schengen area.

The other member countries of the Schengen zone are Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.

Third country nationals who plan to travel to Europe can enjoy free movement within the Schengen zone provided they have a Schengen visa.

They can apply for the Schengen visa in the designated embassies of the Schengen zone members in their home country.

Newsletter of The Delegation of The European Union To Nepal
ERECS-P hospital Opening

On Tuesday 15 November the Right Honourable President of Nepal, Ram Baran Yadav, inaugurated the new Biratnagar Eye Hospital (BEH) in Nepal’s 2nd largest city. Several hundred guests joined the President in celebrating the opening of the new complex. A small team from the EU Delegation led by Gérard van Driesche, Head of Finance & Contracts, attended the ceremony.

The new hospital complex replaces the previous Biratnagar Eye Hospital, established in 2006, which was running out of capacity. The EU has contributed €1.5 million to the project and is one of the main partners, together with Christoffel-Blindenmission (CBM), NGO Nepal Netra Jyoti Sangh (NNJS) and the Social Welfare Council (SWC) of Nepal. Additional funding is provided by Standard Chartered Bank through its ‘Seeing is Believing’ campaign.

Since its start in September 2006 Biratnagar Eye Hospital has grown rapidly from initially 100 beds to 450 beds and progressed into an eye hospital widely recognized for delivering affordable high quality eye care services to the economically poor and under-privileged people of the community.

The EU-funded project has been embedded within a much larger, very successful programme called the “Eastern Regional Eye Care Programme” (ERECS-P). This programme started in the early 1980s following the results of a nationwide blindness survey. According to this survey 92% of the blind population was residing in rural areas and 80% was affected by an avoidable eye disease.

The main objective of the project is to improve the quality of life and economic situation of reversibly blind persons and those at risk of blindness in Eastern Nepal. The project focuses on the vulnerable population of Nepal’s Eastern Region, where the prevalence of avoidable blindness by cataract is very high. The objectives of the project are in line with the “VISION 2020: The Right to Sight” initiative, launched in Nepal in 2000. VISION 2020 is a partnership between the World Health Organization (WHO), and the International Agency for Prevention of Blindness (IAPB), a large umbrella organization for eye-care professional groups and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) involved in eye-care.

ERECS-P is a high-volume treatment programme, which provides high quality comprehensive eye services at a cost affordable to the population in eastern Nepal and northern India (about 80% of patients originate from India, sometimes as far as 700km away). The average cost of an operation, for instance, is 1000 NPR (EUR 10) – compared to 3000 NPR (EUR 30) in other developing countries.

The programme as a whole consists of: 1) Sagarmatha Choudhary Eye Hospital (SCEH) in Lahan; 2) Biratnagar Eye Hospital (BEH) in Biratnagar; 3) 7 Satellite Clinics/Primary Eye Care Centres in the Terai as well as in the hills. EREC-P itself is a further development of the Sagarmatha Choudhary Eye Hospital (SCEH) in Lahan, Siraha district. SCEH started out as small eye unit with only 12 beds in 1983 and has now, under the leadership of Dr. Albrecht Hennig and his wife Kristina, expanded to a hospital with more than 400 beds and five satellite clinics receiving over 2000 people a day.
Photos from the field

The new Biratnagar Eye Hospital

Students at the Narul Walum Islamia Primary School in Kapilvastu district during the EU visit in November 2011

Alexander Spachis, Ambassador, Head of the European Union Delegation to Nepal addressing the media persons at a function organised to mark Croatia’s signing of the European Union Accession Treaty. Croatia signed the treaty on the 9th of December 2011 and will become the 28th member of the European Union starting 1st July 2013.

First Aid course organised at the Delegation by the Nepal Red Cross Society.

EREC-P Director Dr. Albrecht Hennig and team

Students at the Narul Walum Islamia Primary School in Kapilvastu district during the EU visit in November 2011

The EC-Nepal WTO Assistance Programme, which concluded in December 2011, has helped different line departments of Nepal Government to build their competencies in trade through training, installation of equipment, enhancement of laboratory facilities and capacity building. The picture shows equipment for measurement of trading items. Several such equipments have been installed at the Nepal Bureau of Standards & Metrology under the project.

Ambassador Spachis addressing the launching of the European Union funded ‘Agriculture, Nutrition, Extension Project.’ The European Union has provided NPR 400.8 million to the ‘International Development Enterprises’ to promote agriculture and nutrition in four districts of Nepal and one district of Bangladesh.

Newsletter of The Delegation of The European Union To Nepal
This Call for Proposals aims to support projects under all three Actions of the programme:

**Action 1: Erasmus Mundus Joint Programmes**
- Action 1A: Erasmus Mundus Master Courses (EMMC)
- Action 1B: Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorates (EMJD)

**Action 2: Erasmus Mundus Partnerships**
- Action 2 – STRAND 1: Partnerships with countries covered by the ENPI, DCI, EDF and IPA instruments (former External Cooperation Window)
- Action 2 – STRAND 2: Partnerships with countries and territories covered by the Industrialised Countries Instrument (ICI)

**Action 3: Promotion of European higher education**
- Projects to enhance the Attractiveness of European higher education

**Deadline**
Deadline for submission of applications under all three Actions:
30 April 2012

More information and application forms are available on the EACEA website:
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/funding/2012/call_eacea_42_11_en.php#action1

Erasmus Mundus Scholarships
Opportunities for higher education in Europe for Nepalese students

Erasmus Mundus Courses
Erasmus Mundus offers culturally enriching higher education opportunities for both European and Non-European students. For More information on the Erasmus Mundus Scholarships, please check the link:

Prospective students from any country are invited to apply to participate in an Erasmus Mundus Course, provided they have obtained a first degree awarded by a higher education institution. For more information on the eligibility criteria please check the following link:

Erasmus Mundus course are high-quality study programmes offered by a consortium of at least three European higher education institutions. They last between one and two years and lead to the awarding of a recognised double joint or multiple degrees. Students have to study in at least two institutions. There exist Erasmus Mundus courses in almost all academic disciplines. The course normally starts between August and November depending on the usual starting date of the academic year in the countries concerned.

Under this specific action of Erasmus Mundus students and scholars from third countries will be granted scholarships or stipend respectively. All the countries of the world-with exception of EU Member States, EEA-EFTA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and candidate countries for accession to the EU (Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey) – are considered third countries

Check this link for the available Erasmus Mundus Courses:

**Note:**
- There are no Erasmus Mundus courses offered at undergraduate or doctorate levels
- Interested students have to register for an Erasmus Mundus Masters Course directly with consortium offering the Course. The consortium informs interested students about specific admission conditions (e.g. study results, language skills, etc.) and about application deadlines
- Please do not apply to the Delegation of the European Union to Nepal or the European Commission

The EU has recently launched several global and local calls for proposals that offer funding in a wide variety of areas. Another round of local calls is expected to be launched in early 2012.

For more information we invite you to visit our websites at:


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

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