Dear Readers

In the month of August, two important developments took place in Nepal’s politics. First, Dr. Baburam Bhattarai was elected the fourth Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal; and second, the country’s Constituent Assembly was extended for three months until the end of November.

On behalf of the European Union, I would like to warmly congratulate Prime Minister Bhattarai on his election. Mr. José Manuel Barroso, the President of the European Commission, has also extended his official felicitations. The Prime Minister has made the conclusion of the peace process his first priority and the European Union would like to express its hopes for a speedy conclusion of both the integration and rehabilitation of former combatants and the drafting of a new constitution. If the political parties and their leaders take a flexible stance and work together to bridge their differences, significant achievements can be reached on the peace process before the end of the Constituent Assembly’s extended tenure.

The outlines of a political agreement on integration and rehabilitation now seem to be emerging and an all-party agreement is possible. Prime Minister Bhattarai and his party have put forward an ambitious roadmap to complete the integration of former combatants, and the decision by the UCPN (Maoist) to submit the keys to the weapons containers in the cantonments to the Special Committee for Supervision, Integration and Rehabilitation represents a step forward in the peace process. I am hopeful that the integration of former combatants can be concluded within a reasonable amount of time if all parties show the necessary flexibility and commitment to achieve a common ground.

The European Union attaches equal importance to the drafting of a democratic and inclusive constitution. Concrete agreement between the political leaders is necessary on issues such as the future form of governance, the electoral system, and the federal model, so that a first version of the new constitution can be presented before the Constituent Assembly’s expiry at the end of November.

Because the Delegation of the European Union is fully supportive of Nepal’s efforts towards lasting peace and stability, we will continue our assistance and funding such as, for example, through our contribution to the Nepal Peace Trust Fund (NPTF). In the framework provided by the NPTF, the European Union is collaborating in partnership with the Government of Nepal through a support programme worth EUR 28 million for the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and related agreements.

I would further like to draw attention to the other fields that were designated priorities by Prime Minister Bhattarai, namely the areas of good governance and economic development. These issues are key for ensuring long-term peace and prosperity for the people of Nepal, and the European Union will continue working closely with the Government to promote a robust, democratic system of good governance and improve living conditions for the population. In practical terms, we emphasise three priority areas in our cooperation—Education, Stability and Peace Building, and Trade Facilitation and Economic Capacity Building—as laid out in the EU’s 2007-2013 Country Strategy Paper for Nepal.

Thanks to our programmes in these fields and on other cross-cutting issues (like human rights and conflict prevention), we are assisting the country in profiting from the peace dividend and in enabling sustainable economic development. The European Union will maintain this strong engagement in its cooperation towards the future, as demonstrated by the recent visit to Nepal of Mr. Dirk Meganck, Director in the European Commission’s Directorate General for Development and Cooperation, who displayed a strong interest in the country’s challenges and opportunities.

In conclusion, Nepal now stands at the crossroads, and political decision-makers have a chance to open a new chapter in the country’s history if they show courage and determination in completing the peace process and tackling related challenges. The Delegation of the European Union will continue to stand by Nepal, supporting the Government and the people of Nepal to move towards a new future.

Alexander Spachis
Ambassador
European Union Delegation to Nepal
EU Visit to Eastern Nepal as Resettlement Programme for Refugees from Bhutan Passes 50,000 Mark

Refugees from Bhutan have been hosted in seven camps by the Government of Nepal and local communities since the early 1990’s after the Bhutanese Government imposed a series of restrictive citizenship laws. While basic humanitarian assistance and international protection is provided by the Government of Nepal and UNHCR in cooperation with other partners, a large-scale resettlement programme to third countries has been implemented since 2007 to contribute to the resolution of this protracted refugee situation. In August this year, the programme passed the 50,000 mark as refugees from Bhutan have begun new lives in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Norway as well as some EU Member States including Denmark, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Today, some 63,000 refugees from Bhutan remain in four refugee camps in southeastern Nepal. A majority of them have expressed their interest to be resettled. As a result of resettlement the camp populations have decreased significantly. The UNHCR and the Government of Nepal now aim to consolidate the seven camps into two by 2012.

The EU has been funding UNHCR activities in Nepal since 1999. A budget of EUR 3.96 million was allocated under the Aid to Uprooted People Programme (AUP) for the International Protection and Assistance to the Bhutanese refugees for the period 2008-2010. As the project has recently come to a close, discussions are underway to provide additional funds to support the refugees living in the camps and also to help them move ahead with their resettlement plans. The basic assistance provided to the refugees has ensured their livelihood and protected their rights. This assistance includes basic and supplementary food provision, health and nutrition, water and sanitation, primary education and transport and logistics among others. In addition, the EU’s humanitarian arm, ECHO, has been providing food aid to the refugees since 2001 through a series of contracts with the UN’s World Food Programme.

The current progress made on the resettlement and the resulting gradual phase-down of the UNHCR operations, were discussed during a recent field visit to Jhapa and Morang districts of Nepal by the EU Delegation team, Enora Marenne, Dries Belet and Cristina Gómez Dubois. In the course of the two day visit, the EU team visited Khudunabari, Sanischare and Beldangi camps, as well as the recently closed Goldhap camp which was completely destroyed by a devastating fire earlier this year. They also met Ms. Rianawati, the Head of UNHCR Sub-Office Damak, and other UNHCR programme staff to discuss about the implementation of camp consolidation and resettlement programme as well as the planned Community Based Development Programme (CBDP) which will focus on providing integrated services to both host communities and refugees that are yet to be resettled.

The EU team observed several activities in and around the camps. A new communication center will be opened soon, where both communities will have access to computers, printing facilities and communication equipments. The team also visited a Female Rehabilitation Center in Damak, run by the NGO ‘Happy Nepal’, targeting women from both communities.

In addition to the encouraging progress on the resettlement and the recent endorsement of the CBDP by the Government of Nepal at a validation workshop held in Kathmandu, the EU team congratulated UNHCR for the quality of services provided to the refugees as well as ongoing camp consolidation efforts which include the relocation of refugee families from Goldhap camp that were affected by the fire in March this year.

The EU has welcomed several times the ongoing resettlement efforts which are critical to find a durable solution for the refugees of Bhutan. Resettlement, however, is only a partial solution and other durable solutions will need to be found for those refugees that either cannot or do not want to be resettled. In this respect, the EU continues to hope that the Government of Bhutan will allow them to return to their country without restriction should they wish to do so.
EU Delegation to Nepal Celebrates Indigenous Peoples' Day

This year the EU Delegation to Nepal commemorated for the second time the International Day of the World’s Indigenous People. This celebration was a good occasion to increase general awareness and to promote the establishment of partnerships with indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities in the country.

Similar events took place all over the world as a testimony of the EU commitment to indigenous peoples both in and outside the EU. This support, in line with EU policies, is essential to ensure the objectives of poverty eradication, sustainable development of natural resources, the observance of human rights and the development of democracy are met.

On the 5th of August, the Delegation, in cooperation with CARE Nepal and NEFIN, organized an event on “EU strategies, interventions and future prospects for support to Indigenous Peoples and ethnic minorities in Nepal”. The event gathered more than 80 participants from indigenous organizations all over Nepal and included intellectuals, journalists and representatives of the EU Member States and their agencies in Nepal.

During the workshop the participants were informed about EU policies and the available funding instruments and initiatives to address issues related to indigenous peoples. Martha Mendes, focal point for Indigenous People and expert on the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), one of the EU’s main funding instruments in the field, visited Nepal on the occasion of the event. During the event she shared detailed information on the work of the EU and the UN in the field of Indigenous People’s rights. In addition, project partners presented the results, outcomes and impacts of some ongoing and past EU funded projects focused on indigenous peoples in Nepal.

The EU has been promoting issues related to indigenous peoples in Nepal, both at policy and political level. This event was a very good occasion to draw attention to their vulnerability and exclusion in socio-political life, which is the result of identity, cultural and language differences.

The outcomes of this workshop will certainly help to prioritize future EU strategies and interventions in Nepal, as well as contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of the ongoing programme and projects. To continue its work on Indigenous People’s rights the Delegation is planning to launch the next EIDHR local call for proposal by the end of this year.

EIDHR projects increase indigenous peoples’ rights and capacity in Nepal

The EU actively supports the establishment of partnerships with indigenous peoples, as part of the EU aim to integrate the promotion of democracy and human rights into all of its external policies. So far, the EU has funded several projects under the EIDHR instrument to support groups or individuals within civil society that are

Mr. Shiva Bhandari, Program Manager at the EU Delegation to Nepal, interacting with the Raji community that benefits from an EIDHR-funded project in Sankhu district, August 2011.
defending democracy, as well as intergovernmental organizations that implement the international mechanisms for the protection of human rights. Martha Mendez, visiting from EU Headquarters in Brussels, and Shiva Bandhari, Programme Manager at the EU Delegation in Nepal, went on a field monitoring visit together in August to observe some of the ongoing projects.

Both experts visited an EIDHR project in Surkhet district, which is mainly focused on empowering the Raji community (an ethnic minority in Nepal) to help establish their rights and entitlements. In order to reduce the vulnerability of this endangered community, the project has undertaken various activities, such as: developing leadership skills and ensuring access to leadership positions and participation in the community and district level political structures; to organize the Raji community for their heritage protection; to increase their access to community resources; and to conduct skill development and income generation programs to increasing their livelihood options.

As part of this monitoring visit, the experts stopped in Nepalgunj to observe the EIDHR project on “Action and Social Inclusion of Children Affected by Armed Conflict in Nepal (ASIC)” that is implemented by ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency). This initiative contributes to the protection and promotion of the rights of former child soldiers and conflict-affected children in Nepal. In addition, the EU team also visited a recent project funded from the ‘Investing in People’ thematic instrument that aims to enhance the skills of the targeted dalits, janjatis and other marginalised communities in the informal sector. The objective is to contribute to lasting peace and economic prosperity in Nepal through providing skills training and increasing employment opportunities for the disadvantaged young women and men that are working in the informal economy.

The promotion of indigenous peoples’ rights under the EIDHR

The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) as the predecessor of the European Initiatives for Democracy and Human Rights was launched in 2006 to provide support for the promotion of democracy and human rights in non-EU countries.

The rights of indigenous peoples are one of the priorities under the EIDHR. The goals are to increase indigenous peoples’ rights and capacity to control their own social, economic and cultural development, while enhancing territorial rights and capacity for sustainable management of biological resources.

Interventions under this instrument include capacity building of the indigenous people to have access to theirs rights and opportunities, as well as ensure their participation for the leadership development. Activities also focus to ensure indigenous peoples’ livelihood promotion and economic development and sensitizing authorities about their obligation towards indigenous peoples.

For more information we invite you to visit our website: http://www.eidhr.eu/side-panels/highlights/lgbt-women-children-minorities/indigenous-peoples.

EU policies on Indigenous Peoples

In its efforts to promote the rights of indigenous people, the European Union seeks to integrate human rights, including indigenous issues, into all aspects of its external policies (political dialogues, multilateral fora, financial support).

In line with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People adopted in 2007, the EU addresses indigenous peoples’ issues at policy level and provides practical and financial support. At policy level, the Common Position 13/2000 adopted by the Council on 16 December 1999, establishes concrete measures to promote the full integration of the environmental dimension in the development process of developing countries.

Furthermore, the Council resolution of November 1998 on Indigenous peoples highlights their right to self-determination. Moreover, the EU is working closely with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to support the participation of indigenous representatives at UN events and meetings and to support the International Labour Organisation in its work for indigenous peoples based on ILO Convention 169.

EU Delegations around the world also organize events around 9 August – International Day of the World’s Indigenous People – to raise awareness of these groups.

For more information we invite you to visit our website: http://eeas.europa.eu/human_rights/ip/index_en.htm
Project Launches

Caritas - EU Supports Climate Project to Benefit Farmers in Kaksi, Nawalparasi and Bardiya Districts

Caritas Nepal recently launched a new programme to promote local food and nutritional security of 1000 small farmer households by identifying and promoting suitable innovative and adaptive small scale farming practices in the mid-hills of Kaksi, Chure hills of Nawalparasi and the plains of Bardiya.

The 60 month project “Building resilience to climate change through strengthening adaptive small scale farming systems in rainfed areas in Bangladesh, India and Nepal (SAF-BINI)” is part of the EU’s “Global Programme on Agriculture Research for Development”. The project is part of the broader support by the EU to South Asian nations that are exposed to adverse impacts of climate change. Caritas Nepal is implementing the project in Nepal with EU assistance of EUR 600,000.

Practical Action PRISM - Informal Waste Workers Get Support From The EU

The EU and Practical Action have joined forces to help improve the situation of 4,000 informal workers in the solid waste management sector in Nepal. The EU is contributing EUR 1,253,125 to the PRISM Project (Poverty Reduction of Informal Workers in Solid Waste Management Sector) implemented by Practical Action. The PRISM project will ameliorate the living conditions of waste pickers, who are among the poorest people in the Kathmandu area and are socially and economically exploited. Thirty five per cent of the project beneficiaries will be women.

The primary objective of the project is to improve the living conditions of these informal workers involved in managing solid waste. The project seeks to raise their income by 30 percent, reduce the negative stigma attached to the profession, improve their working conditions and help them benefit from social protection schemes. Practical Action will implement the project with its local partner, the Centre for Integrated Urban Development (CIUD). Project associates are Solid Waste Management and Resource Management Centre (SWMRMC), UN-Habitat Water for Asian Cities Programme Nepal, and

NGO Federation - NGO Federation of Nepal Launches Project to Increase Civil Society Participation to Improve Economic and Public Finance Governance

The NGO Federation of Nepal recently launched their new programme aimed at improving transparency, accountability and integrity of economic and public finance governance at local level. It is implemented in 11 districts around the country: Accham, Kailali, Mugu, Rolpa, Gorkha, Mustang, Rautahat, Ramechhap, Udayapur, and Khotang.

Good governance is one of the three focal areas of EU cooperation in Nepal for the period 2011-2013. The NGO Federation of Nepal is implementing the project in Nepal with EU assistance of EUR 448,887. The 36 month project “Strengthening Participation of CSOs to improve economic and public finance governance in Nepal” will promote citizen-centred local governance, focusing specifically on: i) participation of marginalised people into economic planning, programme design and budgeting, ii) creating pressure to establish accountable and responsive local authorities; iii) enhancing the capacity of non-state actors to fight against corruption; iv) transparency, accountability and integrity of local authorities’ budget revenues and public expenditure.

EU Ambassador to Nepal Dr. Spachis speaking at an interaction on local elections and good governance organized by the NGO Federation Nepal under the EU supported project “Strengthening participation of Civil Society Organisations to improve economic and public finance governance in Nepal” on 5 September 2011.
EU-supported Renewable Energy Project brings visible improvements to life in Nepal’s villages

The Renewable Energy Project (REP) is a joint effort by the EU and the Government of Nepal to create renewable energy infrastructure and provide basic energy services for the benefit of rural people in remote districts of Nepal. The project supported the installation of a total of 971 solar energy systems for public institutions such as schools (e.g. to power computers, printers, photocopiers, lighting, charging of mobiles), health posts (e.g. vaccine refrigeration, medical lamps); and rural communities (e.g. water pumping, milling agro-grains, communications, literacy classes, entertainment, drying agricultural products, supply of hot water). The project has been implemented in 21 districts: Darchula, Baitadi, Doti, Achham, Bajura, Bajhang, Salyan, Dolpa, Mug, Jumla, Humla, Gorakha, Myagdi, Mustang, Dhading, Dolakha, Ramechhap, Okhaldhunga, Shankhuwasabha, Panchathar and Taplejung. It is estimated that over 1 million people in rural areas will benefit from the project.

Mr. Dirk Meganck, Director for Asia, Central Asia and Pacific at the Directorate General for Development and Cooperation of the European Commission, along with other EU officials, visited Nepal from 25-31 August 2011. The objective of the visit was to assess EU–Nepal cooperation activities, with a particular focus on the implementation of Renewable Energy Project (REP). It was the first time that a high-level EU delegation visited one of the most remote districts of Nepal.

Mr. Meganck was accompanied by Ms. Rensje Teerink, Deputy Head of Section, European External Action Service (EEAS); Mr. Franck Viault, Head of Sector for Cooperation with Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Mr. Ubaldo Lorenzini, Desk Officer for Nepal of the Directorate General for Development and Cooperation at the European Commission; Mr. Lluis Navarro, Head of Operations, and Mr. Ranjan Prakash Shrestha, Program Manager from EU Delegation to Nepal.

On 28 August 2011, Mr. Meganck and his team inaugurated the REP-supported Institutional Solar Photovoltaic System (ISPS), a community communication centre, an agro-grinding mill, and water pumping systems in Deulekh VDC of Baitadi district. As a result of the project local schools are now able to teach their students using solar powered computers. There was a large gathering of local people welcoming the visiting team, including members of the Community Energy Service Providers (CESPs), students, women groups, and representatives of social and local political institutions. Many people from nearby village also joined the gathering to welcome the delegation.

Ms. Ambika Mahara, on behalf of member of the water user group, expressed her gratitude for the EU support to the solar water pumping system, which brought about significant changes to their lives. The water pumping scheme now brings water to the community’s doorstep. Women no longer need to collect water from distant sources, a very time-consuming activity, especially during periods of illness and pregnancy.

Another beneficiary, Mr. Lila Dhar Joshi, operator of the grinding mill, highlighted how life has become easier after the installation of a solar-powered grinding mill in the community. Before its installation, people used to grind their grains using a traditional water mill, which is situated in Kataujpani VDC, more than two hours walk from the village. Traditionally, transporting the grains to the mill, as well as the grinding, is the responsibility of women.
Group of young people, affected by and involved in the armed conflict, who are beneficiaries of the EIDHR project “Action for social inclusion of children affected by armed conflict in Nepal” (ASIC), in Surkhet district, August 2011.

Young male beneficiaries of the brick-layer training program provided by Helvetas Nepal, an EU-funded project on “Skill development and employment for the informal sector in Nepal”, Banke district, August 2011.

EU team visiting Chhani Primary School at Deulekh VDC, in Baitadi district, during a visit to the Far West in August 2011.

EU team visiting a refugee camp in Sanischare, August 2011.

Beneficiaries of the EIDHR project “Empowering Raji community to establish their rights and entitlements”, in Surkhet district, August 2011.

A carpenters’ workshop in Bardya district provided by Helvetas Nepal, an EU-funded project on “Skill development and employment for the informal sector in Nepal”, August 2011.

Local women highlighting the benefits of a water pumping system installed by the EU-funded Renewable Energy Project, during the visit of Mr. Dirk Meganck in August 2011.

Construction of the Community Technology Access (CTA) Center in Beldangi (September 2011), where Bhutanese refugees and the local community will have access to computers, printing facilities and communication equipments.
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

Europe Day

09-May

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

United in Diversity

Average life expectancy in the EU27 (2010)

78.82 years

Three Main EU Institutions

European Parliament, European Commission, Council of the EU

Currency of the 17-member eurozone

Euro

Biggest state (Surface)

France

Smallest state (Surface)

Malta

Most populated state

Germany

Least populated state

Malta

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