



EU-NEPAL NEWS

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OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO NEPAL

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The newly appointed EU Ambassador to Nepal, Ms. Rensje Teerink submits her credentials to President Yadav

The newly appointed Ambassador and Head of the European Union Delegation to Nepal, H.E. Ms. Rensje Teerink, presented her credentials to President Dr. Ram Baran Yadav at a special function organised at the Presidential office on 3 October, 2013.

Ambassador Teerink is the second fully accredited and resident Ambassador of the Delegation of the European Union to Nepal.

"I have been appointed as the EU Ambassador to Nepal at an important moment in Nepal's political history, when the country is set to elect the second Constituent Assembly and complete the constitution drafting process," Ambassador Teerink said.

She reaffirmed the European Union's commitment to assist Nepal in accomplishing its immediate goal of holding fair and impartial elections on 19 November and stressed that all political parties should abide by the law whether they participate in the process or not. The EU has deployed an Election Observation Mission which will travel to different parts of Nepal to observe the elections and will present its final report once the election is completed.

Ambassador Teerink stressed the need for Nepal to have a democratic and inclusive constitution at the earliest and to enhance its policies to promote the economic development of all sections of the Nepalese society.

"We are very hopeful that there will be a significant increase in the EU's development assistance to Nepal for the coming years," Ambassador Teerink added.



Newly appointed EU Ambassador to Nepal, Ms Rensje Teerink presenting her credentials to President Dr. Ram Baran Yadav at his office in Shittal Niwas

Ambassador Teerink, of Dutch nationality, was born in Luxembourg in 1960 and studied Cultural Anthropology/Non-Western Sociology at the University of Amsterdam. Specialising in Asian studies she conducted extensive field research in western India (Gujarat and Maharashtra). In 1985, she joined the Centre for Asian Studies Amsterdam (CASA) as a researcher and, among other consultancy posts, contributed to a project funded by IDPAD (the Indo-Dutch Project for Alternatives in Development) on gender and labour migration in rural India.

She joined the European Commission in 1995 as administrator for South Asia. In 2006, she was appointed Deputy Head of Unit for India, Nepal, Bhutan and SAARC. In 2011, she joined the newly created European External Action Service as Deputy Head of Division for the same countries. She was nominated by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Catherine Ashton, as EU Ambassador/Head of Delegation to Nepal in April 2013.

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Currency Conversion
as of 30 Sept, 2013
EUR 1 = NPR 140.13
EUR 1 = USD 1.326

European Union deploys election observation mission to observe the second Constituent Assembly elections in Nepal

Election observation has been one of the top priorities for the European Union since it deployed its first mission in 1993. It is a key component of European Union's activities to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law worldwide. While it began as a short-term ad hoc operation has today turned into a long-term and rigorous methodology endorsed by the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and the European Commission. Nowadays, European Union Election Observation Missions (EU EOMS) comprehensively assess all aspects of an election process based on the standard international practices.

In keeping with its firm belief that election observation can strengthen democratic institutions, build public confidence in electoral processes and help deter fraud, intimidation and violence, the European Union has deployed an election observation mission to observe the second Constituent Assembly elections in Nepal slated for 19 November, 2013.

HOW THE EU EOM WORKS

The EU EOM was established to observe the elections in Nepal following an invitation from the Government of Nepal. The mission

is led by Chief Observer Eva Joly, a member of the European Parliament.

The mission has 112 observers from 26 EU Member States and from Norway and Switzerland, who are deployed in different parts of Nepal to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the electoral process based on a long-term observation.

The observers will meet government and electoral officials, candidates and political parties, civil society representatives and the media and take stock of the entire electoral process.

A group of 34 long-term observers arrived on 13 October and headed for different districts after three days of comprehensive briefing in Kathmandu. Over the next weeks the observers will meet with, among others, election officials, candidates and representatives of civil society, and will report their observations back to Kathmandu.

Shortly before elections, a group of 40 Short-Term Observers together with a Delegation of members of the European



Chief Election Observer Eva Joly

Parliament and locally-recruited short term observers from the EU Member States embassies will be joining the mission in order to observe voting, counting and the tabulation of results.

EU election observers are bound by a strict code of conduct that ensures their neutrality and impartiality. They do not interfere in the electoral process and have no authority to change or correct any shortcomings or to request changes during the election process. The EU EOM will issue a preliminary statement shortly after the elections. A final report - with technical recommendations for future elections - will be published later. Since 2000, the EU has deployed 78 missions involving the participation of over 10,000 persons. Various types of observers participate in the European Union's Election Observer Missions (EOMs).



The members of the core team along with the long term observers pose for a photograph before setting out to different districts for observing the Constituent Assembly elections 2013.

THE EU EOM TEAMS

Core team experts, including the Deputy Chief Observer, support the Chief Observer, set the analytical framework for the mission, carry out specific tasks such as media monitoring and manage the work of the observers. Other core team experts are knowledgeable in areas such as elections, the law, security, logistics, media and public relations. They have a sound experience of EOMs and are recruited via specific calls for applications.

Long-term observers (LTOs) are ideally deployed two months before an election day and remain in the country after the results are officially announced to observe the resolution of electoral disputes. They are located all over the country and observe the unfolding of the electoral campaign. They also address particular issues, such as the use of public resources by candidates. Short-term observers (STOs) are deployed to observe the polling day and the early counting of ballots. They are deployed in teams of two. Long-term observers report regularly and prepare the STOs' observation programme in their area.

Supporting staff provide the mission with the means to fulfill its duties. They work in

key project, logistics and security positions or as drivers, translators, IT professionals and any other posts necessary for the day-to-day management of the mission.

The Chief Observer is present in the country during all key moments of the mission. She or he has the overall responsibility for the mission, including the final report, and is its only spokesperson. The Chief Observer is traditionally a Member of the European Parliament.

A SIGNIFICANT STEP FOR NEPAL

Chief Observer Joly, in the course of a three day visit to Nepal, said on 31st Oct that inclusiveness and a violence-free environment are the key elements for the success and credibility of the Constituent Assembly elections.

"These elections represent a significant step in the democratic development of Nepal. To meet this challenge it is crucial that all stakeholders engage themselves in the conduct of an inclusive and peaceful electoral process", Ms. Joly said.

Ms. Joly held consultations with the President of Nepal, the Chief Election Commissioner, the Chief Justice and Chairman of the Interim Election Council,

as well as with political party leaders, media representatives and other stakeholders involved in the electoral process.

She said that during her meetings with the Nepali authorities she was assured that everything possible has been done to enable the voters cast their votes in a safe environment.

"We are now in the process of observing and analysing in-depth all aspects of the process and we will issue a preliminary statement on the elections 48 hours after polling day," Joly said in a statement issued by the EU EOM.

On Election Day the EU EOM will deploy over 100 observers from all 28 Member States, as well as, from Norway and Switzerland, throughout the country. Its mandate is to provide an impartial and objective assessment of the entire electoral process. Chief Observer Joly will present the preliminary findings of the EU EOM in a press conference two days after Election Day. A more comprehensive final report, including recommendations for future electoral processes in Nepal, will be published within two months.

Former-Nepali diplomats and EU representatives explore to further EU-Nepal ties

The Delegation of the European Union to Nepal and the Association of the Former Career Ambassadors of Nepal (AFCAN) organised a one-day seminar on the existing state of EU-Nepal cooperation and the possible way forward. Its main objective was to facilitate a candid dialogue between

the EU diplomats, incumbent and former Nepali diplomats and government officials including people representing the trade and economic sector. Five papers were presented at the symposium: 'EU's Cooperation on Nepal's Development', 'EU Investment in Nepal', 'EU-Nepal Trade, Problems and Prospects', 'EU-SAARC Relations' and 'The Role of the European Union in the Promotion of Democracy, Human Rights and 'Electoral Process in Nepal'.



Former EU Ambassador Dr. Alexander Spachis with Foreign Minister Ghimire at the EU-AFCAN seminar

Presenting a paper on "EU-SAARC Relations", Dr. Shambhu Ram Simkhada, Nepal's former Representative to UN in Geneva said that the new evolving institutional architecture of Europe has changed the nature of inter-

state relations within Europe making a global impact.

He observed that since EU-SAARC relations is more evident at the level of the individual SAARC member states rather than SAARC as a whole, the nature of relationship at the institutional level is quite limited.

Dwelling on the possibility of promoting EU-SAARC relations, Dr. Simkhada said since SAARC is a regional grouping having the largest population and abundant resources, it leaves a fertile ground for creative thinking to take the EU-SAARC relations to a new level.

The EU believes that it can help consolidate the integration process of South Asia through its economic influence in the region, its own historical experience of economic and trade integration and of

dealing with diversity, and its interest in crisis prevention. EU support to SAARC currently falls under the Regional Strategy for Asia 2007-2013 and its multi-annual program for Asia. Under these strategies, cooperation between the EC and SAARC seek to promote the harmonization of standards; facilitate trade; raise awareness about the benefits of regional cooperation; and promote business networking in the SAARC area.

In 1999, the EU and SAARC agreed to cooperate on improving market access for SAARC products into EU, working towards harmonizing the rules of origin for SAARC, products for exports to the EU, giving technical support for the establishment of the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) and supporting the harmonisation of SAARC standards, Dr. Simkhada has mentioned in his paper.

Commenting on the paper, Mr. Dhan Bahadur Oli from the SAARC Secretariat said the leaders of the South Asian countries now stress that the current phase of SAARC should be the implementation phase. Each time the leaders meet under the auspices of SAARC, they face a lot of pressure to increase the level of integration. SAARC requires projects based on core areas of regional needs. Some of the needs are capacity building, uplifting, poverty alleviation and value change. SAARC should be developed as a body of multiple stakeholders, with cooperation at the peoples' level, rather than limiting itself to an organisation of eight states. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between SAARC and the EU in 1996, long before EU became an observer. SAARC Development Fund (SDF) will soon be operational, he added.

Commenting on the paper entitled 'EU Investment in Nepal' presented by Mr. Sanjay Poudel from the Nepal Investment Board, Mr. Suraj Vaidya, President of the Federation of Nepalese Commerce and Industries (FNCCI) said that Nepal needs to conduct an analysis of the areas in which it can attract foreign investment. Donors can help by creating conditions for the political parties to put economy on top of the election agenda. Donors should decrease aid once a clear strategy for attracting FDI

is achieved. Mr. Vaidya put forward the example of Bhutan when stating the ideal climate to attract foreign investment. Adequate power supply, shunning of strikes and corruption have created a investor friendly environment in Bhutan which Nepal needs to emulate, Mr. Vaidya observed.

The President of the European Economic Chamber-Nepal, Mr. Binayak Shah in his paper entitled 'Nepal-EU Trade' pointed at the vast trade opportunities offered by the European Union. Presenting an overview of EU's economic policies, he said that sustainable development is central to EU trade policy. The EU is one of the most open economies in the world and remains committed to free trade. It applies a very low tariff rate - 70% of its imports are at zero or reduced tariffs. It also provides concession on its imports through the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) and Everything But Arms (EBA). Its service market is the most open investment regime in the world. EU has not reacted to the crisis by closing its markets. Rather, it has retained its capacity to conclude and implement trade agreements. Mr. Shah said.

Nepal's total trade with EU in the fiscal year 2011/12 was about Rs 19.5 Billion, accounting for just 3.4 % of the country's total foreign trade. The share of trade with Nepal in the EU's total volume of trade is negligible. Nepal mainly exports woolen carpet, readymade garments, woolen and pashmina shawls to Europe, he added.

Commenting on the paper, former President of the European Economic Chamber-Nepal, Mr. Dibya Mani Rajbhandari said there is lack of knowledge and information within the EU on the economic potential in Nepal. The need for Nepal is to create and consolidate value added industry and to improve the quality of products. Nepali products are not quality consistent, productivity is low and production cost is high. There is no stable policy on trade. Nepal has become dependent on trade. The private sector should develop its own capacity to trade. The need is to enhance people-to- people contact between EU and



Foreign Minister Madhav Prasad Ghimire addressing the inaugural session of the seminar on 'Bilateral Relations and Economic Cooperation' jointly organised by the EU Delegation and the Association of Former Career Ambassadors of Nepal (AFCAN)

Nepali businessmen and intellectuals. The EU should allow chambers such as the European Economic Chamber-Nepal to issue certificates for export. It can possibly organise a European business week jointly with the European Economic Chamber-Nepal, Mr. Bhandari said.

Presenting a paper on 'The Role of the European Union in the promotion of democracy, human rights and electoral process in Nepal,' Dr. Genoveva Hernandez Uriz, Head of the Political, Press and Public Diplomacy section at the Delegation of the European Union to Nepal reflected that one important goal of EU's development cooperation in different sectors in Nepal is focussed on the advancement of human rights.

She referred to EU's support to build peace and stability in Nepal over the past few years through its contributions to the Nepal Peace Trust Fund of the Government of Nepal. Nepal urgently needs to focus on restoring political stability through the holding of the elections on the slated date so that it can prepare itself for planning and reorganising its initiatives for rapid economic development, she observed.

At the outset of the programme, Foreign and Home Minister, Madhav Prasad Ghimire praised the EU for extending support for Nepal's development and looked forward to the consolidation of bilateral ties between the two countries.

The programme, the first of its kind was instrumental to start a new debate on the promotion of EU-Nepal ties.

EU-funded research reveals high lead content in decorative paints

Paints containing lead are hazardous to human health

A study report unveiled by the Centre for Public Health and Environmental Development (CEPHED) recently indicates that most of companies in Nepal have been selling paints containing unsafe level of lead exceeding worldwide accepted standards.

The report is the result of the examination of 49 samples of enamel paints from 21 paint brands manufactured, imported and sold in Nepalese paint stores from Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Pokhara and Butwal.

Colourful walls, be they in offices, schools or private homes contribute to enhance the ambience of the surroundings. They undoubtedly give a trendy look and leave no room for those present to have any suspicion about the health hazards they could pose. But the question is do they really pose any health hazards? The answer is a big 'yes' if the paint used has lead above 90 parts per million (ppm). The level of 90 is a globally accepted standard approved by the World Health Organisation. PPM stands for parts per million; hence 90 ppm would mean 90 parts in a total of a million parts.

The release of the report coincided with the International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of Action (20-26 Oct) marked globally through a joint initiative called Global Alliance to Lead Paint Elimination (GAELP) of WHO and UNEP. The day is marked to raise awareness about the issues of lead in paints and pursue all member countries to formulate the required legislative and institutional framework to phase out the lead from paints.

According to the results, 71% of samples analyzed, including some market leaders' brands, contained more than a proposed limit of 90 ppm of lead and would not be permitted for sale in most of the developed countries. The highest lead concentration in enamel paints produced and marketed into Nepal was 130,000 ppm which is about 1,444 times more than the US standard for Lead in Paints. Additionally, most of the

Nepal Standard (NS) marked paints contain high level of lead.

Bright paints such as yellow, green, red and blue were found to be containing a high level of lead. The report has revealed that the paints sold in the market contain the highest concentrations with averages of 50,200 ppm, 36,800 ppm, 10,400 ppm and 2,700 ppm respectively.

Lead above the acceptable limit of 90 ppm was detected in paint samples from 16 of the 21 brands included in the study, paint samples from 15 brands contained lead level above 600 ppm and paint samples of 12 brands contained lead levels even above 10,000 ppm. The samples were tested at the Certottica laboratory in Italy.

Ram Charitra Sah, Executive Director of CEPHED disclosed that exposure to even small amounts of lead can reduce a child's intelligence and school performance. He drew the attention of the concerned institutions towards the growing fashion of brightening the classrooms in different schools with paints containing high quantity of lead.

The CEPHED conducted the study under the European Union-International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN) Switch Asia lead elimination project. The project is being implemented in India, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand with a total funding of 1.4 million Euros provided by the European Union covering the period 2012-2015. IPEN is a global network working to establish and implement safe chemical policies and practices that protect human health and the environment around the world.

Addressing a function organised on 22 October to unveil the report, the Secretary at the Ministry of Industry, Government of Nepal, Mr. Krishna Gyawali stressed the relevance of for the EU funded project. He said that the report had brought to the fore very important data on the quantity of lead found in different decorative enamel paints sold in the Nepalese market and announced



Secretary at the Ministry of Industry, Mr. Krishna Gyawali releasing the EU-funded research report on 'lead content in decorative paints'

that the government would take the necessary steps to put into place relevant codes to make manufacturers uphold the universally-accepted standards.

Based on the recommendations made by the report, Secretary Gyawali instructed the Nepal Bureau of Standards and Metrology (NBSM) to look into the issue and accordingly a 'Standard Formulation Technical Coordination Committee' was formed on 29 October 2013.

According to Executive Director Sah, the recommendations of the meeting of the 'Standard Formulation Technical Committee' have been forwarded to the 'Standard Formulation Council' of the government and hopefully the Council will adopt the decision to limit lead content within the globally accepted standard of 90 ppm.

He said that the project had achieved good results in the course of its year-long implementation. The project has also managed to build working relations with the Ministry of Education, Department of Education and the Private and Boarding Schools' Organisation Nepal (PABSON) to raise awareness among school children and parents on the harmful impacts of using leaded paint through their countrywide networks of public and private schools.

"We have printed educational posters on the harmful impacts of leaded paint and possible ways to prevent lead poisoning jointly with Department of Education and PABSON and are in the process of distributing them in different schools," Mr Sah informed.

The high prevalence of paints with a high lead content in the Nepalese market is a severe threat both for the health of the Nepali children and environment. In view of that CEPHED has urged the government to enact a policy for the compulsory import, production, sales distribution and use of non-lead paints.

Recently, a few paint companies have started to produce No ADDED LEAD paints. However, this is only a voluntary initiative and unless a limit of lead in household paints becomes mandatory, consumers cannot be assured merely on the basis of the claims of the manufacturers that their products are lead free and/or non-lead. The recent movement from governmental

agencies on this issue provides a ray of hope, and we hope to have a mandatory standard in place soon, Mr Sah said.

CEPHED has made several recommendations to different Ministries and departments of the Government of Nepal.

On the one hand, the recommendation for the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment is to prepare a regulatory framework for lead levels in household paints and conduct regular monitoring and analysis of the paint products.

On the other hand, CEPHED requested the Ministry to make the necessary arrangements to disseminate information

about childhood lead poisoning in communities to make everyone aware about lead poisoning, lead content in paints, and its consequences for human health as well as the environment. CEPHED also has recommended organising programmes at the district level in order to raise awareness among school children on the harmful impact of leaded paint. Other recommendations include timely coordination among the Ministry of Education, Department of Education (DoE) to include lead toxicity appropriately in school / college level curricula, declare schools, playgrounds, day-care centers and health care facilities as lead free zones and adopt a green and environment friendly public purchase policy of unleaded paints.

EU-funded project comes to the rescue of women migrants

*M*r. Ram Krishna Thapa, Social Development Officer, at the Makwanpur District Development Office is all smiles for achieving what he calls 'a great success' to organize the women migrants and re-integrating them into their respective societies.

He has good reasons to make the claim when looking at the success achieved by the 'Shuba Yatra Project' in changing the lives of women through the dissemination of skill-based training. Economic hardships back home led them to go abroad to work in the informal sector. But their problems and vulnerabilities were comparatively bigger since they used the informal channels to find jobs.

The project funded by the European Union and the Australian Development Cooperation with ABC Nepal and Maiti Nepal as partners aims at giving relief to 1000 women workers working in the UAE, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

The project area covers 24 Village Development Committees and three municipalities in Makwanpur and Rupandehi districts. There are 300 returnee migrant women, 300 returnee women deported from UAE, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and 200 migrant women in UAE, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, who are the targeted beneficiaries of the project. The project has received a funding of 560,000 Euros.

The project has the twin objective of strengthening capacities and linkages among the Community Based Organisations (CBOs) along the mobility continuum to prevent and address exploitative migration and trafficking. It also seeks to empower potential female migrants to make informed choices, decisions about migration.

The project which is ending in December 2013 has succeeded to integrate 536 returnee women in 30 groups. Three hundred and forty one women have been trained as peer educators and the returnee women have been organized into two federations.

Peer educators have been regularly visiting 726 migrant women for providing pre-departure information. One hundred and eighty seven deportees are being visited by peer educators for psychosocial support while 485 migrant women are identified and 180 members of the migrant families have been given pre-departure orientations on migration.

The project, in the course of its interventions, came across a young girl from Sarlahi district, who was sold in Mumbai by her husband after they were married for a year. The girl, who preferred not to be identified, narrated a sad story of how her husband ditched her after pretending that he was in love with her. "He convinced me to accompany him abroad assuring that I

would have all the good things in life if I followed his suggestions."

In 2007, both of us agreed and we went abroad to earn money. We were supposed to go via India to a third country. Once we reached Mumbai, my husband told me that he would have to go somewhere for an important work and a lady named 'Sharmila' would come to pick me.

Sharmila was taking me somewhere when suddenly we were surrounded by a group of five women from Maiti Nepal. They asked me my name, where I had come from and where I was going. When I gave them my response, they began questioning Sharmila. It was only then that I realised that my husband had brought me to Mumbai with the motive to give me away and I found myself very sad and helpless. He had sold me for sixty thousand rupees. Despite being struck by inexplicable amount of grief, luck was still on my side. I was rescued by the workers of Maiti Nepal who saved me from being pushed into forceful prostitution. They arranged for my return to Nepal and I got to learn different survival skills at the Maiti Nepal office for two years.

I am happy to lead a peaceful life with the skills that I got to learn at Maiti Nepal. My message to all the other youngsters like me is 'do not get disillusioned by people who give you false hopes and get yourself trapped in unwanted problems.'

Photo Feature



Newly appointed European Union Ambassador and Head of the European Union Delegation to Nepal, Ms. Rensje Teerink walks along with her team before presenting her credentials to President Dr. Ram Baran Yadav



Haliya Women sharing their sufferings despite the announcement of their liberation six years back. The EU funded project being implemented together with CARE Denmark and Rastriya Haliya Mukti Samaaj is supporting the revision of government policies and laws so that they can guarantee the rights of the Haliya communities



Former EU Ambassador to Nepal, Dr. Alexander Spachis at a meeting with Chairman of the Interim Election Council, Mr. Khilraj Regmi a few days before his departure



Participants of the media training on child rights organised in Godavari posing for a photo. Save The Children along with National Coalition for Children as Zone of Peace and Child Protection (CZOPP) organised the training for one of the EU-funded EIDHR projects.



Staff at the EU Delegation in Kathmandu join Dr. Spachis for a group photo



The EU Delegation staff join Ambassador Teerink for a group snap a few days after her arrival



Ambassador Teerink and other diplomats from the EU Delegation with President Yadav at the credential ceremony



EU Programme Manager, Shiva Bhandari talking to the HIV/AIDS affected family in Kanchapur. The EU has provided financial support to Samajik Samanta Abhiyan (SSA) for supporting Children Affected and Infected by HIV/AIDS (CABA).

EU Fact Sheet

Number of inhabitants (2012)

504.9 million

Number of official languages

24

Surface area of EU (Km²)

4 381 376

Gross domestic product/capita (2012)

€ 25 600

Europe Day

09-May

Average growth rate of real GDP per capita (2012)

-0.3 %

Average unemployment rate (2012)

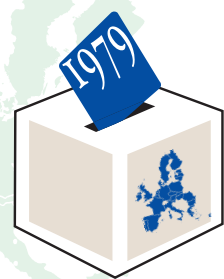
10.9 %

Motto

United in Diversity

Date of the first European elections

Jun-79



Average life expectancy in the EU28 (2012)

78 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



Source: eurostat_en



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