

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

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NEPAL: Trade Unions Welcome UN Action

Brussels, 12 April 2005 (ICFTU Online). At a meeting with senior United Nations officials in New York yesterday, Laxman Basnet, President of the Nepal Trade Union Congress, welcomed the UN's efforts in support of human rights in Nepal. Basnet and ICFTU UN Representative Gemma Adaba met Danilo Turk, Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs, and Tamrat Samuel, Senior Political Affairs Officer for Asia and the Pacific, in the Department of Political Affairs.

Turk said that the UN was following developments in Nepal very closely, and that Secretary General Kofi Annan was briefed on a regular basis on the situation with respect to the break-down in democracy and respect for fundamental rights and freedoms. Annan has expressed concern at these developments, and affirms his readiness to support all efforts geared towards defining a peace process and the full restoration of democracy.

The UN's Department of Political Affairs was keenly aware of the critical situation concerning human rights violations and growing humanitarian needs. Turk said that two support mechanisms that were now put in place were aimed at mitigating the crisis and contributing to efforts for a lasting peace. The first was a monitoring mechanism on human rights which came into being on 11 April with an agreement signed by the High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour, and the foreign affairs representative of Nepal's King Gyanendra.. The monitoring operation which will include field offices at regional level will help to establish accountability for human rights abuses, and allow for quick responses to reports of abuses, helping prevent gross violations of human rights.

The second intervention from the UN was a humanitarian needs assessment mission which left New York on Monday for Nepal. The mission will include an expert on internally displaced persons and will try to gauge the scale of the humanitarian crisis. It will assess first-hand reports that there are thousands of internally displaced persons, and increasingly impoverished, insecure and terrorized local communities. While this burgeoning humanitarian crisis was not attracting media attention, it was nonetheless real, and the UN was keenly aware of this, according to Samuel. The Department of Political Affairs appreciated getting first-hand information from Basnet on the situation on the ground in different regions, and the situation with respect to trade union detentions and other trade union rights violations. Turk confirmed that such information would be useful for the UN's current mission to Nepal.

Trade unions from some 50 countries around the world joined in an International Trade Union Day of Action on Nepal on 22 March, protesting at the coup mounted by King Gyanendra, and the associated violations of trade union rights, including detention of trade union representatives and disruption of union gatherings by security forces.

-URL-link with spotlight interview Laxman Basnet:
<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991221406>

The ICFTU represents 145 million workers in 233 affiliated organisations in 154 countries and territories. ICFTU is also a partner in Global Unions: <http://www.global-unions.org>

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