



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“THE NEED FOR RECONCILIATION IS IMMEDIATE”

STATEMENT BY SENATOR TOM DASCHLE

Kathmandu, Nepal

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In this past week, I have met with His Majesty King Gyanendra, political party leaders, civil society representatives, business people, and many others. My purposes in coming to Nepal were three-fold: to express to the people of Nepal the strong support of the American people for the restoration of democracy and democratic institutions and the resolution of the violent Maoist insurgency; to assess the current political crisis; and to urge Nepal’s political leaders to come together expeditiously to resolve Nepal’s crisis, recognizing how the current impasse imperils democracy and progress. I want to acknowledge and thank the National Democratic Institute for supporting my visit to Nepal.

It is clear that the Maoist conflict must be resolved through a political solution and that this will be most effectively undertaken after reconciliation is achieved between the political parties and the Palace. The need for reconciliation between the King and the mainstream political parties is immediate. All personal and partisan considerations should now be put aside for the good of the Nepali people.

It is incumbent upon the King, given his stature, to call upon the political parties to become partners in a dialogue to restore democracy and peace to Nepal and make this a priority of His Government. His Majesty’s Government must also respect and restore all civil and political rights, including freedom of the press, and the resumption of news broadcasts on FM radio. He must also remove any restrictions on peaceful assembly and expression. The RNA must continue to improve its performance in respecting the human rights of both civilians and combatants while fighting against the Maoist insurgency. All political prisoners should be released, including former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and Prakash Man Singh, and the Royal Commission for Corruption Control (RCCC) should be dissolved and corruption cases referred to the constitutionally-created Commission for the Investigation of the Abuse of Authority (CIAA). Attempts by the Palace to consolidate royal power through controls on the civil service, the education system, NGOs, the press, and other areas should be reversed and ended. Corrupt individuals and convicted criminals should have no place in His Majesty’s Government. Without a resolution of the crisis and a quick return by the Palace to constitutional norms, there will be growing civil unrest and growing discontent in Nepal with the institution of the monarchy.

Political parties deserve praise for the many achievements made under the twelve years of parliamentary democracy, and for the current unity of purpose that they are now displaying. Nevertheless, they can and should do more to alleviate the political crisis. Understanding that corruption has in no way been limited to political parties, but has been present in many Nepali institutions, political parties must nonetheless demonstrate to the Nepali people a willingness to

improve their performance and fight corruption where necessary. They should commit publicly to genuine party reform, internal democracy, transparency, and accountability, and the removal of corrupt figures from their ranks. They should also offer a clear and detailed blueprint for change, progress, and peace to the people and recapture the Nepali people's faith through their actions and commitments. They should also unconditionally and unambiguously offer to begin dialogue with the King, regardless of past wrongs, real and perceived.

The Maoist threat is serious and ongoing and must be resolved. Besides the terrible human suffering caused by this violent insurgency, it is undermining economic progress in Nepal as well as the institutions of democracy. A military victory by either side in this conflict is very unlikely. The only real solution is political. While the social issues raised have legitimacy, the violent tactics the Maoists employ are universally condemned by the Nepali people. The Maoists must respect human rights and stop the abuse of civilians through abduction, extortion, and violence. The underlying social issues driving the Maoist movement should be addressed by a democratic government and the Maoists themselves must renounce violence and take their ideas to the mainstream of politics where they can be judged by the Nepali people in free elections.

The people of Nepal, with the support of the international community, should demand that all parties to this impasse make democracy and peace their most urgent priority. America firmly supports a restoration of democracy in Nepal. And I urge the King to return immediately to constitutional democratic principles. A return to Panchayat-style governance is unacceptable and will only lead to more difficulties for both the nation and the monarchy in the future. The restoration of democracy in Nepal is the only way to achieve progress and peace. The people of the United States and other friends in the international community stand ready and willing to help in this critical effort.

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