



- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

**Speech by Mr. Robert Piper
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at the International Conference on the Dynamics of Constitution Making in Nepal
15 January 2010**

Right Honourable President, Dr. Ram Baran Yadav, Right Honorable Chairman of the Constituent Assembly, Mr. Subash Chandra Nembang, Honorable Members of the Constituent Assembly, Chief Justice Anup Raj Sharma, distinguished guests, friends

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement offers an extraordinary vision of equity, inclusion, human rights, good governance and justice. We are all gathered here today because we recognize that the successful completion of Nepal's constitution building process is a vital key to unlocking the potential of the CPA. The work of the Constituent Assembly, the support of Nepal's international partners and attention to the importance of implementation are all vital to this effort.

Yesterday was the first anniversary of the appointment of the CA Committee Chairs. In that challenging year, the CA has accomplished so much. Nine of 11 thematic reports have been delivered, and the tenth is well under way. The early recommendations from the committees carry much promise. None will satisfy all demands, but they all satisfy many important demands. Draft provisions on the representation of women in the parliament and other elected bodies and the substantial inclusion of child rights in the early texts, for example, have the potential to set new global standards.

There are some hard questions still to be resolved of course. About the form of government, the names and number of provinces, the electoral system and other matters. The CA Committees have nevertheless already brought this process to a point where the features of the new Nepal have begun to show clear contours, and where hope can legitimately grow for real and tangible changes in the way Nepalis live and in the way they are governed.

I take this welcome opportunity to congratulate the CA Members and the CA Secretariat for their achievements to date and to wish them well for the drafting and adoption of the new Constitution in the months to come. I want particularly to draw attention to the role of the Speaker in successfully guiding, for these many months, a process that international experience shows us is one of enormous difficulty.

The UN respects the sovereignty of the people of Nepal in drafting their Constitution. We are working to ensure that the best possible expertise is available to the drafters, and that relevant experiences in constitution building are made available. In so doing we keep in the forefront, the principles on which the United Nations is based – human rights, the rule of law, and democratic governance. And an abiding concern that the Constitution is one that further cements peace. Lasting peace on which prosperity can be built.

The whole UN system has been supporting this process one way or another. UNDP has taken a lead role in establishing the Centre for Constitutional Dialogue. OHCHR and UNHCR have provided advice on



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fundamental rights provisions, ILO on indigenous rights, UNICEF on child rights. UNFPA and UNIFEM has led from our side on gender and inclusion. UNESCO and WHO have helped look down the path towards the upcoming challenges in ensuring adequate health and education services in a future federal system. As our visitors will now appreciate, Nepal is blessed – or cursed as some might have it! – with the full array of UN agencies. And in all of this, we have worked with an array of international partners and donors who have shown I believe, a singular commitment to work in a coordinated and coherent fashion in order to not add more burdens to the Speaker and others, who are shepherding a process which is already complex enough.

It bears repeating, that the constitutional challenge faced by Nepal does not end when the new constitution is promulgated. At that point, a whole new set of challenges will begin. The final design and implementation of sub-national units provides a striking example of the demands of the road ahead. Many countries, and particularly those with challenging issues of regional diversity, have turned to federations or other regional structures. Hardly any federation in the world still looks like and operates in the way it did when it was first born. Change will continue to occur, and the rules must be sufficiently adjustable to changing realities.

Building the right provisions for transition, for implementation, and for future amendment is as vital as providing for fundamental rights and the system of government. I am very glad to see that this conference will also address some of these questions at such a timely moment.

Let me close by welcoming the impressive group of experts who have come to participate in this important discussion. And recognizing the equally impressive group of local experts gathered in this room. And to reaffirm the commitment of the United Nations to stand by Nepal in its future efforts to build an effective, responsive and capable state. We are committed to do everything we can to help bring about real and tangible change for the people of Nepal, in whose name this Constitution will be written.

Thank you.