

Box 4.9.1 Nepal

The handover of authority from Nepal's King Gyanendra to parliament during 2006 marked the end of both the Hindu monarchy's grip on Nepal's governing structures, and ten years of conflict between the Royal Armed Forces of Nepal and the country's Maoist rebel movement. To help sort out continuing differences over disarmament and reintegration, in August 2006 the new interim government and the rebels jointly requested the United Nations to provide a wide-ranging assistance package.

In February 2005, King Gyanendra dissolved Nepal's parliament in an effort to stifle political opposition and crush the Maoist insurgency. This move was followed by a wave of guerrilla attacks and political protests, which were met with an upsurge in arrests by the king's emergency-rule government as well as widespread human rights violations. The king lifted emergency rule on 30 April 2005, but the gesture did little to calm the situation, as Nepal's parliament was not reinstated and questions regarding the constitutional power of the monarchy went unanswered.

In response to the increased violence and restrictions placed on personal freedoms, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), with the consent of the Nepalese government, established a monitoring office in Nepal in April 2005. Ian Martin was appointed Personal Representative of the High Commissioner in Nepal.

After further violence and protests, seven political opposition parties formed an alliance that brought about the reinstatement of parliament on 24 April 2006. The opposition alliance then called off protests and established an interim government, headed by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala. On 16 June 2006, the Maoist rebels agreed to a three-month cease-fire and joined the interim government in peace talks aimed at completely ending the decade-long conflict.

In August 2006, Secretary-General Kofi Annan dispatched a week-long assessment mission to Nepal, led by Staffan de Mistura. Following the mission's return, Annan received identical letters from the interim government and Maoist rebels, inviting the UN to dispatch

a mission to oversee the rebel cantonment, management of arms, and the overall peace process. The letter also requested that the UN continue its human rights monitoring, as well as oversee the twenty-five-point code of conduct agreed to by the two sides in anticipation of June 2007 elections.

Ian Martin was subsequently appointed Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, supported by a small team of administrators. His first task was to determine how the UN could contribute most effectively to Nepal's postconflict evolution. On 21 November 2006, the Maoists and the government agreed to a peace deal in which the Maoists would join the parliament and their weapons would be locked up and monitored by the UN.

With the first group of mission personnel starting to arrive in late December, a second assessment team was sent to plan for a full-fledged UN mission to support the peace process.