

Peace Roadmap: An Appeal to the Leadership of the Eight Parties

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Gentlemen,

Before peace and democracy, fought for during the 2006 People's Movement, have been attained, the country is entering a vortex of human insecurity. The forces that defeated royal authoritarianism by means of the 12-Point Agreement are growing apart, and this provides opportunities for reactionary elements to become active. Steps must be taken immediately to reduce the confusion and mistrust between the seven parliamentary parties and the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) during the interim period before the elections to the Constituent Assembly. We appeal to the leadership of the eight parties to reach a wide-ranging agreement with regard to a peace settlement before the upcoming Dasain season. In our opinion, once the roadmap for peace is decided upon, the very maturity of the people will lead us through to the Constituent Assembly elections and the new Constitution. We urge the eight parties to put behind them questions of who has or has not conformed to their stated responsibilities thus far, and to move ahead with a new mutual understanding.

In our view, the central focus of the eight parties must be the people of the villages and districts, who are in the process of losing hope and trust. The eight parties must work together in order to create a comprehensive roadmap that will pave the way to both the Constituent Assembly elections and to lasting peace. In our opinion, such an agreement between the parties should include understanding on the following points:

1. The Interim Constitution

Neither the peace process nor the preparation for a Constituent Assembly will move ahead without the incorporation of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) – one of the forces that participated in the April People's Movement – into the government. The Interim Constitution is required in order to achieve this inclusion, but the recently submitted draft Interim Constitution is incomplete because the parliamentary parties and the CPN (Maoist) were not able to agree on the key issues. Since it has already been agreed that the Constitution for a new Nepal will be created through the Constituent Assembly, an interim constitution should be made through general consensus and in a manner that it does not contradict the proclamations of Parliament.

2. The Interim Parliamentary Order

Since it is the reinstated Parliament that has been able to guarantee the gains of the People's Movement through its national legitimacy and international acceptability, for now one does not see an alternative to this institution. At the same time, as a group without representation in Parliament, it is not possible for the CPN (Maoist) to be accountable to the House when it is in government. To get around this problem in a practical manner, we suggest that a People's Consultative Committee be established by agreement between the eight parties. All political decisions would be taken by the Committee, which would be given the stamp of approval by the government and

Parliament. The committee must function under the directives of the leaders of all eight parties.

3. Management of Arms

In our understand, the 'management of arms' involves, on the one hand, the bringing of the Nepal Army under full control of the government and Parliament and to make it committed to the democratic and pluralistic system of government. On the other hand, 'management of arms' refers to, from start to finish, the process of Maoists setting down their arms. It is important to make the officers of the Nepal Army who are implicated in atrocities during the conflict and who were part of the royal takeover to be held accountable for their actions. Meanwhile, at a time when the police and army are confined to their posts and barracks, it is a fact that the people at large in the villages and districts are having to live under the threat of armed Maoist groups, in an environment of fear. Even though guns are not being fired under the ceasefire, the citizens are yet to be freed from the fear of weapons. It is our conviction that the Maoists cannot backtrack from their commitment to management of arms, under the letter and spirit of the 12-point agreement and the 5-point letter to the United Nations. Therefore, in order to afford the people psychological relief, it is necessary that the CPN (Maoist) place all of its armed personnel in specified camps under the supervision of the United Nations. Meanwhile, nationally and internationally, we will have to guard against the possibility of atrocities against Maoist supporters who have been separated from their arms. In our view, it will be timely to implement the suggestion contained in the 5-point letter, to put all armed personnel in cantonments, while putting aside for the time being the question of when the full disarmament of the Maoist fighters and militia is to take place.

4. Ceasefire Agreement

Even though the Maoist's ceasefire declaration is of the phased kind, it has brought relief to the people. The roadmap to permanent peace, however, requires the Government of Nepal and the CPN (Maoist) to sign a bilateral ceasefire agreement. Such an agreement must contain adequate mechanisms for supervision and mutual communication.

5. Agreement on Human Rights

Given that disregard for human rights lies at the root of the violence and bloodshed that the Nepali people have suffered, it is important that the government and the CPN (Maoist) show commitment to respect the basic principles of human rights and humanitarian law, to sign an agreement on human rights and humanitarian law, and ensure its implementation and enforcement.

6. Public Security

The Nepali people are experiencing insecurity and lack of peace, and the absence of government throughout the country is a matter of utmost concern. The Government of Nepal has failed in its responsibility of delivering human security, and this can be considered disrespect of the mandate of the People's Movement of 2006. In this context, it is important for the government and the CPN (Maoist) to cooperate in giving the citizens a sense of law and order. Logistical support to the Nepal Police should be enhanced immediately, and there should be a move towards re-establishing police posts all over the country. This is important in providing a sense of rule of law nationwide. Simultaneously, in order to provide a sense of security in the interim

period, the government has to proceed with providing the basic elements of human security through the provision of public health, education, essential items, and so on. Both the government and the CPN (Maoist) have to agree that in order to provide security to the people, the police force, administration and the court system have to be activated and made visible throughout the country.

In conclusion,

The Nepali people are today involved in making space so that a group that has been engaged in revolt for more than a decade is able to enter open competitive politics with respect and self-esteem intact. We believe that the character of Nepali society as well as the goodwill and understanding between the CPN (Maoist) and the government provide ample reason for this campaign to succeed. The successful implementation of the peace roadmap following extensive homework between the parties, we believe, can make Nepal a 'model country' in front of the world community. Further, the process that begun with the People's Movement of 2006 to promote pluralism, democracy and lasting peace will ultimately lead the country at long last towards progress. Through the Constitution that will be drafted by the Constituent Assembly, a people that has been cheated throughout history will at last enjoy respect and prosperity within an inclusive structure of governance. Under this process, the CPN (Maoist) too will convert from a 'rebel group' to a responsible national party, gaining the opportunity to serve the people and be part of the exercise to create a New Nepal.

If lasting peace were to be achieved through the points made in this appeal, we believe that Nepal is capable of moving ahead with the constituent assembly process. In doing so, through reasoned discussion, the citizenry will successfully address the many sensitive pending issues in order to introduce a new state structure befitting our soil. We ask the eight parties that have been working together from the 12-point agreement to the 5-point agreement not to underestimate the people's good sense, and to sign a Understanding for Peace and Democracy, before the upcoming Dasain season. As you thus draft the roadmap that will take us to the Constituent Assembly, we also request you to please keep the interests of the people in the villages and districts foremost in your thoughts.

Signatories to the Appeal:

1. Amrit Gurung
2. Bhimarjun Acharya
3. Binaya Kasaju
4. Bipana Thapa
5. Bishnu Nisthuri
6. Dhurba Basnet
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