

Indian Council of World Affairs

Sapru House, Barakhamba Road
New Delhi



View Point

Extension of UNMIN and Peace Process in Nepal

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United Nations has adopted the resolution 1939(2010) for the extension of UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) till January 15, 2011. It is important to note that UNMIN was established under resolution 1740(2007) and this is its seventh extension. Earlier, in the wake of wide criticism of UNMIN's role in Nepal's peace process amid differences among the political parties, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said that he was not in favor of repeated extensions of UNMIN's mandate in an atmosphere of 'persistent and unfounded' criticism that complicates its ability to function. However, he had maintained that the UN wants to see its body's mandated tasks completed. Ban Ki-moon added that commitments made by the Nepalese political parties have become unrealistic in the absence of a consensual approach and parties of Nepal are paying more attention to the formation of a new government than the peace process itself.

UN has adopted the resolution to extend the UNMIN's tenure after the Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal and UCPN(M) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, signed the four point agreement on September 13, 2010, renewing the peace deal and agreeing upon UNMIN's extension for four months. Both the leaders committed to give a final shape to all documents prepared by the Special Committee for forwarding the peace process by reaching agreement on them as soon as possible and implementing them. They also agreed to finish all remaining tasks of the peace process by January 14, 2011, when UNMIN's mandate will finally expire. UN Security Council has requested

Mr Ban Ki-moon to report back to it by October 15, 2010 on the implementation of the agreement, following high-level discussions among the United Nations, the government of Nepal and the political parties.

Prior to the decision, there were signs of clear division among members of the Council whether to accept Nepal's request for the extension or go for a short rollover of the current mandate. United Kingdom was in favor of technical rollover by a month, while China argued for acting upon the request of Nepal. EU, led by the United Kingdom, wanted to send a strong signal to Nepal that the failure of the local actors couldn't be passed on to the world body. The grace period of one month was intended for Nepali parties to come clean on their words and deeds.

India has consistently supported the peace process in Nepal. It should be noted that India also welcomed the establishment of the UNMIN in 2007. In fact, India provided more than 80 vehicles and 50 wireless sets to UNMIN to help its activities get going and even today, the containers in which the weapons are stored are provided by India. India is of the view that extension of UNMIN's mandate is a decision taken by concerned Nepali authorities. India believes that the peace process in Nepal, in order to have legitimacy, must be Nepali-led and Nepali-driven.

UNMIN's Arms Monitoring Office continued to monitor the compliance of the Nepal Army and the Maoist army with the Agreement on the Monitoring of the Management of Arms and Armies. Arms monitors also visited the satellite cantonment sites on a regular basis. Again, the Child Protection Unit of UNMIN continued to provide advisory support to UNICEF and UNDP in the implementation of rehabilitation programmes for former Maoist army personnel disqualified as minors. UNMIN's political affairs officers have maintained regular contacts with a broad range of Government officials, political party representatives, civil society organizations and international actors.

UNMIN is being accused by several sections that it has been working against its mandate and favoring particular political powers and ideologies. The Special Committee to supervise, integrate and rehabilitate Maoist army personnel has not achieved a quorum in its meetings during the reporting period because of the non-

attendance of some members, principally UCPN-M, which has not participated for several months. Serious disagreements persist on key issues such as the number of Maoist personnel to be integrated into the Nepal Army and other security forces, their eligibility criteria, whether they integrate individually or in groups, and the sequencing and time frame for the implementation process. UNMIN is also criticized for failing to recognize even the existing and potential actors of reintegration and to coordinate with the various stakeholders in different layers.

Nepal's peace process remains stalled, with few signs of a consensual way forward. The major parties are preoccupied by profound internal fissures and the question of power-sharing. While the extension of the Constituent Assembly by one year averted a grave political vacuum, almost four months have passed without notable headway in the peace process. Despite the sustained efforts of the UNMIN, little progress has been made towards the conditions for its departure. Therefore, the UNMIN must relook its activities regarding the reintegration of ex-combatants in Nepal; otherwise, such plans could add more political tension and confusion over the peace process in coming days in Nepal. The ill-designed reintegration plan may push the nation into further conflict and political polarization. UNMIN should have worked more closely with other UN agencies and bilateral development partners, aiming to transform the current peace mandate to a broader peace, development and reconciliation platform. UNMIN must work more closely with the Nepali people and civil society and not just politicians to foster a permanent peace that can contribute overall sense of peace, security and happiness.

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September 21, 2010