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Contact:
In Kathmandu:
Subodh Raj Pyakurel
Tel: (+977) 1 4278 770,
E-mail: subodh@insec.org.np

**NEPALI AND GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS CALL FOR NEPAL TO JOIN
INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT**

*Say Cabinet's Tabling of Accession Bill and Foreign Minister's Statement to UN Human Rights
Council Shows Government's Commitment to Human Rights and the Rule of Law*

Kathmandu. Today, civil society members along with political party leaders and the Chairperson of the Constituent Assembly Honorable Subhash Nemwang gathered to discuss strategies for ensuring that the government of Nepal joins the International Criminal Court (ICC) without delay. The workshop was entitled "Towards an end to impunity: Accession to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court." The meeting followed a two-day strategic meeting of Asian members of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC), a civil society network in 150 countries advocating for a fair, effective and independent ICC.

"It used to be that those with power could commit atrocities against civilians and get away with it. Now the movement to end impunity is gaining force," said William R. Pace, convener of the CICC. "Just yesterday, we witnessed a historic development: the ICC's issuance of its first arrest warrant for Omar Hassan Ahmad Al-Bahsir, who is a sitting head of state, the president of Sudan, for crimes against humanity and war crimes."

The Chairperson emphasized that the primary objective of the country's April 2006 move to democracy was to end impunity and strengthen the rule of law. Indeed, three months later in July 2006 the House of Representatives issued a directive for accession to the Court's founding treaty, the Rome Statute. Since then, there was little progress toward Nepali accession to the Statute until 11 February 2009 when the Minister of Foreign Affairs tabled ICC accession to the Cabinet.

"Impunity is today widespread and systemic in Nepal," the Chairperson said at the meeting. "We decided to put an end to this two years ago and I have been discussing the ICC with the foreign minister. The government has been doing the necessary preparation, but the accession proposal has yet to be submitted to parliament. I am hopeful that there will be progress in the upcoming session of parliament."

At the national workshop, groups highlighted the recent statement by Nepali Minister of Foreign Affairs Upendra Yadav at the 10th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. In his statement, Mr. Yadav said “We are committed to strike a necessary balance between peace and justice, and provide relief to conflict victims....Justice remains an integral part of the peace process.”

“We welcome the Foreign Minister’s commitment to peace and justice, but let us be clear: justice is the foundation for a sustainable peace,” said Subodh Raj Pyakurel, executive director of INSEC. “And the benchmarks for the highest standards of justice are the principles outlined in the Rome Statute of the ICC. Nepal must now back its words with actions and join the ICC now.”

The Foreign Minister’s statements were delivered two weeks prior to the first visit to Nepal by United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay. ICC advocates hope Nepal’s public commitment to human rights will lead the government to join the Court soon.

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