**05GENEVA2483**

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 GENEVA 002483 SIPDIS USUN FOR MALY; BRUSSELS FOR MEZNAR E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/03/2010 TAGS: PREF NP PHUM BT PREL UNHCR SUBJECT: UNHCR EXCOM #4: PURSUING AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PROGRESS ON BHUTANESE REFUGEES IN NEPAL REF: GENEVA 2465 Classified By: RMA Counselor Piper Campbell; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d) [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05geneva2483#par1) 1. (C) Summary: Acting PRM A/S Greene pressed Bhutanese and Nepalese officials to agree to a comprehensive solution to the problem of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, during October 3-7 meetings on the margins of UNHCR's annual ExCom. Nepalese PermRep Acharya asserted a "lack of urgency" on the part of Bhutan and said that voluntary repatriation "must form the basis" of any agreement, but also welcomed U.S. involvement and agreed refugee registration is an appropriate first step. Bhutanese Permrep Rabgye expressed concern over Maoist infiltration of the camps, but said Bhutan is committed to working out an implementation schedule for return of refugees in categories one and four, as agreed by the foreign ministers of Bhutan and Nepal earlier this fall at the UN General Assembly. UNHCR Asia Director Lim sees an opportunity for a breakthrough and will intensify efforts to conduct registration and put together a resettlement package. The Norwegians and Danes want to work to ensure that resettlement countries provide political impetus, as well as resettlement commitments, to drive this forward. Indian PermRep Puri credited recent progress to (in part) new thinking at UNHCR and offered India's help in persuading Bhutan to cooperate. End Summary [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05geneva2483" \l "par2) 2. (SBU) On the margins of the October 3-7 annual meeting of the UNHCR Executive Committee (ExCom), Acting Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) SIPDIS Richard Greene met with a number of delegations as well as UNHCR officials concerning efforts to devise a comprehensive solution for Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. All parties acknowledge that such a solution will include returns to Bhutan, local integration, and a major third country resettlement operation, although differences over the relative proportions remain. Ambassador Moley participated in several of the meetings, as did various Mission members. - - - - - - - - - - - - - - UNHCR Sees Opportunity, Will Intensify Efforts - - - - - - - - - - - - - - [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05geneva2483" \l "par3) 3. (C) During an October 3 meeting with UNHCR's Director for Asia Janet Lim (other subjects reported septel), Acting A/S Greene urged UNHCR to redouble its efforts to gain Nepalese approval to perform refugee registrations and to assemble a large resettlement offer from interested governments. Lim responded that she too sees an opportunity for a breakthrough, although she said governments would have to maintain political pressure on Nepal and Bhutan. She plans to travel to Katmandu and hopefully Thimphu soon, and has spoken with the local Norwegian Mission, which -- as incoming chair of the Working Group on Resettlement (WGR) -- will champion the issue with other resettlement states. Lim said UNHCR would quietly intensify its efforts to identify the most vulnerable Bhutanese refugees, and utilize this initial resettlement to build confidence for a more comprehensive agreement. - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Pressing Nepal to Seize the Momentum - - - - - - - - - - - - - - [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05geneva2483" \l "par4) 4. (C) Greene and Ambassador Moley met with Nepalese PermRep Gyan Chandra Acharya October 3, calling on Nepal to seize the momentum generated by Bhutan's acceptance of category one and four returns from at least one camp. Greene said the U.S. considers Bhutan's offer to be "a start, not an end," and that we will continue to press for Bhutanese cooperation. He cautioned, however, that any "grand bargain" would not consist solely of returns to Bhutan, but would include local integration and third country resettlement. A positive step could be resettlement from the camps of the most vulnerable individuals now. Greene told Acharya that we expect UNHCR to conduct a registration of refugees in Nepal, as they do as a matter of policy everywhere they work in order to better understand refugee demographics and ensure proper management of assistance. Ambassador Moley reviewed recent diplomacy on this issue and, saying "we have to start some place," asserted the time to move forward to a comprehensive agreement is now. [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05geneva2483#par5) 5. (C) Acharya said Nepal welcomes U.S. involvement. While he had no direct report on the meeting in New York on the margins of the UN General Assembly between the Nepalese and Bhutanese Foreign Ministers, Acharya complained of the lack of progress in bilateral talks, blaming a "lack of urgency" on the Bhutanese side. He said Nepal is concerned that the talks not result in "half-measures," and stated that voluntary repatriation "must form the basis" of any comprehensive solution. He said Nepalese officials are not opposed to refugee registration but had concerns that a registration would be a prelude to local integration only. Having had this misperception clarified by UNHCR, Acharya said Nepal now should "in principal have no objections" to a registration. Greene emphasized that any returns to Bhutan must be voluntary and suggested there is a role for local integration and resettlement. Saying there are probably some "non-Bhutanese," possibly stateless persons, in the refugee camps, Acharya admitted "the responsibility is ours" and did not rule out the possibility of limited local integration. - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Norwegian and Danish Resettlement Initiatives - - - - - - - - - - - - - - [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05geneva2483" \l "par6) 6. (C) At their request, Greene met with the Norwegian and Danish delegations to ExCom to discuss the Nepal/Bhutan issue. (Comment: Both countries are jockeying for a lead diplomatic role, with the Danes trying to launch a coordinated EU effort and the Norwegians trying to ensure that the focus of diplomacy is the Geneva-based WGR, which they chair. End Comment.) Greene began the meeting by welcoming the Danish and Norwegian initiatives and stressing the importance of coordinating various diplomatic activities. He said the U.S. strongly supports UNHCR's request to register Bhutanese in the refugee camps, despite some Nepalese reservations the process will lead to a UNHCR recommendation that the refugees be locally integrated. Danish MFA Deputy Permanent Secretary Kim Lunding said Denmark is prepared to work within the EU to encourage resettlement offers from non-traditional resettlement states (he made specific reference to new EU members) and undertook to prepare an EU position paper touching both on the registration issue and guidelines for a comprehensive solution. (Draft e-mailed to PRM/MCE.) Norway will make a parallel approach in the November 2 meeting of the WGR, which includes major resettlement states outside the EU such as the U.S., Canada, and Australia. - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Indians Will Press Bhutan to Cooperate - - - - - - - - - - - - - - [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05geneva2483" \l "par7) 7. (C) Indian PermRep Hardeep Singh Puri told Greene and Ambassador Moley on October 4 that UNHCR, and in particular former High Commissioner Lubbers, had been "part of the problem." By discouraging the "bilateral track" in favor of a UNHCR-brokered multilateral agreement, UNHCR had delayed resolution of the issue, according to Puri. Commenting that Bhutan would greatly appreciate efforts to resettle a large part of the caseload, Puri pledged that India would encourage Bhutan to be flexible. - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Bhutan Cautious but Appreciates U.S. Involvement - - - - - - - - - - - - - - [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05geneva2483" \l "par8) 8. (C) In an October 7 meeting with Bhutanese PermRep Sonam Rabgye, Greene noted with appreciation Bhutan's recent decision to allow category one and category four returns from one of the camps in Nepal. He told Rabgye such a confidence building measure could facilitate a more comprehensive solution that would include refugee returns to Bhutan, local integration in Nepal, and third country resettlement. As part of that package, he said, the U.S. is prepared to consider substantial numbers of resettlement cases. Greene pressed Bhutan to seize the moment and look for opportunities to resolve the remaining outstanding issues. [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05geneva2483#par9) 9. (C) Rabgye expressed appreciation for how hard former PRM A/S Dewey worked to obtain a comprehensive agreement. He also credited a meeting in New York on the margins of the UN General Assembly between Bhutanese Foreign Minister Wangchuk and South Asia Bureau A/S Rocca with drawing out Bhutan's offer (which was accepted shortly afterward in a meeting between Wangchuk and his Nepali counterpart). Rabgye said the two foreign ministers agreed to work out an implementation schedule and that "there is no need to reinvent the wheel." Citing reports that some of the Nepalese refugee camps have been infiltrated by Maoist elements, Rabgye said Bhutan does not want to import "ready-made terrorists." Rabgye concluded by noting that Bhutan is a less populated country with large neighbors and a substantial percentage of ethnic minorities already, and must take that into account when making decisions on this issue. Cassel