**06BRUSSELS491**

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This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 000491 SIPDIS GENEVA RMA FOR IKE REED E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/13/2016 TAGS: BT IN NP PREF EUN USEU BRUSSELS SUBJECT: FOLLOW-UP ON BHUTANESE REFUGEE DEMARCHE TO EC REF: A. A. STATE 0681 [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/06brussels491#parB) B. B. BRUSSELS 00254 Classified By: PRM OFFICER MARC MEZNAR FOR REASONS 1.4 (B & D) [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/06brussels491#par1) 1. (SBU) PRM Assistant received feedback from the European Commission, DG RELEX India/Bhutan/Nepal Desk Officer, Rensje Teerink, on the February 2 courtesy visit between the Benita Ferrero-Walder, Commissioner for External Affairs, and Bhutan's Foreign Minister, Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk which was preceded by a one-hour meeting with Deputy DG RELEX for Asia & Latin America, Herve Jouanjean. The two meetings provided the opportunity to impart the EC's concerns about the Bhutanese refugee situation in preparation for the February 16th Donor Roundtable on Bhutan being held February 15-16 in Geneva. The Foreign Minister (FM) was most interested in providing an update on Bhutan's progress towards a two-party democracy but did eventually address the EC's points on the refugees in Nepal, which mirrored the USG's concerns. [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/06brussels491#par2) 2. (C) The FM indicated that Bhutan still supported the agreement reached at the fifteenth Ministerial meeting between Nepal and Bhutan in 2003 for the repatriation of Category I and IV refugees. He also emphasized that his country would only take responsibility for verified refugees who were forcefully evicted and not for those who migrated voluntarily. Wangchuck explained that he had met with the Nepalese FM while at the UNGA meeting in September 2005 but that a proposal to issue a joint statement explaining the terms of procedure for repatriation was rejected. He stressed that Bhutan was only prepared to follow-through on the agreement to readmit Category I and IV refugees if the process was "well prepared" and included informing the refugees of the consequences of repatriation. He further stated that the RGON has stalled the process through its failure to provide adequate security measures in the refugee camps to allow the resumption of the verification exercise. During the meeting the EC raised concerns over the Category II refugees (those who "voluntarily" migrated to Nepal), which total over 70,000 people and comprise 70% of the refugee population in the camps. The response from the FM indicated that the first priority for the RGOB had to be the Category I and IV refugees before developing a strategy for the other categories. [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/06brussels491#par3) 3. (C) Commissioner Ferrero Waldner made a strong point to the FM to find a solution for the refugee issue prior to the transition to democracy, warning that this issue could impede the democratization process. DG RELEX characterized the meeting overall as positive and friendly, but lacking any indication that a solution to the refugee situation was imminent. They view the forthcoming Donor Roundtable in Geneva as an opportunity to "put the onus" on Bhutan for action on this issue, indicating that this was an opportunity to send a strong message to the RGOB from the donor community to stop using Nepal's problems as an excuse for inaction. DG RELEX will represent the EC at the Donor Roundtable and their representative, Rensje Teerink, has indicated her interest in also attending the Core Group meeting being held just prior to the start of the Roundtable. Gray .