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Police quotas for women, marginalized groups an important first step - OHCHR

OHCHR-Nepal welcomes the decision taken in last week's cabinet meeting to institute quotas for recruiting women and members of marginalized groups – Janajatis/Adivasis, Madheshis, Dalits and people from “backward areas” – to fill vacant posts in the Nepal Police (NP) and Armed Police Force (APF).

OHCHR has long urged the police forces – and other government institutions – to take steps to make their workforces more inclusive. In March 2007, the Office wrote to the APF asking for a breakdown of its personnel belonging to marginalized groups, following violent incidents that starkly highlighted the lack of inclusiveness in police forces. During riots in Nepalgunj in December 2006, the NP was accused of acting partially. The issue resurfaced again in the January and February 2007 Madheshi Andolan in Terai districts. The recent violence in some Western Terai districts again stresses the need for such inclusive hiring measures.

OHCHR-Nepal suggests that the quotas announced last week be applied across the ranks of the police forces, ensuring representation of women and marginalized groups in the officer ranks. It also urges the NP and APF to take a further step and adopt an inclusive hiring policy for all future recruitment.

The police forces' adoption of quotas for filling vacant posts can serve as an example to all civil services of the steps they can take in order to make their recruiting processes inclusive. For example, OHCHR was disappointed to see that of the 28 people appointed to Secretary posts this week, only three were from marginalized groups.

“Making provisions to include historically marginalized groups in the police forces and other civil services will signal that the commitment to inclusion made by political leaders is indeed genuine. It will also address some current demands of these groups, thus strengthening the peace process as it moves toward Constituent Assembly elections,” said Richard Bennett, Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal.