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Press Release - OHCHR

High Commissioner Louise Arbour announces appointment of Ian Martin as Representative in Nepal

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour announced today the appointment of Ian Martin as head of the new Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) operation in Nepal. This follows the recent agreement between OHCHR and the Government providing for OHCHR monitoring in the country to help establish accountability for human rights abuses and prevent further violations.

“Our new Office in Nepal is extremely important and I am pleased to have someone of Mr. Martin’s vast experience to lead our efforts there”, Mrs. Arbour said.

Mr. Martin has some 30 years of experience in the field of human rights, both with nongovernmental organizations and as a representative of the United Nations. He served as the Secretary General of Amnesty International from 1986 to 1992 and went on to play a central role in several international missions. He was the human rights director of the United Nations/Organization of American States Mission to Haiti in 1993 and 1995, and served as Chief of the United Nations Human Rights Field Operation in Rwanda from 1995 to 1996. He was the Deputy High Representative for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1998 to 1999. Most recently, he served as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Mission in East Timor in 1999, and from 2000 to 2001 as the Deputy Special Representative to the Secretary-General for the UN Mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea. He was also Special Adviser to the High Commissioner in Sudan, strengthening the UN’s human rights presence in Darfur. He is presently the Vice-President of the New York-based human rights NGO, the International Center for Transitional Justice.

According to the agreement, the OHCHR Office in Nepal will monitor the observance of human rights and international humanitarian law, bearing in mind the climate of violence and the internal armed conflict in the country. Mrs. Arbour emphasized that “breaking the cycle of serious and systematic abuses will be the first essential step toward achieving peace and reconciliation in Nepal”.

The announcement by Mrs. Arbour follows the fielding last week of an assessment team from Geneva to draw up an operational plan for the implementation of the agreement. Under those plans, a first group of eight human rights monitors and support staff will arrive in Nepal shortly, bringing the total of OHCHR international staff now operating in Nepal to 12. Preparations are already underway for the fielding of a larger contingent to be deployed throughout the country in the coming months.

On 20 April the United Nations Commission on Human Rights welcomed the agreement between OHCHR and the Government and decided that the High Commissioner should submit periodic analytic reports on human rights violations committed by either side of the conflict in Nepal to the Commission, the General Assembly and the United Nations Secretary-General.

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