



**Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on Nepal
New York, 23 December 2004**

The Secretary-General is deeply troubled by reports of an escalation of fighting in Nepal and of continued grave human rights violations. The conflict is undermining democracy and human rights and seriously hindering development activities.

Reports that human rights defenders in Nepal face grave threats to their safety and security are very disturbing. The safety and ability of the National Human Rights Commission and all human rights activists to carry out their essential work should be guaranteed. In that regard, the recent signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between His Majesty's Government of Nepal and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is a welcome step.

The Secretary-General once again calls for an urgent cessation of fighting and the initiation of dialogue between the Government and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) with the participation of all political and civil forces. He stands ready to assist such a national effort.