



America-Nepal Friendship Society, Inc.

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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September 30, 2007 (New York, NY): The America-Nepal Friendship Society (ANFS) hosted its annual awards dinner on September 29th. Congressman James T Walsh, Marvin A. Brustin and Ashok Gurung each received the ANFS Awards in recognition of their outstanding commitment, vision and leadership in American – Nepali relations. The event also included a panel discussion on “US Nepal Relations: Expectations and Realities in a Period of Transformation.” The America-Nepal Friendship Society (ANFS) is an association of individuals engaged in bringing the people of the United States and Nepal closer together in understanding, appreciation, and cooperation.

Kiran Chetry, CNN’s American Morning Anchor, provided insight as well as a personal Nepali connection in moderating the panel which included The Hon. Sahana Pradhan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal, The Hon. James T. Walsh, member of the United States House of Representatives, Mr. Kul Chandra Gautam, Assistant Secretary General of the UN and Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF and.

As Chief Guest, Minister Sahana Pradhan highlighted the historical relationships between Nepal and the United States stating, “It is our understanding that the United States wants Nepal to be a stable, prosperous and democratic State that is at peace with itself, with its neighbors, and with the rest of the world. The US wants to assist Nepal in achieving these goals. Nepal is making significant progress towards those goals by consolidating peace, democracy, development and economic prosperity. As a result, there is convergence of interests and expectations between Nepal and the United States in Nepal’s internal political transformation”.

Minister Pradhan expressed that the presence of so many Nepalis at the Awards Dinner made her feel as if she was in Nepal. Citing the increasing role of the Nepalese Diaspora presently occupying prestigious professional and business positions in the U.S. she stated, “Among the various aspects of the transformation in the US-Nepal relations is the increasing role of the Nepalese Diaspora. They have helped infuse dynamism in the traditional relations between Nepal and the United States. Today, the Nepalese Diaspora is represented in prestigious academic institutions, professional positions, successful businesses and in the growing community of migrant workers in the United States. They have been successfully bridging people-to-people relations and have been contributing to the economy of Nepal and, to some extent, of the United States. The Nepalese Diaspora has created a distinctive niche in the United

States. In Nepal, we have realized their potential and have started to offer them opportunities in economic activities, recognizing the Non-Resident Nepalese (NRN) as distinctive category legally, politically and economically.



Chief Guest Hon. Mrs. Sahana Pradhan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal

Minister Pradhan outlined for the audience in detail the historical struggles against autocratic rule in Nepal, citing the popular movements in 1950, 1990, and 2006. Pradhan expressed gratefulness to the U.S. and other nations for providing support for Nepal's internal struggle for peace and democracy. The voice of Janjatis, women, and Madheshis, said the minister, must also be uplifted during this struggle in order for Nepal to enjoy peace and prosperity. Minister Pradhan states, "Since the 1990s, the United States not only intensified its development aid, it also started to help Nepal in areas related to governance, human rights, and democratization process. The US support was more than forthcoming in supporting the popular movements that led to the establishment of democracy first in 1990 and later against in 2006. The US also wanted Nepal to end the violent conflict, though the perceived US solution did not exactly match the solution that Nepalese people found for themselves. There was always the US expectation that the commitments made in the peace agreements would be sincerely implemented".

Delivering his keynote address, Congressman James T. Walsh, who served as a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer in Nijghad, Bara from 1970-72, stated that much of his identity today was defined by the two years he spent as a volunteer in Nepal.

Congressman Walsh, who was first elected to the US Congress in 1988, said "he was struck by the bravery and selflessness of the people who took to the streets in April 2006 against King Gyanendra, sacrificing their lives for the good of the country. He stressed that the April

movement, which captured the imagination of the world, must now go all the way”. Mr. Walsh, who has been very active in negotiating the peace settlement in Northern Ireland, reminded the audience that democracy is not easy to achieve, citing the 12 years that lapsed between the Northern Irish ceasefire in 1995 and formation of a new government this year.



Keynote Speaker Congressman James T. Walsh

Commenting on the recent developments in Nepal, Congressman Walsh said, “The government of Nepal has to hold the elections on November 22; it can’t be pushed back any further. He added that, “The people of Nepal have waited long enough to have a government they trust. He warned that “Problems are not solved with a gun—the Maoists need to stay focused on the common goal of electing a Constituent Assembly; the elections have to be free and fair—without any interference and intimidation’. Regarding the recent Maoist realignment and break with the government, Mr. Walsh said, “It is not fair to the people of Nepal that the Maoists have quit the government. When they walked out in mid-September, they walked out on the entire process. The people have worked so hard, given up so much and been through hell to come to this point. The Maoists are on the brink of ruining an entire country’s hope for democracy. He further added, “Once Nepal has a stable government it can focus on rebuilding and reestablishing its relations with all the Nepalese. The United States will remain committed to offering its support and cooperation in making sure the elections happen, and once the elections happen, it will help Nepal stabilize its economy. Before ending with a heartfelt, applause-generating sentence in Nepali, Congressman Walsh said, “Our Nepal remains in my heart forever”.

Mr. Kul Chandra Gautam, the highest ranking Nepali in the United Nations, congratulated the America-Nepal Friendship Society for its sustained leadership role in developing and nurturing a

strong political, economic and social relationship between the people of Nepal and America over several decades. “This year marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Nepal and the United States of America. It is also a year of great political transformation in Nepal. It is therefore very fitting that the theme of our discussion tonight is on “U.S.-Nepal Relations: Expectations and Realities in a Period of Transformation”. He urged Nepalis to think boldly, stressing his own hope that the United States would play a key role in post-conflict development in Nepal, he cited the enormous transformations that have taken place in Nepal in just 60 years through over 1 billion dollars of US aid and over 62 billion dollars of foreign remittances sent home by Nepalis working abroad”.



Mr. Kul Chandra Gautam

Recalling the long history of Nepal, Mr. Gautam said, “Although Nepal has a long and proud history as a land of ancient civilization, a rich culture, very friendly people and priceless natural beauty, in terms of modern developments, six decades ago it was just emerging out of the dark age of isolation, feudalism and backwardness”. He added, “Perhaps the most remarkable progress has been in the people-to-people exchange between Nepal and the United States. Many thousands of Nepalis have studied in America; gone back to Nepal and provided leadership for Nepal’s development. Today, over 100,000 Nepalis have made America their second home”.

Mr. Gautam spoke at great length on the importance of post conflict reconstruction and development of Nepal. He said, “It is in the nature of democracy that as political parties prepare for elections, they will tend to emphasize what distinguishes and divides them from each other, rather than what unites us all as Nepalis. In this context, we need to develop a visionary but realistic reconstruction and development plan that could be the glue that unites all Nepalis and helps us overcome the divisive tendencies of the current highly charged and polarized political antagonisms. He specifically highlighted 6 key elements urgently needed and fundamental to the core of an ambitious reconstruction and development plan: Immediate relief and rehabilitation of IDPs and victims of conflict, Rebuilding and upgrading of the destroyed infrastructure, Massive expansion of basic social services, Targeted interventions to reduce disparities and exclusion,

Major flagship projects of infrastructure development, and creating a conducive environment for private sector development and foreign investment.

Delivering his opening remarks, Dr. Tara Niraula, the President of The America-Nepal Friendship Society, praised the meaningful relations between both countries over the past 60 years. “The strong state-to-state relation between the two countries has been accompanied by an ever growing and meaningful friendship between our two peoples. Friendly cooperation in socio-cultural, educational, and economic endeavors along with protection of fundamental rights has grown wider and deeper with time. The America-Nepal Friendship Society is committed to working for stronger relations between the communities and people of these two uniquely blessed and independent countries and taking our ties to the next level. He further added, “Nepal’s current set of problems are daunting in their complexity. All political parties will have to put national interest above partisan positioning and assume a partnership oriented, accommodating attitude in order to build national consensus on key issues. We must make sure that the Nepali people themselves solve Nepal's problems. We can and must solve them! However, at this critical juncture, as Nepal navigates unprecedented change, the country will require the strong and consistent support of the international community.



Dr. Tara Niraula, President of America-Nepal Friendship Society

We welcome the insights and input of our diplomatic partner of 60 years, The United States. The US has a bit of experience when it comes to social and political change! Our challenge is to create a just nation for all Nepali people in which everyone has the opportunity to enjoy a free and prosperous life”.

On the same occasion, The America-Nepal Friendship Society honored Congressman Walsh with The ANFS Friendship Award in recognition of his outstanding commitment, vision and leadership in bringing greater understanding and enduring partnership between the people of the United States and Nepal. This award also acknowledges dedication and extraordinary contributions in supporting and defending the fundamental democratic rights of the people of

Nepal. Similarly, the ANFS Community Leadership Awards were presented to Marvin A. Brustin, Honorary Consul General of Nepal and Mr. Ashok Gurung, Senior Director of India China Institute in recognition of their outstanding leadership and distinguished service in bringing greater understanding, enduring partnership between the people of the United States and Nepal through their community development efforts.



Chief Guest Hon. Minister Pradhan presenting 2007 ANFS Friendship Award to Congressman James T. Walsh



Chief Guest Hon. Minister Pradhan presenting 2007 ANFS Community Leadership Award to Mr. Marvin A. Brustin



Chief Guest Hon. Minister Pradhan presenting 2007 ANFS Community Leadership Award to Mr. Ashok K. Gurung

At the conclusion of the panel discussion, Moderator and Master of Ceremony Kiran Chetry was presented with a Nepali scarf and Honorary Certificate as a token of appreciation by Dr. Tara Niraula, ANFS president. The event began with traditional dances performed by Krishna Man Tuladhar, a veteran artist and Lakpa Sherpa. Ryan Moser, General Secretary of ANFS introduced the MC and Chairman of the Board and Dr. Rajendra Pradhan, welcomed the audience. Attendance at the event included: His Excellency Madhu Raman Acharya, the Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations, distinguished officials of the Nepal Mission, members of Nepal's delegation to UN general Assembly, many American friends of Nepal, leaders of various local Nepali Community organizations, the press and general public. Muna Belbase, ANFS First Vice President concluded this enjoyable and enlightening evening with a heartfelt vote of thanks in both Nepali and English.

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