

First Anniversary of Constitution Day in Nepal, Leaders Discuss Way Forward

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Kathmandu, Nepal—On the occasion of the first anniversary of Constitution Day in Nepal, UPF organized, on September 19, 2016, a program on "Nepal's Constitution 2072: The Way Forward."

A total of 150 government, civil society and academic leaders and journalists, among them, Ambassadors for Peace, participated in the event. The guests included the Minister of Forests and Soil Conservation of Nepal, Hon. Shankar Bhandari; the Minister of Commerce of Nepal, Hon. Jayant Chand; and seven members of Nepal's parliament.

On Sept 20, 2015, Nepal adopted a new constitution, replacing the Interim Constitution of 2007.



The new constitution was drafted by the second Constituent Assembly (CA) following the failure of the first Constituent Assembly, a unicameral body of members that served from 2008 to 2012, to pass a constitution in its mandated period. The constitution was endorsed by 90 percent of all of Nepal's lawmakers. Out of 598 CA members, 507 voted in favor of the constitution while 25 voted against it and 66 members, mainly representing political parties based in the southern Tarai plains in the country,

boycotted the final debates on the constitution as a protest against provisions in the constitution that they say limit the inclusion of minorities, including the Madhesis, in national and public life.

Nepal's political leaders concur that all political parties need to come to an agreement on how to amend the constitution to address the legitimate demands that are being made by the country's indigenous groups.



Hon. Bhandari said that more Madhesis, Tharus and other ethnic minorities will agree with the constitution once it has been amended. He added that no nation in the world has a perfect constitution and that Nepal can improve its constitution by modifying it from time to time.

Hon. Ram Narayan Bidari said that a constitution is a dynamic and living document and that it needs to be revised according to the situation of the country. He added that it was the constitution that established Nepal as a republic, the rule of law in the country and fundamental rights as human rights. He also emphasized the need to advertise to indigenous groups and minorities, including the Dalits, the Madhesis and the Tharus, and women, that all peoples' rights are reserved in the constitution.

Hon. Hari Prasad Upreti said that for this transition phase to come to a close three levels of elections will need to be held by February 2018. He has asked all party leaders and concerned people to complete the elections and that all amendments to the constitution be made by this time, and also said all political parties need to understand the constitution. It will bring prosperity to the nation as well, he emphasized.

Hon. Jayant Chand of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) also said the constitution is a dynamic document and therefore needs to be changed to address the demands of a country's people and that people need to be an owner of their country's constitution. Hon. Dhyan Govinda Ranjit of the Nepali Congress said Nepal's constitution is inclusive and that it encompasses the rights of all ethnic and religious groups in the country. Hon. Milan Kumari Rajbanshi of the Nepal Family Party said no constitution in the world was promulgated by a 100 percent vote, and so the constitution will need to be improved to solve the crisis. She added that since the constitution is law, every citizen needs to respect and cherish it.

Hon. Tara Man Gurung of the Nepali Congress, Hon. Durga Paudel of the Rastriya Janamorcha Party, Hon. Dor Prasad Upadhyaya of the Maoist-Centre and Mr. Binod Dangi of UPF-Nepal emphasized there needs to be agreement on how to successfully implement the constitution.

[1] The MPs were

Hon. Milan Kumari Rajbanshi (Nepal Family Party)
Hon. Hari Prasad Upreti (the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), or CPN-UML)
Hon. Ram Narayan Bidari (the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist-Centre))
Hon. Durga Paudel (Rastriya Janamorcha Party)
Hon. Tara Man Gurung (Nepali Congress, or NC)
Hon. Dor Prasad Upadhyaya (Maoist-Centre)
Hon. Dhyan Govinda Ranjit (NC)