

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR
DEMOCRACY IN NEPAL

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1051) expressing support for democracy in Nepal that will require the full participation of the people of Nepal in the political process to hold elections for a constituent assembly and draft a new constitution and calling upon the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist to adhere to commitments it has made and to respect human rights, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 1051

Whereas the United States and Nepal have longstanding ties of friendship and good relations, and since contributing as Nepal's first bilateral aid donor in January 1951, the United States has contributed more than \$1,400,000,000 bilaterally and multilaterally to Nepal;

Whereas it is the policy of the United States to support sustained peace and democracy in Nepal in order to achieve important United States regional and bilateral goals, including preventing the spread of terror, enhancing regional stability, promoting democracy worldwide, and protecting United States citizens in Nepal;

Whereas the conflict in Nepal has claimed approximately 13,000 lives since 1996, and the insurgency continues to undermine political stability and the prospects for economic development in the country;

Whereas after three weeks of mass pro-democracy protests organized by the Seven-Party Alliance and the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, King Gyanendra reinstated the parliament, which reconvened on April 28, 2006; and

Whereas the United States supports the Government of Nepal's efforts to bring permanent peace and democracy to Nepal: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That—

(1) the House of Representatives—

(A) reiterates its support for democracy in Nepal;

(B) recognizes that the full participation of the people of Nepal will be required in the political process to—

(i) hold elections for a constituent assembly; and

(ii) draft a new constitution; and

(C) welcomes agreements between the Government of Nepal and the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist that commit both sides to a free, fair, multi-party, democratic political process; and

(2) it is the sense of the House of Representatives that—

(A) the Government of Nepal should—

(i) continue its role in developing a new democracy;

(ii) hold free and fair elections for a constituent assembly;

(iii) immediately take steps to restore law and order and government presence and service delivery throughout the country; and

(iv) implement the will of the people of Nepal; and

(B) the Maoists must—

(i) lay down their weapons and permanently and publicly give up violence and intimidation for political ends, both in word and deed; and

(ii) strictly honor and implement their commitments to the Government and people of Nepal, including to—

(I) respect human rights;

(II) uphold civil liberties, including freedom of speech, association, and the press;

(III) submit to the rule of law; and

(IV) dismantle parallel governance structures that emerged during the conflict.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Iowa.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous matter on this resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Iowa?

There was no objection.

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this timely resolution, which takes note of the recent comprehensive peace agreement between the government of Nepal and the Maoist insurgents and expresses the hope that this process will place Nepal on the path of lasting peace and democracy.

In particular, I want to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) for his thoughtful assistance in this resolution and to commend my good friend, the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH), for his leadership on the resolution and his long-standing interest in the welfare of the people of Nepal.

As my colleagues know, sandwiched between China and India and home to the soaring Himalayan Mountains, Nepal has long been known as one of the most beautiful countries on the planet. A constitutional monarchy since 1990, Nepal has long enjoyed good relations with the United States at the governmental level, nurtured in part by the many Peace Corps volunteers, such as Mr. WALSH, who have so ably served in the world's only Hindu kingdom.

Tragically, however, each year since the onset of a ruthless Maoist rebellion in 1966 has seen this country of 24 million ever more starkly challenged, not only by the insurgents, but by a panoply of developmental, governance and human rights problems that have converged to potentially jeopardize the viability of the state itself.

Most recently, popular anger at King Gyanendra's autocratic actions since early 2005 boiled over in April of this year, resulting in massive demonstrations across the country, and public support for a nationwide general strike called by Nepal's seven major political parties. Despite harsh reprisals by the security forces, the resolve of the democracy movement ultimately forced the King to restore sovereignty to the people of Nepal.

On April 24, the King bowed to public pressure and announced the reinstatement of Parliament. On April 28, Parliament convened for the first time since 2002 with G.P. Koirala of the Ne-

pali Congress Party at the helm of a national unity government.

The King's seizure of civilian authority and disdain for the political parties led them to seek a rapprochement with Nepal's Maoist insurgents, based on their mutual rejection of the King's royal coup. This rapprochement led to a formalized 12-point understanding between the parties and the Maoists, the key element of which is a commitment by the parties, now the government, to support elections to a constituent assembly charged with drafting a new constitution, a long-standing Maoist demand in exchange for Maoist commitment to support multiparty democracy.

Under the comprehensive agreement reached this November, the Maoist rebels will join a transitional government, while their weapons are to be put under U.N. supervision. The new agreement also establishes an ambitious timetable for democratic reform with the objective of holding elections monitored by the U.N. to the constituent assembly by mid-June, 2007.

The Government of the United States has welcomed the announcement of this agreement. The administration and Congress hope this step will place Nepal on a path to lasting peace and democracy. All of us hope that the Maoist commitment to peace and multiparty democracy is genuine, and that they have irrevocably abandoned their stated goal of establishing a one-party authoritarian state.

While it is always prudent to judge those who take law into their hands by their actions, not their words, the Congress is committed to giving reconciliation approaches as a fair and reasonable chance. America fully supports any peace process that safeguards the aspirations of the Nepali people.

As the resolution suggests, this means that violence and intimidation and criminal acts, such as forced recruitment of cadre and extortion, should cease forthwith. Nepali people who have lived in fear and insecurity for over a decade deserve not only a chance for peace and prosperity, but to choose their own form of government through free and fair elections.

America is committed to helping the Nepali people build a peaceful, prosperous and democratic future. I urge support for this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution and urge all of my colleagues to do so as well.

I would first like to commend my friend and colleague from New York (Mr. WALSH) for introducing this measure and for his long-standing interest in Nepal since his days as a Peace Corps volunteer in that troubled nation.

Over the past decade, more than 13,000 citizens of Nepal have lost their lives in a brutal civil war. More than 200,000 have been displaced. Hopes for

peace have been repeatedly dashed, and the poor and impoverished people of Nepal have paid the price. With one of the lowest per capita GDPs in the entire world, the inability of the Maoists and the Nepalese government to negotiate a comprehensive peace agreement has been truly unconscionable.

In their bloody insurgent campaign, the Maoist guerillas have dragged children from their villages to serve as child soldiers. They have assassinated local officials who dare to challenge their authority and Nepalese soldiers trying to keep the peace, and they have repeatedly harassed poor villagers who simply wish to stay out of the civil war.

The Nepalese Government has not been without blame. The government has been hopelessly deadlocked by political divisions between the parties and between Nepal's elected political leadership and the Nepalese King. The Nepalese Army has also been responsible for severe human rights abuses in its efforts to defeat the Maoists.

With this history in mind, the news from Kathmandu last month that the Nepalese Government and the Maoists had finally signed a peace agreement is most welcome. On its face the peace agreement holds great promise to bring peace to Nepal at long last, as well as the restoration of democracy.

The guerillas will be forced to put their personnel and weapons in U.N.-monitored cantonments, and the Nepalese Army will put a similar number of soldiers back in their barracks. Elections for a constituent assembly will be held next year, and the guerillas will come into the government in the interim.

The leadership of the rebels has publicly renounced violence as a means to win political power in Nepal, and the Nepalese Government seems prepared to deal with some of the concerns raised by them.

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While the peace agreement is a very positive step forward, cautious optimism must remain the watchword for American policy towards Nepal. I am not convinced that the rebels have truly renounced violence or have given up on establishing an authoritarian Maoist society. I am very concerned that the peace deal lets the Maoists into the government before the Constituent Assembly elections next year, potentially giving them the ability to influence the election results in a non-democratic direction.

I am also concerned that Nepal's vibrant political parties have not put aside their deep divisions, nor are they prepared to move toward strong and effective governments. The elected leaders of Nepal must focus on encouraging foreign investment, creating jobs and promoting education, not jockeying for the next government appointment.

Mr. Speaker, the United States has been a strong friend of Nepal over many decades. Our Nation has been a

major donor of foreign assistance to the Nepalese people and we have made enormous diplomatic efforts to promote peace and stability in Nepal. In the months ahead, the United States and the United Nations must keep up the pressure on all parties in Nepal to live up to the terms of the peace deal. Any sign that the rebels or the government are returning to the violent and corrupt ways of the past must be met head on by the international community.

With the right amount of international pressure, it is our strong belief that the peace agreement between the Nepalese Government and the rebels will bear fruit. Finally, the impoverished people of Nepal will get the form of democracy, human rights and good governance that they so richly deserve. I strongly support this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, as we all understand, this body is composed of 435 Members, and one of the unique features of membership is everyone brings a different background. It has been my experience here that the Members that have some of the most helpful backgrounds possible are those that have served in the United States Peace Corps, and this applies both to knowledge of the area of the world that they may have served, but also just in general. Every Peace Corps volunteer that I have known that has served in this body has been of exemplary character and compassion.

Symbolic of it all is the gentleman from New York, Mr. WALSH, one of our most decent, thoughtful Members, who served in Nepal, whose leadership on this issue and whose introduction of this bill is so much appreciated by this body.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to my good friend, the gentleman from New York, JIM WALSH.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Chairman HYDE, Chairman LEACH and Ranking Member LANTOS for their great service to this country while serving on the International Relations Committee. They bring great honor to this House in their knowledge and the thoughtful approach they bring to our foreign policy, and I am very grateful to them for allowing this resolution to come before the House this evening. Let me thank also the entire International Relations Committee and staff for all the hard work and effort in getting this important resolution to the floor.

It is such a critical time for this beautiful little country in Asia, Nepal. The timing of this resolution could not be more appropriate. The Government of Nepal and the Communist Party of Nepal just signed a comprehensive peace agreement on November 21, bringing an end to the 11-year people's war which has claimed over 13,000 lives.

The 11-page historic document was signed by Prime Minister Girija Prasad

Koirala on behalf of the Nepal Government and Maoist Chairman Prachanda on behalf of his party. This ten-point agreement came after a number of earlier understandings and agreements between the Seven Party Alliance and the Maoists.

The agreement states that "After the Nepali Army is confined to barracks and the Maoist combatants to cantonments, possession and exhibition of arms, intimidation, and use of violence and weapons in any form shall be punishable by law."

The agreement bars the government and the Maoists from recruiting soldiers, smuggling or transporting weapons and explosives, carrying out violent activities against each other, intimidating any person and destroying private property or public property. The agreement states no one is allowed to move about or participate in mass meetings and rallies with any type of arms.

The popular uprising for peace and democracy in April was historic. The will of the people of Nepal is what made the agreements of recent weeks between the government and the Maoists possible, and I am hopeful that those agreements will move Nepal further along the path to lasting peace and democracy.

The progress to date is commendable and there is cause for optimism, but there is much work to be done. Agreements are worth little if they go unimplemented, and the Maoists in particular continue to engage in behavior that calls into question their commitment to non-violence and multiparty democracy.

As Richard Boucher, the Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, said during his recent visit to Nepal, "You don't walk into Parliament with a gun in your pocket." I again call upon the Maoists and their Chairman Prachanda to permanently end violence, to submit to the rule of law and to compete on an even playing field with Nepal's political parties for a contest of ideas to seek the votes of the Nepalese people in free and fair elections.

There is no place in a democracy for private armies. The parties of Nepal have requested U.N. assistance in monitoring adherence to the peace agreements, particularly the restriction of arms and armies. I welcome that request and the U.N.'s involvement, and I strongly support a robust U.N. monitoring mission in Nepal for the upcoming elections.

I am pleased and encouraged by these developments. The Nepalese people have spoken and expressed their will to have their voices heard. It is time for the political leaders to acknowledge their wishes and fully carry them out.

Mr. Speaker, again it gives me great pleasure to stand before you today to give praise to this historic comprehensive peace agreement as the framework for peace in Nepal and recognize the remarkable progress that has been

achieved by all. Nepal can hopefully now travel down the path of peace, stability and prosperity.

I commend the efforts of the leaders of that nation who focused on the greater good of the people of Nepal, and I urge them to continue to move forward.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield such time as he may consume to my good friend the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER), a distinguished member of the International Relations Committee.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy in permitting me to speak on this and his leadership in bringing it forward with my friend and colleague, the chairman of our subcommittee.

Mr. Speaker, oftentimes there is so much work that transpires in the course of the International Relations Committee dealing with things that are too far removed from the world's viewpoint at any given time.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague from New York introducing this legislation. He brings to this debate the experience of somebody who not only was a Peace Corps volunteer years ago, but continues his interest and concern, although not a member of the committee, somebody who has repeatedly brought his attention and expertise and interest. And that is what I think is the strength of what we can do in this Chamber: having the strength that comes from people who have the experience, the concern, use this platform to be able to focus the attention in this country and around the world on these things that seemingly are minor on the world stage. But given the devastation that has been incurred on this small country, the loss of life, the upset, the loss of progress, being able to look at an opportunity like this, it is not just for Nepal, but it seems to me it is a demonstration of taking some of these intractable issues around the world and indicate that there are opportunities for hope.

I just appreciate Congressman WALSH bringing this forward. I know he has had some other experience in the past looking at other modest conundrums, like in Northern Ireland, where his follow-through and his commitment makes a difference, and it is part of the richness of the experience here in foreign affairs.

I hope that this is something as we move forward to a new session, that we will be able to keep the focus, the direction and the attention, because coming out of what we see in Iraq, we are going to need more than ever opportunities to find areas of agreement and to reinforce the positive aspects of diplomacy.

I appreciate again the opportunity to speak in support of this and strongly urge my colleagues to not just support this, but this is something where people think about ways that they can help spread this word for this important work.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, but I wish to take a bit of time to express my own deep admiration for my dear friend from Iowa, whose brilliance and decency and commitment we shall miss more than any of us can express.

During an extraordinarily distinguished, rich, impressive service, Congressman LEACH has brought to this body intellectual equipment, integrity, a passionate commitment to the Congress, and he will be sorely and deeply missed by all of us on both sides of the aisle.

On behalf of all of my colleagues on the Democratic side, I want to express our admiration, our respect and our friendship for him, and wish him the very best in what I am sure will be exciting future endeavors.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I thank very much my distinguished friend, and I wish him every great success as he takes on the leadership of this committee in this coming Congress. We all have a vested interest in the Congress doing well and the country moving forward.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of Nepalese democracy. I would like to commend my colleague from New York, Mr. WALSH, for introducing this important bill and appreciate the opportunity to speak in support of it today.

The Nepalese people, like all people, deserve to live in a country free from conflict and to be represented by democratically elected officials. These elected leaders need to create a professional, non-political military force that can adequately deal with the Maoist rebels who have been destabilizing the country for so long. Currently as a result of the Maoist rule, nearly one third of the Nepalese people live below the poverty line; if the government of Nepal doesn't live up to its moral obligation to effectively govern many more will fall into destitution.

To those citizens who are fighting for democracy through non-violent methods, by standing up grass-roots organizations and educating people on the benefits of a free society, I say keep up the good work. Continue working to ensure freedom of the press and that the rights of all citizens are respected and not abused.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working in the future with Mr. WALSH and the other cosponsors of this bill to ensure that Congress focuses on democratic progress throughout the world.

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WAMP). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1051, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds of those voting having responded in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION WAIVING REQUIREMENT OF CLAUSE 6(a) OF RULE XIII WITH RESPECT TO CONSIDERATION OF CERTAIN RESOLUTIONS AND PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO SUSPEND THE RULES

Mrs. CAPITO, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 109-720) on the resolution (H. Res. 1096) waiving a requirement of clause 6(a) of rule XIII with respect to consideration of certain resolutions reported from the Committee on Rules and providing for consideration of motions to suspend the rules, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO RELIEF, SECURITY, AND DEMOCRACY PROMOTION ACT OF 2006

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate Bill (S. 2125) to promote relief, security, and democracy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 2125

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Democratic Republic of the Congo Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act of 2006".

TITLE I—BILATERAL ACTION ON ADDRESSING URGENT NEEDS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

SEC. 101. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) The National Security Strategy of the United States, dated September 17, 2002, concludes that "[i]n Africa, promise and opportunity sit side-by-side with disease, war, and desperate poverty. This threatens both a core value of the United States preserving human dignity and our strategic priority combating global terror. American interests and American principles, therefore, lead in the same direction: we will work with others for an African continent that lives in liberty, peace, and growing prosperity."

(2) On February 16, 2005, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency testified, "In Africa, chronic instability will continue to hamper counterterrorism efforts and pose heavy humanitarian and peacekeeping burdens."

(3) According to the United States Agency for International Development, "Given its size, population, and resources, the Congo is an important player in Africa and of long-term interest to the United States."

(4) The Democratic Republic of the Congo is 2,345,410 square miles (approximately ¼ the size of the United States), lies at the heart of Africa, and touches every major region of sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, a secure, peaceful, and prosperous Democratic Republic of the Congo would have a profound impact on progress throughout Africa.

(5) The most recent war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which erupted in 1998,