To
Prime Minister
Nepal

Sub: A concern of citizen for issue of environment

Respected Mr. Prime minister

I have attached herein my short paper concerning the issue which I thought is important to bring your attention. I humbly request you to go through the issue. Issues of environment are very crucial in the context of changing climate. Nepal as a developing country has its own role on environment conservation.

As prime minister you have authority of decision making. I hereby want to bring forward some issues which are important to take into consideration. I specially want to grab your concern as these are the areas which need a major portion of investment that would be investment for humankind for present and future generation.

Sincerely
Swechha Ghimire

July 29, 2011

His Excellency Dr. Shankar Sharma
Ambassador from Nepal to the United States
Washington, DC

Excellency:

I am pleased to submit to you Swechha’s short paper along with 16 others. Swechha is a law student in Nepal. Her short letter on pages 5-6 to the Prime Minister, Mr. Jhala Nath Khanal, is called “The Prime Minister’s Legal Authority to Protect the Environment and Why and How the Laws should be Enforced”. The other 15 papers come from university students of environmental law and science in Nepal and in America who are participating in an online graduate course offered this summer by Johns Hopkins University, called “American Environmental Law for Third World Countries: A Course in Comparative Law.”

Swechha, like 11 of her class mates is writing from Nepal. We have twelve students in Nepal and one Nepali here in the US, Deepika Shrestha, who is also serving as a teaching assistant. You met Deepika at the ANA Meeting in northern VA this month. All Nepalis are participating in this class at no charge to them. Co-instructor, Amir Poudel and his colleagues, Drs. Wagley and Basnyat, are also in Nepal, not infrequently in the countryside, studying forests and rivers. We have five Hopkins Master’s Degree students, four of whom are Americans, one of whom is from Ghana and another en route to Sumatra. I could tell you many wonderful stories about each of the writers of these letters to decision makers; but I will let the letters speak for themselves. I believe they provide an outstanding inventory of problems and solutions in the area of land, energy, air and water in Nepal and shed much light on countries in similar situations. Equally important they demonstrate the energy and capabilities of the young Nepalis, and their American and Ghanaian online classmates.
And the best part is that these young people do it as briefly as can be done. Srijana Regmi, for example, sums up the most urgent environmental problems in Nepal with great insight, in less than 300 words. I can’t think of a better way to get an overview of natural resource challenges and opportunities in Nepal in a shorter time than to read these papers. These letters respect the time of policy makers. They will be especially valuable briefing documents for officials, especially those just beginning their service.

I hope after examining these short letters you will want to pass them on to the Prime Minister, the president and other appropriate officials and friends with an interest in Nepal’s Environmental Policy. Sweccha’s paper for example would be of great value to legal officers of the government, and lawyers generally, because of its sharp citation of key environmental cases, statutes and constitutional provisions. It inventories problems and recommends solutions. Krishna Sharma’s letter, to cite another example, on how the National Planning Commission should carry out its environmental responsibilities, may be of special interest to you given your past service as leader of NPC. Krishna, I am sure, would value your thoughts on this.

The first letter in this collection, by Joni Mainaly, is my heart’s favorite, not just because of its cogency and information, but because of its passion.

We are immensely proud of all of our students this summer. We know you and other Nepalese, especially those in government and education, will be very proud of the young Nepali students and professionals whose excellent letters to their government are set out below. But in addition to being proud of these young men and women, I hope and trust that you and your government will listen to them and to their classmates here and around the world. They have so much of value to contribute. I know you will welcome them to the national dialogue.

Thank you for agreeing to examine this collection of letters. It means a lot to the students and I trust will prove of some value to your government and nation.

Larry J. Silverman
Adjunct Professor Environmental Policy
Johns Hopkins University
Washington, DC, Baltimore, MD

Amir Poudel
Chairman
Friends of Prakriti
Kathmandu, Nepal
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1. A Plea for Protecting Me from Becoming a Citizen of a Failed State

22 June, 2011

Rt. Honorable Jhala Nath Khanal
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers
Singha Durbar
Kathmandu, Nepal

Dear Mr. Prime Minister

As a responsible citizen of my land, as you are, it is my greatest pleasure to write you. It is pleasure because, I know you greatly value thoughts of Nepalese people. It is pleasure because I know your effective leadership can lead to my nation’s prosperity and it is a pleasure because I am writing you since you represent our hope and our legitimate expectations.

Mr. Prime Minister, the vast geographic variation that brings in highest peak in the world to the lowest gorges, one of the richest biodiversities in the world, second richest in terms of freshwater resource make Nepal a land that nature has bestowed with its best. Great deal of variation in climate brings tropical zone to arctic zone in the same territory that accounts for such a big hub for different species and ecosystem. Agriculture being the mainstay of economy, its dense forests are its green asset. However, the life the people in Nepal live amid such great potential to prosper seems paradoxical to many in the world.

Mr. Prime Minister, you must have been well-briefed about the environmental scenarios and problems that we are going through. You must have gone through prominent sources of water pollution basically in the rivers of Kathmandu Valley as industrial effluents and household drainage. Since you yourself lead National Level Climate Change Council you must have gone through the plights of Nepalese living with the impacts of climate change. Vulnerability index poses it to the fourth most vulnerable nation in the world in climate change impact. Mr. Prime Minister, there is now no scientific debate on the changing climate, the only debate is the negotiational politics at home and around the world. Darwin’s evolutionary theory took more than a century to penetrate in the real world that we also see the same in climate debate now but the only difference is climate change and its impact cannot wait until century so it is the only time to act than to indulge in dirty politics.

Mr. Prime Minister, I cannot imagine, nor would I aspire to live in the country where there are no white snowed mountains that show our glory, our devotion and our love for peace to the rest of the world. I cannot also imagine to live in the country where I can only see barren lands which used to be a densed forest that now bring home the eroded lands, and keep many lives at stake.
with flood. Degradation of land has brought setback to pursuit of economic development that our different periodical plans foresee. We now talk about greening our economy but I see less sense in it without our actions for the same. The gloomy face of Nepal (especially Kathmandu) shown up with ineffective solid waste management reduces the overall glory of the nation. The world community with all these problems associated with political stalemate are near to conclude our glorious nation to be a “failed-state,” Mr. Prime Minister a “failed-state.”

Mr. Prime Minister, I now would urge that this is a high time we act in order to save our country from being a “failed state.” If it is not now we can’t expect much tomorrow because our tigers, our Himalays, our rivers, do not wait for us to act.

With high regard to whatever good work you are working on, I would like you to work immediately in bringing up more stringent laws and regulatory frameworks, to give immediate executive orders in implementing the enacted laws; for no matter how stringent laws are made, their enforcement only makes sense to us. It must be in your notice that there are different important decisions made by the Supreme Court in relation to protection of environment and their implementation is awaited the most.

Stricter enforcement of laws would bring in a strong foundation for the future leaders to act. This is the high time for you to be the real LEADER, Mr. Prime Minister. We are already in the post cautionary world scenario and its not only about precaution we take for future redress but also an action that redresses the present harm.

Mr. Prime Minister, I give, as you do, meaning to my life in the prosperity of my nation. It is thus, a high time to ACT to protect our glory, our environment and protecting me and yourself from being a citizen of a failed state.

Sincerely,

Jony Mainaly
A responsible citizen of Nepal
2. The Prime Minister’s Legal Authority to Protect the Environment and Why and How the Laws Should be Enforced

Mr. Prime minister, being a citizen of Nepal and environment law student I am concerned about the environment issues of this country. Being a rational citizen I want to contribute in the decision making level with my short paper on general environment condition, problems and I here include some suggestion as per my level of knowledge.

Nepal is a beautiful country blessed by nature with diverse topography. It has snowy mountains, hills and Terai with rivers, springs, and lakes. But now we need to be aware of the fact that mountain is no more snowy, it is melting with threat of glacier outburst. Hills are no more green, due to deforestation. There is natural calamities, extinction of wildlife, habitat. Due to pollution water is no more eye-soothing, they are open drainage, and its big example is our holy river Bagmati. Ecosystem of land, river all are affected because of it.

Our Interim Constitution Article 16(1) states that “Every person has the right to live in a clean environment”. Similarly, we have Environment Protection Act, Water Act, Solid Waste Management and Resource Mobilization Act, and others where law relating to environment are scattered. Judiciary has given some remarkable judgments relating to environment protection in some cases like Surya Prashad Sharma Dhungel V Godawari marbel and Others\(^1\), Surendra Bhandari V Shree Distillery and Others\(^2\), Yogi Narahari Nath V Rt. Hon. PM Girija Prashad Koirala\(^3\) and Prakash Mani Sharma V HMG Cabinet Secretariat\(^4\).

Problem is we lack implementation. We have laws; we have ratified various conventions, soft laws relating to environment protection but we have no proper plans for their implementation. Law’s effect is not seen in action. Discharge of sewage into surface water and into aquifer is dealt by Solid Waste Management and Resource Mobilization Act, 1987, and National Code, 1963 Chapter – 4 deals with management and control of solid waste, where Sec 4 (3) prohibit keeping, throwing, burning, burying or otherwise storing, or disposing of or destroying harmful solid wastes in any public place (like water

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1. NKP 2052 p 169
2. NKP Writ No 3259
3. NKP 2059 V 30 No 1 p 33
4. NKP 2054 V 39 No6 p 312
resource) or private-owned place keeping in view the welfare and convenience of the public. But when we look at the implementation we see nothing showing its effect on remedies.

- Main problem of Kathmandu is waste management: Drainage pipe is poured into the river creating pollution, solid waste is collected on road sides. There is always an issue of dumping site management (issue of Okharpauwa Dumping Site), cholera, diarrhea, and dysentery are still the reason of death of people, and Cultural sites are polluted.

- Vehicle emission, industries in city areas, and unplanned urbanization are the causes of air pollution. Government needs to bring a concrete policy after scientific study and research. Government needs to invest some amount in research too for long term plan and policy and its effective implementation.

- For long term planning, government needs to have more concern about global climate change. Glacier lake outburst can be disaster if not taken seriously. Government should sincerely consider it.

Mr. Prime Minister as I write this the country is enthusiastically celebrating tourism year. Clean environment, beautiful snowy mountains, green hills, fertile Terai, river, rafting, are there to attract tourist so it is essential to preserve them. Environment protection should come under state investment priority.

This is my small effort as individual; you being prime minister have authority to act on it. We are hoping a lot from your primitersial term. Do consider the issue of environment in your investment plan and we are waiting to see it in upcoming budget.

Swachha Ghimire
Law Student
Nepal
3. Major Environmental Issues in Nepal —A Call to Action

June 21, 2011

To,
The Honorable Prime Minister
Government of Nepal
Kathmandu

Honorable Sir,

I, an environmental professional and a concerned citizen of Nepal, would like to request you to contemplate on the following major environmental issues of our country, which are becoming worse with the growing population and haphazard urbanization. I would also strongly urge you to take significant actions towards them, some of which are also suggested here:

1) **Deforestation**: Our forest, an important source of national economy and huge carbon sink, is constantly facing massive deforestation. According to MFSC\(^5\), the annual deforestation rate is 1.7%, which is above Asia’s average. Isn’t it alarming to know that within 20 years (1990 to 2010) Nepal has lost 25% of its forest cover? If unchecked, this rate will further increase and soon will put Nepal's people and economy in jeopardy or even worse. Sir, the causes of deforestation-rampant felling of trees for fuel wood, illegal logging, smuggling of timber, encroachment, and corruptions are already known and now the solution is to take respective actions towards them. You have received a report disclosing names of 100 people involved in the deforestation\(^6\). We believe you will take appropriate action to those people. Plus, strict regulations should be implemented to check illegal logging and smuggling and priority should be given to alternative energy technologies to reduce the dependency of fuel wood.

2) **Water pollution**: In our country, annually 10,500 of children below five die due to diarrheal caused by polluted drinking water\(^7\). Isn’t it frightening? Our major water supply sources-surface/rivers and ground water are highly polluted. The pollution is mainly caused by disposal of untreated sewage, industrial discharge and dumping of solid waste in the water bodies. This pollution is hitting hard at the existing water shortage problem especially in the urban areas and is causing serious public health problems and deaths, and loss of aquatic life. What could be a better example than the state of Bagmati and Bishnumati river in the Kathmandu Valley- full of solid waste and sewage, stagnant water at most of the places, terrible smell, no aquatic life and horrible visual impression. Sir, there is a real need to implement the existing policies and regulations and develop targeted policies and action plans to protect water bodies. Besides, industrial effluent standards should be enforced, simple wastewater treatment technology should be given priority and the provision of polluter pay principle should be activated.

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\(^5\) Ministry of Forestry and Soil Conservation

\(^7\) Water Aid Nepal, 2008
3) **Solid waste:** It has become a huge and serious problem, especially in the urban areas of Nepal. I have seen people literally throwing solid waste in the rivers, road side and in public places. Most of this waste (around 80%) is organic and thus decays creating foul smell and making it aesthetically unacceptable. The immediate action could be removing all the waste from the road side and public places, charging penalty to the people who throw in such places, increasing the number of door to door waste collectors and installing trash cans in various places. The long term solution could be creating mass awareness, encouraging people to separate their organic waste, promoting composting and recycling, investing into landfill sites and developing practical action plans to manage it.

4) **Air pollution:** The outdoor air pollution has become severe in the urban areas reducing visibility and forcing people to wear mask while in rural areas mostly it is indoor pollution thereby increasing respiratory diseases risk. The main causes of outdoor pollution- increases in vehicles number, poor roads, and adulteration in the petroleum products- can be approached by promoting green vehicles, strictly regulating the adulteration process, and investing in long-lasting roads etc. For indoor, promoting alternative energy and providing incentives to the rural people can be done. For both, energy policies and action plans should be developed.

Finally, exploring and learning from global practices, creating mass environmental awareness and strengthening the infrastructure and capacity of concerned agencies should be considered.

Thank you very much!

Yours faithfully,

Deepika Shrestha
4. Urgent Environmental Problems Needing Attention

To
His Excellency the President of Nepal
Shital Niwas
Kathmandu

Dear Excellency,

We are all aware of how much you are concerned about the environmental problems that Nepal is facing. We keep reading about your efforts to address those issues. I would like to highlight some of the environmental issues for your consideration to make it easier for you to combat immediate environmental threats.

Excellency, people of Nepal have been seriously affected by the unhygienic water supply in their taps. Sometimes we experience water mixed with sewage running through the taps. It is such an embarrassment. While, most of them even do not have taps. There has to be better management of sewerage and supply of drinking water.

There is no regular supply of electricity in major cities, towns and villages of Nepal. The cost of electricity generation is huge financially and environmentally. There is a panic in the country due to long hours of load shedding. Government officers and influential private individuals are considering environmentally unfriendly thermal energy policies. It will be a disaster if such policies are implemented when Nepal has a huge potential of renewable energy resources. Some of the other more pressing issues are deterioration of river water quality, air pollution in the cities, noise pollution and loss of biodiversity.

Excellency, rivers in the Kathmandu valley have been polluted to the extent that it is difficult to distinguish them from sewerage. Rivers outside the valley, where the inhabitants are less along their banks, are pristine. As our population will grow and more inhabitants will crowd the banks of rivers the rivers are going to get more polluted unless concrete measures are taken right now. This can already be seen in the rivers in small towns. A vision has to be set and a national policy should be drafted for the preservation of the rivers throughout Nepal.

Wastes from polluting industries and household sewage should be treated properly. Polluting rivers should be discouraged and penalty should be imposed on people polluting rivers. Implementation of the polluter pays principle would be wise. Kathmandu valley’s rivers need to be urgently cleaned up. Kathmandu is crisscrossed with many rivers adding to its beauty. However, the conditions of rivers are in very bad shape. The management of the river will enhance the beauty of Kathmandu.

Management of waste is another issue in Kathmandu and other major cities in Nepal. Management of wastes through latest technology should be adopted. Through research it has been found out that much of waste can be reused for generating energies and for various other useful purposes. Very little is actually non biodegradable and pose environmental problems.

Excellency, major cities in Nepal face the problem of air and noise pollution. The introduction of policy of phasing out of vehicles more than 20 years old might be a good approach in the reduction
of air pollution. Industries contribute a lot to air pollution as well. Proper monitoring of vehicles and industries should be carried out to prevent them from polluting air. Establishment of environmental police for this purpose should be welcomed.

Excellency, due to illegal mining of stones in the mid hills of Nepal there has been desertification of land. There is loss of biodiversity in the region.

Excellency, plantation of trees should be encouraged as it has multiple environmental benefits. It would reduce noise pollution, enhance the quality of air and has aesthetic value as well. It also enriches biodiversity.

Excellency, these are pressing environmental issues and your influential position as a Head of State demands your urgent attention.

Yours faithfully,
Abhishekh Adhikari
5. Investment Choices: Hydropower, Tourism, and Forest Medicine

To the Prime Minister of Nepal,

Nepal is a small but beautiful Himalayan country with an area of 147,181 square kilometers ranging from 70 to 8848m altitude (Mt. Everest) surrounded by two rapidly expanding economies viz., India in the east, south and west, and the People’s Republic of China in the North. The country consists of three ecological regions comprising mountain, hills and Terai with richness in biodiversity comprising ecosystem, species, and a broad variety of topography contributing the occurrence of sub-tropical, temperate, alpine and Arctic climate within the country, which provide about 60 - 80 percent of rainfall during monsoon from July to September.

Regarding the future investments, Nepal holds a great potential in developing its nascent resources like hydropower, non timber forest products, tourism, and many more. The nation possesses 2.3 percent of the world’s hydro resources attributable to four principal river systems, the lifeline of Nepalese economy viz, Koshi (east), Gandaki (central), Karnali (Far-west) and Mahakali (Far-west). Theoretical hydropower potential of Nepal’s rivers, based on average flows, has been estimated to be 83000 MW which is one of the largest potentials in the world. In spite of this huge hydropower potential, Nepal has been able to develop only about 600 MW of hydropower. A large amount of power produced in Nepal can be easily exported to neighboring countries. Nepal Electricity Act of 1993 provides access for the sale of its power to other country and also for the import of power from other country. However Nepal is fully dependent on traditional energy sources such as biomass. For commercial purpose the country is reliant on imported fossil fuels like petrol, diesel, kerosene and LPG for running vehicles, stationary engines, boilers, cooking, lighting etc. Heavy dependence for energy on biomass resources has accelerated the depletion of natural resources and contributed to the degradation of natural environment. The country spends about 40 per cent of its foreign currency reserve on the import of petroleum products. On the other hand, the country’s vast resource of renewable hydropower energy remains virtually unexploited. Nepal needs to harness its vast hydropower potential and reduce its dependence on biomass in order to check the further degradation of the environment and reduce country’s dependence on fossil fuel based energy. The power so generated can be used for setting up clean energy based industries which will significantly contribute to the economic development of the country.

Hence, before any export Nepali hydroelectric project power to thermal dominated grids (like India) has the potential to enter in Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), it would at a minimum need to respect the criteria and guidelines of WCD (World Commission on Dams). This could also be a useful strategy in directing the country towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). There has not been any cross-border CDM projects registered so far into the Executive Board and a proper methodology or approach of revenue allocation has also not been developed so far. So, a further CDM requirement under such a scenario could be that benefits need to be shared. If India and Nepal both need to agree to accept such projects under CDM, negotiations would also need to be undertaken with respect to the sharing of emission reduction credits. However, a partnership between project investors, Nepali and Indian governments, has immense potential to minimize GHG and global climate effects while simultaneously uplifting economic growth of the poor.

Nepal, a dream land of the world, is endowed with gorgeous mountain, magnificent panorama of flora, fauna and fountain, beautiful lakes, valleys and basins, medicinal herbs, precious stones and different forest types. Nepal is the most popular tourist hub and a global destination for tourists from all over the world. There exists a vast potential for heritage tourism, white-water tourism, eco-friendly tourism, health tourism, mountain tourism, safari and adventure tourism etc. In addition, Lumbini - the birth place of Lord Buddha, rich cultural heritage, pleasant climate in most parts of the country are basic and prominent characteristics of tourism
attractions to a large number of tourists in Nepal. The government of Nepal has adopted tourism policy in 1995 with a view to promote tourism sector. With a view of inviting tourists the government of Nepal has already launched Visit Nepal year programmed in 1998 and 2011 respectively. A major strategy in meeting the demand for tourist's easiness is to encourage increased private investment in popular tourist activities and recreations. Foreign investment will be encouraged in capital-intensive tourism industries such as hotels, resorts and areas which transfer modern technology and skills. However due to the lack of political stability and strike done by the several political parties such area is being hampered in Nepal. Thus, all political parties need to be committed to avoid such strike for the wellbeing in the tourism sector.

As we have varied agro climatic environment we are extremely rich in terms of medicinal and aromatic plants which can obviously foster the development of Agro and Forest Based Industries. Nepal can be an exporter of crude herbs. However we have problem in the legislation in case of non timber forest products grown in the private lands. They need to be registered but for the registration process it takes about 2 years and it is a quite lengthy process for the farmers who also need to pay for the field workers who come to survey their land from the survey department and DFO office. This is the case the farmers have to pay and register for growing either single species or more. So there is a need for the change of policy in this sector.

Since Nepal is a bona fide member of WTO, SAFTA and BIMST-EC, amendments have been made compatible with globalization and liberalization in the Acts and Regulations pertaining to these priority areas. The membership of WTO would not only enhance the effectiveness and efficiency in trading capacity but would also result in expansion of trade leading to a higher level of growth and enhancement of quality of life of people. Among others, Nepal has made a conditional commitment to open up sectors like legal service, engineering, architecture, Research & Development, advertising, market research, courier, telecom, musical products, higher education, financial service, hotels and restaurants and many more. Foreign investment in these above specified areas is safe, secure and most profitable in Nepal.

Thank you.

Best Regards
Bharat Sharma
6. The Role of National Planning Commission in Environmental Protection

National Planning Commission (NPC) is the advisory body for formulating development plans and policies of the country under the directives of the National Development Council (NDC). It explores and allocates resources for economic development and works as a central agency for monitoring and evaluation of development plans, policies and programmes. Besides, it facilitates the implementation of development policies and programmes. Moreover, it provides a platform for exchange of ideas, discussion and consultation pertaining to economic development of the country. It also serves as an institution for analyzing and finding solutions to the problems of civil societies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in the country.

According to the Work Performance Rule (1991), the functions of the NPC are as follows:

- To advise GoN, ministries, and departments on the amendments to be made in periodic plans, programmes, and projects
- To advise GoN on conducting feasibility studies and initiation of master plans of large projects
- To advise GoN, ministries, and departments on accepting foreign aids
- To appraise project proposals

The NPC should undergo following points on formulating any policies/advices on natural resource management:

1. Ensure local peoples livelihood with sustainable natural resource management.
2. Ensure the biodiversity conservation combating with climate change.
3. Promote local community based forest enterprises.
4. Ensure the market of locally produced items, goods and services.
5. Promote organic production and its market.

Krishna Sharma
7. Recommendations for Natural Resources Policy: Forestry, Agriculture and Energy

Honorable Prime Minister,

Bridge between two nations, Nepal is bountiful in its social, cultural and Natural diversity. Our ancestors have proved their bravery by shining the khukuri in the war zone and there exist many such brave warriors who have been using the weapons like kuto and kodalo and trying to win a war of food security and livelihood enhancement through agriculture, forestry and livestock. Nation must recognize them and equip them with the new modern tools and techniques so that they can win the fight against poverty and social, economic stability and food security. The only thing that needs is the strong willpower and fine policy and strong implementing authority.

I would like to attract your attention to the following topics and take necessary actions

- **Strengthening Community Forest Management in hills and ensuring the central government control for more revenue sharing.** Popularize the Collaborative forestry approach in Terai through more public participation.

- **End double taxing in NTFP marketing and ensure that they can be grown and exported like any other agricultural products from private land through a NTFP policy.**

- **Complete the REDD++ related policies soon to cash the opportunities of carbon trade.**

- **Review wildlife farming policy and wildlife damage compensation guideline to ensure the victims are well compensated.**

- **Bring out a policy for the establishment of the animal orphanage center.**

- **Prioritize the alternative energy as the government’s focus.** Allow only the green vehicles inside core cities like Katmandu, make necessary arrangements for tax and vat on importing these vehicles. Ensure that every government office will be zero carbon and green zones.

- **Promote the forest micro-enterprises; ensure the market of the product.**

- **Review the Forest Act, Local Self-governance Act and Environment Protection Act to end the conflicting roles and responsibilities provisioned.**

At last I wish good luck for the constitution building and we Nepalese people hope that our environmental rights are ensured in the constitution. Let us never forget that sea can be formed from numerous single drops of water. It’s the challenges and lessons from failure that can pave our way to success. Together we can make a difference. Yes, we can!

Sincerely,

Rajan Paudel
8. Protecting Lumbini, Birth Place of Lord Buddha, and Other Priorities

Honorable Prime Minister,

Being a bona fide citizen of Nepal, I take it as my responsibility to conserve the environment of the country. Hence I am writing so that you get well acquainted with the environmental situation of Nepal and your government can address the environmental problems.

Nepal is facing various environmental problems. But some of the major problems are highlighted in my letter. I have also recommended some solutions to help the government cope with the problems. Lumbini is the birthplace of Lord Buddha and its religious value has been attracting pilgrims since the very early ages. The archaeological remains, which were excavated throughout the last century and which are now conserved at the site, provide testimony of these pilgrimages since the 3rd century BC. It is for these reasons, that Lumbini was inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1997. It is one of the major destination points for both pilgrims and visitors from Nepal, and around the world. But today the site of Lumbini is not in the good condition. Due to establishment of various industries, the value of Lumbini has been decreasing. The industries are the sources of pollution which are causing negative effects to the environment of the precious place. Similarly, the cultural and religious importance has also been degraded. Hence it is very necessary to address the problem in order to preserve the Lumbini site. Therefore it is a must to relocate the industries from Lumbini area so that the world heritage can be less affected by the pollution.

Another huge problem of Nepal is the increasing population growth which is the source of degradation of natural resources. The population of Nepal is increasing at 2.6% per annum. This has brought considerable pressure on the use of resources like air, water, land, forest, etc. Scarcity of the resources has been faced by the people of Nepal. Hence national policy should be immediately implemented to prevent uncontrolled population growth.

Nepal is famous for its forests. But I feel very sorry to say that after few years Nepal shall be famous for rapid deforestation as it is taking place on a massive scale and at an accelerating rate. It has been the cause of soil erosion, landslides, floods, water scarcity, etc. Hence proper afforestation programs and plantation policies are to be implemented. Furthermore strict penalties are to be kept for those who cut down trees. Moreover use of bio-gas or solar energy is to be promoted to prevent people from using firewood.

No country can escape from the effects of global warming. Thus due to global warming ice from the Himalayas is melting. Melting of ice causes the Glacier Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF). The glacier lakes of Nepal like Tsho-Rolpa and Imja are in danger of being outburst. Hence the government should take precautionary measures to prevent these lakes from getting outburst.

Pollution of rivers is also one of the major environmental problems. Due to industrial sewages, domestics wastages, solid hazardous wastes discharged to the rivers, the condition of rivers like Bagmati and Bishnumati has been pathetic. Therefore strict action should be taken by government to regulate the sewages and discharge of wastes. Treatment of liquids before being discharged outside should be made compulsory so that water pollution can be prevented.

Air, water, noise and land pollution are the main environmental problems. Hence Government should take pollution clean-up methods and pollution prevention methods as well.
Hence these are the problems which are to be coped up by the government of Nepal so that clean and healthy environment can be promoted and people can enjoy their fundamental Right to live in a clean environment as enshrined in Article 17 of the Interim Constitution of Nepal. I hope your government will be pro-environment and shall work for promoting environmental justice.

Regards
Ankita KC
9. Water Quality Monitoring for the Bagmati River

June 22, 2011

To,

The Prime Minister of Nepal

Kathmandu

Issue

There is an immediate need to establish monitoring stations along the major rivers inside the Kathmandu Valley.

Background

The majority of the rivers that flow through the Kathmandu Valley have been in an extremely polluted state for many years. Most notably, the Bagmati River has been facing the worst condition as it drains all other tributaries eventually. Despite carrying high values in terms of drinking water supply, irrigation, industries, and cultural aspects, these rivers look like open sewers as a result of direct disposal of untreated municipal and industrial wastes (ADB and ICIMOD, 2006; ICIMOD et al., 2007). The major contributing factor in the process being the population explosion over the past couple of decades and the lack of adequate planning and infrastructure to manage the huge amount of municipal and industrial wastes thus generated (Thapa and Murayama, 2010, Karn and Harada, 2001; Pokhrel and Viraraghavan, 2005). In addition, there is a lack of proper monitoring mechanisms in these rivers which further impedes any current or future restoration plans. Under the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology, Government of Nepal, there are two known monitoring stations: one at Sundarijal (upstream Bagmati River) and the other at Khokana (downstream Bagmati River). However, they are very old and the quality and volume of data generated are not enough to match modern scientific requirements.

Analysis

Availability of different physical, chemical, and biological factors is very important to properly understand the qualitative and quantitative status of rivers and other water bodies. Their historical databases are essential during planning of projects such as sewerage treatment, flood control systems, drinking water supply, and hydropower. To gather such information, properly managed and continuously updated scientific monitoring stations are necessary in all major rivers in the country. The more information we could collect, it will be more helpful to formulate effective restoration and management plans, and a small investment in monitoring stations now can save huge sums of money in future while conducting such projects.

In the current scenario of the Kathmandu Valley, where its rivers require foremost attention, there is an immediate need to establish several monitoring stations along the major rivers. At least, there should be separate stations for rural, peri-urban, urban, and the downstream sections of the rivers. More stations in areas such as the confluence points of the major tributaries would be preferable. In addition, we need to develop efficient mechanisms to share the data generated with the government, funding organizations, scientists, students or any interested public.
Sincerely,

Yogendra Jung Khadka

Kathmandu-8, Nepal

Sources


10. Regarding the Condition of Bagmati River

Honorable Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers
Singha Durbar
Kathmandu, Nepal

Sir, being a citizen of this country it is my duty and also obligation to raise my concerns and voice to the issues that affect me and my countrymen alike. It is with great pleasure and expectation I am writing to you and expect you to take positive initiatives in your term as Prime Minister.

We all are aware of the condition and the pollution of the holiest river in Nepal. The Bagmati, one of the tributaries of the Ganges, passes through the capital of this mystical and beautiful land. The Bagmati River, as we all are aware, is in its worst stage, with household sewage, industrial waste and garbage dumping all being poured into this river. The illegal squatters living along the banks of the river have now added more problems and affected the eco-system of the river in total. Today, various actions are taken to protect and raise awareness regarding the importance to save the longevity of the river, but no action has resulted in long term self sustaining result or measures.

Various public interest litigation have been filed to protect the river from being polluted and turned into an urban sewage, but these initiatives from the public sphere also have not resulted into providing any reforms for this water system. The continued pollution had not only degraded the water quality, but also causes health hazards for the residents of the capital like cholera, diarrhea to malaria, if the water gets mixed with drinking water system. The eco-system and marine life is negligible in the river because of the pollution and toxic waste that is poured daily. Above all, the temple of Pashupati Nath is situated in the banks of this river; various religious and holy activities are carried out in the banks of this holy but polluted water, which holds cultural and religious importance.

Thus it is with urgency I urge upon you to take immediate measures to protect this water system. A few recommendation to what can be done to improve the water system can be, (1) installation of water treatment plants in various locations of the river line, (2) a sewage system plant should be built for waste management of the capital and such waste must be dumped there instead of the river, (3) trees or shrubs should be planted on the banks of the river so as to create a conjugal environment, which will also help in preserving the banks from illegal occupancy, (4) awareness programs regarding the importance and vitality of the river must be generated to the public in general so as to create a sense of obligation and ownership, (5) the illegal squatters that live on the banks of the river must be relocated or provided with other options. These are few but necessary steps that are necessary to preserve this natural resource from irreparable damage.

I hope in your tenure as prime minister you shall take this as an important goal to be accomplished. With these concerns I wish the very best for the issues I have raised, and for the success of your tenure.

Thanking you,
Rahul Chapagain.
11. A Plea for Groundwater Protection Laws, Especially in Kathmandu Valley

To,
Rt. Honorable Prime Minister
Mr. Jhala Nath Khanal
Singhadurbar, Nepal

Dear Sir,

I am a Nepalese citizen concerned with the degrading environment of the beautiful and magnificent country Nepal. Nepal is a blessed land with a diverse environment not found anywhere in the world. Nepal is a small land of 141,181 sq KM area which holds eight highest mountains among the ten of the world, several different vegetation regions, and 844 different species of birds along with very large resources of water in the world.

Mr. Prime Minister, you are a citizen of the country along with the governmental head of the nation. Here is a plea to you for protecting the country using the position and power that you hold and for saving the future of Nepali citizens. Nepal's environment is constantly suffering from the effects of agricultural encroachment, deforestation and consequent soil erosion, and contamination of the water supply, climate change and its effects. Air and water pollution are significant environmental problems in Nepal.


The existence of laws and policies are of no help if implementation pattern is not well. The suffering of the country in environment is a lot due to this as well. Sir, as an alarmed citizen I would like to make few suggestions through this letter as a contribution to the decision making process. It is merely an effort to the tremendous work that needs to be done.

The major focus I would like to put in this paper is of water pollution. Kathmandu valley, the capital city is in threat due to water pollution. All the beautiful rivers are being polluted along with the drinking water of people. Due to the surface water pollution majority of resident as well as industries are dependent on the extraction of underground water. If groundwater extraction continues at this rate a disaster of the worst kind is likely, since The KUKL [Kathmandu
Upatyaka Khanepani Limited i.e. Kathmandu Valley Drinking water supply limited] alone extracts 60 million liters of groundwater daily. Daily Kathmandu requires 320 million liters of water whereas access the population gets is hardly 100 million liters. Stone spouts are drying up in the lack of original canals and recharge ponds, due to excessive groundwater extraction.

Here are some suggestions to approach this issue:

• A specific law addressing the problem needs to be enacted with strong implementation mechanism.
• The haphazard pumping out of water should be checked on time.
• Government needs to allocate space to dig ponds for recharging groundwater; Pakistan is an example where Baluchistan government has even recruited army for its ground water recharge projects.
• New extractions of underground water should not be permitted without a plan for treating the water used in well planned treatment plants before discharge to surface waters.
• Industries using the underground water require a lot more quantity of water than households, hence these are to be shifted or stopped.

Underground water keeps the land intact. The extraction of water in such huge amount will imbalance the land and affects all the lives above the land. The Kathmandu Valley due to its geographical structure makes the situation more critical. Hence, urgent situation is to stop such activities.

Sir, I hope this letter would highlight certain issues with regard to protecting the environment and health of citizens of nation.

Sincerely
Smriti Pokhrel, LL.B, Kathmandu
12. Nepal Environmental Problems In Need of URGENT and Immediate Attention, IN LESS THAN ONE PAGE

Excellency,

In capacity of being a citizen of Nepal I am writing to you about one of the very fundamental issues our country needs to deal with and sincerely hope you will consider this communication with a great gravity on account of the urgency of the situation.

Mr. President must be aware of the environmental challenges the world is facing; unfortunately our country is not an exception to this. The country is facing very pertinent environmental challenges. I have made no exhaustive list of environmental problems Nepal is facing, and it would not be possible to do so as well. However the problems I have pointed out are real and serious. I hope you will, upon going through this and consulting teams of experts, take substantive step towards preserving the common heritage ‘nature’ from the scourge of various threat.

Following are the problems relating to environment faced by us that need urgent attention.

- Impact of Global Climate change particularly in agriculture sector and Himalayan melting.
- Various forms of pollution particularly in urban areas.
- Lack of sustainable planning and policy making in developmental aspect.
- Overwhelming use of arable land for housing and other purpose indifferently.
- Extinctions of various breed of plant and animal due to loss of natural habitat.
- Non conservation of sensitive areas such as wetlands.
- Lack of any concrete plan from government to sensitize people in large extent in matter of environmental causes, etc

The possible solutions to these problems would be a strong legal instrument and a strict implementation mechanism. Many of the problems like the pollution, conservation of wetlands already have legal instruments while the others do not. So those laws which are already there for the protection of the environment and pollution control must be strictly implemented and those which are to be formulated must be formulated as soon as possible. Besides, public awareness campaigns are to be conducted to make people realize their individual role in coping with these environmental problems.

Mr. President I hope if these problems can be tackled or at least if you could make an honest effort for this we won’t be on the perpetrating side of crime against nature which in turn is suicidal for us. It’s our future that is at stake. Nature will adapt; I doubt we would. So it’s high time to take some sincere steps.

Srijana Regmi, Law student
Dear World Bank Director:

The responsibility of political leaders, aid organizations, and the international community to developing nations is to build policies and practices that will lift the world’s poorest people by providing assistance to the populations of developing countries emerging from conflict, assisting nations with struggling economies, and addressing public health concerns. Among those nations which require this kind of guided development, the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal should certainly not be overlooked. As a nation emerging from decades of internal political turmoil, with 35% of its population living below the poverty line, the people of Nepal deserve careful attention as they build a stronger nation for themselves. Among the priorities that should be immediately woven into the policies of Nepal are those of stewardship for the great natural resources of Nepal. Development can only occur with an eye towards sustainable development and towards solving and improving upon current environmental difficulties facing Nepal rather than worsening them in the name of false prosperity. Beyond the intrinsic value of smart and sustainable growth, environmental concerns must be prioritized in Nepal because of the direct impact which they currently have on public health, economic prosperity, and preserving the very character of the nation.

Widespread Public Health Concerns

The environmental problems Nepal currently faces have led to widespread public health concerns affecting large portions of the population. The quality of air and water in Nepal should be a priority as both of these are currently in a state of degradation that results not simply in a higher risk of health problems, but threaten livelihoods and prosperity as well. In cities in Nepal, air quality not only exceeds the maximum level set by the World Health Organization, but is nearly ten times that amount. Water quality is of equally great concern: an estimated 45,000 deaths occur each year in Nepal due to waterborne diseases; studies anticipate that childhood mortality could be reduced by 55% simply by improving sanitation and water quality. In some areas, individuals (primarily women) spend hours each day in search of potable water, time that could be diverted to other community and economy-building activities were clean, safe drinking water readily available. Since poverty is a road block to these improvements; assistance from the international community may be vital. Infrastructure improvements such as localized generation of clean energy that does not rely on dirty coal or wood would greatly reduce particulate emissions and other toxic air pollutants. Basic, local water treatment facilities could eliminate diseases such as cholera, typhoid, and other waterborne illnesses as well as providing job opportunities for local community members.
Protecting Natural Treasures and Promoting Long-Term Prosperity

Sustainable development is additionally critical to Nepal because the biological and ecological diversity, as well as forests and natural landscapes, are critical pieces of the nation’s cultural identity as well as the foundation for future growth and prosperity. Nepal is home to not only the world’s highest mountain peak, but also rare and endangered species that are found nowhere else on Earth: national and international treasures that we cannot afford to lose. Furthermore, the two platforms of Nepal’s economy currently are agriculture and tourism, both of which depend in a fundamental way on preservation of natural resources and are threatened by issues such as degrading air and water quality and deforestation. As Nepal begins its path towards economic growth, it should be a priority to emphasize sustainable agriculture and forestry and clean energy. First, policymakers should be willing to support and regulate agricultural and forestry practices in a way that will ensure natural resources are not depleted immediately. Second, a clean and renewable energy platform should be built to ensure that air and water quality to not continue to degrade, but that citizens, business, and industries have access to the energy they need to grow. Cities can be planned to allow for growth without dependence on fossil fuels alone. Finally, policymakers should be willing to support projects which will preserve tracts of land of great natural beauty and ecological diversity that are found nowhere else on Earth.

Many citizens of nations of the developed world now look back on their periods of growth and industrialization with great regret: polluting energy sources and irreversible damage to natural resources are in some cases too far ingrained to reverse in these nations. In much of the western world, we are too hamstrung by infrastructure that is based on outdated, polluting technology to change rapidly. Nepal has the unique opportunity of building itself a developed country from the ground up. These efforts will assist Nepal not only in growing, but growing in a way that is sustainable over a longer time scale rather than providing the “quick fix” that rapid, polluting industrialization often does and will ensure the health and well-being of the population.

References


14. Forestry Plans and Governance: Payment for Environmental Services

To,
Mr. Jhal Nath Khanal,
Prime Minister of Nepal

Respected Sir,

I am writing you as a concerned citizen of Nepal about the current environmental issues of Nepal focusing basically in Forest related policies and its impact on conservation and management of forest.

As elsewhere, laws related to the forestry sector in Nepal have been influenced by diverse concerns about forest governance such as environmental conservation (for example law relating to protected areas), devolution and decentralization e.g. legal provision related to Community Forestry), consideration of varied scales of forest governance (e.g. watershed and landscape), professional perspectives and focus (e.g. forest, water, land), and trade in various resource components (e.g. endangered animals and marketable medicinal plants).

Sir, hereby I will draw your attention to some of the issues:

Sharing environmental benefit

Project feasibility considers nominal value for forest goods and completely ignores environmental services. Equally true in case of calculating national GDP. Forestry contribution is attributed as sub-sectoral contribution within Agricultural sector in national GDP; but the value of environmental services provided by the forests is ignored. This has resulted in disproportionate (very low) fund allocation compared to its contribution in national economy. It has bottlenecked in developing conservation financing such as Payment for Environmental Services (PES).

Forestry Regulation is yet to be developed to regulate the flow of environmental cost and benefit of forest management. The life of large scale hydro-power, irrigation, drinking water and agricultural systems of lowland depends on the watershed areas, including the forest cover, of hilly region. Till now no law exists which provides a basis for upland farmers to claim compensation from the downstream users for restraint exercised in upland farming or forest management in support of the environmental benefits that accrue in the downstream. In other words, there is no law to guarantee incentives to upland dwellers to engage in conservation-oriented watershed management activities. These watershed areas are managed by the local community without any incentive. It is only the physical laws of nature that govern these systems.

Recommendation

1. Developing suitable mechanism for economic valuation of environmental services of forest/biodiversity. There are some areas where upstream- downstream links are more visible
(watershed, tourist destination sites) where economic valuation of services can easily be accounted and be transferred into PES practice.

2. Formulating policy for Payment for Environmental Services (PES) and create enabling environment to implement.

**Issue**

Forest condition of Churia range, the geologically most fragile region in Nepal, has been deteriorating in coverage and stock. This has strong negative effects on the hydrological regime and productive capacity of the farmlands in the Terai, which supports food grains for over half a country’s population including those living in hills and mountains.

**Recommendations**

1. There should be a clear consensus for making decision on what quality and extent of forest cover is required to stabilize our environment also to maximize livelihood benefits. This should consider land use and capability appropriate to each physiographic zone. Regulate land use based on appropriate land capability.

2. Conversion of forest land to agriculture into farm land or settlement or for other projects should be based on national development priorities with due consideration on environmental implications. Exclude ecologically sensitive zones (Churia hills, river banks, biological corridors) from resettlement plans.

Respectfully,

Lina Chalise
Forestry Student Kathmandu
15. Re-thinking Climate Resilience Loans

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

June 22, 2011

Dear Secretary,

I am writing to you on behalf of a country in transition, Nepal. As secretary of State, Mrs. Clinton, you are in a position which can encourage the increased investment in the future for Nepal while discouraging the increased climate change debt. Right now, tourism is a huge industry in Nepal, as it is home to Mount Everest as well as eight of the ten highest mountain peaks in the world. Because of these features, many tourists travel to Kathmandu and surrounding areas in order to visit these mountains. Tourism is a boon to this city and many of its increasing number of residents are able to support themselves on the tourism industry. However, due to this influx of tourism, the ever-increasing number of permanent residents, and Kathmandu’s location in a bowl-shaped valley which prevents the escape of fumes from industry located too closely to the city and fumes from vehicles with inadequate emissions standards, Kathmandu and its surrounding areas have poor air quality, to the extent that tourists and residents can experience respiratory problems and its government is having difficulty keeping up with the policy implementations necessary to regulate air quality and environmental conditions. Nepal is still in the process of building a new government, and is right now drafting its new constitution and recently elected a new prime minister.

Nepal is not without other resources, as it is receiving climate change loans to combat these growing problems; however, these climate change loans don’t come without a future cost and Nepal cannot afford to take loans that it will not be able to pay back. On top of its self-inflicted pollution issues, Nepal is also suffering climate change impacts from the industrialization of other nations (e.g. its neighbors China and India) which is why it qualifies for these climate change loans, which are made to increase climate “resilience;” however, this “resilience” more and more takes on the shape of adaptation which is a more passive stance against climate change.

Refusing to take these climate change loans would be difficult for Nepal financially; therefore it is necessary to institute a program in Nepal for making policy changes to first decrease the degradation of the environment that is happening in Kathmandu and second to fight
for higher emissions standards in other countries that have a direct climate change impact on Nepal including instituting complaints against the pollution heavy industrial and generation plants. Since it is most likely that these neighboring countries will not curtail emissions anytime soon without some sort of intervention, it seems helpful to provide loans to more third-world countries to try and combat the climate change impact they are feeling; however, wouldn’t it be better to curtail emissions and avoid the need for distribution of loans?

Since Nepal is situated between two nations that are quickly becoming industrialized (China and India), it also suffers the climate change problems of these industrialized nations but since it is not developing itself it only receives the negative effects of industrialization. These climate change loans are quickly becoming a way for third-world countries to facilitate the degradation of their own environment for an ephemeral monetary gain. What Nepal needs is the incentive to curb their own emissions as well as the ability to combat climate change in a sustainable way via the support of developed nations who have the knowledge and resources to assist them. Unlike many industrialized nations, if Nepal's environment is destroyed by environmental degradation, it will have no industry.

When Nepal accepts the climate change loans, the message it sends to its people is that the industry of other countries is more important than their own environment and Nepal has been given these loans as a consolation prize, but it is becoming an offer they can’t refuse. There has recently been some intensive action taken to decrease the emissions happening in Kathmandu and this sort of policy implementation should be supported by developed countries who are also in the process of dealing with emissions standards to be of assistance. In the US, the Environmental Protection Agency has recently been mandated to institute rulemakings on the regulation of emissions from vehicles as well as from electric power plants and oil refineries which should at least curtail any increase in emissions and hopefully will decrease emissions over a course of years. Nepal could most benefit from the institution of sound policy programs which decrease emissions and investments to implement these programs, and the simultaneous decrease in its climate change loans so as to maintain the same amount of investment but for different goals.

Sincerely,

Margaret Graham
16. Ghana’s Eco Challenges Have Much in Common with Nepal’s

Emmanuel Brace  
P.O.Box 4702  
Accra, Ghana

June 21, 2011

His Excellency President John Evans Atta Mills  
Office of the Presidency  
Jubilee House  
Ghana, Accra

Dear President Mills,

As a patriotic citizen of Ghana, I am pleased to send you this letter in the run up to the National Democratic Congress’s presidential primaries.

Challenges of environmental compliance and enforcements  
Ghana has chalked many successes in the environmental sector and under your leadership, the country’s Ministry of Environment, Science, and Technology has continued with its good work. For this reason I extend my sincerest gratitude and urge you to continue with your effective oversight of this sector to complement your efforts to achieve national development goals under the “Better Ghana Agenda.”

Although the future of Ghana’s environment looks promising, there remain compliance and enforcement challenges that need to be addressed. In developing your manifesto, I urge you to make provisions to address the following priority areas.

1. Flooding  
Ghana experiences perennial flooding and lives are lost every year. Properties running into millions of cedis (Ghana’s currency) are destroyed and public infrastructure including roads is damaged. Stagnant water from the floods serves as breeding places for malaria causing mosquitoes. All these, cumulatively, have a negative impact on the socio economic development of the country.

2. Waste Management  
The surge in urbanization and the increasing spate of rural-urban migration has led to a huge increase in the amount of liquid and solid wastes being generated in most cities within the country. A walk through Accra, Kumasi or Takoradi reflects the glaring reality that authorities do not have the capacity to collect and dispose of the waste safely and efficiently.

3. Deforestation  
According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the rate of deforestation has increased by 50% over the last ten years. Timber trade, clearing of forests for cocoa, and the dependence on fire wood are the main causes of deforestation in Ghana.

4. Illegal Mining
The problems of illegal mining continue to plague many mining communities in the country. Sources of drinking water continue to be poisoned by chemical additives used by illegal miners while uncontrolled and unplanned grading continue to cause land erosion and excess sediments being deposited in water bodies. All these have a negative impact on the environment.

A lack of strong political will and an ineffective judicial system on the acquisition of land in Ghana have been mentioned as the major factors influencing the items stated. It is therefore important that effective solutions are developed to mitigate the occurrence of these issues.

I encourage you to ensure that existing environmental legislation is effectively implemented and where necessary updated to meet current trends to ensure overall environmental sustainability.

I appreciate your good leadership and wish you the best in the upcoming elections.

Yours faithfully,
Emmanuel Brace
17. Urging Support for the Transition to a Stable, Free Democracy in Nepal Through Mentorship In Environmental Policy Implementation Plans, Practices, And Techniques

The Honorable Jim Webb
248 Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Webb,

The government of Nepal is rapidly approaching the extended deadline for drafting its new constitution. As you mentioned in the confirmation hearing for Scott DeLisi, the new U.S. Ambassador to Nepal, the United States “has a compelling interest to engage Nepal as a geostrategic partner” due to its “valuable location as a bridge between East and South Asia.” As the Chairman of the Subcommittee of East Asian and Pacific Affairs and a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I am writing to request your support for continued funding for and investment in the Nepalese government, particularly for the implementation of air and water quality regulations.

The environmental issues in Nepal are staggering threats to public health and economic development, as well as to national sustainability and independence. The breadth of the landscape in Nepal makes tackling environmental issues no easy task, with 7 different physiographic zones and an altitude range from 100m in the tropical Terai to 8,848m at the top of Mt. Everest in the Himalayas. From glaciers to rivers to forests, the destruction of the Nepalese resources has consequences that extend far beyond the disappearance of one of the world’s most beautiful landscapes. The rivers of Nepal flow south into densely-populated areas of Asia, meaning that poor forest management practices will be felt not only in Nepal, but magnified downstream in areas like Bangladesh and Pakistan. Like a third polar icecap, the glaciers in Nepal are the first to reflect global climate change, further exacerbating these issues.

Most of the health problems in Nepal are rooted in environmental pollution. Eighty per cent of communicable diseases in Nepal are the result of polluted drinking water. Rapid urbanization due to the industrial expansion necessary for accelerated economic growth led to unplanned enlargement of urban centers, resulting in nearly unlivable conditions. The people of Nepal often wear decorated facemasks as a fashionable way to breathe the heavily polluted air, which, according to a Danish-funded study by the Environment Sector Program Support, contains 1000 parts per million of suspended particulates. The World Health Organization standard is 150-230
parts per million. Congestion, improper solid waste disposal, deforestation, land degradation, air pollution, and pollution of rivers due to factory waste have been the result of Nepal’s rise without proper environmental policy or planning.

Nepal is currently dependent on imports, relying on India and China for many goods. It is also highly dependent on remittance from predominantly Middle Eastern countries. As you said at Mr. DeLisi’s confirmation hearing, the United States “must unwaveringly support (Nepal’s) transition to a stable, free democracy.” While environmental issues tend to take the back-burner to economic development, I urge you to see that they go hand-in-hand, especially in Nepal. The growth seen in Nepal will not be sustained if environmental destruction and pollution continue to take place at the current rate. It is imperative that the United States urges the Nepalese government through whatever means possible to tackle the elusive national environmental policy and incorporate it in their newly-drafted constitution, beginning with air and water quality regulations. These regulations have been written in the Nepali Interim Constitution, where the backbones of vital statutes like the Environment Protection Act, Water Act, and Solid Waste Management and Resource Mobilization Act exist with no proper plans for implementation. In the interest of the effectiveness of the new constitution, the United States must aid in the establishment of proper implementation plans, practices, and techniques. While the burden of environmental issues is great, the Nepali government’s inability to properly implement policy is an implication of problems that may prove to be greater when it comes to the survival of a fledgling nation whose loss we cannot afford. The sustainability of a nation striving to be free and democratic is first and foremost dependent on its environmental sustainability.

Sincerely,

Skye C. Martin
skveemartin@gmail.com
Graduate US Naval Academy