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## **Clearing the air**

By Karin Landgren

For the past two weeks, it seems as if everyone from the senior most political leaders on down has voiced an opinion on an unofficial paper UNMIN shared with four people in all of Nepal, none of them journalists.

Such “non-papers” have their name for a reason. With no official status or attribution they enable thoughts to be floated confidentially as a contribution to discussion.

The thought floated in June, in consultation with senior political leaders and technical experts, was a simple one: technically, how long would it take to implement the parties’ own proposals for the integration and rehabilitation of Maoist army personnel?

Unfortunately, most of the commentary since the document was leaked has ignored this important question. Instead, UNMIN has been charged with exceeding its mandate, seeking to prolong it, or favouring one party. None of these accusations are true.

UNMIN is in Nepal in support of Nepal’s nationally-driven peace process, with specific tasks related to the monitoring of the management of arms and armies. Intended by the Security Council as a focused mission of limited duration, the Mission is now in its fourth year. The Mission cannot continue like this indefinitely. The political stalemate needs to be broken, and UNMIN needs to complete its work and withdraw. This demands a concerted effort by all: we are doing our part by working with the host Government, the political parties, and Security Council members on how best to support the peace process within our mandate, and to bring that mandate to a successful close.

UNMIN scaled back its presence significantly after the 2008 elections. Now, for UNMIN to complete its work, the parties should either agree and put in place another form of monitoring of arms and armies, or the monitoring itself should be made unnecessary, by resolving the future of the Maoist army personnel. In a welcome development, detailed discussion of integration and rehabilitation is now at its highest level ever. It is largely focused on the modalities and numbers of Maoist army personnel joining the security forces. Political agreement on these points will be a milestone in Nepal’s peace process, and once it is achieved, it should not flounder for lack of a well-prepared plan, adequately resourced.

The technical aspects of implementation now need close attention, which UNMIN seeks to encourage and support. Much detailed preparatory work can be done in advance of a political agreement. Without bypassing any proper mechanisms, UNMIN has taken the technical elements of integration and

rehabilitation widely discussed among the parties and the Technical Committee, and assembled them along a hypothetical timeline.

The document is not a “blueprint”, a “calendar”, a “work plan”, a “road map”, or “an UNMIN proposal”. It draws on Nepalese experience and expertise, and is heavily hedged with cautious assumptions: a “best guess”, as it says. It is tied neither to the constitutional deadline, nor to the presence of UNMIN. The sixty weeks extend some four months beyond the end of discharge from the cantonments.

The fact is that integration and rehabilitation will take time. From equipping the Government’s implementing institutions to briefings, registration and more inside the cantonments; from the physical regrouping of Maoist army personnel to the detailed planning of integration, the logistics, staffing, coordination and funding of all must be catered for. This needs planning.

It is for the parties to decide whether they want to retain all, some or none of the technical elements proposed to date, and to consider whether faster implementation is humanly and financially possible. The non-paper illustrates some of the choices that need to be made. The detailed planning, and the strengthening of capacity, cannot be wished away. The sooner this is done, the more confident all parties can be of bringing the peace process to a successful conclusion.

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