



*United Nations Press Release*

**From military to civilian life – first group of minors discharged from Maoist army in Nepal**

SINDHULI, Nepal, 7 January - A group of young Nepali men and women will leave their military lives behind and return to civilian life after a discharge ceremony in the main Maoist army cantonment in Sindhuli in the central region of the country today.

This is the first group of young people disqualified from the Maoist army as children or late recruits who will now be discharged.

“Today marks the first step in the return to civilian life for thousands of Nepalis who have been living in cantonments since 2006. This ceremony is an important milestone in the ongoing peace process and will, we hope, speed up other steps laid out in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement,” said United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Robert Piper.

These young people are among 4,008 individuals - including some 500 below 18 years old - due to be released over the next 40 days. The rehabilitation process will now give these young people the opportunity to gain new skills - returning to school or learning a trade - provided by the Government of Nepal with the support of the United Nations.

The discharge, which is scheduled to be completed in seven cantonments across the country by mid February 2010, is part of an Action Plan signed in December 2009 by the Government of Nepal, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal - Maoist (UCPN-M) and the United Nations. When it is verified that the UCPN-M has fully complied with the plan, the party can be considered for removal from the list of parties that recruit and use children, which is included in the annual UN Secretary-General’s report on Children and Armed Conflict.

Before Thursday’s ceremony at the cantonment these young people completed a discharge process carried out by various United Nations agencies. They were briefed about rehabilitation options and given civilian clothing and identity cards.

In the coming months, a United Nations team will contact those discharged to monitor and assess how they are adjusting to civilian life. Nearly 3,000 of those disqualified were minors on 25 May 2006 at the time of the ceasefire. Today, about one dozen are under 16 years of age and roughly 500 are under 18. About a third are female.

For further information, contact Marty Logan at UNICEF, Kathmandu, tel: +977-9849255063, [mdlogan@unicef.org](mailto:mdlogan@unicef.org); Sarah Crowe at UNICEF, New Delhi, tel: +91-9910532314, [scrowe@unicef.org](mailto:scrowe@unicef.org); or Kosmos Biswokarma at UNMIN, Kathmandu, tel: +977-9851101959, [biswokarma@un.org](mailto:biswokarma@un.org)

“The release of these young people sends out a symbolic message for the New Year,” said UNICEF Nepal Representative Gillian Mellsop. “Not only can these young people now finally get on with their lives, but this also marks a new beginning at the start of a new decade for Nepal, so that it can move forward to a more stable, peaceful future.”

For further information, contact Marty Logan at UNICEF, Kathmandu, tel: +977-9849255063, [mdlogan@unicef.org](mailto:mdlogan@unicef.org); Sarah Crowe at UNICEF, New Delhi, tel: +91-9910532314, [scrowe@unicef.org](mailto:scrowe@unicef.org); or Kosmos Biswokarma at UNMIN, Kathmandu, tel: +977-9851101959, [biswokarma@un.org](mailto:biswokarma@un.org)