

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Response on the issue of the people in the refugee camps in eastern Nepal by Foreign Secretary Yeshey Dorji at the Human Rights Council on 30 April 2014 under the UPR mechanism

I would like to respond to the issue of the people in the refugee camps in eastern Nepal mentioned by some of the delegations and as contained in some of the advance questions.

Indeed, it is a long standing humanitarian problem on which the governments of Bhutan and Nepal have been engaged in bilateral discussions for many years.

However, it must be recalled that the problem is not a straight forward refugee situation but one arising from illegal immigration of economic migrants. Even today, Bhutan has over 1,30,000 non-Bhutanese workers in the country which is more than in the 1990s. Some of them are getting married to local people in order not to leave the country while some others are even demanding citizenship.

The governments of Bhutan and Nepal had agreed that there were all kinds of people in the camps, including non-Bhutanese people.

The root cause of the problem is in the massive movement of destitute people in our region caused by extreme poverty, environmental degradation and political instability.

Third country resettlement by the Core Group of countries, led by the United States, is making significant contribution to the resolution of this humanitarian problem and we are deeply appreciative of their generous offer.

Bhutan is in contact with the Government of Nepal and the UNHCR and recently, in March this year, the Prime Ministers of Bhutan and Nepal met in Nay Pyi Taw in Myanmar on the sidelines of the BIMSTEC Summit.

Thank you.