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Mr Virendra Sharma MP  
Chair, Nepal All-Party Parliamentary Group  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

15<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Dear Mr Sharma,

**UK Government Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic in Nepal**

We write to ask for your help, and that of your Group, to expedite a positive and generous response by the UK Government to the requests from the Nepalese Prime Minister, Mr KP Sharma Oli, and the Nepalese Ambassador to the UK, Mr Lokdarshan Regmi, for urgent assistance to deal with the unfolding Covid-19 crisis in Nepal.

We do so on the basis that our two organisations, and our partners and associates, exist to promote friendship and assistance between the UK and Nepal and have as our main aim to do all we can to help those in Nepal needing assistance.

You will be aware that the second wave of the virus in South Asia is having a serious and tragic impact. We are particularly concerned about the effect of this in Nepal, a very poor country with few resources of its own to deal with such a crisis, not least one of the lowest doctor/patient ratios in the world. Reports in the media and several discussions and planning sessions we have attended over the last few days have highlighted the desperate shortages of medical supplies and facilities in the country, particularly a critical shortage of oxygen. These are having a disastrous impact. Cases and deaths are increasing exponentially with very high rates of transmission and infection. It is a major humanitarian crisis in the making.

You may have seen the call for international help from the Prime Minister, KP Sharma Oli, reported widely in the media on 10<sup>th</sup> May. In addition, the Nepalese Ambassador to the UK, Mr Lokdarshan Regmi, has lodged a request with the FCDO for 2 million doses of vaccine and medical equipment that is urgently needed. Several of our members and partners, including those representing the expatriate Nepalese population in the UK, are already trying to gather resources that can be used to stem the pandemic in their home country, but however admirable their efforts are they will inevitably fall short of meeting the very extensive and large-scale requirements, which only concerted efforts of Governments such as that of the UK will be able to fulfil.

We believe that Nepal represents a special case for the UK when it comes to prioritising assistance with the Covid-19 pandemic. The two countries have strong and close diplomatic ties based on over two centuries of friendship and mutual assistance. Well over 100,000 Nepalis are estimated to live and work in the UK, many of them holding UK citizenship and contributing a great deal to the prosperity of the country. These factors have been acknowledged as a basis for UK Government action in the past when the UK has helped Nepal deal with domestic crises such as the 2015 earthquake, and we believe we should do so now.

We would request most strongly that you and members of the Nepal All-Party Parliamentary Group do all you can to expedite an urgent, positive response by the British Government to requests from the Nepalese Government for help and support. Specifically:

- We entreat the British Government to issue a positive, timely and effective response to the specifics of Ambassador Regmi's request for vaccines and medical equipment. The UK has already allocated Nepal 1m of its vaccine doses from the Serum Institute, but as India is no longer exporting these Nepal will not receive them. However, as reported in the media, the UK will have a surplus of some 400 million vaccine doses after inoculating its own population, a proportion of which should be allocated to Nepal.
- We strongly recommend that the UK offers Nepal scientific and medical advice, if possible by sending relevant experts to the country. The UK Government may also wish to consider sending British Army Gurkha soldiers to Nepal, as they did after the 2015 earthquake, to assist with the construction of hospitals, oxygen plants and other facilities. An offer of Royal Air Force cargo planes to help fly materiel into the country would also be most welcome.
- Longer term we would urge the UK, as the current chair of G7, to use its international influence to mobilise additional support and secure vaccine supplies for Nepal. We would also encourage the British Government to waive the patents on vaccines, as the US has done, to increase the supply to poorer countries such as Nepal.

We are mobilising the support of our members by encouraging them to write to their MPs along similar lines, and some have already written on their own initiative to the Foreign Secretary and other Ministers. We very much hope you feel able to take similar action, and stand ready to assist you with additional information if required.

Yours sincerely,



Andy Sparkes  
Chairman Britain-Nepal Society



Nick Hinton  
Chairman Britain-Nepal NGO Network