



PRESS RELEASE

Great attention for the 1st Online Dialogue on the campaign „Show solidarity. Continue German-Nepalese cooperation“

Initiators Long Yang e.V. and the German Nepalese Society consider the great response of German and Nepalese representatives from politics and civil society to the campaign "Showing solidarity" around the planned BMZ Reform Strategy 2030 for Nepal to be an important signal.

Munich, Kathmandu, 20th June 2020. The online event "Show Solidarity - Dialogue for the Continuation of German-Nepalese Development Cooperation" on 8 June 2020 attracted a great deal of interest. The hosts of the event Long Yang Association (Munich) in cooperation with the Deutsch-Nepalische Gesellschaft (DNG), Cologne (in English: German-Nepalese Society), had invited German and Nepalese participants from politics, science, media and civil society.

Both initiators have been working in Nepal for many years to support a positive development through cooperation and projects in the areas of environment, health and education.

Together they had already started a petition in May in response to the contents of the reform program "BMZ 2030" published by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The intended new strategy of German development policy envisages the termination of bilateral cooperation with 24 countries in the coming years, including Nepal. Until today, more than 1,200 private individuals and 60 NGOs have already supported the initiative launched by Long Yang e.V. and DNG and have signed the petition as well as an open letter to Federal Development Minister Dr. Gerd Müller, clearly expressing their support for the continuation of cooperation with Nepal. Prominent supporters such as mountaineering legend Reinhold Messner have joined the campaign and expressed their support in advance of the event:

"The connection between Nepal and Germany has been very close for decades. During the earthquake disaster in 2015, the Federal Republic of Germany sent a strong signal of assistance. The poor country is still in need of it."

Reinhold Messner

Sixty years of successful bilateral cooperation - what now?

During the 2.5-hour online conference, German and Nepalese protagonists from politics, civil society, academic institutions and the media had the opportunity to exchange their views on the question of how to continue the bilateral cooperation between Nepal and Germany, which has been successful for more than 60 years. For the hosts and initiators of the petition the event's objectives were to start an open dialogue with the different organizations and institutions and - at the same time - to present the first results of the ongoing campaign to BMZ. In this context, the open letter signed by 60 supporting NGOs was symbolically handed over to a representative of BMZ. The event was moderated by Jenny Ludwig, board member of Long Yang Association and Alka Khanal, M.A., German-Nepalese Society.

Jenny Ludwig, board member of Long Yang Association, Initiator of the campaign & petition

"We regard this event as an important sign of open exchange between civil society, academics and politics on the future of German-Nepalese relations. We are pleased about the positive feedback, the broad support and encouragement. By involving various representatives from politics, society and science, it was possible for the first time to highlight the challenge surrounding the decision taken by the BMZ from different perspectives, to ask questions about the background and to deal with it in a joint constructive manner. Having been active in Nepal for more than 20 years, and thanks to our extensive local networks, we are able to assess the enormous loss that a break in bilateral cooperation would mean for Nepal. We would deeply regret such a step."

Ram Thapa, Nepalese Consul and board member of DNG, Co-Initiator of the campaign & petition

"Following the BMZ 2030 reform concept we see drastic consequences for Nepal. Germany has contributed greatly to the development of Nepal with their cooperation programs. Especially after challenging times following the earthquake of 2015 and far-reaching political developments, it is important to continue this fruitful cooperation. Even a contribution with comparatively little financial volume can make a significant contribution. The German commitment to Nepal is highly valued by the Nepalese people. In particular at the local level and in the field of migration, Germany can provide Nepal with important know-how in the future. Even the federal system in Nepal is based on the German system." He therefore asks the German government to continue bilateral development cooperation.

Reform concept BMZ 2030 - German-Nepalese Development Cooperation

- **Content of the petition:** <https://www.openpetition.de/petition/online/show-solidarity-continue-german-nepalese-cooperation>
- **BMZ 2030 reform strategy paper:** http://www.bmz.de/en/publications/type_of_publication/information_flyer/information_brochures/Materilie520_reform_strategy.pdf
- **BMZ press release - Development Ministry unveils "BMZ 2030" reform strategy:** <http://www.bmz.de/20200429-1en>

Further information on the initiators

Long Yang e.V., Munich

Initiated by Tulku Khyungdor Rinpoche, Long Yang e.V. is committed to the promotion and preservation of the original Buddhist practice traditions of the Himalayas in order to safeguard their wisdom for the future. On this foundation, the association has also been implementing social and ecological projects in Nepal for many years, thus contributing to sustainable development in the region.

Long Yang e.V. was founded in 1997, as a non-profit organization based in Munich. One of the key projects is the one-year practical training in basic health, hygiene and health counselling for young women, which has been newly designed with German and Nepalese physicians and is currently unique in Nepal. The training will be realized in cooperation with the Nepalese partner organization Akasha Academy NGO. Due to the Corona Pandemic, the start of training scheduled for May has been postponed. At present, Long Yang e.V. mainly supports families in need as well as medical institutions that lack food or urgently needed hygiene and protection material. Further information is available at www.long-yang.org and www.akasha-academy.org.

Deutsche Nepalische Gesellschaft (DNG) (in English: German Nepalese Society), Cologne

Main purpose of the association is to maintain informative relations between Germany and Nepal in the sense of international understanding and mutual respect. For this purpose, DNG organizes and supports lecture events, academic symposia, concerts and the annual "Nepal Day" with talks and exhibitions. DNG supports individual projects in Nepal with earmarked funds. The projects are generally implemented through an NGO in Nepal. The strength of the organization lies in the individual commitment of its members. The society maintains close contacts with the authorities and associations concerned with Nepal and with fellow organizations in Germany and abroad, and uses the visits of Nepalese politicians to Germany to exchange ideas. Of the approximately 800 members, most have visited Nepal or are otherwise associated with the country. The DNG is considered a forum for all friends of Nepal who are interested in the country and want to be regularly updated. Further information is available at www.deutsch-nepal.de/dng.php

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Further quotes from the online dialogue at a glance (topic-based selection):

On the Nepalese participants' side, there are many **reasons for the continuation** of bilateral relations between Germany and Nepal:

Prof. Dr. Ramesh Kumar Maskey, President Nepal German Academic Association (NEGAAS) & President Goethe Zentrum Kathmandu :

"Many of the initiated developments in Nepal would not have been possible without the support of the German government. In terms of the human rights situation and the fight against corruption, Germany is a role model from which Nepal wants to learn in the future as well".

Rupesh Shrestha, Secretary Nepal German Academic Association (NEGAAS)

"This is not the time to end German-Nepal cooperation. This is the time to enhance the cooperation and to prolong it."

Jan Wenzel, VENRO (German Association of Development and Humanitarian Non-Governmental Organisations) emphasises the **consequences for civil society of Germany's withdrawal from development cooperation:**

"With the loss of structures and knowledge in the BMZ and the foreign representations, important counterparts - also for civil society organisations - are lost".

This is also confirmed by **Uwe Kekeritz (Bündnis 90/Green Party (German environmental party)), Member of Parliament and member of the AWZ Committee (Committee on Economic Cooperation):**

"Compensating for the loss of German state resources is also difficult with regard to third-party funding for German projects. These might also be lost if the German commitment were to be terminated. There are many organisations that achieve positive results with small projects and do not know what to do next".

Many of the participants agree that the **Corona crisis** in particular should be seen as a reason to continue state cooperation with Nepal:

Prof. Dr. Maskey, NEEGAS: *"As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the economic situation in Nepal continues to worsen. Especially in this context, this is not the right time to end bilateral development cooperation."*

Jiba Lamichhane, Founding Member of NRNA (Non Resident Nepali Association): *"Nepal is currently in a difficult situation: the country has still not recovered from the consequences of the terrible earthquake in 2015, the number of Covid-19 cases is rising and the economy is being severely affected by the pandemic. It is precisely at a time like this that Germany's support is needed and appreciated more than ever".*

Dr. Carsten Klein, Friedrich Naumann Foundation - Head Regional Office South Asia:

"In the face of the difficult crisis caused by the Corona Pandemic, the timing of the decision is challenging. Many stakeholders in Nepal are currently occupied with existential questions."

Criticism was also expressed by parliamentarians regarding the **selection procedure for countries** with which bilateral development cooperation is intended to be terminated. **Uwe Kekeritz (Bündnis 90/Green Party), Member of Parliament and member of the AWZ Committee:**

"The AWZ Committee has not been informed of this process, only of the outcome. Nor has there been any coordination on this at international level".

This is also confirmed by Member of Parliament Christoph Hoffmann (FDP), who stated that there was a lack of clarity in the Bundestag's Committee on Economic Cooperation (AWZ) across all political groups regarding the selection criteria - as well as regarding a consistent application of the criteria to all countries.

The BMZ names for Nepal a decisive criterion: The lack of relevance and scope of German development cooperation. Regarding this criterion **Séverine Lang from Long Yang Association** states:

"It is remarkable that the BMZ continues its bilateral cooperation with countries that are supported with less funds than Nepal - also in comparison with other donors".

These include countries such as Tanzania, where Germany is not among the top 10 donors according to ODA figures (2017-2018), unlike in Nepal. *"However, it is also important to look at the content, not only at the figures. The focus of support as well as the measures and implementation differ considerably from one donor to another. It is therefore difficult to compare multilateral donors with bilateral development cooperation - also because "soft" factors are not sufficiently taken into account. Ultimately, development cooperation is also about cultivating relationships."*

Finally **Uwe Kekeritz** and **Dr. Carsten Klein** then discuss the **geopolitical dimension of the decision**.

"Geopolitically, the withdrawal of bilateral cooperation will leave a vacuum. The great danger is that this will be filled by neighbouring countries in the region which have a vital self-interest in engaging in Nepal". According to Carsten Klein.

Uwe Kekeritz also shares this fear and even identifies a clear geopolitical focus in the selection of the country list.

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