

FOREIGN POLICY OF NEPAL:

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# ORIENTATION AND PRIORITIES

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परराष्ट्र मामिला अध्ययन प्रतिष्ठान  
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# PROLOGUE

As one of the oldest nation states in the world map, Nepal is proud of its independent and glorious history. Nepal presents an example of unity in diversity with people of more than hundred ethnicity and languages living together in harmony. Birthplace of Buddha, the apostle of peace, and the fountain of Buddhism, Nepal is widely known for its national character of peace, tolerance and social harmony. King Prithvi Narayan Shah, who unified more than 60 small principalities to found the modern Nepal, famously used the metaphor of ‘yam between two boulders’ in order to depict Nepal’s geopolitical sensitivities. Our physical geographic reality remains the same even today. Nonetheless, in today’s context, we are effortful to diversify our engagements, expand the spectrum of our relations, overcome our limitations and steer the country on the path of prosperity.

Nepal’s diverse and pluralistic social fabric, its unwavering commitment to peace, its uninterrupted independence, geopolitical sensitivity and the social consciousness created by humanitarian thinking have been the fundamental ingredients of Nepal’s foreign policy behaviour.

Much has been said about Nepal’s geopolitical situation: whether it is a boon or bane. For a long time, there have been attempts to interpret this situation as Nepal’s weakness, leading to the sense of national inferiority, which was not only unnecessary but wrongful too. In reality, Nepal is neither a small nor a weak state. True, Nepal could have done better in

terms of economic development. But the responsibility to transform our situation befalls on us. Therefore, it has now become imperative to change the narrative and do away with the predisposition to take history-laden dependence as destiny. It is time to have the conviction and confidence that the relationships in the comity of nations can be deepened and broadened on the basis of sovereign equality, mutual respect and mutual benefits. That only can serve the country's vital national interest. Our position between two big neighbors, with their huge markets and rapidly growing economies is indeed an opportunity for us and one of the prime orientations of our foreign policy is to make the best of this opportunity.

As the Prime Minister of Nepal, Rt. Hon. K P Sharma Oli has repeatedly said that geography and population can make countries big or small; however, they are equal in the essence of sovereignty and independence. One significant takeaway of our external engagements in the past few years is the growing realization that Nepal has come out of the sense of inferiority complex of the past. It has taken "amity with all, enmity with none" as its national principle. The task of expanding relations with all friendly nations has been intensified, based on the Charter of the United Nations, non-alignment, principles of panchsheel, international law and the norms of world peace. In our own modest way, we have also made contributions to nurture those principles as the guiding norms of the global governance and international order.

We have clearly defined the foundation of our foreign policy. We never desire that any ideology or any grouping prevail in our bilateral engagements. Nor do we like to get involved in any military alliance. We are determined to devote our whole attention for the economic development of our country and to achieve prosperity with goodwill and cooperation from all friends. We maintain our foreign relations accordingly.

There are occasional confusions and diverse interpretations about the extent and context of 'nationalism' in Nepal. It has never been a parochial term; its meaning has spatio-temporal context too. When powerful countries invoke nationalism that may at times carry a different meaning and implication; and it may presage the impulse of evading international obligations. But for a country like Nepal, nationalism means defending its national interest, preserving its dignity and searching for its rightful place in the international community. In our national context, it means patriotism.

The discourses regarding the national interest of Nepal should not be understood inversely related to other countries. We need to eschew any attempt to radicalize the sense of nationalism as well as discourage the tendency to undermine the national confidence that Nepal can be prosperous and strong. We must jettison the sense of inferiority and must feel empowered by the principle of sovereign equality while standing in the community of sovereign states in the world.

True that there are some aspects of the current international system not conducive to the aspirations of developing and least developed countries. These countries are still facing structural constraints. The international system and its decision-making process have not been fully inclusive. Despite the overall prosperity the world has achieved, its benefits have not reached to the people equitably. The development of science and technology has made life much easier. But the fruits of science and technology have not been shared equitably.

Economic inequality within and among the nations has increased. Poverty, unemployment, hunger and malnutrition still pose a challenge to the humanity; and in the meantime, billions of dollars are being spent on arms race rather than on eradicating poverty from this planet and investing in the Sustainable Development Goals. It is ironic that there are sometimes double standards applied on issues of global concern, such as human rights and democracy. On its part, Nepal continues to be an advocate for a just, fair and human-centric world order and global architecture.

Since I took charge as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal three years ago, I have taken initiatives to strengthen bilateral, regional and international relations based on our informed national interest. The consolidation and implementation of an integrated foreign policy document is an important step. In addition to the constitutional guidance and Nepal's own time-tested experiences of foreign policy implementation, the present structure of foreign policy remains fully informed by the inputs derived from the studies and reports prepared on foreign policy at different times in the past. The 'National Dialogues on Foreign Policy' provided a comprehensive critical appreciation and valuable broad-based national perspective on foreign policy formulation. Furthermore, the manifestos of the political parties represented in the Parliament served as useful resources in terms of capturing wider perspectives of major national stakeholders. It is believed that this policy will end the ambiguity and provide clarity on how we seek to engage

with international community and what we seek to achieve through such engagements.

Sagarmatha Sambaad has been initiated as a permanent forum and an instrumental platform to interact with global community on Nepal's worldviews, perspectives and concerns, share Nepal's unique experiences as well as to generate closer understanding on issues common to us.

Likewise, positive achievements are expected from the Brain Gain Center established for the purpose of connecting the knowledge, experience and expertise of the Nepali Diaspora around the world for Nepal's development.

The issue of climate change is a matter of high importance for Nepal. Ironically, Nepal is being punished for the mistake it has never made on climate front and environment protection. Rather, Nepal has been playing the role of natural air-conditioning through its snow-capped mountain ranges and green forests. About 60 percent of its land area is used for conserving ecological balance. Rapid melting of glaciers, increased risk of glacier eruptions, floods, landslides and inundations in the lower coastal areas cause climatic disasters and mass migration. In addition, unfavorable climatic cycles are harmfully affecting the agricultural economy and livelihoods. It is a crucial challenge for our generation whether we can hand over hospitable earth to the future generations or not. The first series of Sagarmatha Sambaad is, therefore, dedicated to the deliberation on various dimensions of climate change with particular focus on the challenges faced in the preservation of mountain ecology.

As Nepal draws out from a long transition and aims to graduate from LDC status by 2026 and acquire a middle-income status by 2030, we need to move with great speed and vision. Nepal is gifted with profuse natural resources, enviable cultural heritage, hardworking and resilient people. The affection and goodwill from the world community towards Nepal is unparalleled. Violence and conflict are over; along with it, the transitional period is also over. The dawn of stability has emerged. Nepalis deserve a prosperous country that guarantees collective happiness in their life. To that end, critical factors are: first, the stable political leadership, which has the ability to look beyond the horizons and lead the nation in the pathway to decent democracy and prosperity; second, the unbeatable confidence on the notion that Nepal is not a small and

helpless state, and a strong conviction that it will move forward and achieve prosperity in our time. Our foreign policy today is attuned to the same collective conviction of the 30 million Nepali people.

With these notes, I am pleased to present this book compiling foreign policy speeches and opinions I expressed in my capacity as the Minister of Foreign Affairs. I hope this book will be useful to policymakers, academics, researchers and general readers in gaining insights into foreign policy achievements and challenges of Nepal. This will also document foreign policy articulations during a critical period of post-transition Nepal. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all friendly countries, institutions and individuals for the support and solidarity extended to Nepal in every way possible.

Thank you.

**Pradeep Gyawali**  
Minister for Foreign Affairs

# FOREWORD

Nepal's foreign policy is characterized by both continuity and change. As guided by the Constitution of Nepal, the time-honored Charter of the United Nations, non-alignment, principles of Panchsheel, international law and the norms of world peace make the fundamental basis of Nepal's foreign policy.

In pursuit of national interest, policies have to adapt to the changing political or economic contexts as well as unforeseen exigencies relating to public health, ecology, technology and security concern as well.

The geography and the current socio-economic status of Nepal have, as usual, are the pre-determining factors guiding the trajectory of its external journey and activity. Nepal's handlings of its relations with immediate big neighbours have gained accommodative tractions with the adept diplomatic skills and techniques embraced to maintain a quantum of balanced relations as well as adoption of strategic policies with regards to the relations with major powers.

The Institute of Foreign Affairs' effort to compile major official speeches on Nepal's foreign policy delivered by the Hon'ble Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali on various important occasions covering a period of three years from March 2018 to February 2021. The compilation clearly depicts the traction and parameters of Nepal's foreign policy in the contemporary perspective. Under the diplomatic leadership of the

Hon'ble Foreign Minister, Nepal has successfully navigated its foreign policy with appropriate choices and options made in the complexity ridden regional and global scenarios. Major highlights of priorities of foreign policy as oriented and adapted by Nepal provide kaleidoscopic panorama on the evolving pattern across the world.

The speeches also give good glimpses of Nepal's priority to the process of multilateralism and regional integration, which is strategically and from security concerns, is preferable and advantageous to Nepal to better secure its core national interest. Expanding economic connectivity and cooperation has also been distinctly highlighted in relevant speeches as Nepal direly needs foreign aid and investment to meet the current challenges of speedy social and economic development as envisaged in the national credo of "Prosperous Nepal and Happy Nepali" with much emphasis put on the activities of economic diplomacy. Importantly, a speech also obviously shed light on Nepal's unique peace process as an exemplary case, notably worthy to be followed by any other country facing domestic turbulence.

The speeches appropriately deals with almost all dimensions of Nepal's foreign policy in line with the spirit envisioned in the Constitution of Nepal as an independent and sovereign country, continuously striving hard to contribute to the peace and stability in our region and around the globe at large.

The institute of Foreign Affairs is honoured to publish the valued compilation of official speeches and hopes that the speeches would go a long way to prove its significant contributions to the national literature on various dimensions of Nepal's foreign policy. Experts, scholars and researchers would have the opportunity to glean their much sought-after and relevant information in the compilation.

Meanwhile, IFA has the great pleasure to extend its gratitude to the Hon'ble Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali for his gracious permission for the publication of the compilation. Also, we extend our thanks to all our working staff and the press for the assistance which has enabled its timely publication possible in a short span of time.

**Rajesh Shrestha**

Executive Director

Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA)

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# |01| Foreign Policy of Nepal: Orientation and Priorities

# Foreign Policy Priorities of the New Government

I am delighted to welcome you all to this Luncheon hosted by the Right Honourable Prime Minister. Thank you very much for joining us this afternoon.

This is the first instance that I am speaking formally in front of you as the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

These are still the initial days for me in my office. I am still taking briefs and updates from my colleagues at the Ministry. However, I must tell you how happy and encouraged I am to have received, from various friends at home and abroad, the warm words of felicitation and good wishes on my appointment.

I hope this spirit of friendship and cooperation will continue. I count on your support and collaboration in discharging my responsibilities in the days to come. I will fulfil this responsibility in the best interest of our country and people. I will endeavour to expand and consolidate our friendly ties with all the countries in the world.

We are now at an important juncture of Nepali history. Nepal's peace

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*Welcome Remarks at the Luncheon for Diplomatic Community Hosted by Rt. Hon. Prime Minister Mr. K P Sharma Oli at Baluwatar, Kathmandu on 27 March 2018*

process that was truly unique in nature and very much Nepali in character has been fundamentally concluded. With the successful holding of recent elections, we have before us the prospects of much-needed political stability. And, the present Government has been formed with the support of three-fourths majority of the House.

The election results were the manifestation of Nepali people's desire for stability and progress. People have given us an explicit mandate to build on the political progress achieved so far and take on the task of economic development.

### ☞ **'Amity with all, and enmity with none' remains the soul of our foreign policy**

We cannot lose sight of this opportunity. We are committed to translating people's desire of socio-economic development into reality. However, given the nature and magnitude of challenges we confront, this is not going to be easy.

We will have to promote 'an economic orientation' throughout the country. We will have to bring new ideas together. We need to make the commitments together. This will also demand injecting new dynamism into the system.

We must create jobs. We must eradicate poverty and provide basic facilities to our people. We also need to promote sustainable development. Engaging youths in development activities will be our priority.

Our foreign policy engagements will be commensurate with new domestic priorities as well as our international commitments.

'Amity with all, and enmity with none' remains the soul of our foreign policy. Nepal's adherence to the principles of the UN Charter, *Panchasheel*, and the norms of world peace confirms to this. Guided by this spirit, we attach high importance to our relations with all countries and organizations that you represent.

Our policy of engaging constructively with all our friends and partners

has been mutually beneficial. We continue to work closely with our neighbours, major powers, development partners, countries in our extended neighbourhood, labour receiving countries, United Nations, and multi-lateral financial institutions.

I consider this an opportunity for me to express our gratitude to all our friends and development partners for the close and collaborative partnership that we enjoy. You all have been dependable friends and partners in the highs and lows that Nepal endured in past two decades. We remain thankful to you for your continued support and cooperation in Nepal's development efforts.

Make no mistake, we will keep our specific interests in perspective, but our responses will be qualitatively similar to those of other democracies of the world. We will continue maintaining our strong commitment to the fundamental values of democracy, international peace, security, and human rights.

Nepal has always tried to maintain friendly and cordial relations with all countries in the world. We have historically enjoyed very close relations with our immediate neighbours. Our relations with countries in the extended neighbourhood, development partners, major powers and other friendly countries are also based on mutual trust, friendship, and cooperation.

We aim to deepen and strengthen our relations with our neighbours and all friendly countries of the world, more especially on the economic front. We are committed to creating enabling business environment at home. Our engagements with our friends and development partners will also be for building greater economic linkages and opportunities.

We will continue working with friendly countries for safety, security, and well-being of our migrant workers.

We will continue to play an active role in SAARC, BIMSTEC, BBIN, UN, and other multilateral institutions.

We stand for a free flow of ideas and technologies. We also stand for

unimpeded links of trade. We strongly believe in a system where the States do not exploit the vulnerabilities of each other.

As you all know, the motto of the present government is ‘Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali’. We know that there are challenges ahead, and realization of this goal is not possible with our efforts alone. In recognition of these challenges as well as the distance we have to travel on our way to prosperity, we expect to engage in an enhanced level of economic partnership in trade, investment, technology transfer, and tourism beyond development cooperation.

Maintaining stability, advancing socio-economic transformation, ensuring social justice, good governance and rule of law have been the overarching objectives of the present government. Promoting and adhering to the values and norms of integrity, transparency, and accountability are equally important priorities of the Government. They are applicable to both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

With regard to the concern about the draft integrity policy, I want to clarify that the Government has no intention of curbing or discouraging the participation of stakeholders, including the civil society organizations, in our development efforts. They have been important partners in development and will continue to remain so.

We are also aware of the ‘gaps’ we need to address. We expect our civil society partners to avoid duplication, contribute to areas that help create jobs and bring tangible benefits to the people, and avoid scattering of scarce resources. Our sole objective is to address those gaps so that developmental benefits reach the people.

This has also been the voice of the civil society themselves for long that they function in a transparent and accountable manner. It is but natural for the Government to expect that the civil society partners align their activities with the policy and priorities of the Government so that synergetic effects could be generated in our development efforts.

Our commitment to democracy and the universal values of human rights and fundamental freedoms is total and unwavering. We have reached this

stage with decades of struggle and sacrifices of Nepali people for the cause of democracy and freedom. This Government can never compromise on those achievements and values we fought for. Respect for diversity and pluralism constitute the very spirit of Nepali society and this Government stands on that foundation. Therefore, our commitment to pluralism is absolute.

We live in a complex and unpredictable world. We share the concerns about the simmering uncertainties in multilateralism. However, Nepal's faith in multilateralism remains unshaken. We consider the United Nations as an indispensable organization in multilateral affairs and support its reform for further strengthening. United Nations is the only legitimate forum to deliberate and resolve the international issues of common concern.

Nepal will continue its contribution to the UN Peacekeeping Operations. Our own experience of the peace process may be useful to the countries in transition and those gone through conflict. We would be happy to share our experience as a uniquely successful and home-grown brand of the peace process and contribute to the peace building elsewhere.

We welcome the 2018 Inter-Korea Summit between the leaders of the South and North Korea and resulting thaw on the Korean peninsula. We also welcome the rapprochement between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and hope this will result into denuclearization and a lasting peace in the region.

The pace of post-earthquake reconstruction has moved on satisfactorily. We are close to the final phase of the reconstruction and rebuilding of the individual houses, which we anticipate being completed in a year. Reconstruction and restoration works of the heritage sites and the public buildings are too moving smoothly that will take some more time to complete. We are grateful to all our friends and partners for their cooperation and generous assistance in this process.

We are in an early phase of federalization. It is incumbent upon us to make this process successful. The Constitution allocates the matters related to foreign relations under the competence of the federal government. It is in this context that we had to devise code of conduct and advise our

partners from the diplomatic community to follow the official channels on the matters of development partnership. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs remains available for facilitation in that process.

Before I conclude, I would like to appreciate the bilateral and multilateral donors and development partners for their cooperation and assistance to the development efforts of Nepal. This has helped us make headways towards the socio-economic development of our country.

Our simple expectation is to continue having constructive and respectful engagements with all our friendly countries and partners. We expect an enhanced level of support from them.

# Nepal's Foreign Policy Vis-à-vis Regional and Multilateral Cooperation

I thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts on 'Nepal's Foreign Policy Priorities, Regional Cooperation in South Asia and Multilateralism'.

I thank Foraus for hosting this event during our trip to Switzerland.

Today, I will speak about three broader issues. First, I will share with you the major foreign policy priorities of Nepal. Then, I will discuss the dynamics about regional cooperation in South Asia. Finally, I will touch upon current trends concerning multilateralism and how we approach them.

As you know, Nepal has a glorious history of always being an independent country and having an independent foreign policy.

There are certain fundamental premises guiding our foreign policy objectives.

First and foremost is the promotion of Nepal's national interest while maintaining sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of the country. As the people of a country that was never under the control of

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*Remarks at a Programme Organized by Foraus on the theme 'Nepal's Foreign Policy Priorities, Regional Cooperation in South Asia and Multilateralism' in, Zurich, Switzerland on 25 January 2019*

any external power, we hold, more than anything else, the principles of sovereignty, independence and non-interference close to our heart.

Second, our overall engagements are directed by the principles of *Panchasheel*, non-alignment, UN Charter, international law, and norms of world peace. Our efforts are focused on promoting a just and equitable international order in which all countries enjoy equitable opportunities to fulfil their legitimate aspirations.

Third, our motto is ‘amity with all, and enmity with none’. We want to be a good friend of everyone, and we want to treat everyone as a good friend. We pursue international relations based on justice, sovereign equality, mutual respect, and benefit.

Fourth, development imperatives at home are the guideposts for our diplomatic engagements abroad. Focused pursuit of economic development agenda at the international level remains a key priority.

And finally, the values of our culture, civilizational heritage and identity guide our efforts to promote Nepal as the land of diverse and bountiful resources.

Based on these principles and objectives, the major areas of our diplomatic engagements are: our immediate neighbours, major powers and our development partners, labour destination countries, countries in special situation facing geographical and environmental hardships, and other friendly countries; and regional and multilateral cooperation.

The relations between Nepal and its immediate neighbors- India and China- are age old and deep rooted. These relations have always remained good and cordial; and have been marked by friendliness, mutual support and understanding and appreciation of each other’s aspirations and sensitivities.

Our cooperative relations are diverse in political, economic, cultural, and people-to-people levels. Nepal wants to take advantages of the rapid pace and scale of economic prosperity and transformation taking place in our neighborhood.

Our relations with major powers of the world and our development partners are equally important for us. We are thankful for their goodwill and support to our cause. We aim at enriching the substance of cooperation in our bilateral engagements with them. We urge them to align their assistance with our development priorities.

We work closely with labour-receiving countries for safety, security, and wellbeing of our migrant workers. Our efforts are underway to expand cooperation beyond labour issues especially with focus on trade, investment linkages.

Our relations with other friendly countries in the world are also based on mutual respect and cooperation. Solidarity and cooperation with LDCs and LLDCs continue to characterize our diplomatic engagements. Our goal is to open up and diversify our relations particularly in the areas of trade, investment, tourism and people-to-people exchanges.

We remain engaged at multilateral forums including the United Nations to work together with the international community on the agenda of peace and security, development, and human rights. We believe that it is our collective responsibility to make the United Nations more efficient, effective, and responsive befitting the needs of the present time.

Regional cooperation continues to remain a priority for us. We work closely with other member countries at SAARC, BIMSTEC, ACD and SCO processes. Our aim is to advance the cause of regional peace, progress, and prosperity through these frameworks.

The mainstay of today's diplomacy is the pursuit of economic agenda. Therefore, we strive to promote our vital economic interests at the international level. We are effortful to attract more foreign investment in our national priority sectors, expanding our export trade and promoting tourism, among others.

Now, please allow me to speak a few words about regional dynamics in South Asia.

South Asia is a land of ancient civilization. It is endowed with rich natural and cultural heritages. It is a region of young population and hence with significant demographic dividend.

The region represents over 21 percent of world population and 3.4 percent of the world land mass. It contributes over 2.6 trillion to world GDP. At present the regional growth of South Asia is 7 percent on an average that contributes about 20 percent to the global growth.

Its strategic location between the emerging China and South East Asia, and the oil-rich Gulf Region and the vast Indian Ocean is important.

Despite such importance and potentials of the region, the state of regional cooperation tells us a different story. The region just accounts for about 1.3 percent of world's merchandize trade, with meager 5 percent of intra-regional trade. In this sense, South Asia is one of the least integrated regions in the world compared to other regional blocks such as EU: 65%, East Asia: 25%, and Sub Saharan Africa: 22%.

South Asia is considered as one of the fastest growing regions in the world. But not all countries in the region are equally benefiting from economic development. Lack of adequate complementarities among the countries and the absence of regional and global value chains are the factors that have led to this situation.

On top of this, smaller countries in the region face common challenges of poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, climate change, natural disasters, security, and many others.

Limited transport connectivity, and logistics and regulatory impediments have been the major stumbling blocks to have an enhanced level of trade linkages in the region.

Having said this, however, we believe that regional cooperation is not a choice but a stark necessity in this age of heightened globalization and inter-dependence.

Regional cooperation is one of the major attributes of Nepal's foreign policy. We have been pursuing such cooperation especially through SAARC and BIMSTEC.

Nepal hosts the Secretariat of SAARC in Kathmandu and we are currently the Chair of this process.

It is our policy to push forward the regional cooperation in the agreed areas in partnership with other fellow member states. In August 2018, Nepal held the BIMSTEC Summit in Kathmandu and came out with the declaration, which has the common commitment to integrate the Member States economically.

Regional cooperation, in the new geo-political climate, I believe, must:

- uphold, above all, the universally accepted principles of national sovereignty, non-interference, national independence, equality, mutual respect, and mutual benefits,
- have at the centre the economic agenda for development and prosperity.
- have a clarity of vision on the nature of integration and the course ahead that is backed up by strong political will and actions, and
- must create an enabling environment for all to grow and prosper,

More importantly, I believe that people's ownership of and participation in the regional processes and deliberations is equally critical.

Making deeper regional integration a reality is not possible with the isolated efforts of some States or people. This warrants the realization and translation into action the collective responsibility. While the challenges for regionalism in present day world may be big, the rewards of a more integrated region can be even bigger.

Now some words on current trends about multilateralism:

We live in a world that is full of contradictions and uncertainties. Forces of both stability and disruption are active. Adjustment to a rapidly changing

world is a major challenge for everyone and more so for a country like ours. Stability in the global order is essential for peace, development, and democracy around the world.

“ **‘Making deeper regional integration a reality is not possible with the isolated efforts of some States or people. This warrants the realization and translation into action the collective responsibility. While the challenges for regionalism in present day world may be big, the rewards of a more integrated region can be even bigger.**

In recent years, we are witnessing challenges and uncertainties facing multilateralism. In the face of rising populist nationalism around the world, ensuring primacy of multilateralism to define global agenda becomes even more challenging. National policies of major powers tend to have adverse impacts on the multilateral institutions. This has perplexed many countries that have traditionally relied on virtues of globalization.

A crisis has also emerged in the rule-based, free, and open multilateral trading system. WTO has remained constrained as the trade negotiations on Doha Development Agenda stalled over the terms of liberalization of agricultural trade, among others.

Surge of ultra-nationalism, xenophobia, and other forms of discrimination against the migrants and refugees has become an issue of global concern. Political parties with strong opposition to migration and multicultural ethos tasted success in democratic elections. This has led to spates of polarized societies giving rise to incidences of extremism and intolerance.

We believe that the problems we confront today at global scale can only be overcome by global collaboration and partnership in absolute trust and confidence. We are yet to achieve an inclusive international order that promotes fairness, equality and justice for all states- bigger or smaller.

Nepal is a strong advocate of multilateralism and the UN process ever since it joined the UN in 1955. Nepal has unwavering faith in the principles and

purposes enshrined in the UN Charter.

Nepal believes that it is the obligation of all Member States to preserve the sanctity of multilateralism and uphold respect for international law.

Nepal is one of the main countries contributing to UN Peacekeeping Operations. We favour peaceful solution of international disputes. We support the national leadership and ownership of any solution to crisis situations and apolitical role of the agencies like the United Nations.

Nepal remains constructively engaged to advance the cause of global peace, security, and development. Solidarity and cooperation with LDCs and LLDCs continue to characterize our deliberations.

We have owned and integrated the SDGs into our national policies and programmes. We aspire to achieve them well before the deadline. We call for the faithful and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Special vulnerabilities of countries like ours must be taken into consideration while taking decision on climate change related funds and support measures.

Nepal has been serving as a member of the Human Rights Council for the term of 2018-20. As a member, we continue to provide a strong voice to all those around the globe who look up to the Council to make a positive difference in their lives. Nepal always stands for apolitical and objective examination of human rights issues.

As a country at the bottom rung of the development ladder, we expect equitable trade opportunities through WTO to eliminate poverty, create jobs and achieve sustained growth and diversified economy, which paves our path to sustainable development.

To conclude, Nepal's foreign policy priorities and engagements at regional and multilateral forums are informed by some fundamental principles, certain geo-political realities, and our development needs. In these engagements, we not only keep our enlightened national interests at the centre but we also ensure that our responses are qualitatively similar to those of other democracies in the world.

# Enhancing Diplomatic Engagements for Economic Transformation

At the outset, I express my sincere gratitude to the Prime Minister Right Honourable Mr. K P Sharma Oli for his gracious presence. I also thank you very much, Hon. Finance Minister, Your Excellencies, and distinguished guests, for accepting our invitation and joining us this afternoon.

This briefing, organized to share with you the Government's major policies, priorities, and diplomatic engagements, is the third of its kind since the present Government was formed about a year ago.

As you may recall, the Right Honourable Prime Minister addressed the diplomatic community highlighting the major plans and policies of the new Government in March last year. Some three months later, in July, I also had an opportunity to speak to you about our major foreign policy engagements.

Over the last seven months following our meeting in July, a lot has happened both in Nepal and in the world. But I am not going to dwell upon all these events; rather I would confine myself to three broad topics.

First, I will shed light on the major diplomatic activities undertaken by the Government of Nepal during these seven months.

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*Remarks at the Briefing to Diplomatic Community in Kathmandu on 01 February 2019*

Second, I will reiterate and reemphasize the major policy-orientation of the Government of Nepal on domestic front. (I say 'reiterate' because this may have been shared with you one way or the other in some previous occasions.)

At the end, I will highlight our main foreign policy priorities for the days to come.

Excellencies,

The present Government formed following the successful elections in 2017 has made substantial progress both on domestic and external fronts under the experienced and visionary leadership of Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli. The Government's vision is clear, commitment is steadfast, action is bearing outcome and future course is well-defined.

We continued to make advances in our foreign relations since I interacted with you in July 2018.

The Rt. Hon. President visited the State of Qatar and Poland. The high-level talks held between Nepal and these countries have helped strengthen the friendly ties and cooperation. The Rt. Hon. President's participation at the CoP24 was the manifestation of our strong commitment to climate change agenda.

The visit of the Rt. Hon. Vice President to China has helped further consolidate the bilateral relations with the northern neighbour, China.

Similarly, the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister visited Costa Rica and held a fruitful meeting with the Costa Rican President. The University of Peace in San Jose also awarded him an honorary doctorate for his contributions to establishing peace in the country.

The Rt. Hon. Prime Minister led a high-level delegation to the 73rd General Assembly of the UN and addressed the General Debate. Nepal signed the Action for Peace Agenda of the UN Secretary General to further consolidate its commitment to global peace.

He had bilateral meetings with His Excellency the President of Switzerland,

the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of Canada, and H.E. the Prime Minister of Cambodia. These high-level political meetings have contributed to nurturing our friendship and cooperation with these countries.

The Prime Minister attended the 49th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum and participated in the major sessions and roundtables. He also met His Excellency the Prime Minister of Vietnam and had meetings with prominent business leaders.

I had already shared with you the important outcome achieved during the visit of the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister to India and China and the return visit of His Excellency the Prime Minister of India.

During this period, I myself visited Europe twice. I had meetings with my counterparts from Portugal, Belgium, and Austria, Minister for International Cooperation of Luxembourg as well as with High Representative and Vice President of European Commission and EU Commissioner for Development Cooperation.

I visited Japan and had fruitful meeting with my counterpart on a range of issues of mutual interest. Last month, I had the opportunity to welcome my Japanese counterpart to Nepal.

My visit to the United States of America and meeting with Secretary of State focused on further promoting our seven-decade long relationship.

I recently visited New Delhi and held discussions with my Indian counterpart on further consolidating our relations. I also addressed the Valedictory Session of *Raisina Dialogue 2019*.

In November and December last year, we had the honor of welcoming Cambodian Prime Minister and State Counsellor of Myanmar on bilateral visits. We also welcomed both incumbent and former Heads of State and Government attending the Asia-Pacific Summit in the same months.

Foreign Secretary participated in the Paris Peace Forum in November and French Secretary-General visited Nepal last month. Nepal and France

jointly launched the programme for the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations.

During this period, we held bilateral/political consultations and meetings with China, United States of America, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Republic of Korea, Myanmar, Australia, Canada, France, Mongolia, and Poland. Comprehensive discussions held during these consultations and meetings have been useful in giving new impetus to our relations with these countries.

We successfully hosted the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit in August 2018. The Summit took concrete decisions on working for the Charter of the Organization as well as on enhancing the capacity of the Secretariat. An MoU on establishment of BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection was signed by the relevant Ministers of the member states during the Summit.

Nepal hosted the Informal Meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers for the fourth consecutive years in New York in September.

Nepal also hosted the Fifth Senior Official Meeting and the Sixth Ministerial Meeting of Colombo Process in Kathmandu. As a result, we were able to lead Colombo Process to make substantive contributions to the Global Compact on Migration, which was adopted in Marrakesh in December.

Deputy Secretary General of UN visited Nepal during this period.

Excellencies,

Now, please allow me to underline the major policy-orientation of the Government of Nepal.

As you may agree with me, compared to where we were a few years ago, things look much better now. Nepal continues to make headway in political, economic, and social spheres.

We have achieved much-needed political stability. This has helped us project our vision, goals, and direction for future with clarity.

That said, we know that our achievements cannot be taken for granted.

Our resolve to fight against poverty, illiteracy and inequality needs to gather more strength. We also know that real transformation of a country is more about transforming the lives of its people, not just its politics and governance system.

This needs people-centred programmes and actions. And, we are committed to undertaking them, step by step.

As the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister outlined in his address in March last year, there are fundamental premises around which our policies and plans are devised. They include nationalism, democracy, integrity and accountability, social justice and equality, and good governance and rule of law.

I know you are familiar with the present Government's motto of 'Prosperous Nepal and happy Nepali.'

Our whole focus is to translate this into reality. We are effortful to advance 'economic-orientation' throughout the country. We strive to achieve socio-economic development and prosperity, building on the dividend of political transformation.

Our key goal is to graduate from the LDC status at an early date and reach the level of a middle-income country by 2030 and achieve the SDGs by the same year.

However, our ambition is not free from challenges. What is important is not to lose sight of the focus on our goals. We must modernize our agriculture, build infrastructure, tap the energy potentials, promote tourism, develop human resources, and generate employment opportunities for our people.

For this, we need huge financial resources- both from within and outside the country. Investment in productive sectors will be critical to realize our goal of economic transformation.

That is why, we are hosting an International Investment Summit on 29-30 March this year to invite foreign investors to Nepal. This is a topmost priority for us at the moment.

We know it is only the legal, policy and institutional reforms that boost the

confidence of the investors. We are effortful in making visible reforms so that potential investors see the difference when they come to attend the Summit in March. We will make all possible efforts to ensure a predictable, secure, and attractive investment climate in Nepal.

“ **We believe not in the principles of power but in the power of principles. The principles of inclusion, participation, accountability, and transparency are very much close to our heart.**

It is in the interest of both Nepal and our partners to make this event a success to contribute to Nepal's socio-economic development at a faster pace.

We saw a significant rise in the number of tourists visiting Nepal last year. We are encouraged by this trend and we continue to promote tourism as a vital sector to contribute to our economic growth. We are observing 2020 as Visit Nepal Year with a target of welcoming two million tourists. We expect your meaningful cooperation to realize the goals of this mega-event.

We want to achieve socio-economic development within the broader framework of democracy and political pluralism. Our commitment to democracy and fundamental freedoms is unflinching. Our aim is to ensure comprehensive democracy in which an individual is empowered not only politically but also economically, socially, and culturally.

We are mindful of the cost we had to bear for the cause of democracy. Hence, we cannot even think of shaking the very foundations of democratic values, which we fought for.

We believe not in the principles of power but in the power of principles. The principles of inclusion, participation, accountability, and transparency are very much close to our heart. And, we want to continue promoting and protecting them to ensure equality, respect and dignity for all Nepali people.

Free press is an integral part of our democracy. We are committed to press freedom. But, we believe that everybody has to be responsible in exercising his or her constitutionally guaranteed freedom and rights.

Nepal adheres to constitutionalism and all our laws and policies conform to the fundamental principles and norms enshrined in the constitution. An independent judiciary is there to safeguard people's rights and freedoms.

When we talk about these values and principles, we also expect the non-government stakeholders including the civil society organizations to adhere to them. We firmly believe that civil society organizations are important partners in our development efforts. The Government does not have any intention to control their efforts. Our only focus is to ensure a success story of partnership with accountability and transparency and avoid any possible duplication.

You all are aware that the peace process has been fundamentally concluded and we remain committed to addressing the remaining component of transitional justice in the best interest of this country and people.

While we have noticed concerns expressed in certain quarters for the expeditious conclusion of this process, we believe that this internal matter can be resolved with our commitment and efforts. If Nepali leadership could resolve unthinkable hardcore political issues to arrive at this stage, there is every reason to believe that the leadership has also the ability and willingness to complete this final leg. So, trust on our commitment, willingness and capacity to close this chapter forever in the spirit of the Comprehensive Peace Accord.

We have made it clear to all stakeholders that there will be no blanket amnesty to serious violations of human rights. We are committed to ensuring that justice is provided to the victims. But, we want to ensure that the process of reconciliation is smooth and sustainable, the whole process of 'dealing with the past' is credible and that the tide does not turn back.

I take this opportunity to thank you all- and through you the countries and institutions you represent- for all the constructive support we have received thus far. We expect similar support and collaboration in our

future development efforts, not least in light of our goal of progress and prosperity.

As you are aware, given our geographic, demographic, cultural and linguistic realities, there are certain sensitivities in which we would rather need your understanding and goodwill. At times, even if our core interests are similar, certain issues may warrant some specific perspectives and approaches.

Excellencies,

Now, I turn to our foreign policy priorities.

Today's world is replete with contradictions and uncertainties. Forces of both stability and disruption are active. Strengthening multilateralism and rules-based order is the key challenge.

Against this backdrop, we continue to pursue foreign policy objectives with pragmatic approach and result-orientation. We aim at taking advantage of the unfolding opportunities by (re)orienting our strategies consistent with domestic and external realities.

A principled, consistent, and independent foreign policy continues to be the backbone of our diplomatic engagements.

In promoting national interests, our external engagements have two clear goals: promoting Nepal's credentials as an open and progressive democratic State at the international level; and the pursuit of effective economic diplomacy to contribute to development imperatives at home.

In pursuing these goals, we keep principles of the Panchasheel, non-alignment, UN Charter, international law, and norms of world peace at the centre. Our motto is 'amity with all, and enmity with none'. We want to advance our engagements on the basis of sovereign equality, justice, mutual respect and benefit and to complement the domestic efforts of socio-economic transformation.

The effectiveness of Nepal's foreign policy begins at home. Our culture, civilizational heritage and identity guide our soft power and our diplomacy.

Our constructive pragmatism in our relations with our immediate neighbours, extended neighbourhood, major powers, our development partners, labour receiving countries and other friendly countries has been mutually rewarding.

We will not let any efforts undermine our friendly and longstanding partnership with countries in all regions and continents in the world. The support and cooperation received from our neighbours and valued partners have tremendously contributed to Nepal's development.

We continue to add value to the regional and multilateral forums through our active engagements.

Moving forward, we aim at further deepening our cooperation with our immediate neighbours- India and China with focus on enhancing economic partnership.

We will continue to build on the existing cooperation with the major powers of the world, our development partners, labour receiving countries and other friendly countries.

We will continue pursuing exchange of high-level visits to enhance our relations with the friendly countries.

The bilateral political consultations will be made structured and result oriented.

With regard to our development cooperation, we must together create a success story ensuring that valuable resources are best utilized in priority sectors of development and reach the real needy people through established budgetary system. National ownership and leadership is critical.

The mainstay of today's diplomacy is the pursuit of economic agenda. We will strive to promote our vital economic interests through activities aimed at attracting more foreign investment in our national priority sectors, expanding our export trade, and promoting tourism, among others.

We will continue to closely work together with our fellow Member States of SAARC, BIMSTEC, ACD and SCO for achieving regional peace, progress

and prosperity. Efforts will be made to revive the stalled SAARC process.

We believe that constructive multilateralism is the only way to achieve our collective interests.

A strong UN is needed to address and resolve the challenges the world is facing today. For this, we need a global outlook. And, we must understand that there is no conflict between multilateralism and the national interest.

The multilateral rules and architecture are not perfect, and they must be made fit-for-purpose to deliver on the global agenda including the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

It is also imperative that we demonstrate our shared commitment to a rules-based multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core.

Nepal's engagements at multilateral forums will be enhanced in the days ahead.

Nepal will continue to enhance its contribution to the UN Peacekeeping Operations.

We stand for peaceful solution of international disputes.

The climate change agenda is very close to our heart. Though we do not have significant contributions to global warming, we are bearing the disproportionate brunt. Rather, our snow-clad high mountains and high hills contribute to controlling global warming in South Asia region and beyond. Our commitment and efforts towards clean and green growth are strong as ever.

We believe that Paris Agreement is an important step in ensuring the sustainability of our planet.

We have been elected as a member of the Human Rights Council for the term of 2018-20. Nepal will always stand for apolitical and objective examination of human rights issues.

Nepal has filed a candidature for re-election to the Human Rights Council for the 2020-22 term. We expect your support as in the last election.

To conclude, we are aware of the challenges ahead but also recognize the opportunities we have before us. We are more optimistic with the people's strong support and back up. Our people are known to have the legacy of resilience and hope. It is this legacy that unifies us to strive towards progress and prosperity. We are confident that we will continue to receive, as always, your support and cooperation in our efforts.

I thank you for your attention.

## Nepal's Foreign Policy Priorities and Nepal-US Relations

I thank the Asia Society for hosting this event during my visit and express my gratitude to all of you for joining us this afternoon.

I feel delighted to share my thoughts with you about Nepal's Foreign policy priorities and Nepal-US relations.

This is my maiden bilateral visit to the USA as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal. I had a very fruitful meeting with Secretary of State His Excellency Mr. Mike Richard Pompeo the day before yesterday. We discussed a wide range of bilateral matters and agreed to work together to enhance our bilateral cooperation in future.

Over the last two days, I also met with Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs Mr. Randall Schriver, Deputy Assistant to the US President and Senior Director for South and Central Asia at the National Security Council Ms. Lisa Curtis, and Chief Operating Officer of MCC Mr. Jonathan Nash.

In all these meetings, we reviewed various facets of our excellent bilateral cooperation and discussed ways to strengthen our relations in all spheres.

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*Remarks delivered at the 'Roundtable Discussion' Organized by Asia Society in Washington DC on 20 December 2018*

Now, please allow me to speak briefly on three topics today. First, I will touch upon Nepal's recent political developments. Then, I will highlight the foreign policy priorities of the Government of Nepal. Finally, I will discuss the major aspects of Nepal-US relations.

Dear Friends,

Nepal has undergone the transformation of historic proportions over the last decade.

The process of this transformation started in 2006 when we concluded the Comprehensive Peace Accord ending the decade-long armed conflict between the State and the then Maoists.

This was the foundation of our unique and home-grown peace process which culminated in the promulgation of the Constitution by Constituent Assembly in 2015.

The promulgation of the Constitution was a milestone in Nepal's political history because it materialized the aspirations of Nepali people to have a Constitution written by their own elected representatives. It marked the shift from the unitary and centralized form of governance to a federal set up.

And, more importantly, the Constitution has institutionalized our hard-fought gains of proportional representation, social justice and inclusion made through people's various struggles and revolutions.

The year 2017 was another eventful year in our political history. We were able to hold elections at all three levels- federal, provincial, and local. Governments with strong mandates have been formed as per the federal set up. This has also concluded fundamentally the political transition of Nepal.

With successful holding of elections, the federal system of governance has been fully functional.

I believe that our political achievements have been both far-reaching and exemplary. However, as you know, we do not have as yet a 'glorious story'

of economic achievements to share.

Though, after quite several years, we were able to achieve an economic growth of about 6.9 percent last year, continuing the momentum of this growth is not that easy.

We plan to graduate from the LDC status at an early date and to become a middle-income country by 2030.

We must ensure that economic opportunities open up in the country. Job creation and poverty reduction are our topmost priorities.

Our focus at present is on modernizing agriculture, tapping the energy, and in particular the hydropower potentials, infrastructure development, tourism and development of human resources.

Huge investment will be needed in next few years to achieve our economic goals.

It is in this context that the current federal Government has made the rapid socio-economic transformation its topmost agenda. Our national motto is 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali'. We have devised our plans and priorities around this motto.

Dear Friends,

Now, please allow me to dwell upon our major foreign policy priorities.

As you know, Nepal has a glorious history of always being an independent country and having an independent foreign policy. There are certain fundamental premises guiding our foreign policy objectives. An independent conduct of foreign policy for maintaining sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence remains at the centre.

We are guided by the ideals of the Panchasheel, non-alignment, UN Charter, international law, and norms of world peace. We pursue our foreign relations based on the principle of 'amity with all, and enmity with none'. Sovereign equality, justice, mutual respect, and benefit continue to inform our diplomatic engagements.

And, the maxims of our culture, civilizational heritage and identity guide our efforts to promote Nepal as the land of diverse and bountiful resources. Based on these principles, our diplomatic goals at present are; projecting Nepal's uniquely successful, home-grown and nationally-led and owned peace process together with Nepal's credentials as an open and progressive democratic State at the international level; and pursuing an effective economic diplomacy to contribute to development imperatives of the country.

Towards these ends, the major areas of our diplomatic engagements are: our immediate neighbours, major powers and our development partners, labour destination countries, countries in special situation facing geographical and environmental hardships, and other friendly countries; and regional and multilateral organizations.

On neighbourhood, our relations with India and China are excellent. Mutual trust has been the key aspect of our relationship. We look forward to enhancing our relations with our neighbours at all levels of cooperation. In particular, our goal is to remain engaged in the 'vibrant economic drive' of the neighbourhood in order to contribute to our national development efforts. We have always respected and will continue to respect the legitimate interests of our neighbours.

Our relations with major powers of the world and our development partners are equally important for us. We aim at enriching the substance of cooperation in our bilateral engagements with them. We are thankful for their goodwill and support to our cause. We urge them to align their assistance with our development priorities.

We work closely with labour-receiving countries for safety, security and wellbeing of our migrant workers. Our efforts are underway to expand cooperation beyond labour issues especially with focus on trade, investment linkages.

Our relations with other friendly countries in the world are also based on mutual respect and cooperation. Solidarity and cooperation with LDCs and LLDCs continue to characterize our diplomatic engagements. Our goal is to diversify our relations especially in the areas of trade, investment,

tourism and people-to-people exchanges.

We remain engaged at multilateral forums including the UN to work together with the international community on the agenda of peace and security, development, and human rights. We believe that it is our collective responsibility to make the United Nations more efficient, effective, and responsive befitting the need of the present time.

“ **Our relations are based on mutual trust, cooperation, and respect. The United States has always supported Nepal in its efforts towards becoming a peaceful, prosperous, resilient, and democratic society.**

Regional cooperation continues to remain a priority for us. We work closely with other member countries at SAARC and BIMSTEC processes. Our aim is to advance the cause of regional peace, progress, and prosperity through these frameworks.

Dear Friends,

Now I will speak some words about Nepal-US relations.

Relations between Nepal and USA have always remained cordial ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations on 25 April 1947. The USA is the second country after the UK with which Nepal entered into diplomatic relations. This speaks volumes of the historicity and importance of our relationship.

Our relations are based on mutual trust, cooperation, and respect. The United States has always supported Nepal in its efforts towards becoming a peaceful, prosperous, resilient, and democratic society.

Our relations have evolved into a cooperative and dynamic partnership encompassing political, economic, developmental, cultural, and educational spheres. We share a longstanding and enduring cooperation, which is beneficial to both.

United States is one of the largest development partners and a reliable friend of Nepal. Cooperation between our two countries ranges from big projects at the national level to the local projects for improved sanitary system in rural communities.

The latest partnership under the \$ 630 million Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact for Nepal is but an example of our deepening and widening cooperation.

Nepal attaches great importance to its relations with the United States of America. We remain thankful to the American people and the US Government for all support and contribution to Nepal's economic and social development.

USA remains one of the major trading partners of Nepal. Our trade linkages have been growing also in the context of the preferential access granted by the US Government to 77 Nepali products. Our aim is to enhance these linkages.

We welcomed over 80, 000 US tourists to Nepal last year. We are happy to learn that US tourists love Nepal and continue to make it one of their favoured destinations.

Nepal and the USA also work constructively in multilateral forums including at the United Nations. We believe that the US has a crucial role to play in making the world a just and peaceful place to live in. It is also in this light that our cooperation at such forums aims at promoting a rules-based international system.

So, moving forward, we expect to receive cooperation and enhance our engagements with the US in the five major areas.

First, it is heartening to note that we have been receiving the USA's goodwill, support, and cooperation in relation to Nepal's recent political changes. We hope to continue receiving such support, both moral and material.

Second, from Nepal's perspective, we look up to the USA for further economic contacts in terms of more foreign direct investment, trade

expansion, tourism linkages and technology transfer. Our activities must be oriented towards exploring further opportunities in these fields.

Third, we expect an enhanced level of US development cooperation to our socio-economic development aspirations. Given the its key role in shaping global affairs, the US goodwill and support to our development cause is all the more critical.

Fourth, educational, cultural cooperation and people-to-people contacts constitute another important component of our bilateral relations. Our relations can develop and prosper only when people at the grassroots level get engaged. Nepali diaspora in the US is a vital link in this regard.

And, finally, working with the US Government at multilateral forums for the global cause of peace, security and development is also our priority. We also keep the interests of LDCs and LLDCs in perspective when we talk about our engagements at such forums.

I thank you all for your kind attention.

# Nepal-Russia Relations: Friendship for Mutual Cooperation

I extend to you all warm greetings on behalf of the Government and people of Nepal and on my own.

My sincere thanks go to the Institute of International Relations for organizing today's programme. The Institute's continued partnership with the Embassy of Nepal at different forums reflects the true affinity, close academic interaction and growing people-to-people exchanges.

It is my distinct honour to meet with the faculty, students, and researchers of this Institute of high repute here in Moscow on the occasion of my official visit to the Russian Federation.

I have heard a lot about the extraordinary contributions of MGIMO in the articulation of Russian foreign policy. As an alma mater of top Russian diplomats, intellectuals and politicians, I commend MGIMO's stellar performance, particularly in enhancing the scope of research and knowledge base in the field of contemporary global politics.

I am pleased to be present amongst you to exchange views and experiences on how we can best contribute from our respective sides to further strengthening the already warm bilateral relationship.

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*Remarks delivered at a Reception hosted by H.E. Anatoliy Vasilievich, Rector of the Institute of International Relations, Moscow (MGIMO) on 26 November 2019*

We greatly value the continued dialogue and exchange by engaging in all walks of life and different sectors of development. I offer my sincere appreciation to you all for playing your active role in strengthening multi-faceted ties that exist between Nepal and the Russian Federation.

Nepal and the Russian Federation are old and good friends. Ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1956, we have maintained cordial and friendly relations. This year marks the 63rd anniversary of the establishment of formal ties. I would like to extend warm felicitations to all of you on this happy occasion.

“ **Nepal greatly values the bond of friendship it enjoys with the Russian Federation. Our relations have progressively evolved over the years to cover political, economic, social, cultural, and educational dimensions. It is a multidimensional partnership.**

Dear Friends,

In my presentation today I will briefly touch on three key aspects: Nepal-Russia relations; Nepal's foreign policy orientation in the changed context; and Nepal's development journey ahead and our priorities.

Let me first pick up Nepal-Russia relations.

Nepal greatly values the bond of friendship it enjoys with the Russian Federation. Our relations have progressively evolved over the years to cover political, economic, social, cultural, and educational dimensions. It is a multidimensional partnership.

Continued engagements at various levels and cooperation in the areas of common interest have nurtured our friendship.

Parliamentary and judicial exchanges and frequent visits by high officials of both countries have contributed to widening the scope and enriching the substance of our relationship.

The objective of my visit this time, in my capacity as the Foreign Minister of Nepal, has been to bolster trust, deepen political understanding, promote economic, commercial and cultural ties and strengthen collaboration in dealing with regional and global issues of common concern.

In this light, Foreign Minister His Excellency Mr. Sergey Lavrov and I exchanged substantive views on a wide range of topics during our official talks yesterday. We agreed to work together to take our relations to the next level through enhanced political engagement and promotion of mutually beneficial cooperation in diverse fields. We underlined the importance of exchanging high level visits between the two countries, activating established bilateral consultation mechanism, and concluding a host of agreements and understanding to further cooperative partnership.

I am satisfied with the outcome of our discussions and our consensus on the road ahead to realize the full potential of our mutual cooperation.

As you are aware, my visit has taken place in the fundamentally changed national context of Nepal. Nepal's long political transition following a decade-long armed conflict has ended. A new democratic and inclusive Constitution promulgated in September 2015 has settled long-standing political issues. The elections held in 2017 have produced a stable government with over two-thirds majority in the Parliament first time in two decades, thereby ending the cycle of political instability.

Policy clarity and consistency in development efforts has been realized and the 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali' has been defined as country's overarching national aspiration. A clear sense of direction and commitment in the conduct of an independent and balanced foreign policy based on the notion of 'amity with all, enmity with none' has underpinned our worldview.

This visit is also about Nepal's commitment to reenergizing all aspects of multi-faceted Nepal-Russia friendship. Needless to say, the full spectrum of our friendship is much more than the formal contacts. There has been an increasing level of cultural cooperation and interactions engaging the private sector and other people-to-people exchanges. Students, entrepreneurs, diaspora, scientists, artists, mountaineers, tourists and importantly

the academia from both the countries have made significant contributions.

People-to-people relations give added value to Nepal-Russia relations, which began with the visit of the renowned Russian Scholar Ivan Pavlov-  
iech Minayev to Kathmandu in 1875. It has been reinforced by Russian literary icons like Tolstoy, Chekhov, Gorky and Pushkin who have great influence in Nepali literature. It is heartening that many Russians have attraction towards the Hindu, Buddhist and the Eastern philosophy.

Some Nepali and Russian nationals are residing in each other's countries for a variety of reasons. I thank the Russian community for hosting Nepali nationals and supporting them. I also express my sincere thanks to the friendly Russian people for their help in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in 2015. As Foreign Minister Lavrov said yesterday, the true friendship came into full play when Russia promptly and spontaneously sent a team of medical doctors along with humanitarian supplies for rescue and relief.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is encouraging to witness continued progress achieved by the Russian Federation over the decades. In the fields of technologies, infrastructure, innovation and research, the progress has been remarkable. The Government, people and the academic circle of Nepal greatly appreciate these and many other achievements made by the Russian Federation.

The steady course taken by Russia in achieving sustainable economic development, industrialization and high-end technological advancement have been glaring example of its perseverance and dedication. Over the decades, the Russian partnership with the global south has been increasing.

Nepal sincerely appreciates support and cooperation extended by the Russian Federation in industrial and infrastructure development in the past. The technical cooperation has helped significantly lay the groundwork for Nepal's economic development.

Nepal has learnt from Russia the development planning model. Nepal has adopted systematic and planned development efforts since 1956

and we have now in place the 15th edition of the Development Plan. The best practices of the Soviet Planning model have helped Nepal shape its planning framework.

On a different note, Russian scholarships for Nepali students and public-sector professionals have been highly useful. There are a number of Nepali nationals trained in the Russian Federation occupying higher positions in politics, administration and the private sector in Nepal today.

Nepal and the Russian Federation have been working closely in multilateral forums as well. One important avenue I would like to mention is the United Nations, which Nepal considers to be the cornerstone, custodian and emblem of multilateralism. With emphasis on a just and balanced world order for peace and stability, Nepal believes in multilateralism and rules-based international order.

At a time when the world is facing multiple challenges, the Russian initiatives in global fight against terrorism, cybercrime, climate change and other pressing global issues have been commendable. Let me underline that primacy of international law and value of world peace in the conduct of foreign policy help reduce tension and conflict.

Nepal has been contributing to the maintenance of the international peace and security by consistently and substantially supporting UN peacekeeping operations. Our troops are presently working in 15 out of 16 peacekeeping missions around the world and mostly in the troubled parts of the world.

Russia, being a permanent member of the UN Security Council, has an important role to play, together with other members, so that peacekeeping missions accomplish their objectives in a timely manner within the given mandate. We call for enhanced consultation and coordination with TCCs/PCCs when taking important decision on peace missions.

Regional cooperation is one of the defining attributes of international relations today. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), founded jointly by the Russian Federation and other friendly countries in the region, is a new opportunity for institutionalizing a long-lasting environment for peace and prosperity in the region, and beyond.

As a Dialogue Partner, Nepal has found SCO as an additional platform for engaging in mutually beneficial projects in areas including trade, transit, investment, energy, agriculture, small and medium enterprises and culture. We are looking for a full-fledged membership of the Organization to enhance our contribution. We are thankful to the Government of the Russian Federation that it was in Ufa, Russia, the decision to grant Nepal the dialogue partner status was taken.

Nepal has been collaborating, directly or indirectly, on matters of common interest with the Russian Federation at all available platforms. We will continue this in future.

Distinguished guests,

Next, I will speak briefly about Nepal's foreign policy orientation.

Never colonized and subjugated, Nepal has always remained an independent nation. This speaks of our glorious history and evolution as a nation.

Our foreign policy orientation is very much influenced by this legacy. As I stated earlier, we pursue an independent, non-aligned, balanced foreign policy based on the philosophy of friendship and cooperation with all countries in the world. We do not believe in enmity. We do not nurture ill feelings towards anyone.

The UN Charter, the Panchasheel—the five principle of Peaceful Coexistence, non-alignment, respect for international law, value for world peace guide our foreign policy. We believe that respect for every country's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries are the essential ingredients of healthy inter-state relationship.

As with any other country, Nepal also gives priority to its relationship with its neighborhood and extended neighbourhood. We have defined that our relationship with neighbours and other countries is based on the principle of sovereign equality, mutual respect and benefit. Guided by this principle, the present Government has made substantial efforts to enhance and consolidate friendly ties and cooperative partnership with neighbours and other friendly countries.

It is our principled commitment that we will not let our territory be used against the interest of our neighbours and any other friendly nation. This has helped us earn confidence and trust of neighbours.

Our immediate neighbours happen to be the world's two most populous countries and the fastest growing economies. It gives Nepal ample prospects for its economic development. We have the potential to be a vibrant bridge connecting the two sides for common benefits.

As a region full of potentials, diversity and challenges, South Asia should continue to engage in promoting the collective interest with utmost sense of regional solidarity, mutual respect, and accommodation of divergent views. We want peace and stability in our region and beyond. We believe that all differences can be resolved amicably through peaceful means.

Major powers, such as the Russian Federation, development partners and other friendly countries are in the priority of our foreign policy orientation. We have significantly enhanced our partnership with this group of countries. We are committed to further widening and deepening our relationship for mutual benefit. These countries are an important source of our development financing and trade relationship. Beyond neighbourhood, they are also a source of inbound tourists and technology.

The labour receiving countries are also in our priorities, as a large number of Nepali migrant workers are living there for employment. We are trying to diversify our relations with them to cover such vital areas as trade, investment, tourism, and transfer of technology.

Regional cooperation features prominently in our foreign policy priority. We want to promote meaningful regional cooperation for the collective well-being of the people in the region. We attach importance to SAARC and BIMSTEC as principal vehicles for regional cooperation in our region. As I said earlier, we want to enhance our engagement in SCO. We are also pursuing the objective of sub-regional cooperation within the framework of BBIN-Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal. We are also member of Pan Asian cooperation framework under Asian Cooperation Dialogue.

Our commitment to the UN Charter is unflinching. We are a strong

supporter of multilateralism. As discussed earlier, the UN is an indispensable global institution for us as it is the only legitimate organization which is capable of dealing with a host of contemporary issues we face today.

Ours is an international perspective that believes in collective prosperity of mankind and rejects unilateralism. We stand for general and complete disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction. We support nuclear free zones and peace zones. We unequivocally condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

We call for a just, harmonious, inclusive, and peaceful world order where all nations enjoy their rights while fulfilling their obligations in good faith.

Economic diplomacy has been a key component of our overall diplomacy. We are building economic partnership with friendly countries focusing on trade, investment, tourism, technology transfer, climate financing and decent jobs for migrant workers. Our diplomatic missions have been tasked to promote economic diplomacy to support our national drive for rapid yet sustainable development.

Dear friends,

Now, let me touch on the last component of my presentation.

Economic transformation is our most important national task ahead. We are still an LDC. We have additional difficulties as well. We are a country that recently emerged from conflict and we are also a landlocked country. This sums up the nature of our development challenges, which are of course manifold and complex.

Development is a national responsibility, and we are fully aware of it. But our domestic resources are not sufficient to overcome our huge development challenges. And, we do not have luxury to wait for long, as we are lagging behind. We must quicken the pace.

Our immediate goal is to graduate from LDC and become middle-income country by 2030 which is also the deadline for the realization of SDGs. We have envisioned a long-term plan to achieve national prosperity by 2041. We will redouble our efforts to realize the national aspiration of

‘Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali’ within this timeframe.

Towards realizing the national aspiration, we will expediate the process of economic development. While internal resources are important, we count on international support and goodwill to enhance trade performance and seek enhanced level of foreign direct investment. With a view to attracting foreign direct investment, we hosted an Investment Summit in Kathmandu in March this year. The Summit attracted a large number of prospective investors, including from Russia.

To make the business environment more attractive, friendly and competitive, investment related laws and institutions have undergone constant reforms. For example, Foreign Investment and Technology Transfer Act (FITTA), Public Private Partnership and Investment Act, Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Act have been promulgated and One-Stop Service Center have already been operationalized. Some other reforms such as Intellectual Property Rights Act are in the pipeline.

Nepal’s friendly investment climate is evident from the World Bank’s Doing Business Report. Its latest report ranks Nepal among South Asia’s most favourable countries for ease of doing business.

Nepal has huge hydropower potentials. Exploitation of these precious resources can change the economic face of our country and the region. Investment in this sector is highly profitable as there is no problem of market. Regulatory framework exists to facilitate export of power generated in Nepal to India and Bangladesh.

Agriculture, tourism, mines and minerals, infrastructure development, IT are some of the areas where investment can be highly profitable. We have a liberal investment regime that allows investment in almost all sectors. Negative list is very short. We also offer a range of incentives that are unique and special to our context.

At this juncture, Nepal has high hope of solidarity and support from our trusted friends. Your own involvement or encouragement to the business community to explore investment opportunities in Nepal would go a long way. Nepal is fully committed to protecting your investment. Political

stability gives policy stability, which is the fundamental element to ensure predictability in foreign investment regime.

At present the level of trade and economic engagement between Nepal and the Russian Federation stands at a modest level. Rather than being discouraged by the figures, I think it should be taken as an opportunity to accelerate a higher and swifter level of trade, commercial and investment cooperation between us.

It is upon us—the Governments, the private sector, academia, and people of all walks of life—to strive for meaningful cooperation in all sectors, including trade, investments and tourism. There is a need to energize the role of Nepal-Russia Chamber of Commerce and Industries towards building business networks and kickstart doable projects in hand.

As you may be aware, Nepal is celebrating 2020 as Visit Nepal Year. An increased number of Russian friends to visit Nepal for tourism would greatly help the campaign. Nepal is a must-visit destination in one's lifetime. Famous Poet Rasul Gamzatov was right when he described Nepal as 'diamond yet to be crafted'. Investment in Nepal's tourism infrastructure, which remains one of the lucrative areas, will also greatly help boost Nepal's economy.

The Embassy of Nepal will work closely with you all, including the Non-Resident Nepali Association, Chambers, Friendship Associations, and other partners, to make the Visit Nepal Year a success. As your good friend and also as the Foreign Minister, I would like to extend to you all a very warm invitation to visit Nepal at your convenience.

As I conclude, I once again thank you all for organizing this event and also for your kind presence. Ambassador Rishi Ram Ghimire and his team deserve my special appreciation for their hard work.

I am confident that today's interaction will contribute to continuing the momentum of our exchange and mutual understanding. This platform should continue to explore new ideas, academic exchanges, and avenues towards enhancing Nepal-Russia relations in the coming years. I count on your support and solidarity.

# Nepal's Foreign Policy Orientation in the Changed Context

At the outset, let me thank the United Nations Association of Nepal for hosting this seminar and inviting me to speak on this important theme. Before I touch upon the subject matter of today's seminar, let me briefly go through the background that shaped and inspired Nepal's world view as it grew a consolidated nation State from the fragmentation this region witnessed in the 18th century.

We are proud that Nepal is one of the oldest independent States in Asia. Nepal's recorded history is a testimony to our practice of foreign policy with neighboring countries even before the unification.

Prithvi Narayan Shah eloquently articulated the unique geopolitical situation of Nepal in the metaphor of a 'yam between two boulders'. Modern Nepal's foreign policy draws on that very perception ever since.

Safeguarding of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity were inherent in the 'notion of yam'. Though Nepal chose self-imposed isolation for over a century, retained its independence in the face of expanding colonialism in the region.

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*Remarks at the Seminar on 'Nepal's Foreign Policy: Orientation and Priorities' organized by United Nations Association of Nepal in Kathmandu on 09 August 2019*

The political change of 1951 opened up the country and expanded our external outreach. Throughout the series of political upheavals and systemic transformation that followed in the past 70 years, basic tenets of our foreign policy remained consistent with necessary adjustments to its nuances and strategies.

The Constitution of Nepal guides basic framework for the conduct of Nepal's foreign policy. The Constitution also defines core elements of our national interest. Safeguarding of the freedom, sovereignty, territorial integrity, nationalism, independence and dignity of the country, border security, economic wellbeing and prosperity and the rights of the Nepali people are defined as the basic elements of Nepal's national interest. It is intrinsic that service to the national interests is the primary objective of our foreign policy goal.

“ **Nepal stands for peaceful solution of international disputes. We support national leadership and ownership of any solution to internal conflict and apolitical role of the agencies like the United Nations.**

The Constitution also guides us to pursue independent foreign policy and adhere to the principles of the UN Charter, non-alignment, Panchsheel, international law and the norms of world peace. Maintaining foreign relations based on sovereign equality and enhancing dignity of the nation is an important element of our foreign policy.

These guiding principles have enabled us to take independent posture on international issues, articulate our views on merit basis, contribute to the world peace, and nurture friendship with all countries of the world.

We want amity with all, enmity with none, and consider international relations should be based on justice, sovereign equality, mutual respect and shared benefit. We want to promote Nepal's credentials as an open, progressive, and democratic State.

We support multilateralism to promote a just and equitable international order in which all States- big or small- fulfil their international obligations

in good faith and enjoy equal opportunity to achieve their aspirations for development and prosperity. We consider that stability and predictability in the global order is essential for maintaining international peace and security.

A country transformed from armed conflict, we would be happy to share our hard-earned experience of successful nationally led and owned peace process for the benefit of the countries in conflict or those in transition.

Having achieved internal political stability, we want to focus on the achievement of economic development with the overarching goal of 'prosperous Nepal, happy Nepali'. Development imperatives at home guide our diplomatic engagements abroad. We have devised policies and national development plans accordingly. Focused pursuit of economic development agenda will remain a key priority of our economic diplomacy. Graduating from the status of LDC and attaining the middle-income status by 2030 are set as our milestones.

More recently, another dimension of Nepal's standing in global stage has been added by expanding Nepali diaspora. A number of Nepali nationals living in various countries have excelled in the field of academics, science and technology, medicine, engineering, arts, designs, architecture, culinary skills, literature, industries, sports and adventures. Many of them have written their own success stories of entrepreneurship. They have individually and collectively contributed to the promotion of Nepal's image in the world stage.

As a new initiative, the government has recently launched Brain Gain Centre at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to attract knowledge, skills and expertise of Nepali diaspora to the service of the country.

Nepal has maintained friendly and cooperative relations with both of its immediate neighbours: India and China. Maintaining close and cordial relationship with them is our consistent priority. Our relations have expanded manifold in the sphere of political, economic, cultural, trade, tourism, investment, and people-to-people exchanges. We look forward to further strengthening of these relations.

We commend our neighbours for their continued goodwill and support to our national aspirations and for their cooperation in the development efforts of Nepal. We consider the spectacular economic development of our neighbours as an opportunity and desire to benefit from that. We are conscious of the legitimate interests of our neighbours and will not allow any activity against them in our soil and expect the same from them.

Our relations with the countries in the extended neighbourhood are based on mutual respect, goodwill and understanding which we wish to sustain and consolidate. They are further nurtured by growing cultural and traditional ties. Our priority is to further explore, open up and diversify our relations especially in the areas of trade, investment, tourism and people-to-people exchanges.

Our relations with major powers and development partners have always remained cordial and cooperative. Their goodwill and support to Nepal in its development endeavour has been an enduring aspect of our friendship. We value this cooperation and remain grateful to our development partners for their continued support. Nepal expects an enhanced level of cooperation from our partners for economic development through the Government channel in alignment with our national priorities. We continue to work towards enriching the substance of cooperation in our bilateral engagements with these countries.

Labour migration is an important issue for Nepal. A large number of our citizens are engaged in foreign employment and the remittances they send home make a sizable share of our economy. Therefore, it becomes Government's priority to work closely with the countries of destination for safety, security and wellbeing of our migrant workers.

In recent years our engagements with the labour destination countries have been more intensive and enriched by exchange of high-level visits, and are progressively growing in the fields of trade and investment. We look forward to expanding and diversify the scope of cooperation with these countries so as to encompass the broader areas of economic partnership involving trade, investment, tourism and civil aviation, among others.

Nepal is an ardent supporter of the rule-based and just multilateral system

with the United Nations (UN) at its centre. We have abiding faith in the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and we continue to adhere to them in letter and spirit.

As an active member of the UN, Nepal has contributed significantly for over six decades to the maintenance of international peace and security and protection of human rights. Nepal currently stands as the 5th largest troops and police contributing country in the UN peace operations.

Nepal attaches high importance to the protection and promotion of human rights. Human rights hold the center stage in our Constitution. We are a State party to twenty-four international human rights-related instruments, including seven out of nine core Conventions. Nepal considers all human rights as universal, indivisible, inter-dependent, inter-related and mutually reinforcing.

Currently Nepal is a member of UN Human Rights Council, and also serves as the coordinator of Asia Pacific group in the Council. We are a member of UN Peace Building Commission, Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Commission on Science and Technology for Development, Executive Board of UN-WOMEN, and Deputy Member of the ILO Governing Body. We are also the coordinator of Colombo Process of Labour Sending Countries and Chair of the Enhanced Integrated Framework Board of WTO. A Nepali expert is serving as a Vice Chair in the CEDAW Committee.

Nepal supports the UN reform initiatives with equal emphasis on all three pillars- peace and security, development, and human rights- and to make the global body more efficient, effective and responsive to the need of our time.

Nepal stands for peaceful solution of international disputes. We support national leadership and ownership of any solution to internal conflict and apolitical role of the agencies like the United Nations.

Nepal continues to support total and complete disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction. We condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and believe that terrorist acts cannot be justified on any ground whoever may be the perpetrator.

We accord high priority to the issue of climate change, which is one of the biggest challenges of our time. We contribute negligibly to the global greenhouse gas emission. However, as a mountainous country with fragile ecosystem, we are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change. We, therefore, support effective implementation of the Paris Agreement and call for enhanced level of climate finance and technology transfer for the adaptation and mitigation.

Nepal continues to champion the cause of LDCs, LLDCs, South-South and triangular cooperation in the UN and other international forums. Solidarity and cooperation with LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS continue to characterize our deliberations.

Promoting regional economic cooperation remains our priority. A year ago, Nepal successfully hosted fourth BIMSTEC summit in Kathmandu. As the Chair of SAARC, we have been consistently making efforts to revive the stalled SAARC process. Nepal plays its due role in Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) as its member and in Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as a dialogue partner.

Before I conclude, let me state that our efforts have been to ensure that Nepal's foreign policy serves its purpose to safeguard the vital areas of our national interest in the context of changing global and regional dynamics. We are also fully aware that fundamentals of our foreign policy remain consistent with the constitutional provisions and that our practice remains coherent and credible. Recently, we hosted a National Dialogue on Foreign Policy with an objective of forging minimum common understanding on the critical foreign policy areas. We will continue such exercise in the future as well.

With a view to promoting deliberations on contemporary issues of global importance, we are preparing to host Sagarmatha Dialogue in Nepal early next year. We hope Sagarmatha Dialogue to be Nepal's unique contribution to the policy deliberations in broadening the understanding of the major issues shaping the global and regional order in our time.

# Nepal's Diplomatic Engagements and Development Imperatives

At the outset, let me thank Nepal Council of World Affairs for inviting me to this important event organized to mark its 71st Anniversary.

I wish to congratulate the Council and its office bearers on the occasion of this important milestone and extend my best wishes for the continued progress of the Council.

Since its inception, the Council was active to host luminaries in foreign policy and diplomacy from within the country and abroad. The Council probably is the oldest think-tank in Nepal to deliberate on foreign policy and issues of global concerns. There was a time when everyone would look upon the Council to host talks of distinguished foreign dignitaries or deliberate on the pertinent issues of foreign relations that bear importance to Nepal.

While it is a matter of satisfaction to see the Council completing 71 long years, it is also befitting to expect the Council thriving both in terms of quality of deliberations and inclusiveness in its membership. The Council should be able to attract interests among the young and dynamic genera-

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*Remarks at the 71st Anniversary Programme of Nepal Council of World Affairs in Kathmandu, 18 February 2019*

tion to further grow and contribute to fulfill its founding objectives.

I am confident that the Council will be able to carry on this tradition of quality deliberations, revive the vibrancy of its membership, and generate a community of foreign policy experts.

This would be a fitting service to the objectives of this Council.

Nepali people are proud of their independent history and sovereignty. The Constitution of Nepal has clearly defined the areas of national interest and provided broad policy framework for the conduct of independent foreign policy. Principles of Panchasheel, non-alignment, UN Charter, international law and norms of world peace have remained guiding principles for our foreign relations. Sovereign equality, mutuality of interest, justice

“ **We will strive to promote our vital economic interests through activities aimed at attracting more foreign investment in our national priority sectors, expanding our export trade and promoting tourism, among others.** ”

and mutual respect provide the basis for the conduct of our international relations. Informed by these universally accepted norms of inter-State relations, we have steadily expanded our diplomatic outreach to 161 countries of the world, which constitute over 80 percent of UN membership.

Our foreign policy aims at safeguarding sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and protection of national interest. Within this framework, promoting Nepal’s credentials as an open and progressive democratic State at the international level; and pursuit of effective economic diplomacy to the service of overarching objective of “Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali” remain twin goals of our external engagements.

Amity with all and enmity with none is the motto in managing our international relations. We value equality, justice, respect, and mutual benefit in the conduct of foreign relations.

Building on the hard-earned political stability, Nepal at present strives to

achieve economic development and prosperity. The present Government is committed to bringing economic transformation of the country and improving quality of people's lives. We have mobilized our diplomatic apparatus to pursue these objectives by promoting foreign direct investment, tourism, technology transfer, and export trade.

We are equally striving for consolidating inclusive democracy and ensuring good governance. Our unflinching commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms will be stronger with political and economic empowerment of the people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We enjoy cordial and friendly relations with our neighbors. We have further strengthened trust, goodwill and expanded the scope of cooperation and economic partnership with our two immediate neighbors. In addition to the regular exchanges of high-level visits, increasing people to people contacts have further strengthened and deepened our relations.

Nepal and India enjoy civilizational, geographical, socio-economic, and cultural relations. The visits of the Right Honorable Prime Minister to India and the visits of His Excellency the Prime Minister of India to Nepal twice last year have contributed to further enhance mutual trust and consolidate bilateral relations. Our two countries are committed to taking forward cooperation and partnership on the basis of equality, mutual trust, respect and mutual benefit.

We have agreed to advance cooperation in the core areas of agriculture, railway linkages and inland waterways. While focusing on effective implementation of all the past agreements and understandings, we have intensified engagements for addressing the outstanding matters by September 2018. The bilateral oversight mechanism established in September 2016 has proved to be a useful means to accelerate the progress in the implementation of development projects and address the issues that come up during the process. The Eminent Persons Group has concluded its mandated task and we are anticipating submission of the report soon.

Nepal and China are age old friends. Our relations are based on the prin-

ciple of peaceful co-existence and have always remained friendly and cordial. Appreciation of each other's aspirations as well as respect for each other's concerns and sensitivities has injected an important element of trust in our relationship. Nepal remains fully committed to one China policy. We admire China's neighborhood diplomacy guided by the principles of sincerity, amity, mutual benefit, and inclusiveness.

The visits of Right Honorable Vice President and Right Honorable Prime Minister to China last year have further consolidated the bilateral relations. We have agreed to intensify implementation of MoU on cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative to enhance connectivity. The cooperation covers building of dry ports, roads, railways, aviation and communications network within the framework of Trans-Himalaya Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network. We believe that this will open a new era of cross-border cooperation and foster trade, commerce and investment.

Equally important are relations with the friendly countries in our extended neighborhood, the labour receiving countries and the other countries in the comity of nations. We attach high importance to our relations with the major powers and permanent members of the UN Security Council, the European Union and its member States, and our traditional development partners.

Considering the importance of establishing formal relations with UN member states, we have steadily expanded our diplomatic outreach to 163 countries.

We believe in regionalism as a vehicle for trade and economic growth. Last year, we successfully hosted fourth BIMSTEC summit in Kathmandu. We are the Chair of SAARC and have consistently worked to revive the stalled SAARC process. Last year in September we hosted informal meeting of SAARC Council of Ministers in New York on the sidelines of the UNGA. We are a member of Asian Cooperation Dialogue and a dialogue partner of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Our relations with our development partners have been an important part of our foreign relations.

We attach high importance to our relations with the permanent members of the UN Security Council, the European Union and its member States,

and our traditional donor and development partners. This relationship has remained cordial and cooperative both on bilateral fronts as well as in multilateral arena. Some of these partners have been the longest companions of our journey to economic development and modernization. We are grateful for their steadfast support and cooperation over the years, and we expect enhanced level of economic partnership to drive our mission of economic development and prosperity.

We believe that there is a tremendous potential for expanding partnership in the areas of trade, investment and technology transfer. We have a common understanding with our development partners to multiply the existing success stories of development cooperation through the alignment of development assistance with our national priorities and to build synergetic effects in development. It has been our common goal to ensure that development assistance provides desired results.

We believe in constructive multilateralism to serve our collective interests. Nepal remains actively engaged in the multilateral forums. Our faith in the principles and purposes of the UN Charter is unwavering. We consider United Nations as the centre of multilateralism to deliberate on global issues of common concerns. We do not see multilateralism and national interests contradicting each other, and are committed to a rules-based multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core.

We understand the multilateral rules and architecture are not perfect and they must be made fit-for-purpose to deliver on the global agenda including the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Therefore, we stand for timely and comprehensive reform of the United Nations for global peace, accountability, and effective service delivery in view of the burgeoning global problems and dwindling resources. We hold that the reform of the Security Council should reflect the emerging realities and embrace democratic principles and fair representation.

Nepal's exemplary participation in the UN mandated peace operations have been widely acknowledged. Currently, Nepal stands as the 5th largest troops and police contributing country to the UN peace operations. Considering Nepal's contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security, Nepal has been elected as the member of the Organizational

Committee of the Peace Building Commission for the term of 2019-2020. Nepali peacekeepers have proven their competence as highly professional and dedicated savior of peace and humanitarian protection.

We continue to maintain principled and independent position on major issues of global concern. We support general and complete disarmament, especially of all weapons of mass destruction. We condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We support peaceful settlement of all international disputes and consider diplomacy and dialogue as the most legitimate means of reducing differences and resolving conflicts.

Our commitment to democracy, pluralism and the universal values of human rights and fundamental freedoms is unwavering. Those were the ideals for which we fought for seven decades. We hold them dear and do not 'take them for granted'. This commitment is translated in our role in the Human Rights Council, where we remain a member for the term 2018-20 and have also announced our bid for re-election to the Council.

Nepal's role at the Council reflects our position for apolitical and objective examination of human rights issues on non-selective, even-handed and merit basis. We stand for a system that is transparent, accountable and embraces universally accepted democratic values.

Nepal is a party to 24 human rights related international instruments, and 7 out of 9 core human rights instruments. We continue to faithfully engage with the relevant human rights mechanisms such as the UPR process and the Special Procedures mechanism and treaty bodies. Given the level of economic development and capacity of the country, our undertaking of international human rights obligations remains among the top. We consider that by attaining economic development and providing means for implementation of human rights obligations can substantially enable the enjoyment of human rights by all.

We continue to faithfully engage with the relevant UN human rights mechanisms such as the UPR process, the Special Procedures mechanism and treaty bodies. Our commitment to human rights and fundamental freedom is total and we are committed to fulfilling our human rights obligations in good faith.

Though we are not a party to the Refugee Convention and its Protocol, we have hosted Bhutanese refugees on humanitarian grounds. They have the right to return to their home country in safety and honor and this must be respected.

Nepal firmly stands for the implementation of the Paris Accord on Climate Change. Right Honorable President's participation in the COP 24 reflects the high importance attached by Nepal to this critical issue of our time. Climate vulnerabilities of the countries like ours is real and we call for international community's substantial support in terms of climate finance and technology for adaptation and mitigation.

Nepal remains steadfast in its call for the effective implementation of all relevant international agreements to address the specific development needs of LDCs and LLDCs. We call for progress in the stalled process of Doha Round of trade negotiations and implementation of earlier decision on special and differentiated treatment to the LDCs and LLDCs in particular.

Safety, security and well-being of our migrant workers remain as matters of vital interest for us. We have been closely working with the countries of origin and destination through bilateral and multilateral processes. Currently Nepal is the Chair of the Colombo Process, a regional process of labour sending Asian countries. We hosted the Fifth Senior Officials' Meeting and Sixth Ministerial Consultation of the Colombo Process in November last year.

Nepal constructively contributed to the negotiation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and was represented at Ministerial level in the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Compact in Marrakesh in December last year. Nepal's emphasis on decent work, ethical recruitment, welfare of migrants including female workers, consular support and cooperation found good space in the Compact.

To conclude, ladies and gentlemen, let me emphasize that the mainstay of today's diplomacy is the pursuit of economic agenda. We will strive to promote our vital economic interests through activities aimed at attracting more foreign investment in our national priority sectors, expanding our

export trade and promoting tourism, among others. We will strive to widen the avenues of cooperation with our neighbors in conformity with our national interest and priorities.

Consistent with domestic and external realities, we continue to follow the unfolding opportunities and try to benefit from them by readjusting our strategies as appropriate. The enormous international goodwill towards Nepal and Nepali people, ever expanding Nepali diaspora, our culture, civilizational heritage makes our soft power. We will continue to harness existing soft power and build on its strength for the long-term benefit of the country and the people.

## Nepal in the World Stage

At the outset, let me thank the Kantipur Media Group for inviting me to this Conclave and for the opportunity to share my thoughts.

I will confine myself on the given theme- Nepal in the World Stage- and dwell upon foreign policy and diplomacy, especially on how we are promoting national interests in bilateral, regional, and multilateral spheres.

For that, let me begin by a quote from the address to the nation by the Right Honorable Prime Minister Mr. K P Sharma Oli a few days ago on the completion of one year in office by the present Government:

Nepal has improved its foreign relations in the spirit of ‘amity with all, enmity with none’. Nepal has demonstrated balanced foreign policy while maintaining visible presence in global affairs. It is a matter of satisfaction [that] Nepal’s voice is being heard in regional and international forums. Attraction, appreciation and confidence of the global community towards Nepal has grown.

This statement by the Prime Minister succinctly captures the present state of Nepal in the world stage.

Now, let me briefly outline how this has been so and how we intend to

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*Remarks at the Kantipur Conclave in Kathmandu on 18 February 2019*

further consolidate our foreign relations to the service of Nepal's core national interests.

The Constitution of Nepal provides guiding framework for the conduct of our foreign policy and international relations. Our foreign policy aims at safeguarding sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence, and protection of national interest. Within this framework, promoting Nepal's credentials as an open and progressive democratic State at the international level; and pursuit of effective economic diplomacy to the service of overarching objective of "prosperous Nepal and happy Nepali" remain twin goals of our external engagements.

As you all know, Nepal began to open up to the outer world only after 1950. Our place in the global stage therefore represents the achievements of our foreign relations thereafter.

The journey so far has been characterized by the expansion of bilateral relations, expansion of trade, commerce and economic relations, acquiring membership of most of the multilateral organizations, including the United Nations, championing of regionalism, adherence to the principles of UN Charter, non-alignment and strong commitment to international law and norms of world peace.

This has enabled us to take independent posture on international issues, articulate our views on merit basis, contribute to the world peace, and nurture friendship with all countries of the world on the basis of sovereign equality.

Having said that, let me touch upon where we stand today.

We have maintained harmonious and friendly relationship with both of our immediate neighbours.

The Right Honourable Prime Minister's official visit to India and the official visit of Indian Prime Minister to Nepal twice last year have elevated the relations to newer heights. Pending issues are being addressed in a spirit of mutual cooperation and friendship. Implementation of development projects under India's cooperation has gained momentum. We have

agreed to increase cooperation in agriculture, railways and cross-border waterways and they have already been taken up with priority. The scope of development cooperation has been expanded manifold.

During the Prime Minister's visit to China, 14 various MoUs and Agreements were signed on cooperation in projects related to railways, road and energy sector. We have agreed to intensify implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative to enhance connectivity, encompassing vital components such as ports, roads, railways, aviation and communications within the overarching framework of trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity

“ **Our relations with the countries in extended neighborhood are nurtured by growing cultural and traditional ties. We have intensified exchange of high-level visits and are striving to diversify our engagements in the areas of trade, investment, tourism and people-to-people exchanges.**

Network. With the agreement on the text of the Transport Transit Protocol, door has been opened for Nepal to use roads and ports of China for access to and from the sea.

Exchange of visits with our immediate neighbours in my capacity as Foreign Minister and existence of strong relationship and contacts between the governments and people at different layers have further consolidated our age-old ties with them.

As much as our relation with our immediate neighbors is important politically, we consider them as combination of opportunities to benefit from their unprecedented economic transformation, and source of trade, tourism and investment.

Our relations with the countries in extended neighborhood are nurtured by growing cultural and traditional ties. We have intensified exchange of high-level visits and are striving to diversify our engagements in the

areas of trade, investment, tourism and people-to-people exchanges. The Presidents of Sri Lanka and Myanmar, the Prime Ministers of Bangladesh, Pakistan, Cambodia and Thailand, and State Councilor of Myanmar visited Nepal last year alone.

Our relations with the labour receiving countries have enhanced by the presence of significant number of Nepali migrant workers, exchange of high-level visits, and steadily growing trade and investment. The Right Honourable President paid official visit to Qatar last year and UAE the previous year.

Nepali migrant workers in the Gulf and South East Asian countries have been a major source of remittances that account a sizeable source of national income. They have also significantly contributed to the economic development of the destination countries and serve as a bridging bond of exchange and friendship.

Our relationship with major powers and development partners have remained cordial and friendly. Exchange of bilateral visits with these countries continue to grow. The Prime Minister had bilateral meetings with the President of Switzerland, Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom and Canada on the sidelines of the 73rd session of the UNGA. Prime Minister Right Honourable Mr. K P Sharma Oli visited Costa Rica and held bilateral meeting with the President there.

In my capacity as Foreign Minister, I visited Belgium, Luxembourg, Austria and Portugal, and renewed our partnership with the European Union. I also visited Japan and my Japanese counterpart paid return visit to Nepal immediately after that. My visit to the United States of America and meeting with my counterpart provided opportunity for high level political contacts between the two countries after many years.

In all of these visits we have been able to renew, nurture and consolidate bilateral relations, understand each other's concerns and interests, and expand mutually beneficial agenda of economic cooperation.

Foreign Secretary's visit to France to participate in the Paris Peace Forum in

November and French Secretary-General's return visit to Nepal last month represented the high-level contact between the two foreign ministries in many years.

Last year alone, we held bilateral political consultations and meetings with China, United States of America, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Republic of Korea, Myanmar, Australia, Canada, France, Mongolia and Poland.

On the multilateral front, Nepal has been an active member of the United Nations since 1955. Nepal's contribution to the maintenance of world peace through participation in the UN peace operations for over 60 years has been widely acclaimed. Currently, Nepal stands as the 5th largest troop and police contributing country. Nepal has served in the UN Security Council twice.

At present, Nepal is a member of UN Human Rights Council, coordinator for Asia Pacific region in the Human Rights Council, member of UN Peace Building Commission, Deputy Member of the ILO Governing Body, Chair of Committee on Conference, member of UNICEF Executive Board, member of Executive Board of UN-WOMEN, member of Commission on Science and Technology for Development, coordinator of Colombo Process Countries, focal point for trade facilitation in the Group of Least Developed Countries in WTO, vice-chair of UN Disarmament Commission, and a Nepali expert is serving as a member of CEDAW Committee.

We are a state party to twenty-four human rights related international instruments, including seven out of nine core Conventions. Nepal considers all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent, interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Nepal has maintained consistent and dignified position on the issues of world peace and disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction. Nepal's commitment to human rights, sustainable development, multilateralism, and rule-based international order is widely acknowledged.

Nepal continues to champion the cause of LDCs, LLDCs, South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the UN and other international forums. Nepal was the coordinator during the 4th UN Conference on LDCs held in Istanbul. We continue to champion the rights of LLDCs and are a founding

member of the International Think Tank for LLDCs.

The Right Honourable President's representation to the 24th Conference of State Parties of UNFCCC reflects Nepal's commitment to address climate change and priority accorded by the Government to this critical issue of our time.

Prime Minister Right Honourable Mr. K P Sharma Oli addressed the 73rd United Nations General Assembly in September last year and articulated Nepal's views on disarmament, world peace, international security, human rights and sustainable development, among others.

Nepal became a party to the International Agreement establishing the UN University for Peace in San Jose last year. Prime Minister Right Honourable Mr. K P Sharma Oli addressed the University during his visit to Costa Rica and the University conferred honorary doctorate on him.

Invitation to Nepal's Prime Minister to participate in the Annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland for the first time since its establishment 50 years ago represents a recognition of the increasing profile of Nepal. Prime Minister's address to the important panels of WEF and exchange of views with the world leaders in Davos greatly enhanced Nepal's international standing.

On regional front, Nepal chaired and successfully hosted fourth BIMSTEC summit in Kathmandu last year. We are the Chair of SAARC and have consistently worked to revive the stalled SAARC process. Last year in September we hosted informal meeting of SAARC Council of Ministers in New York. We are a member of Asian Cooperation Dialogue and a dialogue partner of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Having established diplomatic relations with 163 countries, our diplomatic outreach is widening. Currently we maintain 30 Embassies, 3 Permanent Missions, 6 Consulates General and 71 Honorary Consuls to serve our national interest across the globe.

Nepal gathered considerable international attention during the conflict period and the political transition that followed. We are considered as one

of the rare success stories of the peace process. We have now emerged as a confident democratic nation fully capable of taking forward economic development and prosperity agenda for the benefit of our people.

Poverty remains a scar in Nepal's collective conscience and we intend to erase it at the earliest and utilize our demographic dividend for our own development. Nepal aims to graduate from the LDC status at an early date and become a middle-income country by 2030. For that, we remain fully committed to implementing SDGs to meet the targets ahead of the stipulated timeframe.

More recently, another dimension of Nepal's standing on the global stage has been added by expanding Nepali diaspora. A number of Nepali nationals have risen to senior positions in the UN and other international organizations. A number of Nepali nationals living in various countries have excelled in the field of academics, science and technology, medicine, engineering, arts, designs, architecture, culinary skills, literature, industries, sports and adventures. Many of them have been successful entrepreneurs in different corners of the world and have attained significant progress in their respective fields. They have individually and collectively contributed to the signing of Nepal's image in the world stage.

Nepal is also known for its natural beauty, adventure sports, ancient arts, architecture, culture, and for the hospitality and warmth of its people. There exists enormous goodwill towards Nepal and Nepali people.

Together, they make important soft power for Nepal.

In sum, Nepal's standing in the world stage presents an encouraging trajectory. Nepal aspires to attain a decent level of economic development and further enhance its international standing as a progressive, democratic, and equitable society. In its international relations Nepal will continue to stand for justice, equality, and mutual benefit among the countries.

I thank you all for your attention.

## Global Challenges; Global Solidarity

I am delighted to be back to this forum once again.

I thank you Mr. President and Members of the Council for organizing this event and for having me here.

It is always a pleasure to be amongst a cross-section of personalities who have made contributions to Nepal's foreign policy and international relations from their respective capacities.

I would like to acknowledge the role played by Nepal Council of World Affairs in promoting healthy discourse on matters related to Nepal's foreign policy as well as on topics of national, regional and international significance. Such discourses have helped to enrich the quality of policy dialogues.

As I am given a relative liberty from the organizers, today, I am going to share my thoughts on Nepal's foreign policy priorities. Before that, I will offer some highlights of the progress made since the formation of the present Government three years ago.

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*Address at the 73rd anniversary of Nepal Council of World Affairs (NCWA), Kathmandu, 1 March 2021*

Excellencies,

As you all are aware, the unprecedented outbreak of COVID-19 has inflicted impacts on all aspects of national life and significantly changed the mode of our engagements with the international community. Virtual meetings and interactions have replaced physical conversations and dialogues. We were on the right track to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The pandemic has slowed down the pace of progress. It has put huge stress on our health infrastructure, crippled the tourism sector and affected inflow of remittances. In the backdrop of economic vulnerabilities, we are resolutely focused on warding off its negative impact in realizing the national aspiration of 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepal'.

“ **The pandemic has taught us the importance of global solidarity in events of such large-scale emergencies. We are committed to advocate for and support to the bilateral, regional and international initiatives that promote such solidarity and cooperation among the nation states and aim to strengthen multilateral institutions created to address such global challenges.**

The foremost priority of the Governments has been the protection of people's lives and livelihoods. With the generous support of our neighbor India, we have rolled out the vaccination drive to the priority population. This has been complemented by generous support of additional amount of vaccine from our neighbor China. We are grateful to our neighbors as well as friends around the world for their continued support during the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has taught us the importance of global solidarity in events of such large-scale emergencies. We are committed to advocate for and support to the bilateral, regional and international initiatives that promote such solidarity and cooperation among the nation states and aim to strengthen multilateral institutions created to address such global challenges.

Dear Friends,

As the present Government has just completed three years in office, I feel it pertinent to share where we stand on some of the critical indicators that matter to the lives of our people.

Peace and security situation has improved. We have been able to bring almost all disgruntled political groups to the political mainstream through dialogue. Backchannel talks are underway with the CPN led by Biplab.

Nepal fared generally well even during the pandemic. Anti-COVID vaccines are being provided to all citizens free-of-cost. Over nine hundred thousand people have been lifted out of absolute poverty. The per capita income has increased to US dollar 1,097—a 35 percent rise in Rupees terms. The 2020 Human Development Report has recorded improvements in education, health, drinking water and sanitation.

An additional 2,718 kilometers road has been blacktopped and additional 333 megawatts of electricity has been added to national grid. The population having access to electricity and drinking water has reached to 90 percent.

Post-earthquake reconstruction is in concluding phase, including the restitution of some rich and treasured historical monuments. Seven hundred thousand private homes have been built.

Literacy rate has reached an encouraging 85 percent. With basic education made free for all, universal enrollment and gender parity at school level have been achieved.

The economy of the country showed improvement and resilience even during the pandemic. The Economist, a renowned British weekly, listed Nepal among top 10 emerging economies. The World Bank's Doing Business Indicators-2020 has correctly acknowledged the improvements in investment-friendly atmosphere. Nepal has made improvement in 14 governance indicators. We are among the countries to have made good progress in human development, ease of doing business, hunger, peace, rule of law, corruption control and transparency, happiness, and gender parity indices.

For the first time, Nepal has graduated from the World Bank's low-income category to lower-middle income category. The UN Committee on Development Policy has recently recommended for Nepal's graduation from an LDC status. This makes an important watershed in the development trajectory of the country.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I hope you are aware about the developments in the political front. The Supreme Court has given its verdict. Accordingly, the Right Honourable President has called for the session of the Parliament to be convened from 23rd of Falgun. The Government remains firmly committed to the democratic process and we have full confidence in our constitutional system.

As regard to the conduct of our foreign relations, the Constitution of Nepal defines the fundamentals of Nepal's foreign policy. Besides defining the core parameters of national interests, the Constitution also guides us to pursue independent foreign policy by adhering to the principles enshrined in the UN Charter, non-alignment, panchasheel, international law and the norms of world peace. Last year, the Government adopted a consolidated foreign policy document that outlines broad foreign policy principles and priorities and emphasizes on the strengthening of institutions to implement them. Cognizant of the evolving global situation, Nepal has been conducting foreign policy to the service of our core national interests and achieve economic development and prosperity. 'Amity with all, enmity with none' has been the motto of our foreign relations.

Firmly pedestaled on the cardinal principles of national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, freedom and national unity, our foreign policy aims to preserve and promote national interest and conduct foreign relations on the basis of equality, justice, mutual respect and benefits.

At the bilateral level, Nepal remains committed to maintaining friendly relations with her neighbours and all other countries in the world. Over the years, both the substance and our engagements with the immediate neighbors—India and China—have increased manifold. We maintain close and cordial relationship with them based on goodwill, trust, mutual

respect and cooperation. Nepal fulfills its commitment not to allow any activity in her territory against the neighbors and expects similar spirit of cooperation from our neighbors on the matters of our concern.

High-level engagements with India have contributed to further enriching the already intense relationship characterized by robust people-to-people contacts, cultural linkages and extensive economic partnership. We have achieved good progress in some of the landmark connectivity projects, such as, the Motihari-Amlekhgunj Petroleum Pipeline, the first cross border pipeline in the region, and operationalization of Integrated Check Post in Birjung and Biratnagar, and completion of Jaynagar-Kurtha section of railway.

Recently, in January this year, we held a bilateral meeting of Nepal-India Joint Commission at the level of Foreign Ministers. We reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations from border management to cooperation in the areas of trade, transit, culture, education, and health, among others. As regard to the unfinished tasks of the boundary, both sides are committed to resolve them through dialogues.

Similarly, Nepal and China enjoy close and cordial relationship, which is based on the five principles of peaceful co-existence. Appreciation of each other's aspirations as well as respect for each other's concerns and sensitivities has been the hallmark of our relationship. Nepal is fully committed to one China policy. Nepal-China relations have witnessed substantive growth with the exchange of high-level visits and an enhanced level of economic partnership. The President of China visited Nepal in 2019 after an interval of 23 years. Connectivity, trade, investment as well as several other areas of development have been our priorities for collaboration. With the entry into force of the Transit Transport Protocol, we have also agreed to implement the trans-Himalaya multi-dimensional connectivity network that will open up new vistas in cross-border transit transport.

Beyond our neighborhood, Nepal maintains close and cooperative relationship with the development partners as well as the destination countries of Nepali migrant workers.

Nepal's relations with the development partners and major powers have

always remained cordial and cooperative. For the first time in about 20 years, Prime Minister Rt. Hon. K P Sharma Oli paid official visits to the United Kingdom and France. In my capacity as the Foreign Minister, I paid official visits to the United States after 17 years and the Russian Federation after 14 years.

Our development partners have been major sources of finance and technology in critical areas of Nepal's development endeavor for decades. We are grateful to our development partners for this generous cooperation and continued goodwill. Nepal received moral support from our development partners during the peace process. In the aftermath of the devastating earthquakes of 2015, there was an overwhelming support in rescue, relief and reconstruction. Support measures from our development partners in the forms of technical, financial, trade and investment will be important as we prepare for graduation from LDC status. Support for the timely realization of sustainable development goals will contribute to post-COVID recovery efforts as well. We continue to work towards enriching the substance of cooperation in our bilateral engagements with these countries.

We also attach high importance to our relations with the countries of destination of Nepali migrant workers. We have engaged extensively with these important partners for the safety, security and wellbeing of our migrant workers. The Right Honourable Prime Minister and myself held several telephone calls with high level leaders from the labour destination countries with a view to addressing the specific concerns and vulnerabilities of Nepali migrant workers in the context of COVID-19. Nepal's emphasis continues to be on the issues related to decent work, ethical recruitment, welfare of migrants including female workers, consular support and cooperation, financial literacy, and labor market assessment. We are keen to expand broader economic partnership with these countries beyond labour migration and intend to promote trade, tourism, investment and people to people contacts.

In the regional context, we aim to promote economic cooperation, peace and development. Nepal's commitment to regional cooperation is evident from our active engagements with SAARC and BIMSTEC processes. As the

current chair of SAARC, we have engaged with all the member States in a constructive and cooperative spirit. It has been our consistent view that the SAARC process needs revitalization for effective delivery on its stated objectives, including the promotion of mutual trust and confidence among its members.

As mandated by the 4th Summit held in Kathmandu, BIMSTEC is in the process of institution building and further consolidating modalities of cooperation.

Nepal is also keenly participating in the activities of other regional organizations, including the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) as a member and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as a dialogue partner.

Excellencies,

Nepal's multilateral engagements are longstanding and productive. We take the universal values and principles enshrined in the UN Charter 75 years ago as the cardinal principles for international relations. We consider that the United Nations should be at the center of multilateralism and global efforts towards achieving peace, security and development.

The relevance of multilateralism has become more pronounced as we confront with global scale challenges ranging from pandemic to transnational organized crimes to terrorism. Nepal commits to collaborate for strengthening of a just, fair and rules-based world order.

Three years after joining the United Nations, Nepal began its contributions to the cause of international peace and security. Currently the fourth largest troop and police contributing country, Nepal's contribution to the UN peace operations has earned worldwide respect.

As an LDC, we are also working at global platforms on a number of agendas that bear importance to us, such as enhancing effectiveness of development cooperation and securing transit rights of landlocked countries.

Climate change and biodiversity are critical issues for Nepal. Nepal firmly supports the effective implementation of the Paris Agreement. As we prepare for the COP26, we intend to contribute to the larger policy

discourse on climate change by dedicating the first episode of ‘Sagarmatha Sambaad’ on ‘Climate Change, Mountains and the Future of the Humanity’. Nepal recently updated the NDCs on climate change. We are developing a long-term strategy for a net zero-carbon scenario by 2050. A higher level of climate financing is needed for achieving these targets. We believe, COP26 provides an opportunity to generate much-needed political will to save the planet for humanity.

Our commitment to human rights and rule of law has been unwavering. In fulfilling its obligations under the instruments to which we are a state party, Nepal very much stays in the course. Earlier this year, we successfully concluded the third cycle of UPR. We are encouraged by the interests and appreciation shown by the UN member states.

Over the years, Nepal has started enhancing its visibility in the international arena. For the first time, Nepal has been invited to the World Economic Forum and the Oxford Union. Nepal has been re-elected as the member of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) and also at the CEDAW Committee. Currently, Nepal Chairs the 2nd Committee of the 75th UNGA and Board of the Enhanced Integrated Framework under the WTO. Having entrusted to various other intergovernmental bodies and processes, we have been working alongside the international community on global agendas.

Dear Friends,

Nepal’s diplomatic outreach has expanded significantly with the establishment of diplomatic relations with a total of 168 countries.

On economic diplomacy, promoting Nepal’s export trade, foreign investments, technology transfer, tourism industry and safeguarding the interests and wellbeing of our migrant workers are our main priorities. We intend to promote Nepal’s soft power by utilizing the country’s natural beauty and cultural heritages, among others.

The role of Nepali diaspora in national development and building cultural connections has been well recognized. We are committed to protecting interests of Nepali nationals abroad and to utilizing knowledge, expertise

and capital of the NRNs. Brain Gain Centre, created in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2018 with the objective of utilizing knowledge and expertise of diaspora in national development, has now over a thousand entries. We are in the process of further consolidating the BGC as a bridge between the Nepali diaspora and Nepal's national development endeavors.

Before I conclude, let me once again thank the NCWA for hosting this important event and bringing together a galaxy of foreign policy practitioners, experts and diplomats. The goal of a country's foreign policy is to serve its vital national interests and support realization of national aspiration. Nepal's foreign policy has served that goal very well.

I thank you for your attention.

## **| 02 | Deepening Neighbourhood Relations**

## Nepal-India Relations: Development and Dynamics

It is a great privilege and honour for me to speak on the theme of ‘Nepal-India Relations: Development and Dynamics’. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Chairman of Pushpa Lal Memorial Foundation for organizing this talk programme and for providing me with this opportunity to share my views.

Let me begin with the historical relationship between Nepal and India. We know the relationship between our two countries is time immemorial. History tells us that even before the modern nations of Nepal and India came into existence, small kingdoms and princely states existing in the present territories of Nepal and India had developed flourishing relationship, both at the level of the government and the peoples. The bilateral relationship continued to grow in the subsequent times, reaching the present stage. This active relationship in continuity speaks volumes of engagements, friendship and cooperation between our two countries.

The closeness of the relationship between Nepal and India is based on the robust foundation of geographical proximity, civilizational and cultural bonds, friendship between the two peoples, and similar perceptions on

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*Statement on “Nepal-India Relations: Development and Dynamics” at a Talk Programme organized by Pushpa Lal Memorial Foundation, 18 July 2019, Hotel Summit, Lalitpur*

many global and regional issues. Nepal and India are two independent and sovereign countries; they are immediate neighbours, sharing a long stretch of boundary; and they exist side by side and interact much more densely in every sphere of life. When we realize this fact, we come further close. And, it also automatically demands from us more efforts to take the relationship to a new height.

Distinguished Participants,

It is with this spirit that the two countries have maintained friendly and cooperative relationship at the highest political level. High level visits at increased frequency have helped not only strengthen friendship but also fructify the relationship in areas of mutual interest. The growth of the relationship has produced tangible outcomes in many sectors, such

“ **We need to continue strengthening cooperation for controlling the cross-border criminal and unwanted activities, which harm both countries. Similarly, we must prevent unscrupulous elements from using the soil of one country against another.**

as trade, transit, investment, tourism, culture, education, development cooperation and so on. Besides, continuous dialogues, exchange of ideas, and agreements, including through dozens of bilateral mechanisms, have substantially contributed to add dynamism to the relationship.

It is a matter of satisfaction that Nepal-India relations have been growing in multi-dimensional ways, creating myriads of opportunities. However, this does not mean that the relations are bereft of problems and issues. They are there; and it is not unnatural for any friendly neighbouring countries with wide gamut of relations and dense interaction. What we need to do is to continue removing obstacles, resolving issues and moving towards extracting the benefits from enhanced bilateral cooperation.

Another important aspect in our relationship is that we have to understand the sensitivities of each other. If there is trust that sensitivities are well taken care of, the relationship will grow smoothly. We need to continue

strengthening cooperation for controlling the cross-border criminal and unwanted activities, which harm both countries. Similarly, we must prevent unscrupulous elements from using the soil of one country against another. Furthermore, a practical solution is also to be worked out for reducing Nepal's huge trade deficit with India, as the huge imbalance in trade shows a negative picture.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Given India's huge population, big size of economy, industrial capacity, and technological progress, it has remained a major source of investment, import items, tourist inflows, technological support, and development cooperation to Nepal. India is the second biggest country to invest in Nepal in terms of amount. Among the source countries of tourists coming to Nepal, India is at the top. Likewise, in Nepal's total imports and exports, India occupies a prominent position.

On the part of Nepal too, investment, export of goods and tourists outflow into India are increasing. These facts and figures vindicate the depth and dynamism of our relationship. Here, what we need to do is to create a win-win situation for both countries. We must work out plans for ensuring it in a sustainable way.

The areas of cooperation in our two countries are so wide and all-encompassing that potentials exist in almost every sector. We are blessed with enormous natural resources; we have young and active population; our history, culture and civilization are rich. Additionally, people-to-people bonds are strong and dynamic. Interdependence and interconnectedness are intense. India's economy has already taken momentum, securing a respectable position in the global economy. It is an opportunity for Nepal to take the benefit from this economic growth. In Nepal too, economic growth rates have started going up, which can benefit India as well.

It is rare to have a highly favourable situation in both countries, which is available at present, as reflected in the stable governments enjoying the two-thirds majority in the parliaments, enormous faith of the peoples in the leaders, accelerating economic growth rates, clear vision for development and prosperity, and strong commitments for delivery of outcomes

to the peoples. I see it as a golden opportunity for both Nepal and India. We must do everything possible to tap this opportunity.

On the one hand, we need to work on a new agenda for development and shared prosperity in the changed scenario; and, on the other hand, we have to complete the unfinished tasks, clearing ways for novel ventures. These twin tasks are to be performed simultaneously. Old treaties and agreements await review for making them appropriate in the present context. Completion of long-standing bilateral cooperation projects of great significance, such as Pancheswor and Hulaki Roads, require due priority. Similarly, resolution of the boundary issues and the permanent solution to the problems of inundation are other important works to be accomplished.

When we talk about our relations, we should also take into account the global developments, as they have implications on bilateral relations. The world today has seen unprecedented developments in geo-politics, geo-economics, technology, and inter-state relations. Nationalistic fervor, protectionist policies, apathy to multilateralism, and dissociation from global and regional compacts and commitments have unexpectedly changed the dynamics of cooperation among countries. In such a volatile situation, countries like ours have to forge strong cooperation in order to secure common interests from the international and regional engagements.

Distinguished Participants,

The Government of Nepal has dedicated its entire efforts towards realizing the national aspiration of 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali'. To help contribute to this drive, we welcome increased amount of investment from India into Nepal in areas of our national priority, such as hydropower, transport infrastructure, tourism, agriculture, ICT, mines and minerals, education, health, manufacturing, etc. These investments will benefit not only Nepal but also India. In the areas of trade, enhanced market access for Nepali products in India as well as trade facilitation are required for reducing the trade deficit of Nepal, making the trade beneficial for both countries.

Similarly, as we are going to celebrate the year 2020 as the 'Visit Nepal Year', we expect more tourists from India to Nepal in 2020 and beyond. From Nepal's side too, a lot of Nepali people visit India every year as tourists. This is one of the important areas of cooperation between our two countries. I am confident that Nepal will continue receiving increased amount of development cooperation from India. While saying so, I would like to thank the Government of India for continuously extending development cooperation to Nepal in the past as well as increasing the amount of such cooperation to Nepal in the budget announced recently.

I am happy to share the facts that a number of flagship projects between Nepal and India have been carried out. Some of them have already been completed and some are in the phase of implementation. The petroleum pipeline projects from Motihari to Amlekhgunj is almost ready for operation. The Integrated Check Post in Birgunj has already started functioning and the next one in Biratnagar is awaiting its operationalization. Likewise, some segments of Hulaki Roads have been completed. The process for Raxaul to Kathmandu Railway line has begun with preliminary survey. The works relating to Inland Waterways have also started. We are developing strong connectivity with India through railways and waterways. I am sure it will phenomenally help enhance movement of goods and people with less cost and less time.

Ladies and Gentlemen

After the historical political change, Nepal now is perfectly poised for development and prosperity. It is based on the facts. First, the country has political stability with a government enjoying two-thirds majority in the parliament. Second, with a new constitution as well as new and revised laws, legal base has taken strong roots. Third, good governance and reform in public service have received adequate priority. Fourth, revenue mobilization and financial discipline has created conducive environment in the economic and financial sector. Fifth, the Government of Nepal has given a tempo to development works. Sixth, a lot of incentives and facilities for foreign investors, industrialists and businesspersons are available in the country. Seventh, necessary infrastructure and facilities are being expanded for foreign tourists for their comfortable and enjoyable stay. Finally, the Government of Nepal is committed to strengthening ties with

its immediate neighbours and other friendly countries around the world. I am confident that such a propitious environment will serve as a bedrock for the growth of our relations, accruing great advantages to both countries.

To conclude, I would like to say that there is every room for expanding and deepening of Nepal-India relations in the days ahead. Both countries have potentials. There is also the will and determination to realize these potentials for their development. With mutual understanding and trust at all levels, we can continue reaping the benefits of our friendship and cooperation. I see a brighter side in Nepal-India relations. I would like to see it remain brighter forever.

I thank you for your kind attention.

## Nepal-China Relations in the Twenty-First Century

Let me begin by thanking China Reform Forum for inviting me to address this Roundtable and share my thoughts on Nepal-China relations on the occasion of my first official visit to China as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal.

I have come from a place which was a trajectory of central, east and south Asian civilizational exchanges, a place of cross-cultural assimilation and a vibrant trade route during ancient times.

I am glad to learn that the Forum has been making enormous contributions to the policy-making process through informed policy recommendations.

There are many areas of development policy where think-tanks in Nepal and China can cooperate for achieving better development outcomes.

In the process, it will also advance our relations further through exchanges of research findings and scholar exchanges.

In my remarks today, I will first highlight the glorious history of Nepal-China relations, Nepal's policy on its relations with China, and then briefly touch upon our development challenges before concluding with what

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*Speech at the Roundtable organized by China Reform Forum, Beijing, 19 April 2018*

I consider should be the priorities of Nepal-China relations in the 21st century.

Dear Friends:

The history of Nepal-China relations goes long beyond the formal establishment of our diplomatic relations in 1955.

The roots of Nepal-China relations may be traced back to the caravan trade millennia ago. This so-called ‘Tea Horse Trail’ that originated in South West China and passed through mountain passes to the vast swath of southern slope of Himalayas, connecting Nepal and China, was a thoroughfare for civilizational exchanges. Our ancestors took risks to traversing mighty Himalayas in pursuit of better life and significantly contributed to advancement of civilization across them.

The retinue of traders, horsemen and caravan plying this route brought not only Buddhism but also other features of Nepali culture and craftsmanship to China through Tibet, Yunnan, and Sichuan and beyond.

No surprise then that Nepal’s Ranjana script is found in ancient relics housed in the Jiangxi and Beijing.

Recent scholarship has corroborated such historical interface and shown that there existed intense cultural exchange and commercial interchange between South Western China and Nepal since ancient times.

“ **Nepali people fondly recall the generous support accorded by Chinese people and government- be it for any natural or man-made crises Nepal faces or be it for the socio-economic development of the country.**

This exchange facilitated not just cross-cultural understanding and cross-fertilization of ideas but also proliferation of profound civilizational values of acceptance, plurality and inclusivity as preached by Buddhism and Confucius alike. Lord Buddha’s teachings have profoundly impacted the socio-cultural lives of the Nepali and Chinese peoples.

There is a long history of social contact like travel of Faxian, Buddhahadra and Xuan Zan across the Himalayas from early 5th century to 7th century . Their travelogue and translations have richly contributed to disseminating Buddha's teachings in China.

Likewise, Bhrikuti, the Nepali princess married to Tibetan prince Songtsen-Gampo in the 7th century, helped greatly spread Buddhism across China.

Araniko, popularly known as 'Anige', upon invitation of Emperor Kublai Khan, travelled all the way from Nepal to Beijing in the 13th century and built the famous White Pagoda, also known as Baitasi, which is still standing high in the heart of Beijing reflecting deep rooted friendship between the two countries.

Dear Friends

Such extra-ordinary relations between our two countries based on historical legacy and geographical logic have gained great momentum in the sixty-two years of diplomatic relations.

The governments of the two countries have established several institutional mechanisms for regular dialogue. The regular exchange of visits at high levels has contributed to deepening mutual understanding and communication at top levels.

Our cultural, trade and economic relations are growing fast even though we have yet to fully resolve several challenges such as burgeoning trade deficit and infrastructural constraints.

Our people-to-people relations are equally growing fast. This was in full display following the devastating earthquake of 2015 that killed around 9000 people and left thousands homeless in Nepal.

As the Chinese saying goes, 'Only when the year grows cold do we see that the pine and cypress are the last to fade; only when we get into trouble do we know who our genuine friends are'.

China is a real, trusted friend for Nepal, and this was amply demonstrated

in the aftermath of the earthquake.

The prompt support and assistance Nepal received from China for rescue and relief as well for reconstruction was overwhelming and unprecedented.

Nepali people fondly recall the generous support accorded by Chinese people and government- be it for any natural or man-made crises Nepal faces or be it for the socio-economic development of the country.

In turn, the Government and the people of Nepal have always stood with China in times of need and at the international forums. One China policy and our commitment to not allowing anti-Chinese activities in our soil form the core of our friendship with China. On China's part, it has consistently and firmly supported Nepal's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence, faithfully observing the principle of non-interference in our internal affairs.

Our relations are based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and their sincere pursuit by both countries has made us trusted friends and reliable partners. Our relationship is marked by mutual trust, understanding, goodwill, cooperation and appreciation of and respect for each other's concerns and sensitivities.

Today, Nepal is among the founding members of AIIB and a partner under the Belt and Road Initiative, both China-led global initiatives. That is the level of commitment we have for China, and this will always remain so.

We admire China's neighbourhood diplomacy guided by the principles of sincerity, amity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness. Nepal also attaches highest importance to its relations with neighbours.

Nepal takes pride in seeing China's growing profile on the world stage, both politically and economically. China's role is very important in shaping global agenda for a just and equitable world order.

We strongly believe that Nepal-China friendship will always be in the interest of our two countries and people. Territorial size, population

and level of development have never been the elements of constrain in defining Nepal-China friendship. Rather, sovereign equality and mutual respect have always remained at the centre, buttressing our cooperative partnership.

Dear Friends

This is the state of overall Nepal-China relations today. We are proud of this. Nepal's least developed status is a matter of serious concern for us. We have achieved fundamental transformation in political realm. An era of political stability has just begun in Nepal. Achieving the same level of transformation in economic realm would be our topmost agenda ahead. We have defined our motto, "Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali" and all our activities will be directed towards this end. In realizing this goal, we count on support and cooperation from our trusted friend China. China has been a reliable partner in Nepal's development journey for a long period of time. We believe that Nepal-China partnership for economic development is very much crucial for us to realize our national development aspirations.

From a forward-looking perspective, we need to identify the areas where Nepal and China need to focus their collective efforts in the days ahead.

The world has undergone phenomenal changes in the past six decades of Nepal-China diplomatic relations. Innovations in every field, and unprecedented development in transportation, and information technology have made profound impacts in human life. China has emerged as an economic powerhouse with global vision of inclusive and harmonious development. The world's poverty incidence has gone down significantly for which China deserves special mention since it has succeeded in lifting 700 million people out of poverty. In the sectors of railways transportation, sharing economy, online payments, and e-commerce, as well as artificial intelligence, energy and agriculture productivity, China has made unparalleled progress.

With a growing role in international relations for global peace and harmony, China has emerged as a major factor of global stability and growth. On the other hand, Nepal too is endowed with enormous potential with 30 million population and abundant natural resource endowment,

cultural diversity, natural beauty and relatively agile diligent youthful population. Being a most diverse topography ranging from the top of the world to almost sea level flat land within an aerial distance of 150 km, Nepal is a resource-rich country. There are many areas where Nepal and China can complement each other for mutual prosperity.

To my mind, there are five interlocking areas where we should work together for achieving rapid economic prosperity.

### 1. Transport and Connectivity

In his visit to China in March 2016, Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli laid top priority on promoting connectivity between our two countries. This was because infrastructural deficiencies have prevented the full potentials of trade, commerce and people to people contacts between the second largest economy of the world – China – and Nepal from being fully realized.

It has, in the process, also prevented Nepal from benefitting, to the maximum extent possible, from the rapid economic growth in the immediate neighbourhood of China. Transit facility from China will leverage Nepal from transit bottleneck in our international trade. Therefore, connecting through rail, road, power, telecommunication, airways and connecting Nepal to outside world through China are the topmost priority agendas for fully harnessing the unleashed potential within us.

I believe that such connectivity will have transformative impact on development in Nepal' in pursuit of economic growth and social progress. Thus, it will herald a new era in Nepal's economic development. In this connection, the concept of trans-Himalayan multi-dimensional transport network with long term perspective was agreed during my meeting with H.E. Wang Yi, State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of China yesterday. We reached a common consensus that the development of this network will bring prosperity in the trans-Himalayan region and beyond.

### 2. Agriculture, Industries and Technology Transfer

Agriculture is the mainstay of our economy, as two-thirds of our population is dependent on agriculture. However, it is a pity that the country has become a food importer from what it used to be a net food exporter.

Dissemination of Chinese agricultural technologies and mechanization of agriculture in order to improve productivity and efficiency in production, is the area where Chinese enterprises can explore the opportunity. Nepal is the virgin land where we can produce a product of our choice in natural environment due to climatic variations and vegetations Nepal embodies.

### 3. Unlocking Human Potentials

In terms of population, Nepal is among the middle-sized countries in the world. Its approximately 30 million people have 30 million dreams, of having a stable and prosperous society within their own lifetimes. Nepal has relatively young, economically active, and agile population of which 60% are between the ages of 15 to 60 years and is one of the highest among the developing countries. China and Nepal can work together to utilize this resourceful population for creativity and resilience for stimulating economic activities in Nepal and China through production value chains.

Unlocking the full potentials of the human capital in Nepal will herald a new era in Nepal's economic development.

### 4. Natural Resources and Environment

Nepal's rich renewable natural resources, particularly aquatic resources and, cultural diversity, adventure tourism and scenic beauty, are significant, and are likely to evolve into an important pillar of co-operation between the two countries. Nepal is listed on the best tourism destinations in the world by various rating agencies in the past several successive years including best value destination by lonely planet in 2017 and Kathmandu as one of the most interesting visiting place to visit in 2018 by rough guide.

Theoretically Nepal can produce 83000 MW of hydropower of which about 1% is exploited so far till now. Power development is another area that Nepal can offer with tremendous potential for cooperation. China has technology, capital, and experience in the area. Nepal and China can work together for mutually beneficial cooperation.

Nepal possesses vast resources of high value medicinal herbs, forests and timber, which can be harnessed together.

## 5. Trade and Investment

There are several areas under Belt and Road Initiative in the fields of trade, commerce and investment which hold great promise for co-operation between Nepal and China.

Trade is the engine of growth, and investment is the propeller of that engine.

As we saw before, both Nepal and China, as important parts of the ancient Silk Road Belt, have benefited in the past from vibrant trade and commerce in the region.

Nepal has been adopting a policy of economic liberalization since the early 1990s where all economic policies are set to a liberal framework.

To take advantage of the investment opportunities in Nepal, both the governments should encourage Chinese investments in the most promising sectors such as infrastructure development, hydropower, agriculture and minerals, and tourism.

There are high hopes in Nepal on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) put forward by President H. E. Xi Jinping. The BRI aims to have peace and prosperity in the region and beyond, which holds far-reaching implications for the development of its neighbours.

Dear Friends:

In Nepal, our focus is on strengthening inclusive growth.

As Nepal draws out from a long transition and moves towards graduating from LDC status by 2022 and acquiring a middle-income status by 2030, we need to move with great speed and vision.

For that, Nepal will have to focus on promising sector such as hydro-power, industries, tourism, and agriculture as well as gainful employment of the youth population.

A comprehensive economic partnership between Nepal and China will

help achieve these goals quickly and sustainably.

This is the vision I have for Nepal-China relations in the era of 21st century. The vision is one of common development and common efforts. It is a vision of shared prosperity through mutual support and collaboration.

I believe all of you assembled here will agree with me that a stable and prosperous Nepal will be in the long-term interest not only of Nepal and China, but also the entire region.

Let me therefore conclude by emphasizing the crucial role of close economic partnership in further cementing Nepal-China ties.

# Development Prospects in Trans-Himalayan Region

I would like to begin by thanking Sichuan University for inviting me to speak here this afternoon. As one of the earliest institutions of higher education in southwest China, Sichuan University has a rich history of pioneering research and educational reforms in China. The University has also been at the forefront of supporting socio-economic development through education, and science and technology.

Its integrated multi-disciplinary approach to education and its emphasis on cultivating qualities such as respect for humanity and drive for innovation are captured well by its motto: Hai Na Bai Chuan, You Rong Nai Da (The Sea Receives Waters from All Rivers, and A Wise Man Listens to All Views).

Such noble gestures of welcome and acceptance are typical characteristics of Chinese culture. These profound values have played a great role in building the foundations not only of China's great civilization but also, when speaking of cities like Chengdu, in developing vibrant cities of innovation and modernization through their eclectic, expansive and inclusive ambience.

Chengdu is the center of the Southern Silk Road. History tells us that ancient Sichuan, with Chengdu as its most important city, linked South Asia through Yunnan, Tibet, Nepal, Myanmar, India, and Thailand, and extended as far as the Middle East.

In the days ahead, we should build on these excellent roots of civilizational,

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*Remarks at Sichuan University, 20 April 2018*

geographical, and cultural affinities to further connect our countries and societies in order to achieve common prosperity in the trans-Himalayan region.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Many people are familiar with the Silk Road traveled by Marco Polo to reach Beijing in the thirteenth century. Basically, this route included Western and Central Asia, the Persian Gulf, and the ancient caravan route which is now Iran, Iraq and Turkmenistan, onward to the Gobi Desert before reaching the durbar of Kublai Khan in Beijing.

“ **The wealth generated by the trans-Himalaya trade helped build marvelous architecture and monuments in Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur in Nepal. The Buddhist Newars of the Kathmandu valley were at the forefront of the entrepreneurial communities traveling to vast swathes of the Asian heartland. The influence of Nepali craftsmanship and trade was immense in Tibet and beyond.**

But there are other important Silk Routes as well. ‘The Trans-Himalayan Silk Road’ and ‘The Tea Horse Trail’ are ancient routes of great influence. Recent studies reveal that the grottoes of Dunawang of Gansu Province and Mustang of Nepal have similar characteristics and belong to the same time period. They leave us an onerous task of exploring the southern Silk Road stretching those two passes through Sichuan.

Nepal was an important lynchpin in that ancient Silk Road. The trans-Himalayan routes had immense influence on the life of a vast stretch of land extending from present-day western China, central China, Turkmenistan, Bamiyan (Afghanistan), Mongolia, Nepal, Bangladesh (Chittagong), Sri Lanka, and India (from Kolkata to Kashmir).

The entourage of royal attendants of Princess Bhrikuti in the seventh century CE brought not only Buddhism but also Nepali craftsmanship

to Tibet. Some of this cultural heritage traveled to other places in China, which can be witnessed even today. For example, the Lama Temple in Beijing as well as some temples in other places in China, contain ancient relics with Nepal's indigenous Ranjana script. Similarly, the White Pagoda of Beijing is an excellent example of the expanse of Nepali architecture in China.

The large-scale trade and cultural communication between South Western China and South Asia since ancient times contributed not just to cross-border trade and commerce but also to cross-civilizational cultural exchanges and cross-pollination of ideas across continents.

The wealth generated by the trans-Himalaya trade helped build marvelous architecture and monuments in Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur in Nepal. The Buddhist Newars of the Kathmandu valley were at the forefront of the entrepreneurial communities traveling to vast swathes of the Asian heartland. The influence of Nepali craftsmanship and trade was immense in Tibet and beyond. The pagodas, stupas and ancient Buddhist art Pauva from Nepal have great influence in Chinese society. The trans-Himalayan trade across the belt is also a classic example of exchange between two ecological zones.

The middle and lower regions of Nepal produce a surplus of grains but suffer from a lack of salt. The arid Tibetan plateau that expands to Qinghai, Gansu, Yunnan, and Sichuan, contains many salt-lakes but not much grain-producing lands or climatic conditions. The constant demand for grains on one side and for salt on the other provided a basis for stable exchange system, facilitating payment, credit, and exchange. Those specializing in trade, transportation, storage, and distribution could settle in otherwise inhospitable climates, and keep the caravan of trade moving.

That was the underlying logic of trade between our two countries.

Indeed, trade was an important pillar of the economies of both Nepal and western China in ancient time.

Unfortunately, the vibrant commercial exchange that underlined such a long history of cultural interface slowed down considerably by the

beginning of 19th century with a slew of factors, including colonization and innovation of new technologies in Europe. Europe became the center of knowledge, economy, and power.

The need of the day is to envisage a new paradigm of co-operation and commerce across the Himalayas for a win-win outcome, embedding such collaboration in the frame of bilateral co-operation between Nepal and China.

Nepal wishes to promote peace and prosperity through mutual co-operation in enhancing and deepening connectivity. Being the conduit for commerce the exchange of civilizations has been Nepal's forte in the past. We want to lay renewed focus on this comparative advantage that we enjoyed in the past and is equally relevant at present with brighter prospect.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thanks to the Belt and Road Initiative, the rich history of cultural and commercial exchange between Nepal and China is poised at revival and rejuvenation.

For Nepal, it is also a moment of pride as we work together with China in this historic mission for greater peace, prosperity, and harmony.

The proposed BRI projects encompassing cross-border roads, railways, oil pipelines, information highways, energy grids, skyways and transmission highways should aim at utilizing the rich resources along the Himalayan range, and improving the quality of lives of peoples in those areas.

The facilities and infrastructures thus created will not only raise the standards of living of the people residing in those far-flung areas, but also support conservation efforts and help overall development of that region.

During its long history, Nepal always prospered when commerce flourished, and its economy faltered when trade dwindled across the Himalayas. I am fully confident that as the Himalayan range re-emerges as a vital connecting link, Nepal's trajectory of economic development will witness a rapid and positive transformation. It is my pleasure to share with you that

Nepal and China shared common views on developing a trans-Himalayan multi-dimensional transport network with long term vision during my meeting in Beijing earlier this week.

I would like to stress that the aspirations for development in Nepal will remain elusive without setting up a proper manufacturing base and manufacturing cannot be competitive without innovative industry in the country. The manufacturing industry with innovative activities not only raises productivity but also creates jobs for the people. The challenge for us is how to retain the youths who leave the country every day in large numbers in search of job overseas, by creating decent job opportunities at home.

Development of cross-border railways between Nepal and China is a priority for the Government of Nepal along with other connectivity related infrastructure. Coupled with their geographical proximity as well as the proposed infrastructural projects across the Himalayas, Nepal and China can work together in promoting economic activities in the Himalayan belt by creating systems of value-chains to their mutual advantage. I believe that China's enormous manufacturing base, advance technology, and its huge domestic market, together with Nepal's rich natural, geographical and locational resources, will create the right mix of value chain and complement for continued economic growth.

Similarly, agriculture development is the areas where there is huge scope for co-operation between the two countries.

Dissemination of Chinese agricultural technologies in Nepal can raise overall production and raise incomes for farmers, including for those who rely on high-altitude and high value farming. Modernization of agriculture in Nepal's fertile lands will enable Nepal to increase exports and create employment for its young people. Chinese enterprises, on the other hand, will have opportunity to introduce and invest in advance technologies of agriculture production in Nepal to command fair return on their investment.

Similarly, Nepal has abundant natural resource endowments, whereas Chinese enterprises have the technological and financial resources for

investments. We need to work assiduously to realize this vast potential opportunity for development. For example, hydropower has the potential to fundamentally transform Nepal's developmental landscape, if exploited properly. Chinese enterprises have rich experience, capability, technology, and fund to harness water resource for mutual benefit.

Chinese investors may utilize the investment opportunities in Nepal for mutual benefits. The Government of Nepal is fully committed to providing security to Chinese investors. Nepal enjoys duty-free-quota-free market access for its products in many developed and emerging economies. This could serve as an incentive for investors to invest in manufacturing sectors.

Resources such as forests and timber, herbs, cool climatic zones, are areas where we can develop together.

Tourism is an area where China and Nepal both can benefit through greater cooperation. Developing tourism services would be a promising area to forge bilateral collaboration for win-win cooperation since Nepal is endowed with natural beauty, cultural diversity and place for unique adventure not yet fully developed.

In the first three months of 2018 we received more than 36,000 tourists from China, ranking it as top source country of tourists visiting Nepal. Similarly, the number of Nepalis coming to China has increased in recent years. More than 6000 Nepalis are currently living in China, pursuing higher studies, or being engaged in employment and business. Many Nepalis are beginning to choose China as a destination for travel and tourism. In addition, sizable number of Nepalis are also coming to China for leisure, training, study visits, sports activities, seminars and research programs.

These figures and activities indicate the magnitude and intensity of our ever-growing contacts between Nepal and China at people-to-people level. Exchanges between peoples of the two countries are growing steadily. As 21st century's diplomacy is focused on public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy, such exchanges will help both countries nurture and sustain better understanding and goodwill and contribute for creating harmonious society.

Co-operation and exchanges among academic institutions, think tank, research institutes and intellectuals between Nepal and China are equally important for optimizing and harmonizing the learning and development endeavor in either place. Production of knowledge for continued vitality of economic activities is the most essential ingredient and integral part of development endeavor. Sichuan University can play vital role in that area. I appreciate the Sichuan University for their efforts to go beyond border and collaborate with the universities in south Asia that includes Nepal. I also would like to thank the University for providing learning opportunities and platform to the academicians, students, and researchers of Nepal and substantially contributing for their capacity building endeavor.

Dear Friends,

China is a global economic powerhouse, which gives it an important role to play in promoting world peace, development, and stability.

In this context, we appreciate China's efforts at forging co-operative links between countries in the region and beyond. We appreciate the role of the BRI as an initiative aimed at addressing the infrastructural and structural bottlenecks of development. Building cross-border infrastructure is very important for landlocked countries like ours. We expect the Belt and Road Initiative to contribute to our development efforts.

Additionally, connectivity will help Nepal exploit the full potentials of its economic possibilities. Connectivity lies at the core of all development activities.

Meanwhile, it will also help cement our ties through enhanced people-to-people relations.

In the past five years, we have seen phenomenal political, economic, and technological changes globally and in the region.

Among these significant developments has been China's various innovative programs and institutions for global growth and harmony under the broader theme of Belt and Road Initiative.

Time is ripe now to revive the ancient glory acquired from exchanges

between Nepal and China. Nepal stands ready to work together for trade and economic integration towards common prosperity.

The development of infrastructures along the trans-Himalayan region is critical for promoting economic opportunities by ensuring efficient movement of people, services, and goods across the region.

To attain this goal, cooperation and understanding is required to optimize the benefits of trans-Himalayan connectivity.

Therefore, Nepal and China should focus their cooperation arrangement for building the critical infrastructure in the Himalayan region and remove the barriers for a seamless movement of people, goods, and services.

We have already reached an understanding to work together to attain this goal at the earliest, and I do believe that we will reach there soon.

Dear Friends, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before concluding, let me share with you my conviction that Nepal and China are set to gear up their cooperation to a new height for mutual benefit and win-win outcomes.

At a time of historic socio-economic transformation across the globe where poverty levels have fallen down to record lows and global prosperity has shored, we cannot afford to let underdevelopment and poverty wean the talents and promise of people anywhere in the world.

It was in this spirit that I discussed the scope of further enhancing co-operation between Nepal and China with the leaders of China during my current visit. And I am very happy to share with you that China, as always, has remained an enthusiastic supporter of our efforts at national development.

I would like to appreciate the South Asia Institute of Sichuan University for their continued efforts to promote Nepal-China relations.

With this note, I also would like to thank you all for your presence and kind attention.

# Belt and Road Initiative: Opportunities and Implications

Let me begin by thanking the Tribhuvan University, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for bringing out such a pertinent topic ‘Belt and Road Initiative: Opportunities and Implications for Nepal and the Region’ for deliberation.

I have am pleased to speak a few words in this gathering. As the programme has come to an end after extensive deliberations on the topic among the experts of Bangladesh, India, Laos, Nepal, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand, we have already heard thoughtful remarks by distinguished experts on country specific perspectives on BRI and its opportunities and implications.

The Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of Nepal K P Sharma Oli has already shed light on the theme of today’s Conference in his inaugural speech this morning. You might have got the opportunity to understand Nepal’s perspectives on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). I would like to share my brief remarks on the same topic.

‘The Trans-Himalayan Silk Road’ and ‘The Tea Horse Trail’ dating back to

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*Valedictory Address at the International Conference on Belt and Road Initiative: Opportunities and Implications for Nepal and the Region, organized by Master’s Program in International Relations and Diplomacy (MIRD), Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University on 12 September 2018 in Lalitpur*

millennia were ancient routes of great influence. Nepal was a lynchpin in that ancient Silk Road. The trans-Himalayan routes had immense influence on the life of a vast stretch of land extending from present-day western China, Central China to Turkmenistan, Bamiyan (Afghanistan), Mongolia, Nepal, Bangladesh (Chittagong), Sri Lanka, and India (from Kolkata to Kashmir).

The large-scale trade and cultural exchanges between South Western China and South Asia since ancient times contributed not just to cross-border trade and commerce but also to cross-civilizational exchanges and cross-fertilization of ideas across continents.

In view of these historical facts, we have welcomed the BRI, a landmark initiative taken by the President of the People's Republic of China, His Excellency Xi Jinping with the aim of 'building a community of a shared future for humanity' and greater cooperation among nations. We visualize great opportunity to work together with China in this broad mission for peace, prosperity, and harmony.

Based on the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefit, the BRI has expressed commitment for green and inclusive development.

'Working together for growing together' is the spirit of the BRI.

Comprehensive Connectivity is at the core of the BRI. Five priority areas set by the BRI aim in one way or the other at enhancing connectivity to build a community of shared interests.

President Xi has proposed to make Belt and Road as the road for peace, prosperity, opening up, innovation and connecting link for different civilizations.

South Asia is a region of tremendous potentials. The region has more than 1.8 billion population of which the majority is of the working age. The region has been interconnected by the commonalities in language, culture, social system as well as common aspiration for sustainable peace and prosperity.

But physical connectivity among the countries in the region is much weaker than the civilizational and cultural linkages. Needless to say, it requires massive expansion with acceleration.

Our pursuit of development and prosperity cannot be realized unless a comprehensive connectivity is developed among the countries. Efficient connectivity will unleash manifold opportunities in various fields including trade, investment, tourism, and culture.

We need to develop mega infrastructures for enhancement of connectivity. To reach this end, huge investment and modern technology are sine qua non. But our development efforts have been constrained by financial and technological gaps. At this point, the BRI offers us an appropriate platform of cooperation and promises to help fill the gap through joint efforts. Following its principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, South Asian countries can reap the benefit from cooperation under the BRI. Nepal too can benefit from BRI platform to implement projects of national priority.

It is a matter of happiness that the BRI has given significant importance to the region. Among the six land corridors that are the belt part of the BRI, two, namely China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIMEC), belong to South Asia.

Joint Communique of the Leaders' Roundtable of the 2nd Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation has included in its annex Trans-Himalayan Multi-dimensional Connectivity Network, including Nepal-China cross-border railway. This holds great promise for unleashing our development potentials. Our quest for realizing 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali' will be certainly within reach through the development of such connectivity in the coming days.

Nepal has become a part of the BRI after it signed a MoU in 2017. We are committed to implementing the MoU of Cooperation under BRI through utilizing it in our development priorities.

The Government of Nepal has accorded top priority to the enhancement

of multi-dimensional connectivity including railways, highways, airways, waterways, and transmission lines.

We plan to graduate from the LDC status at an early date and become a middle-income country by 2030.

Our development needs require huge investment of capital and modern technology as well as experience and expertise in the related field. We strongly believe that Chinese assistance through BRI can be instrumental in fulfilling our development needs.

“ **We have taken positively the readiness of China to share its knowledge, capital, experience, and expertise with other countries, help them in their pursuit of development to build a community of shared future for mankind.**

China has astonished the world through miraculous achievement in its development landscape in relatively a short span of time. It has successfully lifted millions of its people out of poverty within few decades. Not long ago an agrarian economy, China has become the second largest economy in the world.

We have taken positively the readiness of China to share its knowledge, capital, experience, and expertise with other countries, help them in their pursuit of development to build a community of shared future for mankind.

We have taken it as an opportunity to accelerate our journey of development and prosperity.

Nepal is ready to move together with other countries of the region in the journey of development and prosperity to make it sustainable and beneficial to all. We believe that the BRI can be a reliable and result-oriented platform of cooperation for our common concern

China has made unprecedented strides in socio-economic and technological developments. It has significantly improved the quality of life of its people. Its willingness to share the fruits of development with neighbouring countries for mutual benefits through the BRI is commendable. In view of historical linkages between Nepal and China as well as considering the present-day reality between the two countries, Nepal has joined the BRI last year.

As you are aware, after the consolidation of political gains, we, in Nepal, have embarked on the journey of socio-economic transformation. Our vision is guided by the goal of “Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali.”

In order to achieve this overarching goal, we need, among other things, to develop physical infrastructures within the country and enhance cross-border connectivity with both of our neighbours.

Connectivity within the country and across the borders is very important for development. This is also a prerequisite for regional cooperation. As Nepal enjoys excellent bilateral relations with both neighbours, India and China, which have emerged as global economic powers, we would like to take advantage from their progress and prosperity.

Our development needs are many but resources at our disposal are limited. We hope that BRI could help meet our financial needs for project development.

Recently, during the visit of the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of Nepal to China, our two countries agreed to intensify the implementation of bilateral MoU on BRI to enhance connectivity encompassing such vital components as ports, highways, railways, aviation and communication under the overarching framework of trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network.

Under this framework, our two countries have already started cooperation for cross-border railway project. Development of cross-border railways between Nepal and China is a priority for the Government of Nepal along with other connectivity related infrastructure. Whereas cross-border optical fibre link between Nepal and China has already come into operation

since early this year.

We have recently finalized the text of Protocol to the Agreement on Transit Transport signed between Nepal and China in 2016. This will enable us to get access to the East Asian sea via Chinese territory. Being an LDC, this is an important aspect of diversifying Nepal's access to sea for its transit transport. We want to transform our country from a land-locked to a land-linked one.

We have similar cross-border connectivity with India in the forms of highways, railways, info-ways and pipeline. We hope these initiatives would be milestones in linking the South Asia with south western part of China via Nepal in the future.

Thus, connectivity has become one of the important foreign policy priorities for us.

Dear friends,

We think that the projects related to BRI should aim at utilizing the rich resources available along the Himalayan range and improving the quality of lives of peoples in those areas. The facilities and infrastructures thus created will not only raise the standards of living of the people, but also support the conservation efforts and help for sustainable development of that region.

Most important thing is that, contrary to perceptions in certain quarters, we will be guided by our enlightened national interest to select and implement projects.

We also believe that the concept of trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network comprising the components of railways, highways, ports, aviation and communication linkages across the Himalayas would be significant for opening up new vistas of economic engagements in multiple areas and supporting for the livelihood of peoples in the region. For advancing cooperation under the trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network, we need more understanding, collaboration, and partnership.

Nepal has abundant natural resource endowments, whereas Chinese enterprises have technological and financial resources for investment. We need to work assiduously to synergize from these vast potentials for development projects in the coming days.

The BRI is not just about physical connectivity. People to people exchange is also a vital component of the BRI. Tourism is an area where China and Nepal both can benefit through greater cooperation. Developing tourism services would be a promising area to forge bilateral collaboration for win-win cooperation since Nepal is endowed with natural beauty, cultural diversity and unique adventure sites.

Co-operation and exchanges among academic institutions, think tanks, research institutes and intellectuals between Nepal and China are equally important for sharing experiences and harmonizing the learning process between the two countries. It is a matter of satisfaction that regular exchange of visits and interactions are taking place between the universities and think tanks of Nepal and China.

Dear friends,

Nepal and China have been enjoying excellent bilateral relations for over a period of six decades. Our enhanced partnership in economic field will match the trust and understanding we enjoy in our political relationship. The BRI offers such a unique opportunity for us to cooperate and collaborate for common benefit.

I believe the conference has been able to achieve the outcomes as anticipated. I also believe that the compilation of views shared by experts will be useful for all of us.

Once again, I appreciate and thank the coordinator and team of the Master's Programme in International Relations and Diplomacy, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for arranging such a wonderful program on contemporary issue and for inviting us.

Thank you for your kind attention!

## Partnership for Prosperity

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to speak before this distinguished audience.

I sincerely thank the Indian Council of World Affairs for this opportunity and for the warm reception. I thank you, Ambassador Dr. Raghavan, for your kind words of introduction.

That many eminent people are virtually linked for this conversation reflects the interest you all have on Nepal.

For me, this demonstrates your goodwill about Nepal as well as the importance attached to Nepal-India relations.

Dear Friends,

Nepal is not unfamiliar to you. Neither is the kind of political transformation that Nepal has achieved in the recent decades.

It rarely happened elsewhere in the world that a society succeeds to smoothly shift from armed conflict to peaceful political process, agrees on the agenda of socio-political restructuring, accomplish the journey from bullet to ballot and the entire process culminates in the making of

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*Talks at the Indian Council of World Affairs, Sapru House, New Delhi, 15 January 2021*

the inclusive constitution by people's elected representatives.

The Constitution that we made guarantees human rights and fundamental freedoms to all citizens without any discrimination. It seeks to promote socio-economic justice to the backward communities in our society. In the past three years, our focus has been on translating the same constitutional aspiration into reality.

In a diverse society like ours, where political forces carry contesting ideologies, managing transition was not easy. But we did it with a firm resolve. It was a resolve to transform society and empower everyone.

I must mention here that in accomplishing this historic change, we received valuable support from all of our friends and well-wishers in the neighbourhood and around the world, for which we are most thankful.

Post-constitution transition remained short. As envisaged in the Constitution, elections were held for local, provincial and federal legislatures in 2017. After 20 years' gap, the local bodies received elected leadership. And we have already started to see the positive impacts of the empowered local bodies at the grassroots level. The newly established provincial governments have also proven their importance.

“ **In order to carry forward our multi-faceted relations, we have built a large network of bilateral mechanisms in almost all sectors of cooperation.**

A decision has recently been taken to go to the sovereign people for a fresh mandate. These elections will be yet another important occasion for expressing popular will and further strengthening our democratic foundation.

Political process having taken a settled course, our focus is now on the other aspects of people's freedom, namely freedom from poverty and underdevelopment; freedom from hardships of deprived living; freedom from worry about the basic needs; freedom to pursue a healthy and prosperous life.

We are fully aware that political gains can only be sustained if we are able to create a robust economic foundation.

And to this end, our government, under the leadership of Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli, is resolutely focused on realizing the national aspiration of ‘prosperous Nepal, happy Nepali’. For this, we have rearranged our economic development priorities, defined time bound goals, and implemented them with all our strengths.

In the past three years, Nepal has made significant strides in various dimensions of socio-economic transformation. The pace and intensity of the transformation has never been more visible and impactful. The country has progressed on most of the development indicators.

Prior to COVID 19 pandemic, Nepal was in the list of top 10 countries with high economic growth. The rate of growth had been above 6.5% continuously for the past 3 years. At the same time, poverty level was reduced by 1.5% every year.

During the same period, Nepal achieved significant improvements in more than 14 global indicators. It is encouraging that we were among the top 10 countries in making improvements in human development index, ease of doing business, hunger index, peace index, rule of law, corruption control and transparency, happiness index, and gender parity.

Trade deficit has come down by 10%; FDI has increased; development cooperation has increased; and we are in a better situation in terms of foreign currency reserve.

Works related to strategic infrastructure critical for Nepal’s development including cross border railways, East-West electric railway, waterways, new airports, Kathmandu-Terai Expressway are moving ahead. Construction and upgradation of Mid Hill Highway together with expansion of East-West Highway are ongoing.

Guided by the motto of economic growth with social justice, the government has initiated the contribution-based universal social security scheme. Health insurance has reached more than sixty districts.

Despite Covid 19, school enrollment has reached 98%. In health sector, just last month, we laid the foundation stone for new hospitals of 5 to 15 beds capacity in 396 urban and village municipalities to be built simultaneously. This was a historic announcement made with the purpose of ensuring people's access to health services even in the remotest part of the country.

Post-earthquake reconstruction works are nearing completion, including the restitution of some of the rich and treasured historical icons. Seven lakhs private homes have been built and I am glad to share that these include 47 thousand houses built under government of India's generous assistance. People living in vulnerable locations have been shifted to safe settlements.

We are mindful that these achievements are not adequate. There is much more to do.

Our development needs are immense and aspirations are boundless. Resources are limited and challenges are numerous. And many of these challenges we cannot confront alone; many of our aspirations we cannot meet by our lone efforts.

That is why we need partners; we need friends. Natural start of such friendship is neighbourhood. We see a natural connection between our aspiration for prosperity with the prosperity of our big neighbours.

This would mean for us a robust economic partnership that enables us to grow and unleash our potentials;

- a partnership that helps overcome Nepal's structural bottlenecks as landlocked and least developed country;
- a partnership that fosters mutually rewarding and beneficial trade relationship;
- a partnership that propels the process of industrialization, flow of investment, transfer of technology and connects our economies in value chain;
- a partnership that leads to better utilization of our natural resources for sustained economic growth and development; and

- a partnership that makes our relations impactful to the lives of our peoples.

Distinguished Friends,

Our two countries are connected by geography as well as history, by nature as well as culture. Both our societies are blessed with ancient wisdom and heritage whose timelessness has been universally recognized.

When we come to the context of our relations today, the key question is how much we can serve the aspirations of people; to what extent we can be supportive of each other's quest for growth and development.

Both our countries are highly diverse societies and have our own unique experiences of managing this diversity. We have similar aspirations and face identical challenges in pursuit of respective national goals. Our developmental challenges are similar too. Poverty is still significant in our countries. We face the urgency to ensure that our people have a decent home, decent clothes and quality food; that our youths receive quality education that makes them competent and competitive.

These common urgencies do tell us why economic development should be more crucial in our contemporary conversations; why we need to forge close economic partnership to that end; and why cooperative relations between our two countries is important.

Nepal-India relations are the vast confluence of political and economic interactions as well as unique ties at people-to-people level. It cannot be confined to one dimension alone.

In political sphere, both countries have been brought closer by their steadfast commitment to democratic values, practices and system of governance. India has demonstrated how democracy and development could be successfully pursued together so as to promote overall progress and prosperity of the people.

Nepal is equally effortful to consolidate democracy and strengthen democratic institutions so that the gains of our long struggles remain unshakable.

In order to carry forward our multi-faceted relations, we have built a large network of bilateral mechanisms in almost all sectors of cooperation. There are close to three dozen mechanisms that are currently functioning at various levels and in different areas.

I am in Delhi this time to hold the meeting of one such important mechanism with my distinguished counterpart, Dr Jaishankar, the External Affairs Minister of India.

Needless to say that relationship between neighbours has its own characters. Mutual trust, understanding and respect for each other's sensitivities and concerns contribute to strengthen the foundation of such relationship. Building and nurturing trust is absolutely essential for the health and harmony of the relations.

In this spirit, we desire to start the conversation with a view to resolving the question of boundary alignment in the remaining segments. Many of you may be aware that Nepal and India share over 1,800 km long international boundary most of which is jointly mapped. Only in the stretches of some kilometers, the work remains to be completed.

Finding an agreeable boundary alignment in these segments may not only take us to the stage of fully settled international boundary but may also help generate positive vibe in public sentiment as well as help instill greater degree of trust and confidence in bilateral relations. I believe that we can work out and reach that stage.

While both sides have agreed to resolve the boundary question through talks, we have also shown wisdom that despite the difference in one area, the momentum of our overall engagements is continued. We are also mindful that we should not let any outstanding issue between us be there forever and become irritant in an otherwise friendly relationship.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For Nepal, India remains the largest trading partner. However, the problem of bilateral trade deficit looms large. Our economy cannot sustain this alarmingly high trade imbalance.

In the process of the review of the bilateral trade arrangement, we have proposed certain measures that would offer us some genuine space and help us expand our export base. We expect positive and forthcoming consideration of these measures. Nepal is not a competitor of India in trade. I am sure many of you would agree when I say that making Nepal economically strong serves India's interest too.

We have likewise flagged a few proposals for expansion and streamlining of the current transit arrangements. We like to see an early conclusion of this review process as well.

Nepal and India are endowed with resources, both natural and human. The 21st century should not merely be the century of potentials and resources – lying untapped and unused. It should be the century of dream realization.

Talking about potentials, hydropower development is an important sector of bilateral economic partnership. It will benefit the people and industries of both our countries. We need to generate a success story by sincerely implementing the projects agreed in the past. Pancheshwar project comes atop. Our recent conversation on this transformative mega project has been encouraging. Once realized, Pancheshwar will not only be a big project on its own but also set a success story of how we can make arrangements for cost and benefit sharing in harnessing of our vast water resources.

Indian investors are already finding traction in investing on hydro projects in Nepal. Two large scale projects have been initiated – one by a public enterprise and the other by a private investor.

In order to facilitate cross border trade of electricity from projects like these, our two countries concluded a bilateral Power Trade Agreement in 2014 incorporating the provision about free trade of electricity. Power traders and developers are awaiting issuance of a facilitative procedures for cross border electricity trade.

Nepal's desire is to see an early possibility of unhindered trade of electricity among at least the BBIN countries.

The importance of connectivity cannot be overemphasized. We need to

further expand air connectivity, air routes and road and rail linkages. Added to these are railways, waterways and other components of cross-border transit, transport hardware and software.

Lately, we have made noticeable progress on some of our flagship connectivity projects. Our Prime Ministers inaugurated a year ago Motihari-Amlekhgunj Petroleum Products Pipeline, the first cross border pipeline in the region. We are talking about further expansion of pipeline infrastructure.

Integrated Check-posts have been developed and operationalized at two major border points streamlining the cross-border movement of goods. More such Check-posts are on the plan.

Progress has been made on cross border railways too. Required preparatory steps are being taken for the development of Kathmandu-Raxaul railway. Our experts have undertaken homework on inland waterways as well. These initiatives will not only make us more connected but also contribute to Nepal's transformation from land-locked to land-linked situation.

Beyond the respective border, our two countries do share a dream of regional prosperity and better regional cooperation. We work together in SAARC, BIMSTEC and BBIN. Even during the Covid 19 pandemic, we explored the possibility of regional cooperation among the SAARC countries. We thank the Prime Minister of India for taking the initiative to convene the virtual summit of SAARC leaders.

In international forums, Nepal and India are both advocates of the issues uniquely faced by developing countries and do raise voice for a fairer and more inclusive global development architecture. We speak for a better level playing field for all countries.

Dear Friends,

We are in the changed context both at home and abroad. Accordingly, we want to inject fresh perspectives into our relations with external world.

Our foreign policy priority begins at our borders. Talking about India, our intention is to strengthen the foundation of our relations; to expand and

consolidate it; and to bring the relations to the next level. Our objective is clear and unambiguous.

We are two countries of different size, populations, level of economic development. The scope of our ambition is different, so is our strength. India is aspiring to be a global power, both politically and economically. Nepal's ambition is to be a more stable and prosperous country.

As a close neighbour, we are delighted to see India's incredible achievements: be it the infrastructure build-up or industrialization; be it the advancement in technology, or in terms of the seven decades of successful democratic practice.

Today as we wait for the availability of COVID 19 vaccines, India is one of the few front runners that have started vaccinating the people. This has given us a great hope. I take this opportunity to congratulate India and its innovative companies for the success. Being next door, we believe we too will be availing these vaccines.

Dear Friends,

Nepal was among the few countries that remained independent throughout its history. In this very fact is rooted the abounding sense of national pride of today's 30 million Nepali people. We, therefore, hold dearer than anything else the principles of sovereign equality, mutual respect and non-interference.

We pursue an independent foreign policy and our conduct of external relations is based on a balanced outlook. We do not harbour ill-will against anyone. Amity with all and enmity with none is our motto. Guided by the same principles, we seek to foster relations with neighbours and all friendly countries around the world.

Prime Minister Oli said, while in this very city three years ago, that Nepal desired to create a strong edifice of trust in our relations; desired to create a relationship which would make our generation and the future equally proud. We want to see a 21st century Nepal-India relationship, which is forward looking and firmly founded on equality, mutual respect, justice and understanding of each other's concerns and sensitivities.

For that, we should sincerely attend to the issues that we have inherited from the past; address them appropriately and should creatively work out the agendas for future. With the same objective, we created an Eminent Persons' Group in 2016 and mandated them to review the entire spectrum of Nepal-India relations and recommend measures to upgrade them in the changed context. EPG has done its work and our job is to receive their report and implement.

One of the tasks assigned to EPG was the task of recommending the inputs for the review of past treaties and agreement, including the Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1950. We have agreed to revise, adjust and update the Treaty to better reflect the current reality and to further consolidate and expand our friendship. We need to do it sooner than later.

To conclude, our conviction is unwavering that Nepal-India friendship stands on a robust foundation. Our connection is deep and engagement comprehensive. Yet we should be mindful equally that healthy relations require continuous nurturing, creative thinking, promptness and readiness to understand each other in changing dynamics. I am sure we have that competence.

## Nepal-Bangladesh Relations and Sub-regional co-operation

At the outset, let me extend my sincere thanks to Ambassador M. Fazlul Karim, Chairman of the Board of Governors of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS), for inviting me to speak to this august gathering.

I feel honoured and privileged to be amongst you in this programme.

I am on a three-day official visit to Bangladesh. I had a very fruitful meeting today with Foreign Minister Hon. Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen. We discussed every important aspect of Nepal-Bangladesh relationship and I am highly encouraged by the outcome of our discussion.

I also had a fruitful discussion with Hon. Commerce Minister of Bangladesh yesterday on forging strong economic partnership through expansion of trade, investment, tourism and development of multimodal connectivity.

I have learnt that the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) is one of the premier institutions of Bangladesh dedicated to research and dialogue in the field of international affairs, security and development issues.

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*Statement at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, Dhaka, 18 February 2020*

I am delighted to share some of my thoughts with you on the topic of Nepal-Bangladesh Relationship and Sub-regional cooperation.

Nepal and Bangladesh are two close friends and neighbours. Geographically, our two countries are only 27 km away from each other's international boundary.

This geographical proximity together with similarity in culture, tradition and values gets eloquent manifestation in our deep-rooted friendship. Growing people-to-people contacts has contributed to cementing our ties.

“ **Both Nepal and Bangladesh are rich countries in terms of natural and human resources. Optimum utilization of these valuable resources will be catalytic in transforming our development landscape, creating prosperity and happiness for our peoples.**

Our two lands have been nurtured by wisdom and insights of great sages and philosophers like Lord Buddha and Rabindranath Tagore, bringing us spiritually, culturally, and emotionally closer. Moreover, the pristine rivers flowing down the Himalayas of Nepal have cultivated the fertile land of Bangladesh and have enormously contributed to the development of civilization. We should take pride on these natural and civilization heritages.

Nepal-Bangladesh relations have been continuously growing ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations on 08 April 1972. Our relations, however, are much older and go beyond this formal landmark.

It gives me immense pleasure to note that Nepal was the seventh country to recognize Bangladesh as an independent country. Further, Nepal's political leaders representing cross section of Nepali society had extended support to the independence struggle of Bangladesh. This historical fact is deeply cherished by our friends in Bangladesh.

Both of our countries are now democracies and have strong governments. This provides a strong footing to develop our overall relationship in a meaningful way.

Guided by the policy of maintaining friendship with all and enmity with none, Nepal attaches great importance to its relations with Bangladesh and believes that both countries can benefit from greater collaboration and partnership on a range of areas that are of mutual interest.

Exchange of high-level visits has contributed to strengthening bilateral relations. In this context, I would like to recall recently concluded successful visit of His Excellency President Mr. Mohammad Abdul Hamid to Nepal. I also recall with pleasure the fruitful meetings held between our two prime ministers on many occasions, the most recent being on the sidelines of the 18th NAM Summit in Baku.

Both Nepal and Bangladesh are rich countries in terms of natural and human resources. Optimum utilization of these valuable resources will be catalytic in transforming our development landscape, creating prosperity and happiness for our peoples.

Our bilateral engagements extend to vital areas of mutual interest, such as trade, energy, connectivity, tourism, education, culture, and people-to-people relations. So is the mutual support and cooperation at various multilateral forums on a range of issues of shared interest.

While talking about some of the core areas of our cooperation, let me begin with trade.

Though the volume of bilateral trade is still small, there is enough scope for its expansion. We need to take concrete measures towards this end so that both countries enjoy mutually beneficial trade relationship. This can be done by fostering complementarity, eliminating trade barriers, both tariff and non-tariff, adopting facilitating measures, developing required infrastructure, expanding connectivity, and promoting investment in productive sectors, among others.

Energy is one of the most important areas of cooperation between our two

countries. The two countries have already agreed to open avenues for the development of energy and its trade.

Nepal's hydropower and Bangladesh's natural gas offer promising future for development. If developed properly, development landscape of both countries will be vastly transformed.

Our two countries have recently signed an MOU to promote power trade. This will lead to fruitful cooperation between the two countries.

In this process, we also need to develop trilateral cooperation involving Nepal, India and Bangladesh.

For wider interactions and engagements between our two countries, smooth connectivity is a *sine qua non*. We need to add more flight connections to the existing Kathmandu-Dhaka sector and also connect by air our major regional cities like Saidpur of Bangladesh and Biratnagar of Nepal. There is also a possibility of connecting Kathmandu with Chhotogram (Chitgoun) by air.

Likewise, linkages of waterways by connecting Nepal's rivers with that of India and Bangladesh will substantially improve our connectivity and reduce the cost of transport and trade. Upgrading of roadways and development of railways and their linkages will immensely contribute to this process.

There are other areas where our partnership would be equally beneficial.

Bangladesh is one of the preferred destinations of Nepali students to pursue higher education, especially in the medical and engineering fields.

Currently, around six thousand Nepali students are in Bangladesh. Monitoring of service providers to ensure quality education, including required support to the students, will help further expand cooperation in this sector.

Both Nepal and Bangladesh are attractive tourist destinations. Nepal has snow-capped mountains, lush green valleys and plain lands, rich biodiversity, beautiful nature, important historical and archaeological sites, cultural wealth, and friendly and hospitable people. Likewise, Bangladesh

has fertile plain lands, beautiful sea beaches, mangrove forest, and cultural and historical sites.

Joint efforts for the development of this industry will surely benefit both sides. At the national level, Nepal is celebrating the Year 2020 as the “Visit Nepal Year” to welcome more and more people from around the world and, as a friendly country, we expect more visitors from Bangladesh.

Addressing the adverse impacts of climate change is a primary concern for both of our countries which are highly vulnerable.

The high lands of Nepal and the lowlands of Bangladesh have been bearing the huge brunt of the climate change with the melting of Nepal’s Himalayan ice and the rise of the sea level, posing a serious existential threat to low-lying areas.

Beyond this, environmental catastrophes like floods and draughts have been a regular feature, adversely affecting our communities and their livelihood.

Bearing this in mind, Nepal has chosen the theme of Climate Change, Mountains and Future of Humanity for the first edition of the Sagarmatha Sambaad, to be held in Kathmandu from 2 to 4 April 2020. The Sagarmatha Sambaad, named after the tallest mountain in the world, Mount Everest, is a global dialogue forum recently established by the Government of Nepal to deliberate on contemporary issues of regional and global significance in a multi-stakeholder setting on a biannual basis. We expect high-level participation from Bangladesh and all other countries belonging to Hind-kush mountain range.

Our cooperation and partnership are confined to bilateral domain only. Both of our countries support each other at various global forums on different issues of common interests, ranging from climate change to international support for the developing countries. Both countries are among the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping operations. For mutual benefit, this spirit should continue in the days ahead.

I am happy to know about the rapid development taking place in the

economic and social sectors of Bangladesh. We are deeply impressed by sterling performance made by Bangladesh in many spheres within a short span of time. Economic growth rate of Bangladesh remains the highest in South Asia. We have also registered over 6.5 per cent economic growth rate for the last three years. Nepal ranks second after Bangladesh in registering this high rate of economic growth.

As a close friend, Nepal would like to see continued economic growth, development, and prosperity of Bangladesh. We rejoice in progress and prosperity of the friendly people of Bangladesh.

The Government of Nepal has defined Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali as national aspiration. We are confident that with our sustained efforts and dedication, we will achieve the status of a middle-income country before long and ultimately reach the developed country ladder.

On sub-regional cooperation in South Asia, I think, we are on the same page that the countries of this region do have immense potential to benefit from deeper engagements and interdependence. Abundant natural resources, dynamic and educated human resources, geographic, cultural and civilizational linkages, growing people-to-people relations all have created a sound basis for meaningful sub-regional cooperation. What is left is the full realization of this potential.

Though, individually, countries of South Asia have been engaging with each other on their own, a sub-regional platform can become fruitful for generating benefit for all from the areas of common interest.

There is potential in sub-regional cooperation. It can benefit the member countries if interconnectedness is developed and interdependence fostered in all aspects with the objective of ensuring equitable sharing of benefit to all constituent members. It will further ensure a larger dividend in terms of regional peace and stability.

Our sub-region witnessed the evolution of various concepts in the form of sub-regional cooperation, such as Growth Triangle, Growth Quadrangle and Growth Polygon. BBIN is the latest manifestation of this effort which is taking shape with identified areas of sub-regional cooperation, mainly

energy, transportation, and connectivity.

Bangladesh, India and Nepal have agreed to the operating procedures for the movement of vehicles in the sub-region under BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement, albeit Bhutan has expressed its interest in remaining out of it. Development of energy and its trade through synchronizing the grid systems is also under discussion. We can also develop sub-regional cooperation in other areas of interest.

Having said this, I wish to conclude my statement by extending sincere congratulations and best wishes to the Government and the people of Bangladesh on the celebration of the birth centenary of Bangabandhu, the Father of the Nation, this year.

# **|03| Multilateralism: Path to a Just, Prosperous and Peaceful World**

## Effective Multilateralism: Centrality of United Nations

I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, and members of the Bureau on your election and assure you of our full support in the discharge of your responsibilities.

I also appreciate the role played by Her Excellency Maria Fernanda Espinosa, as the President of the 73rd session of the Assembly.

Our acclamation goes to the Secretary-General His Excellency Mr. Antonio Guterres for bringing reforms to make the United Nations fit-for-purpose.

Mr. President,

The world today stands at crossroads. Landscapes of global order are undergoing profound transformation. The problems of yesterday have not subsided, yet new challenges are menacing.

Inequality - of income or opportunities; and of technology or capability - is increasing.

Trade tensions among the largest economies are giving rise to unpredictability and risk of recession. The ensuing insecurity and disorder hurt the countries such as LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS the most.

The peril of climate change is outpacing our response. The threat is truly existential in terms of sustainability of planet and future of humanity.

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*Statement delivered at the General Debate of the 74th Session of United Nations General Assembly, New York, 27 September 2019*

It is the poorest and most vulnerable countries that are hit hardest by the impacts of climate change. Despite their negligible emissions, they face the consequences which are disproportionate, unjust, and undue.

In this context, Nepal appreciates the Secretary-General's leadership in convening the Climate Action Summit on 23 September 2019. It was another milestone to chart out sustainable path in the face of obstinate ignorance of climate science.

Home to Sagarmatha, also known as the Mount Everest, the highest peak in the world, Nepal lies at the hotspot of climate change. The Himalayas, as the barometer of climate change, are witnessing the melting of glaciers and drying up of the fresh water in a faster pace.

A report by International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) published this year reveals that one-third of the glaciers will melt away from the Hindu Kush and Himalaya range by the end of this century even if we meet the 1.5 degrees commitment.

This is alarming.

The climate induced disasters wreak havoc every year. This year alone, several Nepali people lost their lives to floods and tornado.

Keeping in mind the seriousness of the issue and realization of our own responsibility, the Government of Nepal has decided to convene a global dialogue in April next year under the theme of climate change. This will be the first episode of the Sagarmatha Dialogue established by Nepal to deliberate on critical issues of contemporary importance.

Excellencies,

Nepal pins a great hope on the centrality of the United Nations for galvanizing multilateral efforts to address the cross-cutting and global challenges, such as; poverty reduction and achieving SDGs.

We have abiding trust on multilateralism, and we believe that only alternative to it is a better, effective, inclusive, and responsive multilateralism.

The adoption of the Agenda 2030 was a display of inclusive multilateralism at its best. The Agenda can be implemented if similar spirit guides our actions with renewed sense of partnership and with all stakeholders shouldering the responsibility.

In the last four years, the SDGs scorecard shows mixed progress. Poverty has decreased but the rate of reduction is decelerating. The unemployment rate has dropped but the wages remain stagnated. Food insecurity and hunger are in a regressive track.

An enhanced level of collaboration is critical to mobilize required resources for the attainment of the SDGs as well as Universal Health Coverage.

In the countries like Nepal, there is a big gap of resources in order to fully realize the SDGs by 2030. Mobilizing domestic financial resources is our priority. However, national efforts need to be complemented by international support measures in the form of technical, financial, investment and other means of support, particularly to the LDCs and LLDCs.

The world has made great strides in wealth creation and advancement of technology. So has been the progress in life expectancy, literacy, basic education and reducing maternal and infant mortality.

Sadly, the progress has not been evenly distributed. Women and girls, people with disabilities, ageing population still bear the disproportionate brunt of poverty and inequalities. Inequality within and between countries is growing.

In this context, Beijing+25, International Conference on Population and Development+25 and mid-term review of Vienna Program of Action would provide important opportunities to reset the actions in accelerated pace.

Nepal appreciates the Secretary-General's strategy on bringing gender parity.

Mr. President,

Nepal welcomes the reforms towards creating synergy and coherence of the UN system adhering to the principle of keeping people at the centre.

We are hopeful that the new generation of country teams and RCs live up to the expectation by delivering more.

**“ We reiterate that the outer space must be kept free of arms race for the greater benefit of humanity.**

We hope that the renewed thrust of UN reforms will also propel the reforms of the Security Council. Our efforts must be towards making the Security Council representative in structure, transparent in function, democratic in character and accountable in performance.

The agenda of revitalizing the work of the General Assembly, including its enhanced role and authority is long overdue. We must take this reform with priority.

The deteriorating financial situation of the Organization is a matter of serious concern. It will impede the fulfillment of its mandates and responsibilities.

Mr. President,

Heightened geopolitical complexities, defunct disarmament architecture, and absence of order in cyber and outer space endanger international peace and stability.

Arms race coupled with growing distrust among major players appears symptomatic to a new form of division with regard to critical issues of peace and security.

Here lies the importance of stronger and effective United Nations to promote trust and cooperation.

Nepal supports general and complete disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction. We are concerned with the collapse of INF treaty, pull out of an important party from the Iran Nuclear deal, and stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament.

Such trends should not encourage the penchant for nuclear armaments.

Nepal is in support of effective and verifiable nuclear weapons free zones.

We stand for a legally binding multilateral disarmament regime for ensuring global security and stability.

As a signatory to the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, we expect to complete internal legal process for its ratification soon.

We reiterate that the outer space must be kept free of arms race for the greater benefit of humanity.

As the host country to the UN Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, Nepal calls for strengthening of the regional approaches to disarmament including the 'Kathmandu Process' to complement the global initiatives.

Excellencies,

Problems of transnational organized crime, human and drug trafficking and terrorisms transcend national boundaries. Flow of illicit money for financing crimes must be dealt with stringent measures and cooperation among the States.

Nepal condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We call for effective implementation of existing conventions and resolutions including the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Conclusion of a comprehensive convention against terrorism should not be delayed any longer.

The violent conflicts in Libya, Syria, Yemen and elsewhere continue unabated inflicting human sufferings.

Conflict induced problems including human rights violations, exodus of refugees and forced migration have global ramifications.

We believe in peaceful settlement of conflicts and disputes through negotiations and dialogues.

Robust conflict prevention and peace-building measures are critical for sustaining peace. The under-utilized tool of mediation can potentially help bring an agreeable solution to conflicts.

We want to see meaningful steps being taken to resolve the protracted Middle East issue. We support a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security with secure and recognized international borders based on relevant United Nations resolutions.

Nepal welcomes the dialogues between the United States and DPRK and between the two Koreas. We hope the initiatives will lead to lasting peace and stability on the Korean peninsula.

Mr. President,

True to our commitment to the UN Charter, Nepal has rendered one of the most dedicated, reliable, and professional services to the UN peace operations for over six decades.

Our peacekeepers have been deployed without caveats at the shortest notice even in fragile and asymmetric threat environments. Safety, security, and dignity of peacekeepers is therefore critically important for us.

In this spirit, we endorsed the Declaration of Shared Commitments in support of the 'Action for Peacekeeping' (A4P) initiative last year.

We appreciate the role of DPO and DOS and the UN as a whole in maintaining peace and order through peacekeeping operations.

Peace operations require predictable, adequate and sustained resources for their success. Timely and full reimbursement to troops and police-contributing countries is essential to ensure that these brave personnel continue to render best performance even in adverse situations.

Troops and police contributing countries should receive due share of leadership positions both in the field and headquarters.

Nepal is committed to progressively deploying more women peacekeepers. We do not condone sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping

missions and therefore we have endorsed the Kigali principles.

Excellencies,

Sendai Framework calls for global cooperation for reducing the risk of large-scale natural disasters.

Nepal has harmonized its national strategies on Disaster Risk Reduction with those of Sendai Framework, the SDGs, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit.

Learning lessons from the 2015 earthquakes, Nepal has focused on resilience of infrastructures.

Though we are a land-locked country, we equally care about oceans. We believe that there is an organic linkage between oceans and mountains. We are concerned because health of oceans is deteriorating alarmingly due mainly to climate change and reckless human activities.

## “ We believe in peaceful settlement of conflicts and disputes through negotiations and dialogues.

We are confident that the new international legally binding instrument on BBNJ– currently under negotiation– will prove to be a milestone international law in protection and conservation of marine biodiversity.

A phenomenon as old as the human civilization, migration comes as a defining mega-trend of our times.

Ensuring the rights and wellbeing of the migrant workers is a matter of our priority.

The Global Compact on Migration adopted in December last year is an important steppingstone and a good example of multilateralism at work. We urge all member States to own the process and be part of this outcome.

As a host to a large number of refugees for decades, Nepal firmly believes in refugees’ right to return to their home country in safety and dignity.

Mr. President,

Nepal's commitment to the universal values of human rights is total.

The Constitution of Nepal is founded on the fundamentals of inclusive democracy, pluralism, rule of law, secularism, representative and accountable government, social justice, and human rights.

We are fully committed to concluding the transitional justice process in line with the Comprehensive Peace Accord, directive of the Supreme Court, relevant international commitments, concerns of the victims and the ground realities.

We hold that democracy, development and respect for human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. As a member of the Human Rights Council, we have been promoting those ideals in an independent, apolitical and objective manner.

To contribute further, Nepal has presented its candidature for the re-election to the Human Rights Council for the term 2021-2023.

We greatly count on the valuable support of all UN member States.

Excellencies,

Nepal's Foreign policy is guided by the five principles of peaceful coexistence, non-alignment, UN Charter, international law, and norms of world peace.

'Amity with all, enmity with none' has been our operational motto. We believe in an inclusive, just and fair international order.

Nepal believes that regional processes complement global efforts for peace, security and economic development. We strive to enhance regional economic cooperation under SAARC, BIMSTEC and ACD. As the current chair, we are effortful to revitalize the stalled SAARC process.

Nepal's democratic transformation presents a uniquely successful, nationally led and owned peace process. We would be happy to share our experience that may be useful to those in conflict.

Building on the historic political transformation, the Government of Nepal is now focused on economic agenda to sustain political gains under an overarching national aspiration of ‘Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali’.

We have created an investment friendly atmosphere with substantive policy and legal reforms. One window service is operational with almost all sectors open for 100 percent foreign investment.

We have recently adopted the Fifteenth Five-Year Plan with a longer-term development perspective. Graduation from the LDC status is part of our plan. The 2030 Agenda and other internationally agreed goals and targets have been integrated in our national plans and programs.

Peace, tolerance and harmony are intrinsic to Nepali culture and way of life. Lumbini in Nepal is not only the birthplace of Gautam Buddha, but also the fountain of peace, the ultimate destination for tranquility of mind and spiritual fulfillment. We want to promote this world heritage at the international stage. We aim to host the UN Day of Vesak in 2021.

Mr. President,

Before I conclude, let me reiterate Nepal’s profound commitment to the principles and purposes of the United Nations. We firmly believe in the centrality of the United Nations in promoting multilateralism.

Viewing from the crossroads of history, we see no alternative to multilateralism to ensure peace, security and order in the world. It is incumbent upon us, the Member States, to make this organization a strong platform of collaboration and dialogue for resolving differences and finding solutions to the challenges.

Only an empowered and reformed United Nations reflective of the present-day reality can achieve these critical responsibilities.

I thank you all for your attention.

# World Reorder: New Geometries, Fluid Partnerships, Uncertain Outcomes

Let me start by thanking the Ministry of External Affairs of India and the Observer Research Foundation for giving me this honour. It is a privilege to share my thoughts before this distinguished audience.

In its fourth year, Raisina Dialogue has become a great platform for churning of innovative ideas.

Generation and dissemination of ideas has been the outstanding tradition of our region. This region was once the wonderful home of the greatest among human civilizations, far advanced in research, innovation, ingenuity and intellectual artifact reflecting the rich tradition of “वादे वादे जायते तत्त्वबोधः” which means ‘through discourse, essence can be extracted.’

When science and scientific thinking was little known to the world, this region had already produced Vedas and Vedanta; when idea of modern statecraft was still in nascent stage elsewhere, this region had already brought up Arthashastra; when human-centred thoughts were yet to be born, this region already prided itself on Buddhism, the core message of which is the peace, happiness and welfare of humanity. The uniqueness

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*Remarks at the Raisina Dialogue 2019, New Delhi (January 10, 2019)*

of ideational pattern of our region is the unwavering conviction on social harmony, discipline, order and larger public good.

Dear Friends,

Much has been said about the changing world order, the shifting paradigm of the world politics, and the rapidly transforming geopolitical milieu around us. Without repeating what scholars and practitioners have already thrashed out so profusely, I wish to make a modest attempt to touch on a couple of questions: what the changing world scenario means for a relatively small country like Nepal, for our neighbourhood and the region; and what kind of global and regional arrangements we would like to see. While

“ **Nepal has always been a firm advocate of rules-based, predictable international order. We are a believer in multilateralism, where we can get our voices heard; problems and challenges recognized; and support be extended.**

doing this, I will also touch upon some aspects of Nepal-India relations today and what these relations would mean for the region and beyond.

Attributes that characterized the world order in the past decades are now covered in the mist of uncertainty. Globalization has been challenged by the very people, who once stood as its determined proponents. Free flow of people, I mean the working people, in fact never happened as restrictions of various nature continued and such restrictions have further been reinforced. What globalization effectively meant was the free flow of goods and services of those who could produce. This pillar of trade globalization seems to be shaken today.

Globalization, we may have liked it or not, has its pros and cons . But one thing is true: under globalization, countries were able to uplift unprecedented number of their people out of drudging poverty. Trade grew exponentially; industries expanded; value chains were set up; millions of jobs were created, including in developing countries; and economies were transformed. This was not a small achievement by any means.

There were small players like us who could not reap the full benefits of globalization. We consistently demanded that a level playing field had to be created; an enabling environment had to be necessary for all to prosper; and the growing economic disparity must be addressed. We continued to voice that no country should be left behind in this historic march towards prosperity. We demanded reform, but we never sought an alternative to globalization; never opposed rules-based arrangements of global trade.

Today, the same arrangements face big questions not from us but from the big players, in whose ideas the arrangements were rooted.

Today, technological advancement has brought us closer than ever before and made us more known to each other; but in the mindset, we are getting farther and the border that surrounds us is getting tighter.

Today, the world has become more peaceful than before, but still military expenditure has soared up higher than ever: expenditure that could otherwise have gone for development.

While the world is becoming more interdependent, the challenges ahead require to be addressed with more collective efforts. These include challenges posed by the growing tendencies to weaken multilateralism and collaboration.

While the humankind is making progress to understand and predict the dynamics and adjust with the rule of nature, ironically, we are creating such a situation where unpredictability is prevailing, and pre-set rules are being shaken.

What triggered today's anti-globalization wave? Was it the 2008 financial crisis and its associated impacts on day-to-day life in the developed world? Was it the Brexit referendum? Was it some of the 'costly wars'? If yes, could these have been avoided? Could the respective leaderships have taken an alternative decision that would yield results otherwise? Does leadership just mean catering to the short-term public sentiments or do leaders have responsibility to sway public opinion for a better result and a more collective welfare? Does the world today seriously lack statecraft required to keep things in better order and organized way? These questions are set

to irk us as we embark onto this fluid and uncertain transition.

Uncertain because the existing world order stands challenged, and the new order is yet to take shape.

Uncertain because the nature, definition and structure of world power is changing but the new power equation does not seem to be fully acknowledged.

Uncertain because the old alignments are fading and the new ones, at times of hitherto unthought kind, seem to be emerging, which are yet to stand solid and as durable.

Uncertain because there is a growing skepticism about tenacity of what was once deemed as universalism and universal values and the alternative values are yet to take shape.

Uncertain because there are still believers in good number that the current wave against globalization and liberal world order could just be transient and we would all soon return to the same 'normalcy'.

Anyway, geopolitical contest is today's reality, and economy is at the heart of this contest. Unlike in the past, today it is less of ideological divide, more of who gains from what sort of trade and economic arrangements. And such contest has at times tended towards the zero-sum game of harming each other. One good thing about today's contest is that unlike in the past there is less threat of interstate military warfare. Not so good thing, however, is that the contest has sometimes been pungent.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Small countries do not have resources and capacity to be engaged in such geopolitical contestation.

Nepal has always been a firm advocate of rules-based, predictable international order. We are a believer in multilateralism, where we can get our voices heard; problems and challenges recognized; and support be extended. Small countries may not have adequate strength and competence to engage in bilateral deals with bigger players and this is why they

cherish the cushion provided by collective negotiations in multilateral and regional forums. Rules-based order is essential for our survival.

We have always been supporter of multilateral institutions like the United Nations. What we have wanted, though, is its reform to reflect the current realities.

We have always supported rules-based trading arrangements under WTO. What we want is a meaningful preferential treatment to less capable, least developed countries like us so that we can catch up.

We have constructively participated in the existing global economic architecture and have demanded that such architecture should be inclusive, democratic, and enabling for the most resource-constrained countries. We have stressed that gaps and deprivation must be addressed.

Nearer in the region, we have always been a campaigner for greater regional integration. We stand for strengthening SAARC and BIMSTEC and the implementation of the agendas of BBIN sub-regional cooperation.

“ **Past experience tells us that global challenges require global solution. At a time when the number and intensity of such challenges have grown manifold, thinking of the world as one is all the more required.**

Next door, we have always emphasized on the importance of good and harmonious relations between our two big neighbours. When these two rise together, the rise of Asia becomes unstoppable. We were encouraged, in this context, by the positive vibe that last year’s Wuhan summit created. We are of the view that one country’s rise should not be seen as a threat to the other. It could be an opportunity to rise together. The only thing is that right sort of arrangement for rising together has to be there and leaders in the region are capable of getting that ensured.

Having possessed a third of the Earth’s landmass and almost two thirds of the world population, mostly young and energetic, Asia is the fascinating combination of economic strength, demography and unique value system.

And with the developed and prosperous Asia, the world will be transformed because this will mean the end of the largest chunk of world poverty.

Cognizant of the fact that we can work together in neighbourhood for our mutual benefit and common prosperity, we have been emphasizing the need of a trilateral partnership between our three countries. Such partnership would entail working together for better physical connectivity, deeper economic linkages and greater people-to-people connections.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Nepal pursues an independent foreign policy. Our conduct of external relations is based on a balanced and independent outlook, which is rooted in the historical fact that we were among the few countries that always remained independent, free from any sort of colonial rule. The 28 million Nepali people harbour today an abounding sense of national pride and patriotism.

Patriotism that does not have ill will against anyone: our people have always demonstrated great degree of resilience in times of difficulties and their confidence was never shaken. Amity with all and enmity with none is our motto in foreign policy. We seek to foster relations with neighbours and all friendly countries around the world based on justice, sovereign equality, trust, mutual respect, and benefit.

Nepal is a peace-loving country and shuns any kind of military alliance.

Dear Friends,

In this august forum where we are talking about the world's transformation, I feel tempted to share with you the transformation of historic proportion that Nepal has been able to achieve in the past few years. Unlike the current global transformation towards fluidity and uncertainty, ours has been transformation towards stability and predictability. With the making of a democratic and inclusive constitution in 2015 and subsequent formation of strong elected governments in the centre, provinces and local levels, Nepal has entered into a new phase, where our main quest is growth, development and prosperity.

Past two decades were challenging for Nepal. First the country went through a decade long armed conflict and then long transition marked by uncertainty about how we are to seek a constitutional settlement of conflicting political perspectives. Success of peace process depended on our ability to reach this settlement. We finally did it thanks to the prudence of our political leadership, perseverance of our people and support and solidarity from international community. We were mindful of the cost of instability: our development was pushed back; we remained in stagnation while others advanced.

Now under Prime Minister Oli's leadership, we are committed to work in such speed that would enable us to make up for the two lost decades. We have set a development vision with the slogan of 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali'. We have the potential and what we need is resources and technology.

We are known for richness in water resource, which we are yet to convert into hydropower; we are known for natural beauty and cultural diversity, due to which our tourism industry is growing.

We are aware that we cannot reach the destination of prosperity with our efforts alone. We must seek support from our development partners from around the world, including our rising neighbours.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

India is our close neighbour, with whom Nepal's relations have been comprehensive and multifaceted. Our economic partnership is robust and has a long history. India is our biggest trading partner, source of FDI and a main transit country. We are connected by geography as well as history, by our religions as well as culture.

Apart from taking effective measures for the implementation of all the agreements and understandings reached in the past, we have common understanding on the need for reinvigorating the existing bilateral mechanisms to promote cooperative agenda across diverse spheres.

Our enhanced engagements at different levels, in particular in recent times, have contributed to taking the bilateral relations to newer heights.

We cherish India's progress and prosperity. Its accomplishments in many spheres are notable. The wonderful journey of India as a major economic powerhouse is an inspiration for many people around the world and more so in our neighbourhood.

To increase the flow of goods and augment trade between our two countries, we are focused on investing in infrastructures and streamline procedures. We are aware that cross-border connectivity is very important to unleash development potentials and to spur growth.

The importance of connectivity cannot be overemphasized for a land-locked country like ours. With India, we are advancing connectivity by railway and waterways. When I talk about connectivity I recall what Prime Minister Modi eloquently highlighted, during one of his visits to Nepal, as the HIT formula (highways, information ways and transmission ways). We appreciate in this context a recent positive step taken by India towards making cross border trade of electricity possible. Given Nepal's hydropower potential and investors' interest in it, it has long been our demand that cross border trade of electricity be opened up just like other tradable commodities.

Dear Friends,

Back to the world geopolitics again, there is no denial that we all have our respective fundamental national interests that we cannot compromise on them. At the end of the day in electoral democracy, we must answer to our people, serve them best and make them happy. It is equally true, however, that there are issues beyond our respective border that we cannot tackle in isolation: issues which our domestic audience is not necessarily aware of and for this reason require correct guidance from leadership. Past experience tells us that global challenges require global solution. At a time when the number and intensity of such challenges have grown manifold, thinking of the world as one is all the more required.

Climate change is one such colossal problem of our time that is staring at us and challenging us if we have the strength, conviction and collective will to find a solution. Reports after reports have forewarned of impending disaster and called for immediate actions. It is disheartening, therefore,

particularly for small, vulnerable, resource constrained and least prepared countries like us, to see that the fate of Paris Agreement looms in uncertainty.

Our report card of the Millennium Development Goals was a sort of mixed. We did well with some of the goals while progress in other areas remained illusive. Without collective actions, SDGs will not fare better. Partnership for development is a critical aspect of realization of these internationally determined goals. We are, therefore, concerned about the shrinking development assistance.

Advancement in information and communication technology has tremendously benefitted us in many ways. This has made us more connected and made us more informed. This advancement has not come without challenge. How are we prepared to address today's cyber anxiety? Cyber or satellite collapse? As a byproduct of ICT appears the challenge of fake news and propaganda. Information empowers people; misinformation betrays. How are we going to enable our people to rightly filter between information and misinformation?

Likewise, how are we going to tackle the challenges associated with the most contemporary scientific advancements? Robots have started to perform many of the jobs humans did in the past. How are we going to create alternative jobs for our people? Are we all prepared for half men, half robot kind of working environment? How shall we address the chasm that will possibly be created among us by Artificial Intelligence? How are we going to manage the possible unmanned military capability?

New forces of division in the form of sectarian violence, religious extremism and terrorism are gaining ground posing huge threat to individual liberty, democratic institutions and rule of law. Are we able to overcome these without collective efforts?

Growing volume of world trade is taking place over the water. How we are going to make the oceans safer? How are we going to prevent maritime conflict? How are we going to ensure that landlocked countries get better access to sea for trade and transit?

Distinguished Audience,

Challenges the world faces today are too big and too many to be overcome by our lone efforts. History is our witness. There has always been a positive correlation between our collective efforts and world's peace and prosperity. Such efforts are more required today.

Let us, therefore, be prepared to correct our obsession with short-term gains and think in a larger perspective of long-term collective welfare.

Let us contribute to build bridges rather than barriers.

Let us act in synergy rather than in isolation.

Let us embrace fraternity rather than narrow communalism.

Let us aspire for a better world where we collectively work for common prosperity; a world which future generation can proudly inherit.

# Elimination of Nuclear Weapons for Peace and Prosperity

At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this event to commemorate the international day for the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

We are living in unprecedented times. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruptions in lives, livelihoods, and economies.

However, the pandemic has taught us an important lesson that human lives are more precious than anything else.

In nine months, we have lost over a million lives to the pandemic. But, we can lose more lives within a wink of an eye in case of a nuclear explosion-whether accidental or intentional.

The scientific race for vaccines has kept our hope alive to win the war against this virus. But no vaccine would save us from the nuclear catastrophe. Death, destruction, and devastation would be much more severe, inhumane, and indiscriminate- both for the present and future generations.

Despite this, it is ironic that huge amount is spent on nuclear weapons every year, which is much higher than official development assistance to the neediest and poorest countries.

It is time to reflect on where our investment should be:

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*Statement at the Event to Commemorate the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, Friday, 2 October 2020*

- On nuclear weapons or poverty reduction?
- On eternal annihilation or environmental conservation?

Answer to these questions is plain and simple. We need to focus on the security and wellbeing of our people and humanity at large.

The dividend of disarmament should be diverted to achieving SDGs.

A small fraction of the costs of armament could save millions from hunger and disease; and can supply safe drinking water and basic health services.

More diplomatic efforts can be devoted to the protection of environment, trade promotion, and economic development if we all abide by nuclear disarmament regimes including NPT, CTBT, and TPNW.

“ **Nepal stands for peaceful solution of international disputes. We support national leadership and ownership of any solution to internal conflict and apolitical role of the agencies like the United Nations.**

To conclude, Mr. President, I reaffirm Nepal’s principled position that universal peace and security can only be ensured through a time-bound, general, and complete disarmament of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

Nepal believes that the peaceful use of nuclear energy and the complete disarmament of nuclear weapons are two sides of the same coin.

Nuclear technology should be harnessed for peaceful purposes of promoting health care, increasing agricultural productivity and saving lives.

The world will never be a safer place as long as specter of nuclear weapons looms large.

Thank you.

## Peaceful Use of Nuclear Science and Technology

Nepal's abiding faith in multilateralism emanates from our deep commitment to the principles and purposes of the UN Charter, the values of Panchasheela, and the norms of world peace. We consider that only through dialogues, negotiations and engagements in multilateral setting, the world community can address the global challenges that we in isolation cannot. As the world becomes increasingly complex, the problems we face become equally intractable. This is where the value of multilateralism, collaboration and cooperation among the sovereign States appears critical to build synergy, muster strength and confront the challenges collectively.

Nepal considers that all three pillars of the United Nations- peace and security, human rights and development- should receive equal emphasis. We believe that advancement in science and technology should contribute to the strengthening of the development pillar of the United Nations.

Almost three years have passed since the UN General Assembly adopted the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development with a commitment to leaving no one behind. This is a fitting time that we deliberate in this important forum how the nuclear science and technology can be beneficially utilized for attaining SDGs.

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*Statement Delivered at 62nd General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Vienna, 17 September 2018*

I am glad to note that IAEA has calibrated its activities to facilitate this process and help achieve the goals related to health, clean water, agriculture, nutrition, food security, climate action and access to energy for all. These are critical areas for reducing poverty, sustaining progress, and enhancing benefit of technological advancement for humanity. Indeed, with its fundamental tenet “atom for peace and development” IAEA has always captured the very essence of this idea.

We deeply value our membership and partnership with IAEA. Though use of nuclear science and technology is still very much limited in Nepal, our joining as a Member State of IAEA in 2008 has broadened our understanding of application of nuclear technology and its utility for socio-economic development. Important innovations in medicine, energy and other industrial applications have been developed through the use of nuclear technology. Countries like ours need technical support for properly utilizing nuclear science and technology for development, building capacity, complying with the safeguard regime and ensuring safety and security of nuclear and radioactive materials.

Since the signing of Revised Supplementary Agreement Concerning the Provision of Technical Assistance and the Fifth Agreement to Extend the 1987 Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training in 2012, Nepal has become beneficiary of IAEA's technical cooperation. The area of technical cooperation includes building of national infrastructure for radiation safety, developing radiation health service infrastructure, increasing animal productivity and trans-boundary diseases control, improving crop yield for food security, education in nuclear physics and chemistry, and non-destructive testing among others.

We have seen good results of the projects in the application of nuclear science and technology for peaceful purposes. Nuclear medicine services have been strengthened and expanded in Nepal. Diagnosis and treatment of cancer disease has become more effective and affordable to the needy and poor. The cooperation has helped capacity building of Nepali technical experts as well as those of some academic and scientific institutions. Now we are engaging with IAEA to prioritize national programs and projects with a view to sustain the achievements and help implementing SGDs. Last

year we had the pleasure to host the Director General of IAEA Mr. Yukiya Amano on visit to Nepal. The visit provided good opportunity to assess the implementation of technical assistance projects and identify the areas of future cooperation.

Nepal considers that nuclear science and technology should be used only for the peaceful purposes within recognized safeguard framework of IAEA. To give it an effect, in 1972, we signed the Comprehensive Safeguard Agreement with IAEA. Ever since, we have not only adhered to the Treaty provisions but also stood for stringent safeguards measures and IAEA verifications.

Nepal has introduced Nuclear Materials Regulatory Directives and has adopted National Nuclear Policy. We are in the process of enacting separate nuclear law to create a sound regulatory framework within the country. We believe that only a robust regulatory framework at the national levels can ensure better nuclear security and safety at the global level.

Nepal believes that the international community, while complying with such frameworks prescribed for the peaceful uses of nuclear technology, should equally espouse the principles of general and complete disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction particularly the chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons. We believe that resources of armaments should be diverted to peace and development. We consider that sustainable peace can be achieved only through dialogues and collaboration, not through armaments. We believe in utilizing science and technology for creating new and fair development opportunities for all. It has been our firm belief that existing disarmament mechanisms, such as, the First Committee of the UNGA and the Conference on Disarmament, should be made more effective and relevant.

Nepal was one of the original signatories of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons which we ratified in 1970. We are a signatory to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Last year we supported the adoption of the Nuclear Weapons Prohibition Treaty and later we signed it. Ratification process of both treaties is being initiated with due priority. We are a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention and Biological Weapons Convention. We strongly support UN Security Council resolution 1540

and remain fully committed to its implementation. These international regimes complement to promote the agenda of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament with NPT at its centre.

Before I conclude, allow me to briefly update about the uniquely successful peace process through which Nepal transitioned to a state of democratic peace and stability. In the process we concluded a decade long armed conflict peacefully, managed arms and armed combatants and integrated them into the society, restructured the State, empowered women and hitherto marginalized communities, managed diversity and adopted democratic constitution through an inclusive and democratically elected Constituent Assembly and formed stable governments in all three tiers of federal structures through democratic elections. It was a home-grown, nationally led process owned and supported by our people. The peace process has established a culture of dialogue, accommodation, and mutual respect among the stakeholders within the country.

“ **Nepal considers that nuclear science and technology should be used only for the peaceful purposes within recognized safeguard framework of IAEA**

To sustain the political gains and building on the democratic foundation that has been created, we are now focused on attaining economic development under the national aspiration of of ‘Prosperous Nepal and Happy Nepali’. This aspiration is closely aligned with SDGs, and we intend to implement this through promoting investment, propelling economic growth, creating job, maintaining stability, and ensuring social justice, good governance and rule of law.

In today’s globalized world, no country can walk alone in the pursuit of development and prosperity. It is only through partnership, cooperation, and collaboration we can collectively reach that destination. Nepal is keen to contribute to such partnership for collective prosperity.

# Nepal and United Nations: Partners for Peace and Development

I feel honored to be amongst you this afternoon. I would like to thank the organizers for inviting me to this forum.

Discourses on the pertinent themes like that of today are always useful. I found the theme aptly chosen and relevant. I hope the United Nation's Association of Nepal will continue such discussions in the future as well. Let me directly address the topic and share my thoughts on this.

Even before Nepal became its member, Nepal and the United Nations began partnership for development. It all began at a time when Nepal had just emerged from centuries of isolation and the country needed expertise and technical know-how to steer through the path of openness, development, and modernization. Those experts who came to Nepal in early 1950s under the UN technical assistance represent the early incarnation of UN's partnership in the development of Nepal. That partnership has steadily grown and extended to the present.

After we became member of the United Nations in 1955 our partnership and engagements increased manifold and we have remained a dedicated

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*Statement at the Seminar on "Nepal and United Nations: Partners for Peace and Development" organized by United Nations Association of Nepal, Kathmandu, 12 July 2018*

and active member of the organization. Ever since, this partnership has grown, expanded, and developed to include wide range of thematic areas and geographical coverage of Nepal.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Nepal's partnership with the United Nations permeates all three pillars of the Organization, i.e. development, peace and security, and human rights. Let me briefly touch on each of them.

On the development front, we have been partners in increasing the coverage of vaccination, controlling disease, improving maternal and child health, reducing child and maternal mortality, and improving hygiene and sanitation. Our collaboration with the UN continues in expanding literacy, increasing enrollment of children into schools, reducing dropouts, improving girl's education and increasing women's participation and empowerment.

These efforts have contributed for bringing marked change in the human and social development indicators and achieving the MDGs and SDGs. UN's cooperation in the eradication of malaria, leprosy, tuberculosis and controlling of pandemics and epidemics has remained significant. UN has been a partner in disaster preparedness, mitigation, and response, and we have worked together to reduce vulnerabilities, enhance resilience, and protect environment.

UN funds and programs like UNDP have been partners for development and the face of UN in Nepal for decades. We have received UN's assistance for management of refugees population for years. We have received relief services and food aid in time of disasters and emergencies, and humanitarian assistance to the refugee population. UN has been assisting us in the provision of food for work in remote areas to cope with food shortage and nutrition problem as well as in the building of local level infrastructures. UN agencies' support extends to the conservation and preservation of natural and man-made heritage sites. They have been partners for promoting social dialogue and decent job. We have received technical assistance and capacity building for the modernization and improvement of agriculture sector and assistance in fulfilling critical resource gap in that process.

Nepal's association with and contribution to the different UN specialized agencies has been long, constructive, and fruitful. Some of the UN specialized agencies in the governance of international public goods and cross-border regulation of communications and air transportation have been partners in their respective fields ever since we became the member of these agencies.

“ **Nepal's partnership with the United Nations permeates all three pillars of the Organization, i.e. development, peace and security, and human rights.** ”

UN has brought new ideas and technical expertise in development process. Its partnership in improving human development indicators and implementation of MDGs was significant in the past. Our partnership with the UN has now transitioned to the focused implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UN has been a key partner in that process to help us achieve the goals as per the national development plans and priorities.

In this spirit, last year Nepal stressed the need to evolve United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) through a genuine consultative process of the Government stakeholders, and make UNDAF a true outcome of a country-owned and country-led process so that it could help attain its objectives. Nepal's assertion to make that important document a broad-based and country-owned emanates from our desire to bring a requisite focus to those SDGs that are critically important for Nepal to achieve in the short run so that a solid base could be created for the attainment of the rest.

Building on our relative success of the implementation of the MDGs, it has been our priority to implement and achieve the 17 goals and 169 targets of the SDGs before 2030. We have taken some concrete steps to this direction. We have fully internalized them into our national policies and plans. They are now being implemented in earnest. This entails a massive mobilization of resources and requires unique technical capacity. Our partnership with

the UN in the coming years would be to marshal our combined resources and capacity towards achieving those goals. Poverty alleviation remains the overarching goal of the SDGs and through that we can collectively consolidate peace and development cherished by our people for long.

In this regard, we are encouraged by the adoption of the resolution 72/279 by the UNGA in May this year. The resolution carries a fundamental repositioning of UN development system in decades. This is intended for robust implementation of SDGs where the country concerned is at the centre of the entire process. We look forward to the impending repositioning that is aimed at addressing the gaps, building synergy and improving accountability, steering clear from the politicization of development. With the new system in place, we anticipate carrying forward of the implementation of all SDGs with equal emphasis and priority so that a balanced and an even process of development could be achieved.

It is in this line, the Government has outlined 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali' as its overarching development goal. The recently pronounced policies and programs of the Government and the budget statement for the next fiscal year are aimed at attaining that goal. While we are aware that there is an enormous task ahead, we seek cooperation of our partners, including from the UN system, for an enhanced level of economic partnership.

The ideals of sovereign equality, peace, justice, and progress espoused by the UN Charter continue to guide us. Nepal has an abiding faith and commitment to the principles and purposes of the UN Charter. Nepal's Constitution recognizes them as the guiding elements of our foreign policy.

Maintaining international peace and security is the major objective of the United Nations. Nepal on its part has been contributing to the fulfillment of this objective for decades. True to our commitment to the principles of the UN Charter, we started contributing to the UN mandated peacekeeping operations just three years after Nepal joined this world body.

This is the 60th year of Nepal's participation in the UN peace operations. Ever since, over one hundred and thirty-five thousand Nepali peacekeepers have provided best of their services to over 42 different peace operation

missions around the world. In the process, seventy-three Nepali peacekeepers have made ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. Nepal currently stands 6th largest troop and police contributing country to the UN peace-keeping.

With its steadfast commitment to global peace, Nepal has remained a dependable and enduring partner in the UN peacekeeping operations often taking responsibilities in some of the most challenging situations. Nepal has never let the request of the UN down even at the shortest of calls. We have shown flexibility for inter-mission relocation of troops, deployed our officials in most difficult and challenging missions in terms of safety and security and have been fulfilling our commitment even during the period of internal conflict at home.

The fame and repute of Nepali peacekeepers as the most competent, dutiful, and dependable peacekeepers has been further enhanced by Nepal's participation in such operations without national caveats. This has allowed the United Nations the much-needed ground level operational flexibilities to significantly enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the peace operations and fulfill its mandates.

Nepali peacekeepers' unique capacity to respect and empower community, earn their confidence and trust, and dedication to the fulfillment of the mandate have rendered them as one of the most sought-after UN peacekeepers.

Our long experience in UN peace keeping tells us that the UN Security Council must be guided by the unity of purpose explicitly articulated in the mission's mandate. Peace operations must be Member- States driven process where UN General Assembly should have a better role, than it has today, in deciding the nature and mandate of the operations. Three key pillars of peace keeping operations i.e.- stabilizing the security situation, supporting national political process, and ensuring economic revitalization- should always be holistically taken at the centre of the mandate. Our experience says that the ultimate aim of peacekeeping or peace building should be the socio-economic transformation of the conflict-affected countries.

To make such operations successful and capable of delivering on the mandate, we have called for substantive, institutionalized, and structured consultation with troops and police contributing countries at all stages of UN peacekeeping. We attach high importance on the protection of civilians especially children and women and have a policy of zero tolerance on sexual exploitation and abuses.

In line with this policy, last year Nepal joined the UN Secretary General's compact on Sexual Exploitation and Abuses. We attach high importance on respect for the personal safety and security as well as dignity and honor of the peacekeepers. As the demand for more robust engagement at the ground has increased in modern day peace operations, legal protection for the peacekeepers in the event of collateral damage remains equally important.

We consider that timely revision of the incentive structure should be a permanent feature to keep high morale of the officials serving in difficult circumstances. A fair share of representation in the leadership role, both at the UN headquarters and field missions, proportionate to contribution of the countries concerned is critically important.

There have been many happy anecdotes and examples of utmost bravery, dedication, discipline and sense of duty displayed by our peacekeepers even in extremely challenging environment and life-threatening situations. They have received accolades for outstanding services and for the protection of people. Our happiest moments have been many, including when, as a recognition of the Nepali peacekeepers' contribution to the UNIFIL, a Nepali soldier was included in the entourage of the then UN Secretary General to receive the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the UN in 2001.

As part of our continuous engagement with the UN in the maintenance of international peace and security, recently we had the pleasure to host Under Secretary General for Peace Keeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, and last year we had hosted Under Secretary General for Field Support. Both of these visits have provided good opportunities to enhance further cooperation in the areas of peacekeeping.

Nepal had its own share of the internal conflict followed by a home grown and successful peace process. United Nations supported us during the initial phase of our peace process through a focused and limited-mandate political mission for monitoring of the arms and combatants. We appreciate the UN for this support. As the political transition has ended and a new era of political stability has emerged in Nepal, our experience of the peace process may be useful to the countries in transition and those gone through conflict. We would be happy to share those experiences as a uniquely successful and home-grown brand of the peace process and contribute to the peace building elsewhere.

With regard to the third pillar of the United Nations, I reiterate that Nepal's commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights is total and unflinching. Despite the relatively smaller size of our economy, level of development and capacity, we have been party to 24 international human rights related instruments, and 7 out of 9 core instruments. True to our commitment, we have regularly submitted our periodic reports to the treaty bodies and faithfully implemented the outcomes after the consideration of the reports. This year alone three of our periodic reports are being considered by different human rights treaty bodies.

Our engagement with the UN human rights mechanism, including the human rights council and its special procedures mechanism as well as the UPR process, has been constructive. This year alone we have invited three special procedure mandate holders for the country visit. This is substantial for a country of our capacity and resources.

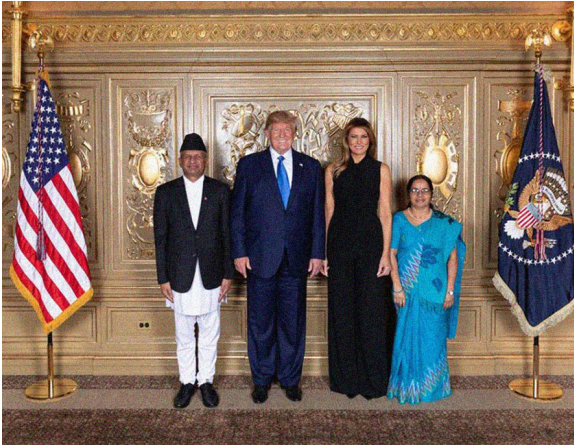
As a member of the Human Rights Council, Nepal's role in the Council has been constructive. We firmly stand by the UNGA resolution 60/251 and the principle that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interrelated and mutually reinforcing. We recognize and adhere to the objectivity, non-selectivity and elimination of politicization and double standards in dealing with human rights issues.

The world we live in has increasingly become complex and unpredictable. We share concerns on the seeping crisis in multilateralism. Nepal always stands for multilateralism and considers the United Nations as an indispensable organization. We regard the United Nations as the only

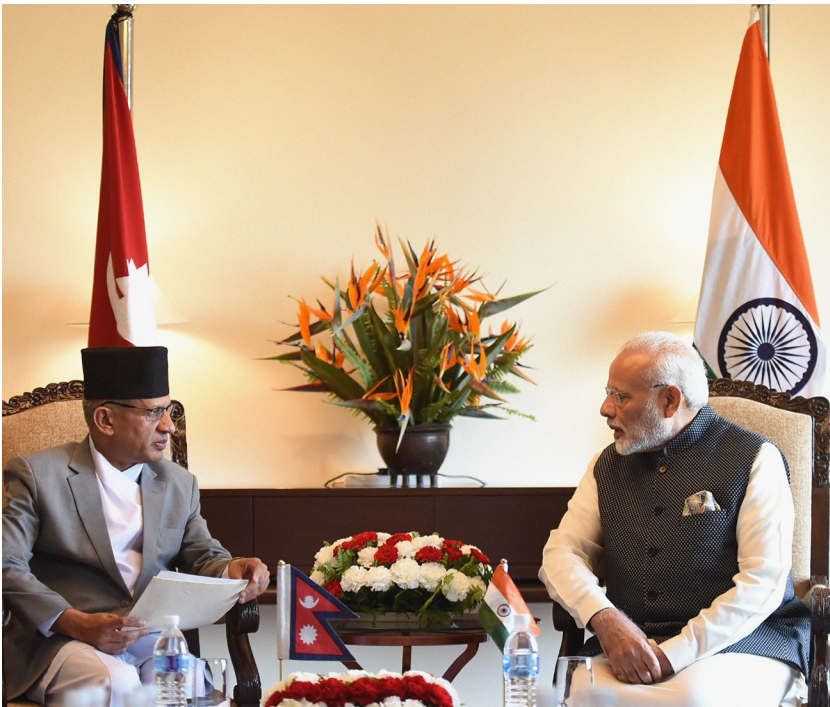
legitimate forum to deliberate and resolve the international issues of common concern.

Under the UN initiative, Nepal Chaired and led the process of Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries during the 4th UN Conference for LDCs held in Istanbul. The Conference adopted Istanbul Program of Action (IPOA) for the Decade 2011-2020. The IPOA charts out international community's vision and strategy for sustainable development of LDCs with a strong focus on developing their productive capacities. In line with the goal of the IPOA, Nepal has been preparing for the next cycle of review for graduating from LDC status.

At present, Nepal contributes to the UN processes as the Chair of the Bureau of Committee on Conference; Vice-Chair of the Executive Board of the UNICEF; Vice-Chair of the 28th Meeting of State Parties to the UN Convention on Law of the Sea; Vice-Chair of the Disarmament Commission; member of the UN Human Rights Council; member of the Executive Board of the UN Women; member of the Commission on Science and Technology Development; and Deputy Member of the ILO Governing Board. Through these roles we have been closely working with the UN and contributing to the multilateral process.



Meeting with His Excellency Donald Trump and Ms. Trump, New York



Meeting with His Excellency Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India



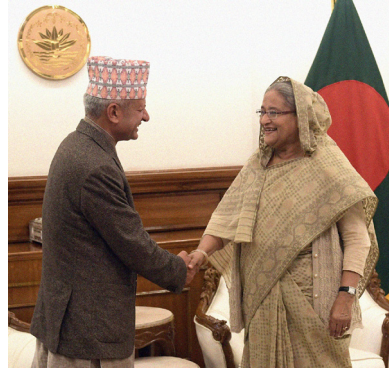
With His Excellency Xi  
Jinping, Beijing, China



With HE Antonio Guterres, UNSG, New York



With His Excellency Abdul Hamid, President of Bangladesh, Dhaka



With Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Dhaka



With His Excellency Ilham Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan, Baku

With His Excellency  
Ibrahim Mohamed Solih,  
President of Maldives,  
Male



With HE Mr Battulga Khaltman, President of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar



With HE Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Prime Minister, Vietnam, Hanoi



With FM of Myanmar, in the presence of PM KP Sharma Oli and State Councillor Aung San Suu Kyi



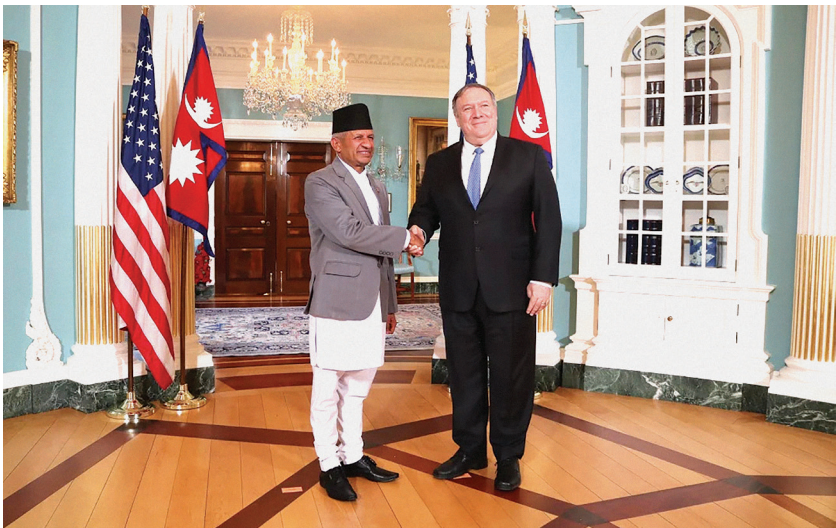
With HE Vice President of China



With HE Srimati Sushma Swaraj, EAM of India, New Delhi



With HE Wang Yi, State Counciler and FM of China, Beijing



With US Secretary of State HE Mike Pompeo, Washington DC



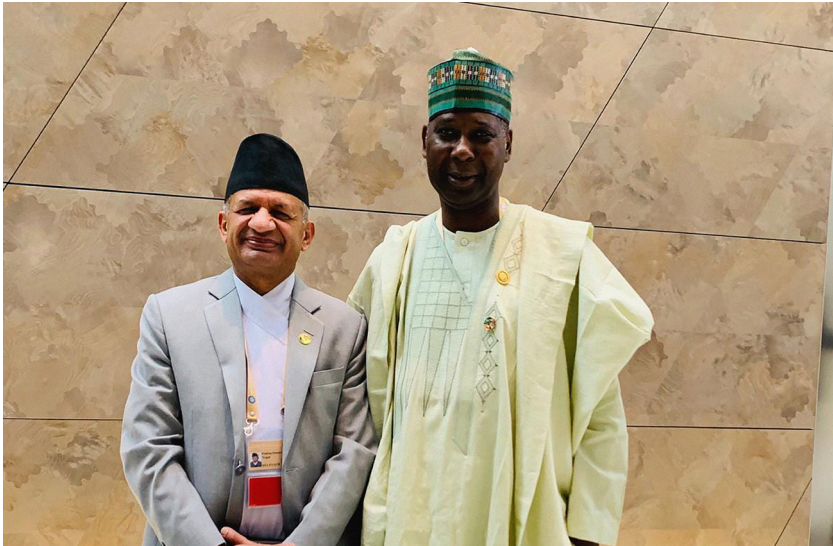
With HE Sergei Lavrov, FM, Russian Federation, Moscow



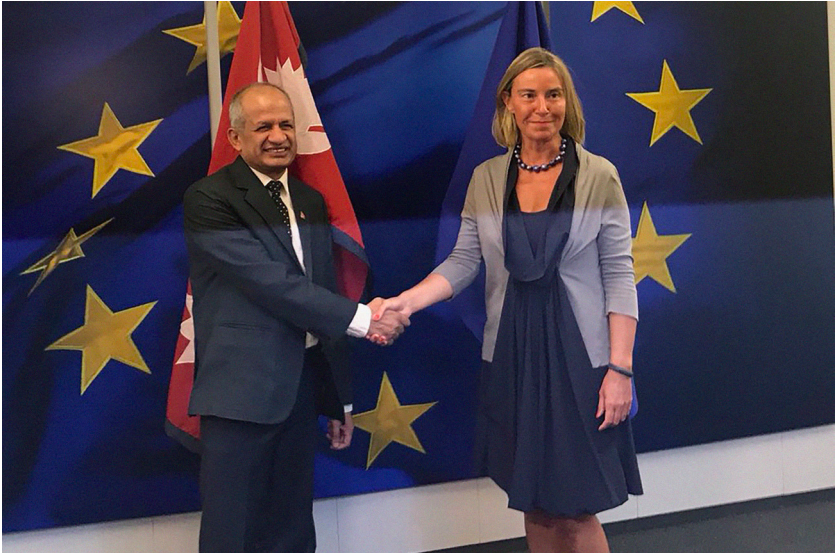
With HE Taro Kono, FM, Japan



With HE Dr. S. Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs of India



With HE Tijjani Mohammed Bande, President of the 74th session of the United National General Assembly at the sideline of NAM Summit



With HE Federica Mogherini, EU Vice President and High Representative, Brussels



With Norwegian Minister for International Development H.E. Mr. Nikolai Astrup

# | 04 | Democracy, Peace and Human Rights

# Nepal's Pursuit of Democracy and Human Rights

It is indeed an honour to address this august session after 11 years since I first addressed this Council in 2007.

I bring warm greetings on behalf of the people and Government of Nepal for the success of this session.

At the outset, let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, and members of the Bureau and assure Nepal's full support.

I also express sincere thanks to Madam High Commissioner for her commitment and unwavering service of her office to the work of the Council.

Mr. President,

While addressing the 73rd session of the UNGA last September, the Prime Minister of Nepal Rt. Honourable Mr. K P Sharma Oli had said and I quote, “[We] hold the view that development, democracy and respect for human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. As a member of the Human Rights Council, we will continue to play our constructive role to

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*Statement at the High-Level Segment of the 40th Session of Human Rights Council, Geneva, 27 February 2019*

deliver on Council's mandates." Unquote.

This statement essentially reflects Nepal's firm commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights at home and constructively contribute to fulfill the mandate of this Council as its member.

“ **We have been able to bring transformative change in the empowerment of women, indigenous people, Dalits, Madheshis, persons with disabilities, among others. They are now at the forefront of political and development process.**”

We believe in multilateralism with the United Nations at its center. Nepal holds strong faith in the principles and values enshrined in the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other human rights instruments to which we are a party.

We firmly believe in the universality, indivisibility, interrelatedness, interdependence and mutually reinforcing nature of human rights, including the right to development. All human rights must be treated in a fair and equal manner on the same footing and with the same emphasis. Our approach must remain balanced and all human rights must be operational at national, regional, and international levels. The rule of law must work at all levels.

Peace and human rights cannot be achieved without attaining inclusive development. We consider that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Global Compact on Migration provide wider platforms to advance inclusive human rights agenda everywhere. Faithful implementation of these landmark compacts and other relevant internationally agreed development frameworks is central to the enjoyment of human rights by all.

As we celebrate the centenary of International Labour Organization and the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, these milestone events should inspire us to further advance human-centered

future of work and the human rights agenda.

Mr. President,

The Human Rights Council and its mechanisms have been playing an important role for the protection and promotion of human rights. The work of this Council should rekindle a hope for all those that look upon us as a voice of conscience. This becomes possible only when the Council acts in unison for all those that deserve our attention and avoids politicization, selectivity, and double standards. Our commitment and action should speak in harmony.

The Universal Periodic Review mechanism has successfully evolved as a platform of positive international cooperation in the field of human rights. This represents a transparent and fair process for all. We consider that the spirit of cooperation and desire to improve human rights situation everywhere through UPR process should be further promoted. In Nepal, we have been implementing the outcome of second cycle of UPR in earnest under a clear plan of actions.

Mr. President,

Nepal represents a uniquely successful case of democratic political transformation. At the center of this process lies our aspiration to ensure equal rights to all Nepali people.

Therefore, Nepal's commitment to the universal values of human rights is total. We are a party to all major international human rights instruments, including seven of the nine core human rights conventions. We have internalized those values into our national laws, policies and practices.

The Constitution of Nepal is founded on universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms and such other principles as inclusive multiparty democratic polity, pluralism, the rule of law, representative and accountable government, social justice, and independent judiciary. Equality and non-discrimination lie at the core of it. The Constitution guarantees special measures that all sections of our society are enabled to enjoy those rights and receive fair share of representation in all spheres of national life, including politics, governance, health, education, employ-

ment, and social security.

We have put in place requisite legal and institutional arrangements to realize those provisions. The year 2018 essentially remained a year of human rights law making. We accomplished the task of enacting implementing legislations for all human rights enshrined in the Constitution.

The National Human Rights Commission of Nepal confirms to the Paris principle and stands accredited as 'A' category national human rights institution for years.

Separate independent and constitutionally empowered Commissions have been established to promote and protect the rights and interests of women, Dalits, indigenous nationalities, Madheshis, Tharus and Muslims. National Inclusion Commission is mandated to ensure that the constitutional and legal provisions are effectively implemented.

True to our commitment, we have all along remained constructively engaged with the UN human rights mechanisms and fulfilled our reporting obligations. Last year alone, three periodic reports of Nepal under CRPD, CERD and CEDAW were considered by the respective treaty bodies. We hosted Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants and Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Its Causes and Consequences. We have extended invitation to the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food and are keen on welcoming her to Nepal sometime this year.

Nepal was one of the pioneering countries to mainstreaming human rights agendas into national policies and plans through Human Rights National Action Plan. Currently the fourth series of the Action Plan (2014-19) is under implementation and the fifth one is being prepared in tandem with the national development plan for next five years.

Mr. President,

Having firmly set the political course in place, we are resolutely focused on economic agenda with the long-term vision of "Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali". We are in the mission of enabling our people to fully enjoy all human rights. Landmark schemes of contribution-based social security scheme, universal health insurance program and Prime Minister

Employment Program have been launched.

Forty-five percent of the public sector employment has been reserved for weaker sections of our population. The policy of affirmative action has significantly enhanced access to education, health services, employment opportunities and political participation.

“ **The story of gender equality and empowerment is particularly inspiring. Women now represent 33 per cent at the federal and provincial assemblies, and total 41% in all elected bodies. Nepal currently has a woman Head of State.**

We have been able to bring transformative change in the empowerment of women, indigenous people, Dalits, Madheshis, persons with disabilities, among others. They are now at the forefront of political and development process.

The story of gender equality and empowerment is particularly inspiring. Women now represent 33 per cent at the federal and provincial assemblies, and total 41% in all elected bodies. Nepal currently has a woman Head of State.

Strengthening of national capacity remains our priority. Nepal's independent judiciary has made contribution to further enrich human rights jurisprudence. We have abolished death penalty and do not condone impunity.

Nepal is a uniquely successful case of nationally owned and nationally led peace process. To conclude the last leg of this process, term of the two independent Commissions- the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons- have been recently extended to allow time to complete their mandates. We are preparing for the amendment of the laws in consultation with and participation of the victims to further enhance the capacity of the Commissions. There exists a requisite political will to conclude this last leg of the peace process in equally unique way.

In doing so, we will be guided by the Comprehensive Peace Accord, directive of the Supreme Court, relevant international commitments, concerns of the victims and the ground realities. There will be no blanket amnesty to the cases of serious violations of human rights.

Civil society organizations have been important partners in our development efforts. We value the role of the media, free press and civil society in the promotion and protection of human rights.

To conclude, Mr. President, Nepal truly believes that together we can provide a strong voice to all those who look up to the Council and make a positive difference in their lives by upholding the mantle of human rights.

We are a young democracy. We are keen to learn from the wider world, share our own experience in the field, and contribute for the promotion and protection of human rights. Our experience so far in the Council has given much needed confidence to consolidate democracy, peace and human rights in the country. With this in mind, Nepal has presented candidature for the re-election to the Council for the second term 2021-2023 and we count on your support and cooperation.

We know that no country has ever achieved perfection in human rights. What is important is how sincerely and seriously we are aiming higher and better. We consider that Nepal has been consistently doing better and we are genuinely willing to improve further. With this open mind and genuine desire we have come to this session.

## Enforced Disappearance in Asia: Prevailing Laws, Challenges and Solutions

I begin by thanking the organizers- Informal Sector Service Centre and Advocacy Forum- for inviting me to be part of this session of the workshop.

The issue you have chosen to deliberate over these two days is important to all of us, particularly the countries that have emerged from internal upheavals or conflicts.

I am confident that this exercise would be useful to learn from each other's experiences and strive for the betterment.

Nepal's democracy is an outcome of long struggles to secure fundamental freedom, human rights, and justice to all of our citizens.

The Government elected by overwhelming popular mandate and led by the leaders who sacrificed everything for the establishment of rights and freedom to the people, remained in prison for many years, or suffered human rights violations, is resolutely committed to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedom of our people.

For this reason, Nepal has made strong constitutional and legal safeguards

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*Statement at the Workshop on "Enforced Disappearance in Asia: Prevailing Laws, Challenges and Solutions" Kathmandu, 27 May 2019*

against all human rights violations, including the act of enforced disappearances and ensured adequate judicial remedies in case of violations.

The Constitution of Nepal guarantees right to freedom to every citizen and protects people's personal life and liberty.

The Constitution provides that no person can be taken into custody without informing the ground for such arrest. Arrested person's right to be produced before the court within 24 hours and the right to consult with a lawyer is protected as the fundamental right.

The Constitution is explicit that unless there exists sufficient ground of imminent threat to the sovereignty, territorial integrity or public peace and order of the country, no person can be held under preventive detention. Existence of such a situation is determined by the court of law not by law enforcement authorities.

Information about the situation of a person who is held under preventive detention is required to be communicated immediately to his or her family

“ **Nepal is a State party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture, Cruel or Inhuman Treatment or Punishment. We have adhered to the provisions of those instruments in good faith. Our commitment to human rights is total.**

members or relatives. Any person subjected to preventive detention in bad faith is entitled to claim compensation from the State.

Right against physical or mental torture or cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment is guaranteed with adequate judicial remedies in case of infringement of such right. The person or authority involved in such treatment is punishable by law.

To comply with the order of the Supreme Court (2007) and to make necessary legal protection against the act of enforced disappearance, the penal

code of Nepal has criminalized such act and provided legal remedies to the victim.

Nepal is a State party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture, Cruel or Inhuman Treatment or Punishment. We have adhered to the provisions of those instruments in good faith. Our commitment to human rights is total.

Nepal transitioned through a stage of internal conflict. As per the spirit of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) signed between the Government and the then rebel party in November 2006, one of the important task of the peace process was to find the truth, make the perpetrators of serious violations of human rights accountable and provide reparation to the victims.

With the view to implement the CPA and in line with the provision of the Interim Constitution and the order of the Supreme Court, Nepal in 2015 established two separate commissions- the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission on the Investigation of Enforced Disappeared Persons (CIEDP) to deal with the conflict era human rights violations.

The mandate of the Commissions is based on the principles of truth-seeking, inquiry, accountability, reconciliation, reparations, and measures of non-repetition.

The CIEDP has collected over 3 thousand complaints and commenced preliminary investigation of over 2 thousand and 2 hundred cases. The Mandate of the CIDEP has been extended up until February 2020 and the Government is in the process of appointing members of the commission to complete the remaining tasks.

For this purpose, necessary amendment to the Act was done recently to initiate an independent process of selecting the candidates to serve in the Commissions.

As required by the TRC Act, the Government of Nepal has constituted an independent five-member recommendation committee headed by former

Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

The Committee is mandated by law to recommend most qualified persons to serve in the two transitional justice commissions. The Committee has begun its work and is expected to complete it in due course of time. Upon appointment of the members of the Commissions,

At the same time, to address the concerns raised on the TRC Act, the Government is preparing to submit amendment to the Act in the current session of the Federal Parliament. A broad-based consultation was conducted in an open, inclusive and transparent manner. The comments, feedbacks and suggestions received are being examined to further enrich the content of the amendment Bill.

The Government of Nepal reiterates that the perpetrators of serious violations of human rights will not go unpunished.

We have reaffirmed in every appropriate occasion that transitional justice process will be guided by the Comprehensive Peace Accord, directive of the Supreme Court, relevant international commitments, concerns of the victims and the ground realities. Independence of the Commissions will be guaranteed and adequate resources including budgetary, human and technical will be ensured by the Government of Nepal.

Nepal successfully traversed through an arduous journey of peace process with strong resolve and commitment of Nepali political leadership, unwavering support of Nepali people, and the continuous good will and understanding of the international community, including the United Nations.

Despite the pains and losses of the past internal conflict, the nationally led peace process that followed was able to bring fundamental democratic transformation in political, social and human rights realm of the country.

Those achievements have now been firmly institutionalized in the Constitution of Nepal. Sustaining peace has been the earnest desire of Nepali people and this becomes critically important for the consolidation of hard-earned political achievements.

As a country that steered through the uniquely successful peace process, Nepal is confident that we have the capacity and necessary political will to conclude the transitional justice process in equally unique and satisfactory way.

Most Often, the legacy of a conflict is very complex and generate contradictory perspectives because of the intrinsic plurality of social memories. The subtlety and criticality of the issue demands us to avoid generalization and consider all nuances into account. We must find a way to address the grievances of the victims, and accommodate the long term need of the society and the nation to build sustainable peace.

Building peace in post conflict situation is a complex process that requires restoring political machinery and civil service, holding free elections, drafting a new constitution, guaranteeing a minimum physical security, stabilizing the economy, rebuilding the economic infrastructure, reintegrating the former armed group, helping the victim, keeping the confidence of international community, and finally tackling the transitional justice.

On top of that, ensuring ownership of all political forces in the process remains critical element to the success of a peace process.

In Nepal we broadly achieved all these elements through a long but inclusive process of dialogue and accommodation, mutual respect and negotiation taking the supreme interest of the country at the centre by all stakeholders. They were the key elements for the success of Nepali peace process.

As we consolidate peace for achieving far reaching political, social, and economic reforms, we consider that development, democracy, and respect for human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

Our peace process had an organic evolution that addressed root causes of the conflict through a democratic restructuring of the State in an inclusive, transparent and participatory manner taking into account the great diversity of Nepal. This process was enriched by the contributions from the civil society, media, and scholars alike.

Since the Government has expressed willingness to plug the perceived shortcomings in the TRC Act by way of amendment, we need to allow the institutions to function and look for the outcome. We cannot be misled by conjecture. The CIDEP is tasked with the publication of its report based on the evidence and appreciation of the facts. The final result of the two commissions will certainly demonstrate the aspects of truth and justice that we want the two commissions to deliver on.

Government of Nepal has reiterated that the perpetrators of the serious violations of human rights will not go unpunished. Similarly, the independence and impartiality of the Commission will be guaranteed and adequate resources including budgetary, technical, and human will be provided by the Government of Nepal.

To conclude, let me stress that human life is highly regarded in our culture. The idea of justice has had a deep reverence for compassion, repentance, and forgiveness. These values along with the principles of rehabilitation, reformation, reconciliation, and transformation have always been showing us the path towards full respect for dignity of human life.

We need to reflect on our past, contemplate the future, and carry forward the present to bring a closure to our painful memories.

I wish you all to have a fruitful and engaging sessions ahead. I hope that the deliberations that you will have here today will be valuable to those that need it the most.

## The Question of Death Penalty

Thank you for convening this important panel.

I am aware that we are yet to have a consensus on the question of death penalty. I know arguments are there on both sides, and national jurisprudences on death penalty are founded on the perspectives and arguments they deem as important.

In the case of Nepal, we remain an abolitionist. There is a long background how we came to the stage of complete abolition of death penalty. We consider the right to life as sacred and inviolable, and a basis for all human rights. Our faith in personal liberty, integrity and dignity of human life, and respect of human rights lies at the core of our choice to go for complete abolition of death penalty. It is our conscious national choice, and reflection of the values we share in common.

In this context, let me briefly share the historical context that led to the abolition of death penalty in Nepal and subsequent adoption of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1998 without any reservation.

Modern State of Nepal has had a long history of “Leadership from the front”

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*Statement at the High level Panel Discussion, on The Question of Death Penalty, Geneva, 26 February 2019*

in the abolitionist movement. The first moratorium on death penalty was made in 1931 with some exception to Army and Sedition related cases.

Even in the times when death penalty was not abolished, it was used in “rarest of the rare cases” only. The then jurisprudence was basically guided by faith, and had put restrictions on the legitimacy of the death penalty.

The legal reforms following major political changes have always taken up the abolitionist agenda. The amendment to the National Code in 1964 abolished the provision of Death Penalty. However, provisions of death penalty remained in the serious military and sedition crimes.

We did have a setback in the abolitionist movement. Death Penalty provisions were introduced in certain grievous crimes under a sunset law in 1985. But within five years, it was repealed.

“ **Nepal believes in the universal abolition of death penalty. The right to life is the bedrock of all human rights.** ”

The Constitution that came into being in 1990 explicitly prohibited making of any law providing for capital punishment. Thus, it took almost 59 years for us to reach full abolition of death penalty. We abolished the remnants of death penalty from the military and sedition laws subsequently. This has been carried forward in all major legal frameworks that followed.

Therefore, abolition of death penalty was possible through long and conscious effort of all stakeholders including political leaders, civil society, human rights defenders, and media.

Contributions made by faith and faith leaders is implicit in this process, so is the inspiration of our tradition, culture, and value system. Human life is highly regarded in our culture. The idea of justice has had a deep reverence for compassion, repentance, and forgiveness. These values along with the principles of rehabilitation, reformation, reconciliation, and transformation have always been showing us the path towards the

full respect and dignity to life.

Nepal believes in the universal abolition of death penalty. The right to life is the bedrock of all human rights. Death penalty ends all possibility of correction and reform in an individual. Elimination is not an answer. Instead, we need to fight the root causes of crime which might be poverty, deprivation, destitution, and marginalization.

We appreciate all efforts towards abolition, no matter the intensity and scope of such initiatives. Abolitionist movement is a long and gradual but sure pathway. It will take time. As we advance the cause of right to life, of human rights and values of human respect and dignity, time will come to make us feel that it is necessary to go for abolition.

I would like to thank again for this opportunity to share our experience on the abolition of death penalty. We are fully confident that the universal abolition will be achieved at its pace and in due time.

I thank you.

# Multilateral Cooperation on Human Rights for Peace and Prosperity

I feel honoured to be back to the Council again.

This session is taking place at the beginning of the new decade marked by optimism, empowerment, and equality.

With the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration, the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, and a full circle of a hundred years of multilateralism, we have come a long way towards realizing the common aspiration of ‘leaving no one behind’ by ensuring opportunity, justice, and human rights for all.

These landmark events remind us of our determination to maintaining world peace, protecting human rights and fundamental freedom, and embracing socio-economic progress.

Nepal remains steadfast in those commitments, principles and values.

Nepal firmly believes in the universality, in-divisibility, inter-relatedness, inter-dependence and mutually reinforcing nature of human rights, including the right to development. We believe that the rule of law and

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*Statement as the Head of Nepali delegation at the High-Level Segment of the 43rd Session of Human Rights Council Geneva, Tuesday, 25 February 2020.*

human rights must be evenly operational at national, regional and international levels.

We are a party to all major international human rights instruments including seven of the nine core such instruments. We have internalized those values and standards into our national laws, policies, and practices.

The Constitution of Nepal is founded on universally recognized human rights and such other principles as inclusive multiparty democratic polity,

“ **Nepal firmly believes in the universality, in-divisibility, inter-relatedness, inter-dependence and mutually reinforcing nature of human rights, including the right to development. We believe that the rule of law and human rights must be evenly operational at national, regional and international levels.**

pluralism, the rule of law, and representative and accountable government. Independence of judiciary and full freedom of press are the salient tenets of Nepal's Constitution.

Social justice is integral to our democratic process. The Constitution guarantees special measures for weaker sections of our society to enable them enjoy fundamental rights and receive a fair share of representation in all spheres of national life.

Nepal, as a secular State, guarantees freedom of religion as a fundamental right. The religious tolerance in Nepali society is exemplary.

We recognize the role of the grassroots community organizations, civil society, human rights defenders, and the media as the indispensable partners in the promotion and protection of human rights.

The National Human Rights Commission of Nepal conforms to the Paris Principles and stands accredited as 'A' category national human rights institution.

As one of the pioneer countries to implement National Human Rights Action Plan since 2004, we are now preparing the 5th National Action Plan.

Having achieved democratic political order and stability in the country, Nepal is now focused to realize the vision of “Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali”. We have mainstreamed Sustainable Development Goals into the national development plan with a view to realize them by 2030.

We practice equality and non-discrimination and remain committed to ensuring full enjoyment of all human rights by women and girls. The progress made by Nepal in terms of gender equality and empowerment provides a reason to be proud.

Marking the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child last year, we have pledged to ending all forms of child labour, ending Child Marriage and enacted the Right to Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Act.

We are fully committed to the rights of persons with disabilities. The measures of positive discrimination that we have implemented to enable them to participate in political and public life have produced good impacts. Provisioning of adequate resources and infrastructure for quality and inclusive education for children with disabilities remains our continued priority.

Migration has been one of the defining phenomena of our time.

Being one of the major countries of origin; safety, security, dignity, and welfare of the migrant workers is a matter of paramount importance for us.

Protection of rights of migrant workers, including women migrant workers, and combating trafficking in person requires cooperative efforts at national, regional, and international levels. We believe that the historic commitment expressed through Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) provides a framework of cooperation to ensuring migration benefits for all.

A clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is essential for the full

enjoyment of all human rights.

As a mountainous country, impact of global warming is of particular concern for us. While we support Council's attention to human rights vis a vis climate change, Nepal has initiated a multi-stakeholder global dialogue forum- Sagarmatha Sambaad- named after the world's tallest mountain, known as the Mt. Everest, to deliberate on the issues of common interest.

The first edition of this dialogue will be convened in Kathmandu from 2 to 4 April this year on the theme of 'Climate Change, Mountains and the Future of the Humanity'.

Nepal presents a uniquely successful case of nationally led and owned conflict transformation and peace process. We are dealing with the incidences of conflict era human rights violations through two independent Commissions - the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission for Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons. The term of the Commissions has been extended to ensure the completion of their work. The newly appointed Commissioners have started functioning in full swing.

We stand firmly to our commitment to addressing remaining issues of transitional justice in accordance with the Comprehensive Peace Accord, directive of the Supreme Court, relevant international commitments, concerns of the victims, and the ground realities.

Nepal appreciates the continuous goodwill and understanding of the international community.

The Human Rights Council and its mechanisms have been playing important role in promoting universal respect for all human rights.

The UPR has successfully evolved as a transparent and fair process of promoting dialogue and cooperation and a meaningful exercise for the improvement of human rights situation everywhere.

In Nepal, we have been implementing the outcome of the second cycle of UPR in earnest under an updated plan of actions. Nepal looks forward to

the Third Cycle of Review in November this year.

Nepal attaches great importance to the work of Special Procedures mandate-holders. We continue to be constructively engaged with them. We welcome country visits by Special Procedures at a mutually convenient time. We regularly respond to the Communications of the Special Procedures and treaty bodies.

We are committed to our obligation to submit periodic reports on regular basis. In 2018 alone, Nepal's periodic reports under CRPD, CERD and CEDAW were considered. Preparation of latest reports under CAT, ICCPR, ICESCR and CRC are underway.

Our experience as a member of the Council has inspired us to consolidate democracy, advance socio-economic transformation, and promote universal respect for and observance of human rights. We have made utmost efforts to fulfil our pledges and commitments.

In this spirit, Nepal has submitted candidature for the membership of the Human Rights Council for the second term 2021 to 2023. We count on the valuable support of all UN Member States.

We have strong faith in the values of multilateralism to strengthen and sustain our common aspiration of a peaceful, prosperous and just world. We remain committed to working together in a balanced and objective manner for the universal protection and promotion of human rights.

I thank you.

## Total and unequivocal commitment to Human Rights

I have the honor to present Nepal's national report to the UPR Working Group. I appreciate the Human Rights Council for the arrangements made for this review despite the constraints posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Madam President,

Nepal is guided by the spirit of dialogue and cooperation and considers the Universal Periodic Review as a truly unique, constructive and cooperative mechanism. Let me convey our gratitude to members of the Troika, namely, India, Argentina and Burkina Faso, for facilitating Nepal's review. As I present the updates on the status of implementation of the recommendations and major strides taken by Nepal since the last review, I reiterate Nepal's willingness for an open and constructive dialogue with the Member and observer States during this review.

As a member of the Council for the second term, Nepal is grateful to all the UN member States for their support to our candidature during the recently held elections for both the Human Rights Council and CEDAW Committee. Nepal remains firmly committed to the work and effectiveness

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*Opening Statement to the 37th Session of the Human Rights Council Working Group on Universal Periodic Review, Geneva, Thursday, 21 January 2021*

of the Council for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Today, I am accompanied by the Chief Secretary of the Government of Nepal, Secretary at the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers and the Secretaries of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs; Home Affairs; Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs; Health and Population; Women, Children, and Senior Citizens; Labour, Employment and Social Security; and Education, Science and Technology.

Nepal's Ambassador and Permanent Representative in Geneva and officials of the Permanent Mission are joining from Geneva.

A dedicated Committee led by the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers was formed with cross-sectoral representation for the preparation of the national report. Wider outreach and consultation with the National Human Rights Commission, other constitutional commissions, provincial government and local level bodies, civil society, community organizations, human rights defenders, and the media immensely contributed to the preparatory process. Most of them also provided with the written inputs. In the context of COVID-19 related health protocols and lockdown, some of the planned consultations and workshops had to be conducted in virtual format in all seven provinces, where more than 700 Civil Society Organizations participated. Two consultative meetings were held with the Law, Justice and Human Rights Committee of the House of Representatives. Draft National Report was also disseminated for feedback and comments from all stakeholders and general public. Inputs thus received were incorporated in the final report prior to the submission.

Nepal firmly believes in the universality, indivisibility, interdependence, interrelatedness, and mutually reinforcing nature of human rights, including the right to development. Our commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights is total and unequivocal and we believe that the rule of law and human rights should be evenly operational at national, regional, and international levels. As a State Party to seven core human rights Conventions and six Optional Protocols; seven humanitarian Conventions, including the four Geneva Conventions of 1949; 11 ILO Conventions; and 14 other international and two regional conventions that have direct bearing on human rights, Nepal strongly upholds the values

enshrined in those Conventions.

These values are duly internalized in our Constitution in the form of comprehensive bill of fundamental rights, democratic polity, pluralism, the rule of law, accountable government, inclusive participation, and social and economic justice.

A country emerging from conflict amidst compounded odds including the massive Earthquake of 2015 and recurrent natural disasters; we have made sincere efforts for the promotion and protection of human rights of our people.

Madam President,

Nepal had accepted a total of 152 recommendations during the 2nd cycle of UPR in 2015, most of which have now been implemented. A dedicated mechanism at the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers was designated for the monitoring of the implementation.

Since the last review in 2015, Nepal's periodic reports under CRC, CRPD, CERD, and CEDAW were considered by the respective treaty bodies. Preparation of such reports under CAT, ICCPR and ICESCR are in progress.

Nepal acceded to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol) in June last year. We intend to build necessary legal and institutional capacity for joining additional international instruments.

Nepal attaches great importance to the work of Special Procedures Mandate-Holders. In 2018, Nepal invited Special Rapporteurs on the Human Rights of Migrants and Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women for a country visit. We look forward to welcoming the Special Rapporteur on the right to food and Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights this year.

Madam President,

The National Human Rights Commission of Nepal, an independent Constitutional body, has been working as a powerful watchdog to protect and

promote human rights in the country. Accredited as the “A” category institution, the Commission fully embraces the Paris Principles, and exercises a wide range of investigatory, supervisory, directive, and recommendatory powers for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Other independent thematic Commissions on Women, Dalit, Indigenous Nationalities, Madheshi, Tharu, and Muslim Community have been actively working for the promotion and protection of rights and interests of these specific communities.

Nepal’s independent judiciary acts as the guardian of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It has the power of judicial review to assess the constitutionality of any laws passed by federal, provincial, or village or municipal legislature, and may declare them ultra-vires if found inconsistent with the Constitution. The Judiciary has given landmark judicial pronouncements, expanding the scope of human rights jurisprudence.

Madam President,

Nepal embarked upon a new era of political transformation in 2006 which was consolidated by the democratic Constitution adopted in 2015 by the Constituent Assembly. The Constitution guarantees a wide array of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights akin to those provided by international human rights instruments. It consolidates an inclusive and participatory federal democratic republican order following the successful transformation of conflict into peace through a home-grown, nationally led and owned peace process.

The Constitution of Nepal is founded on the value of equality and non-discrimination and guarantees special provisions for the empowerment and development of the backward section of society. Nepal has for long abolished death penalty. Effective constitutional and judicial remedies are provided in case of infringement of the fundamental rights. As one of the pioneer countries to implement National Human Rights Action Plan since 2004, we are now implementing the 5th in series of such Action Plan. Implementation and follow up of UPR and treaty bodies recommendations are integral part of it.

Over the past four years, a comprehensive, transparent, and consultative legal reform process was undertaken both to implement Nepal's human rights commitments as well as to drive the federalization process. Necessary fundamental-rights-implementing-laws have been enacted within three years after the adoption of the Constitution. Several prevailing laws have been revised and consolidated, and dozens of new laws have been enacted.

A new set of rights, such as, right to live in a clean and healthy environment; right to food sovereignty; right to social security; and the rights specific to senior citizens and children have been guaranteed in the Constitution.

In 2017, Nepal successfully held free, fair, transparent, and broad-based participatory elections at the federal, provincial, and local levels, embracing the principle of proportional and inclusive representation while institutionalizing democratic and accountable governance at all levels. Nepal has a woman as the Head of State. Earlier, we had women as the President, Chief Justice, and Speaker of the Parliament at the same time, which reflects a rare example of women empowerment in national leadership. It is mandatory to have at least two women out of five local-level ward members and one of them must be from the Dalit community.

Currently, women constitute 41 percent of elected public offices and 25 percent of civil service. Women participation in labour force has reached 83 percent. As we recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Nepal is happy to share these achievements.

Women are fully empowered by the Constitution and enjoy right to lineage and equal rights in the family matters and property. Sexual and reproductive health rights of every woman and girl have been firmly established by law. Sexual violence constitutes a serious crime. Polygamy, child marriage, forced marriage, sexual harassment in the workplace as well as sexual and domestic violence are strictly punishable by law. Enforcement of the laws related to human trafficking and domestic violence has been further strengthened to end gender-based violence and discrimination.

Nepal stands among a few countries that have been implementing UN

Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace and Security through a National Plan of Action. We are one of the pioneer countries to implement gender-responsive budget system since 2007.

Madam President,

Peaceful assembly and association, freedom of expression, and right to information are prerequisites for good governance. Nepal regards civil society and the media as indispensable partners in the promotion and protection of human rights. Nepal has formulated Digital Nepal Framework 2019 to unlock Nepal's growth potential through the wider use of digital technology. In an ever-changing digital world, ensuring access to quality information, digital inclusion, and the protection of every citizen's privacy and wellbeing becomes important consideration. The draft Bills relating to the Information Technology, Media Council and the National Human Rights Commission that were presented to the Parliament have now been lapsed as the House of Representatives stands dissolved.

A multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural country, Nepal believes in equality, inclusion, secularism, non-discrimination, social justice and development of all of its people.

Discrimination on the basis of class, caste, region, language, religion, and gender are outlawed. Discrimination in public places and in the use of public services and utilities is strictly prohibited. Stringent legal and enforcement measures have been taken to investigate and punish any of such acts. Untouchability is strictly punishable under the law.

Nepal has ratified the ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. The Indigenous people and those from the communities on the verge of extinction have the right to get special opportunities and benefits from the state. Two independent and empowered entities- the Indigenous Nationalities Commission, a constitutional body and the National Foundation for Development of Indigenous People, a statutory body, work to look after the rights and interest of indigenous people. The right-based policy measures are incorporated in the national development plans for ensuring their participation.

The Constitution guarantees special measures for minorities and the marginalized sections of the society so as to enable them to enjoy fundamental rights and receive a fair share of representation in all spheres of national life.

Inclusive development interventions have been made to improve living condition of the backward section of our society and empower them in all aspects of national life and nurture social harmony and cohesion. Targeted programs for poverty reduction, literacy and employment generation have been implemented. The 15th National Development Plan, which is currently under implementation, aims at promoting inclusive economic growth and creating broad-based foundation for prosperity.

Being a secular State, the Constitution of Nepal guarantees freedom of religion as a fundamental right. Social and cultural harmony, tolerance, and unity in diversity are the inherent tenets of Nepal's identity. The Penal Code criminalizes hate speech, attacks against the religious sites and activities aimed at creating religious discords. Nepal believes that freedom of religion cannot be impaired by coercion or monetary inducement for conversion.

Nepal has been giving utmost importance to tackling the issues of torture, impunity, gender-based violence, exclusion, and inequality. The right of a victim of crime, right against torture, and right against preventive detention has been recognized as the fundamental rights. Any form of physical or mental torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment for any reason is prohibited, and those acts are punishable by law. A victim of torture is entitled to compensation.

Human rights cells have been established in all security agencies, including Nepal Police. Conditions of the prison have been improved with the piloting of open prison system.

The National Penal Code criminalizes torture, rape, and other forms of sexual violence. Statutory limitations for the prosecution of cases of torture and rape have been extended.

Nepali laws protect the right to justice for the victims of crimes in all

stages of investigation, adjudication and social rehabilitation. Special arrangements have been made for victims of rape and sexual violence with regard to limitation and privacy in hearing the cases.

Nepal remains committed to conclude the transitional justice process through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons. Nepal's transitional justice process is guided by the Comprehensive Peace Accord, the directives of the Supreme Court, relevant international commitments, concerns of the

“ **The Constitution has guaranteed the rights of sexual minorities to participate in the State bodies on the basis of inclusive principle.**

victims, and the ground realities. The Government is steadfast that there would be no blanket amnesty in cases of serious violation of human rights.

Nepal considers NGOs and Civil Societies as the building blocks of democracy and human rights and has been forging a constructive and cooperative partnership with NGOs, INGOs, Human Rights Defenders and Civil Society Organizations. A total of 237 INGOs and more than 51,000 NGOs are affiliated to Social Welfare Council, Nepal, which reflects a strong manifestation of the important space being provided to the civil society in Nepal. The reports submitted by NGOs for this review are the testimonies of their vibrant presence in Nepal.

The Constitution has guaranteed the rights of sexual minorities to participate in the State bodies on the basis of inclusive principle. To protect the identity of LGBTI persons, the census and electoral rolls recognize them under “others” category for data entry. Citizenship certificates and passports have been provided with identity of “others” category. Discrimination based on sexual orientation is punishable.

Madam President,

Nepali labour laws protect equal pay for equal value of work for both men and women. The Government has also specified minimum wages for work-

ers. A minimum paid employment of 100 days has been guaranteed for those who do not have gainful employment. Women workers are entitled to paid-maternity leave. Forced labour has been prohibited. Workers have the right to form trade union and engage in collective bargaining.

Nepal has become one of the pathfinder countries of the global partnership, Alliance 8.7, to fulfill its commitment towards ending all kinds of child labour by 2025. Nepal reaffirms its commitment to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. Ending child labour, forced labour, and trafficking in children is in high priority of the Government.

The right-based and inclusive approach has been adopted while devising the plans and policies to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. The Disability Rights Act, 2017 recognizes self-empowerment of persons with disabilities. New building code requires public buildings to be disability friendly. Provision of adequate resources and infrastructures for quality and inclusive education of children with disabilities remains our continued priority.

Every community has the right to basic education in its mother tongue, and the right to preserve and promote its language, and script. The right of every child to receive a free and compulsory basic education, including books and educational materials has been protected by law. Every citizen is entitled to get free education up to the secondary level. Universal enrolment and gender parity in school have been almost achieved with a significant reduction in drop out of girls. Monthly scholarships and day meals are provided to the children from Dalits communities, backward regions, and other marginalized communities. Hygiene kits are provided to adolescent girl students. Distance learning via radio and online classes has been conducted in the pandemic situation.

The Government has reserved 45 percent of scholarships for higher education in medical sciences to students graduated from community schools and for those coming from backward section of our society. Other programs such as day nutrition, scholarship to 50 percent girls at the primary level and provision of women teachers in a specific ratio have produced positive results in terms of increasing enrollment and reducing dropouts.

Human rights education constitutes part of curriculums of education institutions and training of the public officials, including security agencies. Awareness-raising activities have been regularly conducted by both the Government agencies and civil society organizations. Necessary legal and institutional mechanisms have been established to ensure access to justice for all.

The extension of social care and protection has made our cities free from street-children, street-people, and beggars. “Street Children Free Kathmandu Valley” initiative has been implemented and over a thousand street children have already been rescued.

Necessary laws have been enacted to safeguard the right to a clean environment and access to clean drinking water and sanitation. In September 2019, Nepal declared herself as the open defecation free country.

Every citizen has the right to free and equal access to basic health services from the State. Significant progress has been made in strengthening the health system and improving health services of the citizens to ensure universal health services. Under the National Health Insurance scheme, Government of Nepal pays premium for health insurance of the poor, orphans, elderly and persons with disabilities. The coverage of the insurance has been extended to 563 Local Levels of 58 districts with a target of universal coverage eventually.

Free medical treatment is provided to senior citizens above 75 years of age for severe diseases related to heart, kidney, and cancer. Health insurance for the elderly people has been further expanded.

We have recently laid foundations for the construction of basic hospitals in all 396 local levels across the country to provide quality health services at the local level. Infectious disease hospitals are being built in each of the seven provinces.

The elderly, single woman, Dalit, persons with disability, destitute, indigents, and people belonging to the ethnic group on the verge of extinction receive monthly social security allowances. Social security and special protections are recognized as fundamental rights of senior citizens. A

comprehensive contribution-based social security scheme has been rolled out by the Government that provides coverage to the workers in formal and informal sectors.

Nepal attaches high priority to the safety, security, and wellbeing of the migrant workers. We have concluded bilateral agreements with several destination countries for the security, protection and welfare of the migrant workers. Effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development along with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration is essential to make migration safe, dignified and work for all.

The President Women Upliftment Program, Prime Minister Employment Program and Prime Minister Agricultural Modernization Project are being implemented as the flagship programs to generate employment within the country. Returnee migrant workers are provided with concessional loans and other incentives to start self-employment or entrepreneurial activities.

Even though we are not a party to the Refugee Convention and its Protocol, Nepal has sheltered Tibetan and Bhutanese refugees for decades on humanitarian grounds. The extradition law of Nepal fully recognizes the principle of non-refoulement.

Madam President,

The reconstruction work of residential houses, schools, colleges, hospitals, heritage sites, and infrastructures damaged by the devastating earthquakes in 2015 is nearing completion. We have built better infrastructures and capacity for responding to the natural disasters and protecting the lives of people.

Effective and timely implementation of SDGs and other internationally agreed development goals through enhanced partnership and collaboration is a key to the protection of all human rights, including the right to development. Nepal has mainstreamed SDGs into the national development plans and policies with a view to realize them by 2030.

Poverty reduction remains an overarching development agenda of the Government. We have aimed to reduce poverty to 5% by 2030 and to 0% by 2043. We are committed to achieve zero hunger goals of SDG by ensuring

food and nutrition for all. We have been working with the vision of “No one should remain hungry, no one dies of hunger”. Prime Minister Agriculture Modernization Project, Advanced Seed Program and Agriculture Insurance Programme have been implemented to ensure food and nutrition security.

Being a mountainous and agricultural country, Nepal is vulnerable to climate change challenges such as the melting of glaciers, glacial lake outbursts, soil erosion, decrease in productivity, desertification, loss of biodiversity, floods, and landslides, which have become recurring challenges. Nepal is developing a National Adaptation Plan and corresponding Climate Finance Strategy and Roadmap in all local levels. We have set an ambitious target of achieving a net zero-carbon scenario by 2050.

Human Development Index Report 2020 shows some improvement in Nepal’s HDI value. Our economy has recently been elevated to a lower-middle-income country and we are preparing to graduate from the status of the least developed country. Nepal was recording strong economic growth rates in the years preceding to the pandemic.

The health and education-related indicators, specifically nutrition and schooling, in which we were lagging behind, have received renewed priority, including through reforms of public schools for quality education. Investing in people and preventing them from re-lapsing into poverty remains the key challenges.

Nepal under the able leadership of Prime Minister Rt. Honorable Mr. K P Sharma Oli has embraced a long-term vision of “Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali”. Despite resource constraints, we have significantly increased investment in infrastructures and social sectors.

Good governance has been our priority. Adequate resources have been allocated both for prevention as well as investigation and prosecution of the cases of improper conduct and corruption.

Madam President,

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has severe impact on livelihoods, economy, public health and social security systems. The Government of Nepal has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic through measures, such as,

prevention, control, isolation, quarantine and treatment and has adopted various health and safety protocols in compliance with WHO guidelines. We are guided primarily by the three objectives: - strengthening of the health care system, protecting people's lives, and building a sustainable and resilient recovery.

Testing and treatment services are provided free of charge to the needy people. Necessary infrastructures, human and financial resources, and medical equipment are ensured to the health systems at all levels. With a combination of measures employed, we have been able to keep low mortality and higher rate of recovery among the COVID-19 patients.

The Government has directed the concerned agencies to investigate all incidents of caste-based discrimination and violence during the COVID-19 lockdown.

With the outbreak of a new variant of the virus and continued risk of transmission, Nepal, like other LDCs is struggling with capacity constraints. Strengthening the health care system and addressing the needs of vulnerable segment of population remain our top priority.

While development of vaccines has given a new hope, availability and affordability of vaccines becomes critical for a country like Nepal requiring greater international cooperation and solidarity. We commend the initiative of COVAX and generosity of our neighbors to ensure availability of vaccines. The Government of Nepal has already decided to provide the vaccines free of cost to the people.

To conclude, Madame President, Nepal is striving its best for achieving the sustainable development goals and remains committed to ensuring the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by every citizen. I look forward to a constructive dialogue as we continue the review process.

I thank you for your kind attention.

## Nepal's Peace Process: The Dawn of a New Era

It is a distinct honor and privilege for me to extend our warmest welcome to all distinguished guests who have joined us for the Asia-Pacific Summit.

Our deliberations on this occasion will focus on issues pertaining to the pursuit of peace, prosperity, and stability in the world. I do hope that the variety of perspectives and diversity of experience that such discussions bring will be helpful in addressing the many challenges that we face in ensuring a peaceful, secure, and stable world.

It is with this objective in mind that I wish to share with you the unique experience of Nepal's own home-grown, nationally-initiated and -led peace process that successfully put an end to a decade-long armed struggle and brought together forces from across the political spectrum to begin a new chapter in Nepal's long and glorious history.

In the past seven and a half decades, Nepal witnessed several episodes of struggles for political freedom, economic development and social progress, the aspirations, which were repeatedly thwarted by the unchecked ambitions of an absolute monarchy. In 1960, for example, Nepal's nascent

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*Speech at The Asia-Pacific Summit, 1 December 2018*

democracy suffered a severe blow in the form of a royal ‘coup’ which pushed the country into another three decades of autocratic party-less Panchayat system.

The incessant and resolute struggles of the Nepali people for democracy and modernization finally culminated into the People’s Movement of 1990, which led to the restoration of multi-party democracy. Unfortunately, our naïve initiative to confine monarchy within the constitutional set up failed again, since the monarchy could not give up its longing for power. In addition, the deep-rooted structures of exclusion and exploitation perpetrated by a centuries-old feudal system continued unabated. Against this backdrop, the conflict in the form of an armed struggle began. A peaceful and peace-loving nation had to go through a painful and blood-bathed decade in its history. Though it played an important role in fermenting political transformation, regrettably, the ultimate cost of the armed conflict fell upon the people of Nepal. During the decade-long struggle, several thousand lives were lost; many families were torn apart and vital infrastructure suffered irreparable damages.

While the world entered the new millennium, the King harbored the ambition of reviving absolute monarchy, pushing the nation into the labyrinth of dictatorship.

It was at this critical stage that the mainstream political parties and the Maoist rebels realized the need to overthrow absolute monarchy and resolve the decade-long conflict in a peaceful manner. To attain these twin objectives, twelve-point understanding was signed between seven political parties and the rebels, which would be the founding stone of Nepal’s peace process. A compromise was reached this way: the mainstream parties agreed to pursue the constituent assembly election and the republican setup, and the Maoists became ready to give up the arms and join the mainstream democratic course. The agreement reflected a prudent and far-sighted - albeit rather late - realization on the part of Nepal’s political parties to honor the popular will of the Nepali people for peace, democracy and modernization.

Immediately after, there was a rapid build-up of momentum in the democratic struggle. A peaceful popular uprising, also known as the Second

People's Movement or April Uprising, succeeded in forcing the King to yield sovereign power to its legitimate owner –the Nepali people. The dissolved Parliament was reinstated - and expanded later - as an interim legislature-parliament for broader representation.

The comprehensive Peace Accord signed in November 2006 between the Government and the Maoists formally ended the armed conflict. The other agreement signed was on the management of arms and armies. These accords were indeed the milestones in Nepal's homegrown, nationally owned and -led peace process. An interim government was formed with the participation of former rebels to carry out the onerous tasks that lay ahead.

The management of arms and combatants was handled through in-depth and extensive consultations among stakeholders to pave the way for a smooth political process. Some combatants were absorbed into the national army; most of them were reintegrated in society. In tandem, several initiatives were taken for further reform the Nepali Army to make it even more professional and politically neutral while ensuring civilian oversight.

To build confidence among the parties of the conflict in implementing the peace agreement, Nepal invited a UN Mission, with small size and limited mandate, - mandate to monitor arms management. By and large, its presence in the early days of the peace process was helpful in supporting confidence-building measures among the parties of the conflict. Later we realized that Nepal's political parties had full trust and confidence in each other's capability, competence and motivations to carry forward, thence forward the peace process on our own.

As part of the peace process, and to realize the long-held aspirations of the Nepali people, the Constituent Assembly election was held in 2008. The Nepali people voted for an inclusive and representative Constituent Assembly, which declared Nepal a federal democratic republic, abolishing the 240-year old monarchical system. However, the assembly could not agree on the draft constitution owing to the inconclusive debates on several vital issues such as the structures of governance, mode of representation and the basis of federalization. Another election became necessary for

seeking a fresh mandate.

The second election of the Constituent Assembly, held in 2013, continued the democratic process and ultimately adopted a new constitution in September 2015 with the support of over 90 percent majority. The constitution institutionalized federal democratic republic polity in Nepal.

The overwhelming consensus on the new constitution marked a uniquely successful conclusion of the nationally owned peace process in Nepal. The new Constitution has received wide support and acceptance of the Nepali people. This is no small feat, reflecting the extensive consultations and constructive discussions during the lead-up to its promulgation.

I can proudly tell you that, it was really a landmark event in our history. It was an achievement, which materialized Nepali people's long cherished aspirations to have a constitution written by their own elected representatives. It fundamentally marked the conclusion of eight-year long peace process thereby institutionalizing the democratic gains of the people's successive political movements and struggles. That was also a testimony of our ability to resolve the country's internal problems even in extremely testing circumstances.

The overwhelming consensus on the new constitution marked a uniquely successful conclusion of the nationally owned peace process in Nepal.

In the form of the constitution, we were able to lay a foundation whereby the issues such as federal democratic republic, secularism, social justice, proportional representation and people's human rights were institutionalized. The Constitution guarantees equality, safeguards fundamental rights and ensures opportunity for all by putting an end to all forms of discrimination. It also marked the end of a decade-long transition after the Peace Accord and restored hope for a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Nepal.

The constitution, as an epitome of people's sacrifice, dreams, and aspirations, guarantees equal rights, opportunity and dignity to all Nepali people. In particular, it ensures the rights of the disadvantaged groups and communities on the basis of equity and positive discrimination.

More importantly, it provides a basis for the long overdue socio-economic development of the country.

“ **Despite insuperable challenges and difficulties, we have successfully navigated through the difficult waters of conflict resolution. Ours has been an exemplary model of peace process and democratic transition. People from a diverse spectrum of political ideologies and backgrounds and from the heterogeneous mosaic of linguistic groups, ethnicities and regions have come together in the political process for a political settlement that caters to their dreams and aspirations for a brighter future.**

The historic elections, that were held in 2017 at federal, provincial and local levels not only recorded a high number of participation, but also elected people from all sections of society. More than 41 percent of women have been elected in the representative bodies at all levels.

The left alliance, which included the formal rebels, got an overwhelming majority in the elections. Also implicit in the people’s mandate in the elections was the call for unification of the two largest left parties of Nepal. As promised to the people before elections, we are now a single and united Communist Party.

Nepal has achieved much needed political stability, and is marching on the way toward a new era of socio- economic transformation. Just a few days ago, for example, the Government started the implementation of an elaborate social safety net for the people.

The events I described above are just some representative milestones of our political process in recent times. However, I suppose they are sufficient to prove that our democratic struggles and peace process constitute an exemplary model of conflict resolution and peace building.

Our peace process had three major dimensions. On political front, we have accomplished the historical mission by formulating a democratic, just,

and progressive constitution and introducing a federal and inclusive state structure, which mirrors the multilingual, multicultural and multiethnic society of Nepal. On security side, we have settled the former combatants issue through mainstreaming them and making the National Army more representative, inclusive and professional. Now we are finalizing the transitional justice where we have to heal the wounds of conflict, to ensure the new life to thousands of victims and have to end the impunity and prevent reoccurrence of conflict. We are clear- there will be no any blanket amnesty for gross human rights violations, though our major focus will be on the reconciliation.

Despite insuperable challenges and difficulties, we have successfully navigated through the difficult waters of conflict resolution. Ours has been an exemplary model of peace process and democratic transition. People from a diverse spectrum of political ideologies and backgrounds and from the heterogeneous mosaic of linguistic groups, ethnicities and regions have come together in the political process for a political settlement that caters to their dreams and aspirations for a brighter future. Never before in Nepal's history were its people consulted at such length, and with such intense sense of purpose and goal-orientation.

Nepal's experience with peace making and peace-building has been eminently indigenous, with many salient features that are unique to our special circumstances. To quote Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, "Nepal's case is a unique example of peaceful and democratic transformation. It is a telling testimony that dialogue triumphs the differences; and ballot triumphs the bullets." (UNGA statement 2018)

Let me now share my thoughts with you about the lessons that we have learned from our peace process.

The important lesson from our experience is that we should not lose sight of the long-term prospects for peace, and that the parties in the conflict should keep on engaging with each other and seek the common grounds despite their differences in perceptions and positions. The spirit of accommodation, consensus and confidence building is a sine qua non for the successful resolution of conflict. Equally important in any homegrown peace process is strong political will, national leadership and ownership.

As I mentioned earlier, national ownership and leadership have been key features of Nepal's unique peace process. There are, however, several other significant features in our peace process that deserve special mention, and among them are shared vision and unity of purpose; agreed process and mechanisms, consultation and debate; change with continuity; initiative and leadership; and pragmatism and flexibility.

**Vision and Unity of Purpose:** By signing the 12-point agreement, all the major political forces in Nepal had agreed to a single vision: the vision of a democratic, peaceful, prosperous, and socially advanced society by ending autocratic monarchy. Therefore, whenever there were any disagreements, such as in the wake of the failure of the First Constituent Assembly, we knew where to look for: the initial vision for a peace, democracy, and prosperity. Other actions would follow on this major consensus, as they eventually did.

**Agreed process and institutions:** To bring the conflicting parties closer, and to promote ownership, common process and institutions are extremely important. Peace process is not a unilateral step, where one side decides and the other just abides or follows. We developed such institutions and processes, where both sides agreed to sit together and deliberate. The 12-point understandings, cease-fire agreement, Comprehensive Peace Accord, Agreement on the management of arms and ammunitions, Interim constitutions were such frameworks, among others, which guided the peace process. Likewise, Interim parliament, Special committee for combatant management and Constituent Assembly were some important mechanisms, which played the role of common bodies in decision making.

**Consultation and debate:** The devil lies in the details, as they say. Therefore, several precious years were lost in agreeing on the details of a peaceful, democratic, and prosperous society we all wanted to build. However, we did not block the full expression of each other's voices, concerns and fears, because they reflected not discord but debate.

For a time, it seemed as though the cacophony of disparate voices that had permeated through to the very depths of society would shake our confidence and run over any semblance of order or a pathway of conflict resolution. But then gradually, but surely, a pattern evolved. Extreme

forms and expressions of ideas began to falter and then died down with a whimper.

What followed was a spectacular unanimity and consensus on all major issues that we had been grappling with for so many years. Or if there was no unanimity in the beginning, the process itself gave the answer. For instance, there were some grievances during the constitution drafting, and a small number of assembly members abstained in the process. But when the new election under constitution was declared, all sections of society, with overwhelming turnout, participated. Likewise, we began to realize that identity is important, but then it is neither immutable nor unchangeable; besides, we all have multiple identities, all at the same time. We realized that all sections of society should find fair and equitable representation in all layers of political bodies, but then it would also be a good idea to elect some parliamentarians directly for the purpose of promoting leadership and accountability.

Change with continuity: So, while the country was going through a period of momentous change, there was an underlying system of continuity that ensured that abrupt change would not disrupt social structures by setting undesirable precedents. The House of Representatives, which had been dissolved by the King, was re-instated to function as a legislature-parliament by expanding it with the inducting of members from the CPN (Maoist). It was a classic case of change with continuity.

Initiative and Leadership: However, none of such historic change would have been possible without powerful initiatives and strong leadership. Leadership, in turn, is a product of the material conditions of a society, and the special conditions of our country during those years mandated special initiatives. Given the prevailing security conditions in the country, only strong leadership with a view of the distant future in the eyes, and of the welfare of the Nepali people in the heart, could have dared to sign the 12-point agreement in the first place. I again want to emphasize how much important the role of national leadership is, because for some elements, whether they are insiders or outsiders, both conflict and peace is equally beneficial like trade. Sometimes they invest in conflict and sometimes in peace. If the national actors cannot take the lead, there is always a risk of

vicious cycle of never ending conflict.

Pragmatism and flexibility: Finally, I would like to emphasize the crucial role of pragmatism and flexibility for mutual accommodation, compromise, and give-and-take. The history of Nepal's peace process is replete with numerous instances of pragmatism and flexibility exercised by all parties in achieving their common goals. Three instances of them come instantly to my mind: successful integration of the former Maoist combatants, where the national army and the former rebels agreed to bury their hatchets and made significant compromises early on; when the mainstream parties and CPN (Maoist) quickly realized it was time to move on by agreeing to jointly proceed with the peace process without help from outside the country; and when it was necessary to hold second election for the Constituent Assembly, all major political parties were able to agree on the modality of conducting those elections without much delay.

I believe that Nepal's peace process presents a unique case study of conflict resolution and peace building. In this process, we internalized and contextualized the best practices from other peace building exercises. We need to deliberate its salient features and achievements honestly and also give credit to the sincere efforts made by all stakeholders in the process. This is critical in order to ensure that we do not forget how difficult and arduous our journey was over the last 12 years.

Having settled the political issues through a new democratic polity, the history has bestowed on us the greater responsibilities to undertake the socio-economic transformation of the country.

With an overwhelming mandate of people, the current government is determined to building on this political transformation and on 'peace dividend' in order to accelerate the drive for prosperity and sustainable development.

We are in the process of addressing the remaining component of peace process keeping in the mind both imperatives of transitional justice mechanism- providing justice to the victims and ensuring reconciliation in the society as envisioned in the Comprehensive Peace Accord.

Now the Nepal Communist Party leads the government with over three-fourth support of the parliament. With this historic mandate, Nepal has achieved much needed political stability, and is now already marching on the way towards a new era of economic development and social progress.

Our vision is guided by the long-term goal of “Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali”.

Our plan is to graduate from the LDC status at an early date and to become a middle-income country by 2030.

We know this is not easy. To realize this goal, our priority is to ensure decent jobs and gainful employment for our working age population, modernize our agriculture, utilize our energy potential especially in hydropower, and promote development of infrastructure, connectivity, tourism and human resources.

We are firmly committed to achieving these goals. We have developed our strategies in line with these priorities. Our overall aim is to promote ‘an economic orientation’ and good governance throughout the country.

The government is determined to maintaining an enabling environment for investment, not by word but by action. We are ready to do everything possible that enhances the confidence of investors; that facilitates their economic engagements in Nepal.

In a nutshell, the focus of the government is in sustaining the hard-won gains by investing in peace, stability and sustainable development for the people of Nepal. We know that the time has come to work with sincerity and vigour as never before in order to materialize Nepali people’s aspirations for development and prosperity.

To conclude, peace can be sustained only through achievements of sustainable development and prosperity. The present government is fully committed to working for a just and prosperous Nepal. We are all set to move fast thereby ensuring that we do not stop short of our goal. We are confident that we will continue to receive, as always, your cooperation in our efforts.

# Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: What It Means for Nepal?

I feel honored to be amongst you and be part of this useful event. I thank the organizer, SAATHI, for the invitation.

The year 2020 is going to be an eventful year in terms of gender related issues in their entire spectrums. As we are gradually winding up the year 2019, this event today is timely and pertinent to sensitize what is ahead of us for next year.

I appreciate the organizers for this worthy initiative.

Advancement of women's agenda has been a long and continuous process. Each step of this process has added value and paved ways for further advancement.

Let me briefly touch upon those milestones that we have crossed and how the year 2020 will provide us an opportunity to build complementarity among them and reaffirm our resolve for the realization of those norms we have agreed not only for gender equality and empowerment but also for the betterment of human civilization.

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*Remarks at a program on 'Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: What It Means for Nepal', in Kathmandu, 14 August 2019*

Next year, we will be celebrating 40th year of the implementation of CEDAW.

CEDAW was a monumental achievement and first ever attempt in terms of international norm setting for the promotion and protection of comprehensive rights specific to the women. It was a great value addition to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the two international covenants of 1966.

Thirteen years later, women's agenda was further enriched by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. The Beijing Platform for Action was an embodiment of collective international commitment to advance the most holistic and bold women's empowerment measures in 12 critical areas of concerns. It was a genuine attempt to achieve substantive equality, ensure meaningful participation of women in all spheres of life, and a drive to create a peaceful, just and humane world with full respect for diversity of women's situations.

A year later, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) recognized that reproductive health and women's empowerment are inter-twined, and both are necessary for the advancement of society.

We will be celebrating 25 years of BPA and ICPD in 2020.

The UN Security Council resolution 1325 further expanded the frontier of protection of women's rights in conflict situations. It also recognized the important role women can play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts as well as maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

Next year will be the 20th year of UNSCR 1325.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was yet another comprehensive international commitment not to leave any one behind. In addition to the exclusive Goal 5, achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is integral to each of the 17 goals of SDGs which are critical to create and sustain a condition of justice and inclusion, economic development, and environmental protection at present and for future generations.

Next year will mark the 5 years of the implementation of the SDGs- the most ambitious goal for development of humankind.

All of these milestones were of no ordinary proportion if we consider the enormous efforts that were put to achieve them and the depth and extent of the issues each of them cover.

From hindsight, they were separate but ground-breaking events for the advancement of gender equality and empowerment. And now, in combination, they make a sum total of the comprehensive agenda of women and girls for present and for the future.

Nepal's journey to gender equality and empowerment traverses together with the international efforts in this field. But, it has been more pronounced, systematic, and coherent in recent years.

Being a committed State party to the CEDAW, an active participant and contributor to the BPA and ICPD, an important stakeholder of UNSCR 1325 and SDGs, Nepal has been continuously working to attune ourselves to match our practice with the norms we have agreed upon.

For that we have reformed our constitutional and legal arrangements and transformed our behavior and practices as we move on. We have internal-

“ **We are one of the few countries that has fully integrated SDGs into its national development plans and policies. Now we are localizing them.**

ized our international commitments into national laws and policies and sincerely implemented them.

The Constitution of Nepal is founded on the ideals of equality and non-discrimination and provides for the most comprehensive sets of fundamental rights, including the rights and freedoms specific to the women and girls. We have made implementing legislations to give effect to those constitutional provisions.

We have continuously and rigorously reformed our laws and policies scattered across different aspects of life and streamlined to make them gender friendly.

We introduced the system of positive discrimination and affirmative action and rigorously implemented them.

We have strengthened legal and institutional measures to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

We have invested in education, health and employment of women and girls.

We are one of the few countries that has fully integrated SDGs into its national development plans and policies. Now we are localizing them.

As we move on to achieving the national aspiration of 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali' the idea of gender equality, non-discrimination, social justice and equity is intrinsic to it.

Combined effect of all these efforts has resulted in significant increase in women's participation in politics, state affairs, bureaucracy, security apparatus, and in all kind of economic activities and employment.

The empowering effect of this is visible in public, private and the third sector. Even in areas that we are lagging, the trajectory we have taken is not disappointing.

By this, I do not mean to be complacent. We have a long way to go.

We have things to consolidate, we have areas to improve, we have challenges to address to fully realize gender equality, and on top of that we have the challenge to lift our society economically and attain a decent living standard for all which will create a condition for enjoyment of rights and freedoms enshrined in our Constitution.

As we advance our efforts to attain gender equality and women's empowerment, we grapple with some atypical challenges and gaps. Some of them are more visible than others, while many others are yet to be fully

understood and internalized.

The gaps I am talking about are the urban-rural gap, the gap between educated, under-educated and uneducated, inter and intra-regional gap, the gap between powerful and dis-enfranchised, gap between those with voice and voiceless, and the gap between haves and have not.

In addition, there is increasing voice of elite capture of the reservations and positive discrimination provision.

While we need to further intensify our efforts to ensure, consolidate and expand measures to advance gender equality and empowerment, we also need to address and plug those gaps.

We need to devise appropriate strategies to address those and other emerging challenges.

Our responsibility is to create a level playing field not only vis a vis men but also vis a vis women with differentiated power and access.

We need to create condition that enables all women in the country enjoy equally the constitutional and legal arrangements into their real life.

The year 2020 is going to be a significant year with the major UN review processes on anvil, such as CEDAW+40, Beijing+25, UNSCR 1325+20 and SDG+5.

Essentially, the year 2020 will be an occasion to showcase and celebrate the achievements made in past several decades,

- an occasion to reflect and ponder upon the failures,
- an occasion to distill the challenges out of the experiences thus far and devise appropriate strategies to confront them,
- an occasion to reaffirm our commitments to the agreed outcomes and their implementation, and
- an occasion to learn from others and share our own experience in those areas that we have fared better.

This will also provide an opportunity to address cross-cutting issues in more consolidated way and plan more coherently for the future.

I am of the view that by the interconnected nature of gender issues and challenges, we require coordination and collaboration among Government, private sector, civil society and international organizations.

The Government of Nepal remains receptive and welcoming to the suggestions and way forward as we march ahead.

I thank you for your attention.

# Equity, Equality and Inclusion of People with Intellectual Disabilities

Let me thank the organizers for inviting me to this event. It is a privilege and honor to be here today. The issues and people that this conference was dedicated to are close to my heart

I thank the AFID for choosing Kathmandu as the venue of this conference. I welcome all international participants in Nepal.

Trust that you have had a comfortable stay and a productive and fruitful outcome.

As you wrap up the conference, I am sure that you had sufficient opportunity to deliberate on the theme of the conference- “Equity, Equality and Inclusion of People with Intellectual Disabilities”. This seems to be a thoughtfully chosen theme which should receive high importance from the Governments, civil society, private sector, and the media alike.

According to WHO estimation, about 15% of the world’s population lives with some form of disability and about 200 million people have an intellectual disability.

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*Closing Remarks at the 24th Conference on Intellectual Disabilities organized by Asian Federation of Intellectual Disabilities,, Kathmandu, 6 December 2019*

We must recognize that to be intellectually disabled is not an individual's choice. It transcends the boundaries and is found in all societies, economies, and religions. They are just people with different abilities, and we have to support and encourage them to unleash their potentials. They are members of our family, our sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, uncles, and aunts, very much part of our society.

“ **It is a responsibility of every civilized and democratic society to render special provisions to the persons with disabilities in general and persons with intellectual disability in particular.**

They are right-holders and are entitled to every right and benefit that all other members of our society enjoy. They are subject of equal protection of law. We can make an equitable and inclusive society only when we walk the road together.

Let me quote a statement by Stephen Hawking.

“We are all different, but we share the same human spirit. Perhaps it's human nature that we adapt and survive.” Unquote.

This group of people requires support, respect, and special enabling provisions to be fully able to enjoy their rights. Socio-psychological and emotional support stands very important. Such a support and special provisions should begin at home and extend to the community and State at large.

It is a responsibility of every civilized and democratic society to render special provisions to the persons with disabilities in general and persons with intellectual disability in particular. All other stakeholders in the society also have their role to play. I am confident that this conference has been able to come up with recommendations to be implemented by all of them.

Ignorance and poverty stand as impediments to the protection of persons with intellectual disability. Therefore, greater awareness, creation of

supportive environment, provision of adequate resources and programmatic interventions at all levels should be our priority.

Inclusion of persons with disability becomes critical not to leave anyone behind as we gear up to the implementation of transformative sustainable development goals. We have to encourage them to mingle with, engage in enterprises, let them learn language, speak and communicate in the language they feel comfortable and let them gain vocational training and skills for self-empowerment.

At community level, rehabilitation centers, teaching and learning centers, health and sports centers, cultural programs could be the healing tools. More than that, love, care and affection strengthen their morale to overcome the hardships.

Let me briefly share with you what we have been doing in Nepal with regard to ensuring equity, equality and inclusion of the persons with disabilities in general and persons with intellectual disabilities in particular.

Nepal is a State Party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and has submitted its periodic report well in time. We are now implementing the recommendations of the CRPD Committee.

The Constitution of Nepal is founded on the ideals of equality and non-discrimination. It has guaranteed comprehensive sets of human rights, including for the persons with disabilities.

Discrimination on the basis of disability is strictly prohibited. They have the right to live in dignity and honor. They have the rights to inclusion, social justice, social security, education, participation in the State institutions and right to access to public services and benefits.

Special provisions have been made for their protection, support, empowerment, and development as well as to ensure their access to education and enhance representation.

To implement those rights enshrined in the Constitution, a comprehensive Disability Rights Act was enacted in 2017 in compliance with the CRPD.

The Act fully adheres to the right-based approach, recognizes diversity within the disability, eliminates derogatory words, and criminalizes the use of such words.

It also creates institutional mechanism to coordinate, monitor and promote the effective implementation of those rights at all levels of government.

We have introduced National Policy and Plan of Action on Disability (NPPAD) which is under implementation now.

Nepal's culture and family values strongly encourage taking care of the differently able members within the family.

The Government of Nepal has also undertaken some key programmatic interventions with a view to implementing the constitutional and legal provisions.

Interventions, such as, promotion of community-based rehabilitation, production and distribution of assistive devices, provision of ID Cards, social security allowances, and full tax exemption to assistive devices, vehicles, and wheelchairs are some of the most utilized provisions.

In addition, monthly welfare allowance is paid to persons with profound and severe disabilities including the children. Scholarships and incentives such as residential scholarship; device and support scholarship; transportation subsidies; and motivational scholarship have been provided.

The Government provides resources to disabled peoples' organizations to implement targeted programmes and support the people with psychosocial disabilities through counselling, treatment, rehabilitation, and reintegration.

Mental health medication is included in the list of essential drugs that the Government makes available through the local health facilities. A separate Mental Health Policy has been approved to address the issues related to the persons with intellectual disability.

For over 13 years, Nepal has been implementing special reservation system in public sector employment opportunities to the persons with disabilities

and has encouraged private sector for the same through tax incentives. Income tax threshold for persons with disabilities has been extended by 50% in comparison to others.

We have created institutions at different levels to exclusively work in the interest of the persons with disabilities.

While sharing these positive efforts on the part of the Government, I am equally aware of the unique challenges that Nepal is confronted with in the way of protecting rights, interests and welfare of the persons with disabilities. The mountainous terrain of the country, high risk of natural disasters, modest level of technological development and capacity to afford modern assistive devices account some of the challenges that we face today.

We have endeavored to address those challenges through mobilization of all three tiers of government and enhancing partnership with civil society organizations and development partners. We need to invest more resources on infrastructures and technology.

To conclude, I am confident that the outcomes of this conference will provide useful ideas to calibrate and further reinforce our efforts and help to strengthen the partnership among the government, private sector, academia, media and social society for the common cause of supporting and enabling persons with intellectual disabilities.

## Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers

It is a distinct honour and privilege to be at this important International Conference on Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers organized under the auspices of National Human Rights Commission.

I would like to express my gratitude to the organizer for inviting me to share my thoughts at this important occasion.

Before I begin, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all international participants to Nepal and wish you a comfortable stay.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Migration has been a defining phenomenon of our time.

We have seen migrant workers being important vehicle of high economic growth, infrastructure development and critical source to replenish the shortfall of working population in many countries.

Skills, knowledge and labour of migrant workers have been important force of production in the receiving countries and they provide critical

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*Remarks at the International Conference on Protection of Rights of Migrant Workers, 12 November 2019, Kathmandu*

human resources for agriculture, industries, trade and other sectors.

Migrant workers have also been the carrier of goodwill and source of co-existence and diversity in many countries.

On the other hand, the remittances sent by migrant workers have been significant source of income to their families back home that has played important role to keep economy of the countries of origin vibrant.

They have helped both the countries of origin and destination to strike balance between labour supply and demand; stimulate innovation, transfer skills and technologies; and assist to attain sustainable development.

If managed well, migration has a potential to create a win-win situation to all three parties in the process- the countries of origin, countries of destination and the migrant workers themselves.

According to UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, there are 164 million migrant workers worldwide in the year 2017. Data shows that annually 2.5 million Asian workers are leaving their country of origin in search of works to various destinations in Western Europe, US and countries in the Middle East.

As the number and demand for migrant workers increases worldwide, associated issues and challenges tend to surface in the process of recruitment, transfer, employment, social security and repatriation.

Most notably, in our own experience and from the experiences of elsewhere extrapolated from well-documented studies, the issues of low and discriminatory wages, unhygienic working conditions, violence and sexual harassments are some of the critical challenges faced by the migrant workers.

There are other challenges that further expose migrant workers to risks and vulnerabilities.

The issues such as low wages, exploitation, non-payment, or delayed payment of wages, and cheating and malpractices in the recruitment process are some of the challenges that demand careful attention. Migrant

workers tend to be vulnerable to human traffickers and smugglers. This is more severe among the low skilled labourers in comparison to the skilled workers.

All these factors have implications to the welfare, well-being, and human rights of the migrant workers.

Most often they do not find themselves in a situation to express their problems and seek redress through locally available mechanism under the laws of the host government. Lack of knowledge of local rules and regulations coupled with language barriers and cultural differences come as impediments for them to avail legal remedies and administrative grievance handling processes.

In recent years, there is growing international awareness about the challenges faced by the migrant workers and the need to respect basic human rights and welfare of this group of people.

Similarly, negotiation and adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) was another significant milestone towards holistically addressing the issues surrounding migration in general, including the migrant workers.

GCM provides a framework for cooperation to facilitate safe, orderly, and regular migration and address the risks and challenges associated with the process. It offers sound way forward to decent job, health and safety at the workplace, non-discrimination in wage on the basis of gender, nationality and cultural difference of the migrant workers.

What is important at this stage is implementation of the agreed commitments contained in the GCM, engage in constructive dialogues and cooperation in addressing migrant workers related issues and enhance their welfare and protection.

Ladies and gentlemen,

A significant number of Nepali youths are living in different foreign countries as migrant workers. Therefore, the issue of migrant workers receives high importance in the policies and diplomacy of the Government of

Nepal. Protection of the rights and interests of migrant workers, addressing the issues of exploitation and discrimination constitute critical areas of priority to the Government of Nepal.

A State party to various 24 human rights related international instruments and different ILO Conventions including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Nepal attaches high importance to issues of

“ **Nepal attaches high importance to the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Goals 8 and 10 related to the migrant workers. While main thrust of the present Government has been to create employment opportunities at home for our youth, with a view to better protect rights and interests, provide safety, and prevent unfair practices in the process of those going for foreign employment as migrant workers, the Government of Nepal has accorded priority to concluding bilateral labour agreements with the labour receiving countries.**

human rights of all people. Lord Buddha’s teachings of humanity, compassion and oriental philosophy of human dignity and freedom deeply inspire us. We have abolished death penalty and practice non-discrimination as sacrosanct. We have built national institutions and necessary legal and policy frameworks for promotion and protection of human rights.

The Constitution of Nepal guarantees right to labour and right against exploitation. Our laws guarantee equal pay for equal value of work. The Foreign Employment Act, 2007 and its implementing regulations 2008 govern and regulate outward migration for foreign employment and rights and welfares of the migrant workers.

The Foreign Employment Policy aims at reducing risks and vulnerabilities

of migrant workers and creating a safe, dignified and managed working environment.

The National Human Rights Commission, an independent national human rights institution, functions as oversight agency in areas of promotion and protection of human rights. We are glad to see that NHRC in recent years has paid equal attention to the rights and welfare of the migrant workers.

A member of UN Human Rights Council, we have played constructive, objective and impartial role for the promotion and protection of human rights of all around the world. We would like our people wherever they live and work as migrant workers enjoy rights equal to that of local population in the work place and receive equal economic and legal security from the country concerned.

In close coordination, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of Consular Services and Nepali diplomatic Missions abroad provide necessary services and protect interests and welfares of our migrant workers, including through rescue and repatriation services in time of difficulties.

Nepal attaches high importance to the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Goals 8 and 10 related to the migrant workers. While main thrust of the present Government has been to create employment opportunities at home for our youth, with a view to better protect rights and interests, provide safety, and prevent unfair practices in the process of those going for foreign employment as migrant workers, the Government of Nepal has accorded priority to concluding bilateral labour agreements with the labour receiving countries.

As a significant number of our nationals work as migrant workers, Nepal remains keen to work with all stakeholders and partners for the protection and promotion of the rights, interest and welfare of migrant workers.

This requires close collaboration and cooperation between the countries of origin and destination. Other national and international stakeholders can add value in building synergies and effectiveness in our actions. The constructive role of recruitment agencies, private sector, civil society actors and the media is equally important.

Skills and capacity development, comprehensive pre-departure, on arrival and before return orientation to the migrant workers would help them understand their rights and responsibilities and the available remedial measures in case of violations. Use of information and communication technologies would be useful in protecting the rights of migrant workers.

A year after the adoption of the GCM, I believe this Conference would offer an opportunity to the participants for open and interactive dialogues in assessing the risks and challenges that the migrant workers are facing today and in exploring the ways to address those challenges in a cooperative and collaborative manner.

I wish to extend my best wishes for the success of this Conference.

I thank you all for your attention.

# **| 05 |** Strengthening Cooperation, Partnership and Solidarity in the region and beyond

# Public Policy and Governance in South Asia: Towards Justice and Prosperity

It goes without saying that South Asia is one of the most dynamic regions in the world. This is a region of abundant natural resources, huge market, talented and laborious men and women. This is a region with rich cultural heritage, enormous diversity, and exemplary unity. This is a cradle of civilization, innovation, and creation. This is a region of opportunities and hope.

As estimated by the World Bank, growth in this region is expected to accelerate to 6.9 percent in 2018 and 7.1 percent in 2019. This shows that South Asia is one of the fastest growing regions in the world.

In terms of geo-topography, it is an area of vast diversity from White Mountain to blue oceans, from deserts to tropical islands. It covers about 5.2 million square kilometers i.e. 3.5 percent of the world's land surface area and about one fourth of the world's population, making it the most populous geographical region in the world.

South Asia is a region of youth with almost half of its population below the age of 25. This demographic dividend will create an economically active

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*Keynote Address on the Conference on 'Public Policy and Governance in South Asia : Towards Justice and Prosperity' organized by Nepal Administrative Staff College and other renowned institutions from Nepal, India and Bangladesh 29 June 2018*

group of young people in many years to come.

Availability of abundant natural resources is another economic boon to South Asia. Thus, managing natural resources prudently is critical for achieving socio-economic well-being of the region.

Similarly, Cultural heritage is a core of South Asian identity. It is rich and diverse with the capability of creating human values. Our Art, architecture,

“ **Confidence between and among the member states is the most critical factor for regional cooperation and shared prosperity.**

music, literature, lifestyle, philosophy is an essential part of South Asian culture. Basudhaiba kutumbakam, Sarbajana hitaya sarbajana Sukhayaare such age-old values that make south Asia unique and that are the most valuable gifts to the whole world.

Despite huge opportunities, potential and hope, why is South Asia still considered as one of the Poorest corners of the world? Why are development and prosperity still far-fetched dreams for many people of this region? Why are unemployment, illiteracy, disease, backwardness still hanging to our identity? Why are we unable to prove those critics wrong who often criticize that most of the regional mechanisms in this region are more formal and less functional? Why is this still one of the least integrated regions in the world?

I think it is high time to contemplate on these issues. A serious contemplation that could reach to the root cause, diagnose the problem, and recommend the pragmatic and doable action plan.

South Asia has a , shared culture and shared future with common problems and potentials. We know we can go far together; we can grow better together and we can prosper faster together. But why is the spirit of regionalism yet to be workable? Why are the SAARC mechanisms yet to be functional? How closer has the SAARC process brought us? Why is the dream of south Asian integration yet to be realized? where did we reach in

the implementation of SAFTA? Where are our common dreams of shared prosperity entangled?

Frankly, regionalism could not develop deep roots in this region. We always talked about regional integration, but do our actions truly follow our words and spirit? Are we ready to deal with several issues that we could handle better regionally? I think intellectuals like you should try to find the answers to these questions.

Another important factor that is halting the enhancement of regional cooperation is poor connectivity within the region. Connectivity is the key to regional integration. But in our region, all forms of connectivity, such as road, railways, waterways, air, digital and grid connectivity is not sufficient in terms of both quantity and quality. In the same way, legal infrastructure for the facilitation of the movement of goods and peoples is also not satisfactory. This has limited the intra-regional trade, investment, people-to-people contact and other areas of cooperation.

Our intra-regional trade and investment shows how less integrated region we have been. According to the World Bank Report, it is the least integrated region in the world with intra-regional trade at less than 5% of total trade, dwarfed by East Asia's 35% and Europe's 60%.

There are some inherent problems in South Asia. Long-practiced Feudal socio-economic structure did not promote entrepreneurship and investment. As a result, industrialization process started late in our region and even today overall level of industrialization in all SAARC member countries is low with some exceptions. Thus, import-orientation, labor migration and poor utilization of natural and human resources became our fate and culture. Ultimately our region got trapped in a vicious circle of unemployment, poverty, low saving, and low investment.

Lower productivity, poorer quality and meager investment in research and development have reduced the competitiveness of the products and services produced in the region. In the same vein, over the time, we could not develop complimentary and supplementary industries in the region. As a result, member states have less temptation to buy goods and services within region.

Internal political stability, peace and social harmony in the member countries is also equally important for regional integration. Internal dynamics has far-reaching regional consequences.

Confidence between and among the member states is the most critical factor for regional cooperation and shared prosperity.

South Asia is prone to non-traditional security threats as well. Water and food security, energy security, environment and climate change, natural disasters and health hazards, cyber and organized crime are some of them to name. Food, water and energy security and climate change aptly called as “tragedy of the commons”, are the most serious non-traditional security threats among others in South Asia.

Non-traditional security threats can evolve into traditional security threats if left unaddressed. They are interwoven in many complex ways and cannot be managed effectively without cross-sectoral integration and intra-regional coordination.

Above all, poverty is the biggest threat to our region. As the Rt. Honorable Prime Minister Mr. K P Sharma Oli stated while addressing the thirty-Seventh Meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers in Pokhara on March 17, 2016: “We have an enemy- a common enemy to South Asia. An enemy that is draining our potentials, an enemy that is ridiculing our collective efforts, an enemy that is threatening the whole of South Asia and an enemy that is testing our abilities and intentions. The enemy called poverty, the enemy called backwardness. At any cost we cannot afford this enemy to win.”

Against this backdrop, it is an urgent call to take concrete and meaningful steps towards shared prosperity and development in South Asia.

As learned speakers of this plenary have already indicated, first of all, we must seriously work to make SAARC process and mechanism more result-oriented and functional. We must review the formalities, bureaucratic processes, areas of cooperation and mechanism/institutions within SAARC judiciously and factually.

Second, we need to focus on less contentious but more important areas of

cooperation. Let's explore these areas and focus on them on priority basis.

Third, all forms of connectivity (physical, digital, and human) should be expanded and deepened. Facilitation of the movement of goods and peoples should be given high priority in the region. Needful legal infrastructure should be timely made and duly implemented in this regard.

Fourth, SAFTA act as a building bloc of regional prosperity. We must place great emphasis on making SAFTA effective and useful.

Fifth, complementarities particularly in industrial sector should be promoted and stalwartly facilitated by all member countries. In the same way, research and development, innovation, competitiveness among others, must be in our regional priority.

Sixth, to spur economic growth and reduce poverty in South Asia, industrial activity, particularly manufacturing, must expand. Rural industrialization is vital since large rural population offers significant potential for economic growth, if better policies and institutions are adopted.

Seventh, for inclusive and sustainable development, Involvement of the people of different walks of life and consideration of their concerns should be ensured in all dimensions and processes of regional cooperation and integration. For this, private sectors, cooperatives, community, and people to people contact and cooperation should be properly channelized and enhanced.

Eighth, spirit of we-feeling should be inculcated in society, particularly in children. Our traditional values of accommodation, tolerance, respect, peace, harmony, and co-existence should be revived and taught.

Ninth, meaningful engagement with observer countries of the SAARC is another import aspect that adds impetus in our aspiration of South Asian Prosperity.

Tenth, above all, South Asian countries should continue regular meetings, dialogues, negotiations, persuasions, and engagements in all levels and in all spheres. This will narrow down differences, wipe out misunder-

standings and make a clear roadmap for future cooperation to conquer the poverty, to utilize the resources (natural and human), to promote the industrialization, trade and investment, and to fight the traditional and non-traditional threats in the region together.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Nepal has embarked into an era of stability. Long cherished dream of Nepali people for peace and stability has fulfilled with the promulgation of New Constitution of Nepal and successful completion of three-tier elections at local, provincial, and federal levels. These elections have paved the way to form a stable government with the strong mandate from the people.

We are marching towards development and prosperity with a motto of “Samridha Nepal Sukhi Nepali”. Prosperity is not only a long-cherished dream of Nepali people but also a foremost priority and focus of the incumbent government. We understand prosperity alone is neither possible nor sustainable. We want development together with development. We eagerly want to walk a journey together—a journey of peace, a journey of prosperity and a journey of development with all SAARC member states.

Ladies and gentleman,

As many people think, SAARC is not in hibernation. SAARC is not hopeless. SAARC is not futureless. Regular activities of the SAARC process are happening. Several SAARC ministerial meetings are being held. Regular meetings, discussions, trainings are going well. SAARC Secretariat is active and most importantly, SAARC spirit is alive.

As the current Chair of the SAARC, we assure Nepal’s full support and cooperation to the SAARC process. I am fully confident that, we, the South Asian countries will walk together and reach the common destination of peace, prosperity, and development. I believe that SAARC will be instrumental to walk this journey.

Finally, once again I would like to thank the organizer, eminent speakers, and you of all for making this plenary a good memory and a success.

Thank you.

## Potentials for South Asia

I am pleased to attend this interactive discussion on the potentials for South Asia.

At the outset, I would like to thank Horasis Global Visions Community for hosting this panel discussion on such important theme and giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts.

Today, the whole world faces multifaceted impacts of COVID-19 pandemic, and South Asia is no exception. The pandemic tends to reverse our hard-earned development gains. It has already disrupted the lives and livelihoods of our people. Millions have lost jobs. Millions are going to fall back into the poverty trap. The so-called second wave has been taking a full swing in South Asia. Our economies have heavily suffered. The public purse is getting slim day after day, and we face a huge capacity constraint.

Let me briefly share the situation of COVID-19 in Nepal. We have seen altogether 77,817 cases and 498 deaths, which is 0.64 percent. Out of this, 56,428 people have already recovered which is 72.5 percent, and there are some 20,105 active cases at present. The protection of the lives of people has been our top priority. We have launched the 'Healthy Nepal Campaign' to educate people to use traditional and herbal medicines, adopt healthy habits, and sincerely follow the safety measures of using masks, keeping social distancing, and maintaining hand hygiene. We have received support from our neighbors, including the SAARC member states.

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*Remarks at the Panel Discussion on Potentials for South Asia during the Horasis Extraordinary Meeting to be held virtually on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, 1 October 2020*

Mr. Chairman,

Our talk about the potentials of South Asia will be incomplete without talking about the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). It was created in 1985 with the objectives of promoting peoples' welfare and improving their quality of life through accelerating economic growth and social progress. We, the SAARC Member States have been working together to promote regional connectivity, trade, energy partnership, agriculture, and people-to-people contacts.

Regional cooperation prominently features in Nepal's foreign policy. As the current Chair and founding Member, Nepal attaches great importance to the SAARC process. In its 35 years of operation, SAARC has gained the necessary legal and institutional framework for the Member States to mobilize it for achieving tangible results. The SAARC processes have moved ahead. It has taken some tempo too. But, it has yet to deliver development dividends to the people. It is yet to serve as a vehicle for turning South Asia's potentials to reality.

The COVID-19 pandemic came with the compelling reason for the SAARC Leaders to sit together to chart out the ways and means to control the spread of the virus. Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi hosted the SAARC Leaders' video conference on 15 March 2020. This injected hope in the region.

Carrying forward the initiative of Prime Minister Modi, SAARC Health Ministers met virtually on 23 April, Health officials on 26 March, and trade officials on 8 April 2020. A SAARC COVID-19 Emergency fund has been created.

COVID-19 has forced us to find alternative ways to continue our interactions at bilateral, regional, and international level. We are gradually adapting to this 'new normal'. This year UN General Assembly has been taking place virtually. Nepal hosted the virtual Informal Meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers on 24 September 2020 which would normally be held on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. Before that, we held the informal meeting of SAARC Finance Ministers on 16 September 2020 which would be held on the sidelines of the Annual Meeting of ADB.

Nepal is going to host the virtual meeting of SAARC Education Ministers on 8 October 2020 to discuss the education sector's response to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. These meetings speak about the importance of regional cooperation to fight the common problems collectively and develop resilience at the regional level.

“ **The collective commitment of the SAARC Member States is vital to accelerate meaningful cooperation in areas of high potentials.**

Now, I would like to zoom on some of the most promising areas of cooperation under the SAARC framework which, I believe, are key to unleash the full potentials of South Asia.

First is Trade and Commerce. Intra-regional trade in SAARC stands just around \$ 23 billion which far below its potential. We initiated SAFTA and SATIS processes. The SAFTA (in 2004) envisioned a South Asian Economic Union (SAEU). The SATIS recognized the potentials for trade in services in the region. We have also put in place a number of trade facilitation agreements and measures under SAARC with a view to supporting regional integration.

Second is Connectivity. Regional integration is not possible without connectivity infrastructures. The SAARC Member States initiated a discussion on the Motor Vehicle, Railways, Air services, and waterways connectivity. The initiatives for regional connectivity are underway and have not moved ahead to utilize this potential. Connectivity is the top agenda in the BBIN sub-regional framework.

Third is energy. SAARC Framework Agreement for Energy Cooperation (Electricity) has also been signed in 2014. The energy sector is a key area for the region's development. South Asia is an emerging market. Power is the driver of the economy. The region has a huge potential for renewable and green energy. The energy cooperation is a top agenda under the BBIN sub-regional arrangement.

Fourth, Agriculture. This region is endowed with fertile land, diverse

climatic conditions appropriate for growing a variety of crops- food grains, vegetables, fruits, herbs, and spices.

Fifth, people-to-people relations. SAARC is home to over 1.7 billion people, the one-fifth of the humanity of the world. A large chunk of the population falls under active age category with young and youths. It has a huge demographic dividend.

The South Asia region represents one of the great civilizations. It is extraordinarily rich in culture. It is blessed with abundant natural and human resources. The region has high potentials for development. To date, such abundant resources remain either untapped or under-utilized.

The collective commitment of the SAARC Member States is vital to accelerate meaningful cooperation in areas of their potentials.

The Covid-19 has hit hard the countries of South Asia. Already, the countries like Nepal have been facing poverty, unemployment, impacts of climate change, natural disasters. And now, Covid-19 comes to add to the difficulty. Our GDP has already shrunk, markets significantly slowed down, revenue base is narrowing. The coming days will test our individual capacity and measure the strength of regional partnership and resilience.

We need to support each other in fighting Covid-19. It is equally important to ensure universal, easy, and affordable access to vaccines, once they are developed.

We need to stand ready to face the difficult days ahead. It is also a time to put our honest efforts to unleash our potentials. The occasion calls us to rise above our conventional thinking. It is time to utilize the frameworks and arrangements we have set-up under SAARC processes. It is the time to remove barriers, diversify trade, and re-energize our economies.

South Asia holds huge potentials. There is no alternative to the regional cooperation. The cost on non-cooperation is colossal. We must utilize the legal and institutional framework of SAARC for harmonizing our activities and channelizing our efforts to achieving the objective of a peaceful and prosperous South Asia.

## SAARC: Prospects and Possibilities

We all know that our leaders had envisioned a peaceful, prosperous, and happy South Asia thirty-four years ago. They established SAARC as a vehicle for reaching to that destination.

SAARC has made a long journey since its inception in 1985. An effective, efficient, and result-oriented SAARC capable of bringing visible changes in the life of the peoples has always been our aspiration.

In the last 35 years, we have achieved some important milestones in key areas. We have created institutional and legal frameworks, intensified our efforts in such areas as alleviating poverty, reducing inequality, promoting trade and commerce, expanding connectivity, deepening people-to-people contacts, and expanding contacts with external organization having similar objectives and purposes, and implement many program and activities for our common benefit.

The progress report of the Secretary General suggests that we need to do more to tackle both the traditional and emerging challenges facing the region through deeper and meaningful cooperation.

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*Opening Remarks delivered as the Chairperson at the Virtual Informal Meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers Kathmandu, 24 September 2020*

However, this spirit of cooperation has halted since the postponement of the nineteenth SAARC summit. Only a few ministerial meetings and some activities like trainings, workshops, etc. are visible under the SAARC framework.

The Covid-19 pandemic has been shaking every foundation of development and deeply impacting humanity in our region and all over the world. We have seen the fallouts of Covid-19 in our economy, in our education system, in our social life and people's livelihood. The number of infected cases is on the rise.

Shrinking revenue, rising public expenditure, and increasing unemployment will further aggravate the situation in the coming days. Covid-19

**“ Mutual trust and confidence among the Member States are vital to achieving the objectives of SAARC. While we may have difference on certain issues, SAARC process must be insulated and allowed to move forward because we have invested so much time, energy, and resources in it.**

is going to pose a serious security threat to the wellbeing of millions of people in South Asia.

The SAARC Leaders' Video Conference hosted by Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi on 15 March 2020 remained instrumental in forging regional partnership to fight the pandemic.

In these trying times, it is vital to expand connectivity and ensure smooth supply of essential medicines and medical equipment. Sharing of knowledge, experience, technology, and best practices could help develop resilience and to fight the pandemic collectively.

During the 18th SAARC Summit held in 2014 in Kathmandu we agreed to hold the meetings of the Charter bodies regularly.

The delay in convening the 19th SAARC Summit and the absence of formal

meetings of the SAARC Charter bodies since 2016, has greatly impacted the functioning of our organization. Consequently, key regional arrangements and instruments, and important undertakings and activities have been on hold for a long time. This has raised a serious question about the relevancy of the regional cooperation process that our leaders so thoughtfully launched and nurtured. We need to explore all viable options to generate the momentum and dynamism in SAARC.

The trading arrangements like SAFTA and SATIS are yet to come into full operation. Despite many commonalities in terms of geography, history, civilization, and culture, we remain one of the least integrated regions in trade and connectivity compared to other regions. We need to enhance our cooperation in the core areas of trade, investment, agriculture, energy, connectivity, and climate change.

Nepal is fully committed to advancing the SAARC process forward in a spirit of unity and solidarity among fellow member states. Given the huge potentials in the region, we need to chart a long-term course with a view to utilizing these resources through deeper integration.

Mutual trust and confidence among the Member States are vital to achieving the objectives of SAARC. While we may have difference on certain issues, SAARC process must be insulated and allowed to move forward because we have invested so much time, energy, and resources in it. We want to see a SAARC that is both vibrant and united. We must build on our collective strengths and narrow down the differences on the matters of regional cooperation.

Nepal has been on the Chair of SAARC almost five years since we hosted the eighteenth SAARC summit. It is overdue to hand over this responsibility. As time is passing by without summit level meetings of SAARC, it is high time that Member States took appropriate decision as to what ought to be done in this regard. It will look weird if our association remains in such an inactive status indefinitely.

We know South Asia is replete with potentials and prospects. Effective cooperation at the regional level will help utilize these strengths in changing the socio-economic landscape of the region. But the potentials are yet

to be fully tapped.

On the other hand, the region is also marked by various challenges and problems, such as poverty, inequality, underdevelopment, climate change, natural disasters and so on. We need robust cooperation in order to address them effectively.

Our long-term vision is deeper integration. The goal of South Asian Economic Union (SAEU) was set long ago. Economic interdependence, enhanced connectivity, increased cooperation, peace and security, and, above all, mutual trust and friendship are a must for attaining it.

I hope we will be able to give a proper thought on these vital aspects.

We want a developed, prosperous, and self-reliant South Asia. For this goal to achieve, I believe, we need trust, friendship, and strong cooperation among Member States of SAARC.

Therefore, we must take a bold decision to push the process forward with a strong commitment to deepen cooperation in areas which can really transform the development landscape of this region. Concentration rather than proliferation should be the guiding norms. It is an unpleasant irony that a region, which is rich in both natural and human resources, continues to languish in poverty and hunger at a time when many other regions are making incredible progress in several areas.

This region has huge potentials for development. Apart from development challenges, we continue facing the challenges that cannot be addressed with efforts of an individual member state. The complex and transboundary nature of the challenges make the process regional cooperation indispensable. Therefore, cooperation has no alternative and the cost of non-cooperation will be colossal.

Thank you!

## Regional Partnership For Economic Recovery

We are meeting at a time when the whole world is fighting against the Covid-19 pandemic. In continuation of our tradition, we are meeting today and sharing our views through this virtual means.

We were not prepared for the crisis of this scale and magnitude. Our capacity to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus is limited. The lives of many people have been lost, hospital beds have been filled with the infected patients, isolation wards are fully occupied, and home-quarantines have also been utilized. It is really a trying time. It is an unprecedented public health emergency. And, we all are learning to adapt to this new normal.

I express deepest condolences and sympathies to those who lost their loved ones and wish for the speedy recovery of those infected.

The pandemic is going to cost us dearly. The theme of this meeting “Covid-19 and South Asian Economies” is timely and relevant. The global economy is shrinking. We have already seen serious impacts on our economies. Recent estimates are alarming. We are heading towards the worst downturn since the great depression of 1930. It is high time for all of us to deliberate and come up with innovative ways to cope with this situation. I hope, today’s deliberations will guide us to find common ways to respond to the adverse impacts of COVID- 19 pandemic particularly in public health, social, economic, and environmental areas.

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*Opening at the 15th Informal Meeting of the SAARC Finance Ministers, on 16 September 2020*

Let me briefly touch upon the economic impact of COVID-19 in South Asia.

- We have seen a staggering slowdown in South Asian economies. High growth projections of over 7% on an average have collapsed. Growth sharply contracted in the last quarter of 2020. The latest estimate shows the region will experience a contraction to 2.7% this year. The region is going to experience the worst economic performance in the last 40 years.
- At the same time, we need to have a recovery strategy. The investment climate needs to be further improved by reducing the barriers to

“ **Nepal stands for peaceful solution of international disputes. We support national leadership and ownership of any solution to internal conflict.**

businesses, strengthening governance, promoting market access, and creating regional synergy.

- There is a risk of a sharp increase in poverty. Informal and migrant workers are the hardest hit. We should be equally aware of the psycho-social impact of COVID-19.
- Governments are facing mounting fiscal pressures, high deficit due to higher spending needs, and lower revenue collection. Increased debt distress will be another challenge.
- This needs an effective fiscal and monetary stimulus to offset the economic damage of Covid-19. We should try to implement accommodative policies to boost our economies.

Allow me to share some of the initiatives taken by the Government of Nepal:

- So far, we have seen a total of 55,329 COVID-19 cases, out of which 39,576 have already recovered. There have been 360 deaths and there are some 15,393 active cases in Nepal. And the number is increasing day after day.

- Protecting the life of the people from disease and hunger is important and the Government has placed this on the top priority.
- We imposed lockdown measures proactively, and it helped us to contain the spread of the virus and gave us some time to make preparations.
- Lockdown has led us to a downward revision of output by around 6 percent. Business survival particularly of SMEs has become a big challenge. The tourism sector has been badly hit. Loss of jobs in the informal sector and payroll protection in the formal sector has become a huge challenge for us.
- Trade, service, and construction sectors have been contracted and the revival process is very slow as the impact of COVID-19 is unfolding.
- The Government has provided immediate relief and financial as well as policy incentives and stimulus to the affected sectors.
- We have applied fiscal and monetary instruments for creating employment, a continuation of social protection and liquidity injection as well as credit expansion.
- We still see a huge risk. It can have deeper economic impact, make the recovery uncertain and prolonged, pose greater challenges to continue social protection to the vulnerable segment and meet the higher spending requirement in the health care systems.
- We have decided to relax the restriction and gradually open up economic activities without compromising health safety standards.
- It is very difficult to regain the confidence of the people and fully rebound the economic activities unless we find a vaccine or permanent medical solution.
- Despite this adverse situation, we have been maintaining stability particularly in the fiscal and external sectors.
- This fiscal year's budget emphasizes economic recovery. We have announced several schemes to supporting the private sector for crowding in additional resources and deferral of immediate liabilities.

- We see a big role for the private sector in attaining speedy recovery. we are open to support and collaborate with the private sector.
- There also lies the risk of widening inequality and reversal of hard-earned progress that we have made in social sector.
- We look forward to containing the spread of virus, resuming business activities sooner than later, and strengthening resilience to achieve the new normal output level.

I would like to express Nepal's full commitment to work with the SAARC Member States in the spirit of collaboration, partnership, and shared roadmaps to deal with the emerging challenges. Nepal upholds the SAARC charter and relevant agreements for the economic integration of the region. We believe that the formal mechanisms of SAARC must function properly. Meaningful engagement of the SAARC Member states in terms of expanding trade, promoting investment and tourism, and facilitating connectivity networks becomes an imperative for economic revival. We believe, once developed, there should be a universal access to the vaccine at an affordable price.

The Pandemic demands our joint actions and collective resolve. Being aware of this fact, the SAARC Leaders convened a Video Conference on 15 March 2020 to chart out a regional strategy to combat the further spread of the virus as well as to mitigate its after-effects as initiated by the His Excellency Prime Minister of India. In the conference, the Leaders agreed to create a SAARC COVID-19 Emergency Fund to which all the Member States have pledged their voluntary contributions. As a follow-up to the SAARC Leaders' Video Conference, the SAARC Health Ministers' Video Conference and meetings of senior trade and health officials were also held.

Finally, I would like to express my optimism for the collaboration among the SAARC Member States to fight this deadly disease, save the lives of the people, and safeguard the economy to protect the gains we have achieved so far. I look forward to having active participation of the distinguished delegates from the Member States and constructive deliberation on finding better ways to regaining the momentum of our economies.

# Destination of Regional Peace and Prosperity

At the outset, I would like to thank the Institute for Strategic and Socio-Economic Research (ISSR) Nepal, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) India, and Pavilion Group for organizing this important event.

The meeting assumes particular significance as it is being held when preparations are underway for hoisting the fourth BIMSTEC Summit in Kathmandu towards the end of this month. I firmly believe that the deliberations of this meeting will contribute to further promoting BIMSTEC co-operation in general and the success of the fourth BIMSTEC Summit in particular.

Distinguished Guests,

BIMSTEC is a bridge connecting two vibrant sub-regions of the Asian continent- South Asia and South East Asia. The establishment of BIMSTEC was a thoughtful response to vast but untapped development potentials of the region. It has opened the door for numerous possibilities and opportunities in the region for development and prosperity.

This region, with its diverse topography ranging from the white Himalayas

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*Remarks at the Pre-BIMSTEC Summit High Level Consultative Meeting, Kathmandu, 2 August 2018*

to the blue Ocean- shared cultural and historical linkages, and abundant natural and human resources, holds a great promise to be a vibrant growth zone in this part of the world.

The year 2018 marks the 21th anniversary of BIMSTEC. Since its founding, BIMSTEC has witnessed a gradual expansion of its membership and has now become a group of seven member states- five from South Asia and two from South East Asia.

“ **Trade and investment are the most important pillars of regional co-operation under BIMSTEC. It goes without saying that trade is not only an engine of growth but also the most visible and people-centered area of cooperation. A regional integration scheme without a preferential trading arrangement is not possible.**

While the development potentials are huge, BIMSTEC region is also facing numerous challenges and is lagging behind other regions in terms of overall development.

Distinguished Guests,

The purpose of BIMSTEC is not only to facilitate cooperation at government level but also to promote relations at people’s level. This provides a strong foundation to any cooperative enterprise among countries.

Our leaders have a vision to work together in various areas of common concern and interest. Trade, investment, tourism, poverty alleviation, energy, transport and communication, climate change are some of the areas of co-cooperation that have a direct impact on the life of our people and their livelihood. Equally important are matters pertaining to security and counter-terrorism.

Connectivity remains at the core of our cooperation in BIMSTEC region. It

is an obvious fact that connectivity brings people together and helps foster better understanding and affinity among them. Enhanced understanding contributes to creating a conducive environment for cooperation and partnership. This ultimately cements regional bonds and strengthens regional spirit.

The effectiveness of regional cooperation depends upon how well the Member States are connected to each other. It has a direct bearing on the promotion of tourism, trade and industrialization and the overall course of development. In today's world, connectivity encompasses not only physical but also digital and human dimensions. It is both means and ends with regard to development and prosperity of our people. It is the need of the day that we have to redouble our efforts at regional and country level to expand and deepen connectivity in all dimensions.

For a land-locked country like Nepal, the importance of connectivity cannot be overemphasized.

Distinguished Guests,

Trade and investment are the most important pillars of regional co-operation under BIMSTEC. It goes without saying that trade is not only an engine of growth but also the most visible and people-centered area of cooperation. A regional integration scheme without a preferential trading arrangement is not possible.

In view of the size and scope of regional economy, we have enormous potential of intra-regional trade. But it is regrettable to note that trade volume within the BIMSTEC region is just below 4 per cent. If we compare it with other regions- such as EU and ASEAN, it is meager. This scenario compels us to take concrete steps to ensure smooth and hassle-free trade among the Member States. To achieve this objective, negotiations on BIMSTEC Free Trade Area Agreement are underway. But progress has been slow and below our expectation. We need to expedite our negotiations so as to conclude it at an early date and benefit from enhanced trade within the region.

Foreign Direct Investment in the region is also not in encouraging trend

as compared to the huge potential and massive population (22% of the world) as well as abundant natural and human resources. There is a need for capital infusion to boost infrastructure and industrialization in the region, as domestic resources may not be adequate to fill the resource gap. As we intend to accelerate economic growth, generate employment and develop infrastructures, we need to work together to attract FDI from within and outside the region.

Distinguished Guests,

Let me turn to energy sector. Energy, which is cross-cutting in nature, is central to sustainable development. BIMSTEC has achieved noteworthy progress in this field. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the BIMSTEC Trans-Grid Connectivity has been finalized and is ready for signature. I do hope that this MoU will pave the way to work further to promote energy cooperation within the region.

There are various challenges and problems that stand in the way of our efforts for peaceful and prosperous BIMSTEC society. Poverty is among the overarching challenges which is cross-cutting in nature and demands holistic approach in our efforts. Indeed, BIMSTEC has developed a BIMSTEC Poverty Plan of Action, which is being implemented. We also need to explore other robust mechanisms collectively to deal with this societal nemesis sharing our best practices and developing innovative ideas.

Distinguished Guests,

There has been visible progress in some areas of cooperation under BIMSTEC. But the progress that we have achieved doesn't match the potentials for development and the aspirations of our people. It is a moot point, why BIMSTEC has not taken off despite strong commitment of our leaders? It is a time for renewal. Time for revitalization.

As we have already passed two decades of our engagement, it is high time to introspect and move forward with a new vigor and dynamism. We have a common responsibility to create a success story of our regional cooperation, something that our posterity would feel proud of.

In order to steer BIMSTEC into a desired direction and achieve tangible

results, we have to work hand in hand with other stakeholders including the private sector, civil society and think tanks. Efforts of the governments alone are not enough as our development challenges are complex and manifold. The other stakeholders also have a complimentary role to play in a constructive manner. The events like this is a glaring example of our collective efforts for making the BIMSTEC effective and result-oriented.

For BIMSTEC to be visible, it must make tangible progress in core areas of regional cooperation. We cannot wait for an indefinite period of time for a meaningful regional integration to take place. We are already far behind. Concentration rather than proliferation, deepening rather than widening and outcomes rather than promises should guide our thoughts and actions.

To conclude, we have the onerous responsibility of serving our people in order to make their lives better, safe and dignified, and we have no option other than accelerating regional and global co-operation to complement our developmental efforts at the national level. In today's globalized world, there is no option to regional cooperation, as cost of non-cooperation will be colossal that we cannot afford. The nature and scale of today's problems demand collective commitment, collective efforts and collective solutions. Our sub-region cannot be an exception to this fact.

As the current chair of the BIMSTEC, Nepal is fully committed to making BIMSTEC process more effective, functional and result-oriented.

We have a long journey ahead. We have to move at faster pace. We should nurture high ambition and take concrete steps to translate it in to action. For this, we must ceaselessly work together to reach a common destination- a destination of regional peace and prosperity. All member states must exhibit political will of the highest order to achieve this lofty goal. Every one of us should sacrifice something for regional goods. Every one of us should feel comfortable that benefits of regional cooperation are equitably shared. Guided by this spirit, we must collectively take decisive actions to make a difference. Otherwise, the outside world will not believe us. Our people will not trust us. Vision alone will not be sufficient. It needs to be translated into action with a right combination of policies, institution and resources.

I am confident that today's discussions will delve into substantive ideas and issues, analyze the current status of co-operation under BIMSTEC and come up with useful suggestions.

I wish the Meeting all success!

I thank you all for your kind attention!

## BIMSTEC: Connecting South and Southeast Asia

First of all, I would like to thank you, Dr. Pandey and CSAS family, for inviting me to this program and providing an opportunity to speak a few words in front of you all.

I would also like to commend Dr. Pandey and CSAS family for timely organization of this talk program on BIMSTEC: Connecting South and Southeast Asia. As we wind up our preparations for the 4th BIMSTEC Summit and its preceding meetings, the programs of this kind will certainly help enrich our understanding about BIMSTEC and its role as a bridge between South Asia and South-east Asia. I believe today's program has been an opportunity to deliberate on the realities and future priorities for the Bay of Bengal region.

As you all know the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit is being organized next week on the theme of 'Towards a Peaceful, Prosperous and Sustainable Bay of Bengal Region'. This theme itself is an embodiment of the BIMSTEC member states' lofty aspirations of peace, sustainable development and prosperity. I am confident that the Leaders will explore ways and means of realizing these common aspirations and chart out concrete actions in order

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*(Remarks at a Talk Programme on BIMSTEC: Connecting South and Southeast Asia organized by Centre for South Asian Studies (CSAS), Kathmandu, 24 August 2018)*

to further strengthen and steer the BIMSTEC process towards these goals.

BIMSTEC region is bestowed with the abundance of natural, cultural, and human resources. Nearly one-fourth of the world population lives in this region. The size of the economy of the region is over 3 trillion US Dollar and is growing annually at 6.5 percent. This is an evidence of the vast opportunities BIMSTEC possesses for greater regional cooperation and collaboration.

The region also possesses shared history, great civilizations, and compelling potentials. The region has a history of exchanges connecting peoples, societies, and cultures since long before the advent of modern forces of globalization. Diversity in the region has always been an attribute that not

“ **BIMSTEC not only physically connects the South and Southeast Asia; it also possesses shared cultures, beliefs, religions, and civilizations. The values of peace and non-violence preached by Buddha inspire the peoples living in the region.**

just ‘divides and differentiates’ peoples, but on the contrary, binds them together as an enabler for mutual benefit and enrichment.

BIMSTEC region today faces old development challenges and it is not immune to new vulnerabilities. While we have to continue our fight against the ills of poverty, inequality, unemployment and disease, new problems such as climate change, terrorism, and transnational organized crimes demand our concerted efforts. These challenges cannot effectively be addressed through isolated domestic interventions alone. Therefore, we must find a collective and coordinated response to our common challenges and problems.

This is where the importance of regional cooperation under BIMSTEC is more important.

BIMSTEC, as a regional organization, was conceived to connect South Asia and South East Asia as a dynamic bridge. The vision was to connect

South Asia which currently has a population 1.7 billion and 3.3 trillion US Dollar of GDP with South East Asia that has 643 million inhabitants and 2.76 trillion US Dollars of GDP.

The importance of BIMSTEC lies in connecting these two regions for the shared benefit and prosperity of the peoples of the Bay of Bengal region.

The organic linkage between White Mountains of Himalayas and Blue Waters of the Bay of Bengal is a defining marker of BIMSTEC region. Both Himalayas and the Ocean form an 'organic whole' of this region.

BIMSTEC not only physically connects the South and Southeast Asia; it also possesses shared cultures, beliefs, religions, and civilizations. The values of peace and non-violence preached by Buddha inspire the peoples living in the region.

Dear Friends,

We must concede that BIMSTEC has not been able to live up to the expectations of the peoples of this region even after 20 years of its establishment. We are yet to make substantial progress in the issues of mutual interest such as trade and transit facility, physical and digital connectivity, infrastructure, and realization of free trade area. The peoples of this region are earnestly expecting BIMSTEC to deliver.

It is my firm conviction that we must work together with the concerted efforts to make BIMSTEC a deliverable organization. It's high time we channelized our means and efforts towards implementing what we have agreed on. We must also stay focused and committed to develop new concrete actions to steer the BIMSTEC process more effectively.

I am confident that the upcoming BIMSTEC Summit will be instrumental in appropriately addressing relevant issues of mutual interest of the member states. After all, it is in the benefit of all peoples in the region to develop BIMSTEC as a vibrant and fulfilling organization connecting South and Southeast Asia.

I thank you all for your attention.

## Securing the Indian Ocean Region: Traditional and Non-Traditional Challenges

I have the great honour and privilege to address this Fourth Indian Ocean conference being held in this beautiful friendly country, the Maldives.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Government of the Maldives, the India Foundation and S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, for organizing this Conference and inviting me to be a part of this important event.

The theme of the conference, Securing the Indian Ocean Region: Traditional and Non-Traditional Challenges, is highly relevant in view of the great significance of the Indian ocean and its security.

The organizers deserve appreciation for creating such a prominent platform for deliberations on the theme of common interest.

I am here today bringing the best wishes of the people of the Land of Sagarmatha (the Mount Everest), the highest place on the earth, to the people of the deep Sagar (the Indian Ocean).

We all are aware of the glory and magnificence of the Indian Ocean.

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*Statement at the Fourth Indian Ocean Conference, Male, September 3, 2019*

This Ocean is the source of nourishment to a great number of human beings, animals, and plants. It is also a bedrock for the development of great civilizations, cultures, and dynamic commercial and economic activities.

The vast ocean sprawling from Australia in the East to the Arabian Gulf

“ **Nepal is ready to cooperate with all other countries associated with this region in strengthening security of the Indian Ocean and addressing the challenges facing it in whatever way possible.**

to South Africa is replete with precious resources of one sort or the other.

It is an important passage for internal trade, as a large portion of such trade from the Pacific to the Atlantic and, in between them, passes through this region.

It is the route for trade of more than half of the world's sea-borne oil, accommodating 23 of the world's top 100 container ports facilitating one third of the global trade.

Likewise, 36 littorals and 14 adjacent hinterland states are related to the Indian Ocean, making more than 35% of the world's population dependent on it. Thus, there is an inextricable linkage of these countries with this Ocean.

A large portion of the resources of the Indian Ocean region is yet to be explored. It is said that 16.8% of the world's oil reserves and 27.9% of natural gas reserves find home in it. The abundance of huge resources has not only sustained life but also incessantly propelled trade and economic growth in the region.

Despite being a landlocked country, the major share of Nepal's export and import trade is directly or indirectly dependent on transit through the Indian Ocean.

With the opportunities come the challenges. The Indian Ocean and the

surrounding region face a host of non-traditional security threats which include piracy, marine terrorism, climate change, illicit trafficking of drugs and weapons, human trafficking, natural disasters like tsunami, illegal migration, and interruption in freedom of navigation.

Many of these challenges have severely affected the countries associated with this Ocean. The island nations are facing existential threats due to climate change and consequent rise of sea level; unseasonal heavy rainfalls resulting into floods and landslides have been hitting Nepal and other countries every year taking a heavy toll of precious lives and property caused by the phenomena of global warming; similarly, threats of human trafficking, drugs and weapons smuggling and illegal migration have continued posing grave security threats.

In this context, it is appropriate to pursue collective actions from the countries directly or indirectly linked to the Ocean in order to address these challenges.

Moreover, maritime security of the Indian Ocean should receive a due priority by all the governments concerned.

It is important to note that the existing multilateral and regional architecture- Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), ASEAN Regional Forum, East Asia Summit- have all prioritized cooperation in maritime safety and security, trade and investment facilitation, and disaster risk management.

In the South Asian region, initiatives taken such as this Conference will prove instrumental in forging cooperation with regard to strengthening the security of the region.

In Nepal's case, though Nepal is not directly linked with this Ocean, the country is associated with it, as major portion of Nepal's international trade passes through it. It is bearing the brunt of the adverse impacts of climate change without being the cause for it. So is the case for the Maldives and some other countries.

Nepal believes that the rights of exploration, navigation, and utilization

of the resources of this Ocean can only be exercised when there is peace and security. Furthermore, it also holds that maritime security will continue to play a meaningful role in strengthening the Blue Economy, benefitting all the countries concerned.

Additionally, we are in favour of peace, prosperity and abidance of international laws in relations to the use of the high sea.

I am confident that such arrangements would ensure the exploration, navigation, and utilization of the marine resources, sharing the benefits and use of high seas to all states, including landlocked countries like Nepal.

In this context, I am happy to inform this august gathering that the Government of Nepal has been working towards implementing the vision of connecting Nepal's mountains with the Indian Ocean with seamless connectivity of roads, railways, and waterways.

Nepal is also in a process of bringing into operation its own commercial ships in international waters, hoisting Nepal's Flag, in the near future. We believe it will involve us directly with the Indian Ocean with much more focus on international trade and transit.

There is one more dimension- the ecological interdependence between Himalayas and Indian ocean. In the context of climate change, the melting of glaciers results in the rise of sea-level which endangers the survival of low-lying island states. So, preserving the ecological balance in the Himalayas by addressing the adverse effects of climate change is in our common interest. The Himalayas have not only ecological values, but they have also been the source of civilization and repository of traditional and indigenous knowledge.

The Government of Nepal, with a view to sensitizing the international community on the impact of climate change on the livelihoods of people living in the mountains and low-lying coastal and island states, will be hosting a dialogue on Climate Change and Mountain Ecology in the first quarter of next year within the framework of newly established

‘Sagarmatha Sambah’. We will invite you attend the event once we finalize the details.

As to the exploration and utilization of the marine resources under the high seas, Nepal is yet to take full advantage of these resources.

Taking it into consideration, we urge the developed world for their support to the Land-Locked Developing Countries (LLDCs) to enhance capacity for reaping the benefits of the sea.

I am pleased to inform you that Nepal is in the process of developing in-land water ways in its big rivers in cooperation with India in a way to connect Nepal’s rivers with the sea for the movement of its export and import. It believes that effective waterways as a means of transport can greatly facilitate smooth, economical, and fast trade and transit. Once Nepal is able to do so, it will also be effectively linked with the Indian Ocean.

At this moment, it would be relevant to recall the decision of the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit held in Kathmandu in 2018, which emphasized the importance of Blue Economy. The summit agreed to cooperate in this sector for the sustainable development in the region, paying due considerations to the special needs and circumstances of the landlocked Member States. I hope the agreement will be implemented in its true spirit, enabling the land-locked countries like Nepal to reap maximum benefits.

When we discuss about the sea, we need to do it in a holistic manner. There is no doubt that maintaining security of the Ocean is of paramount importance. So is removing obstacles and addressing challenges of various sorts. What is more for the land-locked states like Nepal is to help remove their difficulties so that this natural handicap would not become an obstacle for their development.

Equally important is that the resources of and benefits from the oceans and seas should be equally shared with all countries associated with them. Then only we will create robust cooperation, including for their

security and resolution of problems.

Nepal is ready to cooperate with all other countries associated with this region in strengthening security of the Indian Ocean and addressing the challenges facing it in whatever way possible.

Before I conclude, I, once again, would like to extend thanks to the Organizing Committee for hosting this conference on a relevant theme which interests all coastal and landlocked countries.

I wish the conference a grand success!

Thank you!

# Promoting International Peace and Security for Sustainable Development

I have brought with me warm greetings and best wishes from the people and Government of Nepal to the friendly people and the Government of Azerbaijan and to all delegations.

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was born out of our collective desire for universal peace, unity, shared prosperity, fair international order, and balanced multi-polarity. As a founding member of NAM, its principles remain the guiding ethos of our foreign policy. Our commitment to NAM stands firm and unequivocal. In the face of global challenges, non-alignment as a principle continues to be relevant to guide international relations.

The race for armament, conflicts, civil wars, poverty, famines, and disregard of international law endanger international peace and security. The hunger and poverty continue to degrade human dignity. It is ironic that in the midst of unprecedented economic growth, millions of people still live in abject poverty, disease and deprivation. Whereas the military expenditure in the world exceeds 3.5 billion dollars every day, not even 7 billion dollars annually is available for 2030 Agenda for

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*Statement delivered to the NAM Inter-Summit Ministerial Meeting, 5 April 2018, Baku, Azerbaijan*

Sustainable Development. Attaining sustainable development goals becomes daunting in such an environment.

Peace, security, and sustainable development are mutually reinforcing. Nepal's own experience confirms that exclusion is a major breeding cause for conflict; and lack of peace and security can reverse development gains. Upholding values of democracy, inclusive governance, participatory development, human rights, and rule of law are critical elements to

“ **NAM should further strengthen its solidarity and build internal cohesion and synergy. NAM's common vision for peace, security and sustainable development should be well articulated for being heard and respected in the multilateral system. International rule of law counts supreme in this respect.**

ensure sustainable development as well as peace and security. Most of the countries suffering from conflicts and under-development are members of our Movement. Regrettably, the cumulative human, social and opportunity costs exacted due to the conflicts nowhere match the resources that we have spent for peace and development.

It falls on us to exert all our power for the prevention and resolution of conflicts and help attain sustainable development. Our Movement can do a great deal in this regard. Just to mention a few,

- The success of one member in averting conflict and promoting sustainable development can be emulated by other members with similar socio-cultural and economic conditions. The NAM members, in a spirit of solidarity, should support each other by sharing their experiences, best practices and resources through South-South Cooperation. Nepal is ready to share its experience of uniquely successful peace process.
- It is also equally important to strengthen multilateralism by upholding and defending the principles of UN Charter and

international law. Nepal believes that sovereignty, sovereign equality, territorial integrity, and non-interference in the internal affairs of any State are the cardinal values of multilateral system. They are indispensable for maintaining international peace and security as well as for achieving SDGs. NAM members should work together to make UN a strong, transparent, and democratic institution through necessary reforms of its structures and processes.

- NAM should further strengthen its solidarity and build internal cohesion and synergy. NAM's common vision for peace, security and sustainable development should be well articulated for being heard and respected in the multilateral system. International rule of law counts supreme in this respect.
- The poor and vulnerable countries are marginalized in global economy. They bear the brunt of adverse impact of the financial and economic crises and are left out from the benefits of international systems. Therefore, the international financial system should be democratized to make it more open, transparent, and equitable for increased voice and representation of the landlocked, least developed and other vulnerable countries. It should ensure adequate mobilization of financial resources for growth and development of these countries.
- Trade and investment are critical for ensuring inclusive and sustainable development. The international trade and investment regimes should be open, equitable, rule-based, predictable, and non-discriminatory and should benefit the countries in special situation. To realize this, NAM must work closely with the Group of 77 through the existing Joint Coordinating Committee.

Turning to my own country, I have the pleasure to share this august session that having gone through a decade long armed conflict, Nepal now presents a uniquely successful case of home-grown peace process. Our experience confirms that peace building in post-conflict society can be successful through honest dialogues, mutual respect, willingness to implement the agreements, and inclusive political process. A milestone

in this process has been recently achieved.

After the promulgation of the most progressive and democratic constitution in 2015, we successfully concluded democratic elections at all three tiers of federal structure in 2017. The elections ensured participation of all sections of our society with over 41 percent of women's representation. With political stability firmly set, the government remains squarely focused on attaining economic development with social justice.

To conclude, Mr. Chairman, as guided by the NAM principles, 'amity with all, and enmity with none' has remained the hallmark of Nepal's foreign policy. Nepal will continue to play active and positive role to promote this value in international relations. We will constructively engage with our friends to advance the cause of international peace, security and development. I urge you all to unite our strengths to ensure peace and security in the world, leave no one behind in the development process, and help achieving sustainable development.

I thank you.

# Human-Nature Relation and Human Development

Let me first of all thank Ms. Ayshanie Labe, Resident Representative of UNDP in Nepal, for inviting me to this important ceremony of launching Human Development Report 2020.

For three decades, Human Development Reports have fundamentally shaped the ideas and policy discourse on alternative assessment of development and wellbeing. The criteria used for measuring human development have been the basis for advancing social development agenda, including in Nepal. The contents of the HDR reports have served as useful policy resources for many countries.

Successive human development reports since 1990 have highlighted critical dimensions of human progress and sustainable development, thereby informing, encouraging and assisting the Governments and stakeholders to address the impediments in the way of enlarging choices. They have also widened the conceptual foundation of human development as a capability to lead life one values the most.

Over the years, the very concept of human development has evolved and

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*Remarks at the 6th Ministerial Consultation of the Colombo Process, Kathmandu, 16th November 2018*

adapted considerably to encompass newer elements and dimensions that expands human wellbeing, freedoms, and choices. This year, the report heralds an epoch-making transformation that has taken place in the inter-relationship between human and nature, and signals humans' entry into an uncharted territory of Anthropocene- where humans shape the future of the planet, not the other way round.

“ **We Nepalis are the followers of nature-friendly culture. Our culture and traditions have taught us to live in harmony with nature, which is Nepali way of life. We consider rivers, mountains, trees, ponds and lakes as sacred places and abode of deities.**

The concept of human development has been re-interpreted in the report to account the profound impact of climate change and environmental degradation that we have experienced. The report asserts that in this uncertain and challenging new phase, human development cannot be defined by 'capability' to expanding choices alone, but also by the 'agency' and 'value' – that is ability to participate in decision making and make the most desired choices.

The report talks appropriately on planetary imbalances and social imbalances , and calls for just transformation that extends human freedoms while easing planetary pressures and underlines the need for whole-of-society response.

Conceptually, it develops a new planetary-pressure-adjusted-human-development-index (PHDI) and gives HDI a new dimension of accounting the impact a country makes to the planet.

The report has evoked a transformative thought in the form of an era of Anthropocene that will most probably shape the development discourse for another several decades.

This comes at a time that the world just celebrated the 5th anniversary of the Paris Climate Accord. World leaders have pronounced higher national ambitions and reinforced their commitment to firmly implement the

Accord. This might look merely a coincidence. However, given the level of climate urgency felt around the world, this human development report is a significant addition to alert against the insatiable human action.

We just heard comprehensive presentations and rich intellectual commentaries on the report and its content. I believe the report will continue to invite further stimulating deliberations as we go on.

Now, let me relate the alarm ringing in the report to the context of Nepal and how we consider we could address the situation.

We Nepalis are the followers of nature-friendly culture. Our culture and traditions have taught us to live in harmony with nature, which is Nepali way of life. We consider rivers, mountains, trees, ponds and lakes as sacred places and abode of deities. We want to link this cultural value for the conservation of nature, protection of environment and mitigating and adapting with the impact of climate change.

Nepal strongly supports the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the call to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees. Prime Minister Rt. Hon. Mr. K P Sharma Oli addressed the climate ambition summit hosted to mark the 5th anniversary of the Paris Agreement last week and outlined the roadmap for Nepal's ambition towards a net-zero greenhouse gas emission by 2050. Coinciding this, Nepal submitted its updated, more ambitious and progressive Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC-2020).

We are committed to the promotion of climate-resilient development and aim to move towards a zero-carbon economy. We have prioritized producing clean and renewable energy as well as promoting e-mobility, low carbon infrastructure and ecotourism. By 2030, Nepal aims to maintain 45% of the country's land under forest cover and aims to extend protected area from 23% to 30% and preserve biodiversity.

Nepal's mountains are not only source of fresh water for millions, but also serve as climate stabilizer and help maintain ecological balance in the oceans.

While implementing the NDC, Nepal remains committed to prioritize the

issue of gender equality and social inclusion and ensure full, equal and meaningful participation of women, children, youth, indigenous peoples and marginalized communities in all stages of the implementation process. I believe this is where we match with the emphasis of this year's HDR on human 'agency' and 'value'.

While easy and adequate access to climate finance becomes critical for us to implement these ambitions, we are keen to join hands with all countries to march ahead for a more sustainable journey together.

With a view to contribute in our own way to the climate change agenda, we are committed to host the Sagarmatha Sambahad when the COVID-19 situation becomes normal.

Human development is a path that leads us to live a happy and meaningful life. In order to successfully navigate through the age of Anthropocene, we do not have a choice of continuing the business as usual. It is a call to pursue entirely a new path that all countries, societies and economies must adopt to save humanity from unforeseen crises and dooms.

The most reassuring path is deploying sustained action through mechanisms of social norms and values, incentives and regulations, and nature based human development. Without this, we cannot address the most critical challenges of Anthropocene- mitigating and adapting to climate change, protecting biodiversity and ensuring human wellbeing for all.

Before I conclude, let me quote Nobel laureate Pablo Neruda, 'The bare earth, plantless, waterless, is an immense puzzle. In the forests or beside rivers everything speaks to humans. The desert does not speak. I could not comprehend its tongue; its silence...'

I believe, this report in the 30th year of HDR, will mark a paradigm shift in terms of new development thought, process and action for promoting sustainable human development in an extraordinary time that we are living in.

# Harnessing Science and Technology for the Development of LLDCs

First of all, I congratulate you all on the happy occasion of the inaugural conference of the International Think Tank for the Landlocked Developing Countries (ITT-LLDCs) and express my best wishes for the success of the Think Tank.

I would like to thank and appreciate the Government of Mongolia for hosting this inaugural conference of the Think Tank and for the warm hospitality and excellent arrangements made for the Conference.

I commend Mongolia for the leadership and important role it has played over the years towards establishing the Think Tank. I also recognize the role played by all Member States of the Think Tank that helped to bring this important achievement in the form of international think tank for Land-locked developing countries.

I also take this opportunity to thank all the members of the Governing Board for their substantive work during their session last month. I believe this conference will be able to guide the process of the ITT-LLDC in a firmer footing.

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*Statement at the inaugural Ministerial Conference of the International Think Tank for the Landlocked Developing Countries, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia on 11-12 June 2018*

Nepal attaches great importance to this organization. This has created an enormous hope among the land-locked developing countries. In fact, we are happy that Nepal's accession, as the 10th member, triggered the entry into force of the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of the Think Tank in October 2017.

“ **We should also be able to harness full potentials of science, technology, and innovations, including the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and space technologies to overcome the constraints to the development of LLDCs.**

The establishment of the Think Tank is a milestone achievement for the LLDCs. We believe that the organization like ITT should have been established long ago but it is never late to start a good thing. ITT represents this good beginning for our collective good. We believe that the Think Tank can and should play a critical role in promoting the interests of LLDCs.

LLDCs have special development needs and challenges arising from their landlockedness, remoteness and geographical constraints. Addressing these challenges is key to their inclusive growth, which in turn will contribute to raising human development and reducing poverty in these countries. This is also the overarching goal of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPOA) with a focus on all six priority areas.

Nepal considers that the VPOA should be mainstreamed in our national development policies and plans as well as that of transit countries. The work programmes of United Nations and other international organizations designed to support the LLDCs should also be aligned with the objectives and goals of the VPOA in a coherent manner.

We should also be able to harness full potentials of science, technology, and innovations, including the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and space technologies to overcome the constraints to the development of LLDCs. Technological innovations do have potentials to reduce the burden of landlockedness and open up the vistas of opportunities.

As we are preparing for the Mid-Term Review of the implementation of VPOA in 2019, we acknowledge that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should be in tandem with the VPOA for the much-needed synergy to achieve results on the ground.

As the first ever intergovernmental body of the LLDC group, the Think Tank has an important responsibility. It should be fully operationalized so that it can contribute, through top-quality research and advocacy, towards improving the ability of landlocked developing countries to build capacity for benefiting from the international trade.

ITT's role in equipping and preparing our representatives and diplomats in international trade negotiations can be crucial. Backed with quality inputs and support, LLDCs will be in better position to contribute to and benefit from such processes.

It is important to ensure adequate resources required for effective operationalization of the Think Tank. In this regard, Nepal is ready to contribute what it can, and for now pledges to make a modest one-time contribution of USD 50,000 for the Think Tank.

Support from all sides will be important. We need to expand our outreach to encourage all fellow LLDCs to join the Think Tank. I also call upon all the developed land-locked countries as well as transit countries, development partners and international organizations to continue their solidarity for LLDCs and support the Think Tank.

I conclude, Mr. Chairman, by highlighting one fact that the success of the Think Tank is also the success of LLDCs. So, we should join our hands for developing the Think Tank into a credible, respected, and useful international organization.

I thank you for your attention.

## Bandung+65: More Relevant, United and Effective NAM

I would like to begin by thanking the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Chair of the Non-aligned Movement, for convening this Meeting.

We appreciate Azerbaijan's dynamic leadership provided to our movement during these difficult times.

The Online Summit of the NAM Task Force held in May 2020 was a worthy initiative in mustering international support against the COVID-19.

We are confident that the 31st Special Session of the UNGA being convened at the request of the NAM will be able to garner wider international support, solidarity, and commitment to fight this pandemic.

Mr. Chairman,

Sixty-five years ago, 29 Asian African countries, including my own country Nepal, assembled in Bandung with the shared aspiration of peace, prosperity, harmony, and justice.

The leaders stood for equality among nations, respect for sovereignty and

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*Remarks delivered at the Virtual Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) at the Margins of the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 29 September 2020*

territorial integrity, non-interference and economic cooperation.

They advocated for human rights and prosperity for all.

And, more importantly, they called for addressing global challenges and crises through cooperation and collaboration.

The ten Principles enunciated in the Bandung Declaration laid the foundation of Non-aligned Movement.

“ **With its numerical and moral strength, NAM should claim its rightful place and amplify the voice of the weak and vulnerable countries in their fight against the pandemic. NAM must prove itself as a collective voice of reason and a source of strength to its membership.**

Adopted at the backdrop of complex international geo-politics, these principles are time-tested and stand relevant. They bear even greater meaning today when the very foundation of cooperative global order confronts with parochial nationalism and the return of geopolitics.

The challenges posed by COVID-19 and its impacts on the poorest and most vulnerable people calls for greater international collaboration and support. The pandemic has taught us that no country- whether big or small- is immune from the challenges of global proportion.

Effective and coordinated efforts are needed to address the current and emerging challenges and emergencies. Only through larger international collaboration and synergy we can win the pandemic. United we stand stronger, divided we will fail, and the virus will win.

Therefore, this is not a time to abdicate from international responsibility and resort to self-centered nationalism. This is a time to internalize the cost of discord and benefit of cooperation, strengthen multilateral institutions and promote multilateralism with the United Nations at its centre.

We must retain the spirit of solidarity and cooperation. This is the only way where all nations large or small can coexist in peace and dignity.

With its numerical and moral strength, NAM should claim its rightful place and amplify the voice of the weak and vulnerable countries in their fight against the pandemic. NAM must prove itself as a collective voice of reason and a source of strength to its membership.

For this, we the member states of NAM, need to recommit ourselves to make the Movement more effective and faithfully adhere to its principles.

The current crisis requires investing in health systems, social protection and poverty reduction; removing of trade barriers; and accelerating of efforts to address the climate crisis. NAM has to take a leadership role in these areas.

The challenges confronted by the LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS are unique and different. They require robust support measures in the form of preferential trade, investment, technology and knowledge transfer and development cooperation. This has become even more important in the face of the present global health crisis and resulting economic downturn.

With only one decade left to achieve the 2030 Agenda, we must accelerate its implementation and build sustainable and resilient pathways to address the long-term developmental consequences of COVID-19.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I reaffirm Nepal's profound commitment to the principles of NAM and pledge our continued cooperation to its processes and initiatives.

I thank you.

## Challenges Faced by LLDCs and the Future Roadmap

Let me extend sincere appreciation to Kazakhstan for providing excellent leadership to the Group.

I thank the UN Secretary-General Mr. Antonio Guterres for his solidarity and support.

I also commend the role played by Madam Utoikamanu and her team in promoting the cause of LLDCs. At the dawn of the defining decade in achieving SDGs, the COVID-19 has shaken the world.

The disruptions of pandemic have been profound. It has revealed the gaps, compounded the challenges, and multiplied the hardships.

With preventive restrictions on travel and transportation, the fallouts of the crisis on LLDCs have been much severe. As the means to respond to the crisis are limited, our countries are struggling to fend off this double-edged sword of health and economic crisis.

LLDCs face several challenges because of their remoteness and geographical isolation. Distance escalates the cost of development and trade. The

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*Virtual Address at the 19th Annual Ministerial Meeting of LLDCs, 23 September 2020*

dismal productive capacity has further crushed our trade competitiveness.

Excessive commodity dependence has exposed LLDCs to the shocks and fluctuations in international markets. Perennial and large trade deficits have been a sad reality for many LLDCs.

“ **Nepal stands for peaceful solution of international disputes. We support national leadership and ownership of any solution to internal conflict and apolitical role of the agencies like the United Nations.**

Unhindered, cost-effective, and accessible infrastructures coupled with smooth trade-facilitation measures open up the doors of global market. Investment in infrastructures for LLDCs is an investment in the lifeline of their trade and development.

The potentials unleashed by e-commerce and digital technologies could transform LLDCs by liberating their economies from the rigid clutches of geography. Access to easy, affordable, and reliable technology becomes critical for that.

Adverse impacts of climate change such as outburst of glacial lakes, floods, retreat of glaciers, desertification also pose a serious threat to LLDCs. Unfortunately, the current climate finance architecture has no dedicated window for LLDCs.

The Mid-term review of the VPOA has given us a clear idea on the progress and gaps. We must build on the Call for Action, contained in the political declaration, and intensify our efforts to implement six priority areas of VPOA at all levels –national, regional and global.

An effective partnership between and among LLDCs, their transit neighbors, development partners, UN and other stakeholders will be crucial for this.

Secretary General’s roadmap for accelerating the implementation of VPOA

is therefore an important step.

What else could be a better way for a system-wide response as we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Organization?

In the quest of transforming LLDCs to land-linked with vibrant economies, our response needs to be two-fold.

First, we must put in place a predictable and reliable transit regime and connectivity infrastructures.

And second, we must enhance productive capacities by capitalizing on the new technologies and embracing low-volume high-value products.

For the present, international solidarity should be there in containing the COVID pandemic and addressing the economic fallouts.

In the long run, all means of support, including ODA, trade, technology, and capacity building need to be deployed to support the LLDCs.

Only a genuine spirit of global solidarity to complement the efforts of the LLDCs can ensure that they ride out the current storm and emerge stronger in future.

In Nepal, we have mainstreamed the 2030 Agenda and VPOA into our national plans and programs. Transforming Nepal to a land-linked country underpins our national aspiration of “Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali”.

To materialize this aspiration, we have focused on building transport infrastructures, enhancing connectivity, and improving investment environment, among others. Our investment in social and human development sector, and reforms in governance have produced positive results.

Let me conclude, Mr. Chairman, by reaffirming Nepal’s commitment to cooperation and solidarity for promoting the Group’s common interests and making the leap to land-linked-ness by leaving no one behind.

I thank you all.

## International Cooperation for the Cause of LDCs

I would like to thank Malawi for organizing this meeting and for steering the activities of the Group during these challenging times.

I also appreciate the role of the USG and High Representative and her team for the diligent work to support the LDCs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made ravaging impact on LDCs. Loss of exports, decline of investment, remittances and tourism coupled with commodity price shocks are causing far-reaching socio-economic consequences.

Given the sweeping impacts of the pandemic all over the world, LDCs risk losing the ODA flow.

The pandemic has also amplified the inherent vulnerabilities of the LDCs. These countries are struggling to devise effective response, due to the limitations in - resource base, social protection, and health systems.

We acknowledge the support and swift action taken by the United Nations, G20 countries, the IMF, World Bank, WHO and other multilateral and

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*Virtual Address at the Annual Ministerial Meeting of LDCs, 17 September 2020*

bilateral development partners in response to COVID-19.

But this is not sufficient.

We need to devise other enabling conditions as well, where ODA shortfalls are compensated by lifting of trade barriers, debt relief, transfer of technology and knowledge, and scaling up aid for trade.

Technology transfer to the LDCs is critical to build a foundation for more equal and prosperous world.

Emergency global health package for LDCs including the quick, affordable, and universal access to anti-COVID vaccine, once it is developed, is equally important.

This is a time that we promote international cooperation and solidarity and strengthen multilateral institutions like the United Nations to address the challenges the world is facing.

As we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, this is also a fitting moment to ensure that LDCs challenges and concerns find due space and priority in all multilateral processes, including the United Nations.

A landlocked and least developed country, Nepal has its own share of the brunt of the pandemic.

It has wrought our economy to a standstill –impacting industry, employment, trade, revenues, tourism, and remittances. It is likely to constrain Nepal’s economic growth to less than 2.3% during this fiscal year.

Vulnerabilities to climate change and natural disasters further accentuate our development challenges.

Our hard-earned development gains are under threat, and the pandemic risks our plan for a smooth and sustainable graduation from the LDC status.

However, our aspiration for graduation has not weakened.

We are in the final stage of the implementation of Istanbul Programme of Action. Our focus must be on its unfinished business.

It is also a time to reflect upon the gap between the action-plan and its implementation and identify the bottlenecks that need our introspection.

We acknowledge various international support measures and initiatives taken so far to support the LDCs and implement the IPOA.

Our efforts must be towards creating jobs and advancing inclusive growth. This will not be possible without an enhanced level of external finance, including the FDI. Every country must be enabled to gain from the trade.

In this context, we reiterate the call for a global stimulus package for the LDCs to be funded and implemented with immediate effect.

To conclude, Mr. Chairman, LDCs deserve special attention of the international community in their efforts to achieve peace, development and prosperity. Reaching furthest behind first demands our concerted and collective effort because the decade of action and delivery of SDGs will not be realized if LDCs are left behind.

I thank you.

# **|06| Economic Transformation of Nepal: Agenda of Sustainable Development and Social Justice**

## Marxism and Socialism

I feel honored and privileged to speak a few words in front of you all.

I also thank you for taking time to participate in this seminar and engage with us towards promoting the ideals of Marxism.

In particular, I would like to thank our international friends who travelled from various countries across the world to make it to this programme. Your presence means a lot to us.

Let me take this opportunity to acknowledge your dedication and commitment to our common cause of Marxism and socialism.

I express my gratitude to you for your continuous love, solidarity and goodwill towards Nepal, Nepali people and Nepal Communist Party. Spontaneous support and cooperation we have been receiving from you, your parties and your countries has been of tremendous help for us including in our difficult times.

A number of our Nepali friends have worked hard in putting things in place for this event. Your remarkable contributions and active participation have added more value to this programme. I thank you all.

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*Address at the Concluding Session of the International Seminar on 'Marxism and Socialism' Organized by Nepal Communist Party to Mark the Birth Bicentenary of Karl Marx, Kathmandu, 30-31 May 2018*

The objective of this International Seminar was to reinforce the importance of Marxism by emphasizing its innovative application. Our purpose was to observe Mark's birth bicentenary and engage in the theme as well as to learn from each other's experiences. I am fully confident that the scholarly presentations and rich discussions we have had over the course of last two days have made important contributions towards this end.

Therefore, I do not want to speak for long and repeat what has been already said. Please allow me just to dwell upon briefly on the theme of

“ **Nepal stands for peaceful solution of international disputes. We support national leadership and ownership of any solution to internal conflict and apolitical role of the agencies like the United Nations.**

innovative use of Marxism and then share with you the priorities of the present Government of Nepal with special focus on our foreign policy engagements.

Dear Friends,

The world has witnessed tremendous changes since Karl Marx was born two hundred years ago. Human societies have developed novel and yet more complicated structures. As a result, multifarious and unprecedented issues have risen for humanity to deal with.

In last 170 years, the sphere and influence of Marxism has also widened through different forms and structures. Its usage and interpretations have made significant contributions to philosophy, politics, history, economics, aesthetics and many other fields. Through its various avatars, Marxism has guided the overall change and revolutionary shift in all areas of human knowledge.

In doing so, however, what has not changed is the very crux of Marxism. That is the spirit of questioning the established structure, the undercutting of the commonly accepted ideas and redrawing the traditional boundaries. The critical perspective of Marxism has helped redefine the relationship

between 'haves and haves-not', rulers and ruled, centre and margin, and truth and non-truth.

In whatever forms and uses it may be, Marxism, calls us to explore opportunities for change in favour of the working class and disadvantaged groups. It invites us to be brave, creative and involved for the cause of change. Marxist interpretation of history and society questions 'winner-takes-all' approach of markets as promoted by capitalism. And, it calls for redistribution of wealth by preventing it from flowing in the hands of a few.

Based on this fundamental and universal principle, Marxism has been contextualized and 'localized' in many countries and places across the globe. While maintaining its guiding principle is the key, innovation in its application helps address unique and distinct needs and challenges of different societies. Such innovation must be made in relation to local realities pertaining to production modes and relations. This means that all socialist movements need not necessarily have 'uniformity' in their approaches. They may have their own unique attributes and characteristics. However, as their common 'thread' is Marxism, they can form various platforms for sharing unique experiences.

We must bear in mind that the main aim must be to strive for social progress that brings about positive changes in people's lives. And, we must know that there are no obvious pathways to the social progress we aspire for.

So, the art of innovation in Marxism is the art of changing the economic and social relations. This is a continuous process, not a point in our efforts. Such process must be irreversible both in terms of history and commitment. Looking for future is necessary but cautious efforts to change the present are equally critical. And, special realities may warrant that we move fast; but we must also ensure that we do not end way short.

Dear Friends,

The seventy years of Nepali Communist Movement was about similar innovative application of Marxism. I must say that our political movements and struggles were both 'unique and home-grown'.

We took Marxist ideals as our guiding principle but appropriated them in relation to our historical needs and realities. I firmly believe that the success our Movement has achieved so far was due to our readiness to adjust Marxism as per the local context of Nepal.

Having said this, however, we must concede that we have a long way to go in terms of attaining socialist goals and objectives. We can be proud of what we have achieved at political front but we are yet to get our economic and developmental aspirations materialized.

In this context, I would like to briefly touch upon our priorities with a special focus on our engagements at international level.

The present Government of Nepal has its topmost priority to build on the political gains made so far and take on the generational challenge of socio-economic progress. And, we are fully committed to transforming the development aspirations of our people into reality.

The present government has the motto of 'Prosperous Nepal and Happy Nepali.' Its policies and programmes have been founded on some fundamental pillars. They include nationalism, our commitment to democracy and fundamental freedoms, and social justice based on equality. Our efforts for stability, progress and sustainable development are guided by the goals of good governance and inclusive public participation.

If we closely examine these goals and principles, we find that they are intrinsically associated to Marxist perspectives.

Our foreign policy engagements are guided by these pillars as well as our development priorities at domestic front. We aim at promoting our national interest in the international arena while remaining committed to fulfilling our international obligations.

Independent foreign policy and balanced conduct of relations have been the hallmarks of our external engagements. Our focus has been on promoting sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and non-interference while adhering to the principles of Panchasheel, non-alignment, UN Charter, international law, and norms of world peace.

Our motto has been and will continue to be ‘amity with all, and enmity with none’. The development imperatives at home will guide our diplomatic engagements abroad. And, most importantly, our culture, civilization and identity as well as a sense of solidarity with under-developed and developing countries will remain at the centre.

We enjoy cordial and friendly relations with both our immediate neighbours- India and China. We aim at further building on these relations and working on the basis of mutual trust.

We continue to enhance our relations with all our development partners and friendly countries across the world. We are grateful for all the support extended to Nepal by our friends and partners. Promoting cooperation based on mutual respect and trust is our priority.

Our engagements at regional forums such SAARC and BIMSTEC aim at promoting regional cooperation and harmony. We value regional processes and want to develop them for the common good.

Nepal remains constructively engaged at the multilateral forums including the UN and Non-Aligned Movement. We are committed to the cause of global peace, security and development. Solidarity and cooperation with all friendly countries including the small states, LDCs and LLDCs characterize our deliberations in such forums.

We know that the pursuit of economic agenda is the mainstay of today’s diplomacy. So, our economic interests are of vital importance in our foreign policy engagements.

The contemporary world is characterized by conflicts, contradictions and paradoxes. Though the modernization has brought unprecedented wealth in the world, its distribution is not judicious and equitable. The gap between haves and have nots has widened causing social unrests. In addition, the world today is mired under inward-looking tendency and protectionism. The lines between truths and half-truths have been blurred. Thoughts and ideas are being reduced to the whims of tweets and facebook posts.

'Identity politics' is apparently seen as undermining the fundamental goals of ideologies. Racial, cultural and ethnic issues are trying to undercut the overall ethos of class struggle. Against this context, Marxist ideologies and principles can best be utilized for the betterment of the oppressed and exploited communities across the world. It would help us to bridge this widening gap and establish the social ground for equality and justice- the essential component for peace, security, development and prosperity.

Our cooperation must promote the free-flow of goods, services and people. Redefining the global order in favour of the small nations and their peoples is necessary.

Nepal believes that we must value the democratic right of independence and choice and stand together against all forms of external interference in the domestic affairs of our friendly countries. We must ensure that the voiceless people and states get a voice.

Our focus must be on peaceful resolution of international disputes. We need to ensure that the international community, institutions and organizations must play an apolitical role. Selective approaches targeting particular countries and regions must be stopped.

Our efforts must be towards promoting a just and equitable international order whereby all countries- small and big- fulfill their international obligations. We also need to ensure that all countries enjoy equitable opportunities to pursue their goals of development and prosperity.

To conclude, attaining these goals is not that easy. Some may ignore us, ridicule at us or even oppose us. However, our collective efforts oriented towards progress and change will be instrumental. Change is not the question 'why and how'; it is a question of 'when and by whom'.

I am sure our deliberations in this Seminar were productive in exploring more specifically the ways and means of using Marxism to attain the common cause of socialism. The need is to continue working together with a spirit of collaborative partnership.

I thank you all for your attention.

# Investment Opportunities in Nepal

I am delighted to welcome you all to the first plenary session of Nepal Investment Summit 2019.

At the outset, let me express my sincere appreciation for the opportunity given to me to chair the session. I am encouraged by your active participation in the Summit.

I wish you all a pleasant stay and successful business mission in Nepal.

It is not my intention to reiterate what has already been said by the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister in his inaugural address a short while ago. You have also heard the views expressed by Hon. Finance Minister.

However, I wish to highlight some of the important points that will set the context for our deliberations.

It is often said that this is an era of Asian century. With unprecedented economic dynamism, global development landscape is being changed and locus of global geo-economics is being shifted towards Asia.

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*Address to the Nepal Investment Summit, March 2019, Kathmandu*

Our neighbours--China and India have already emerged as global economic powerhouse.

Nepal's strategic location is suitable to unleash immense investment and business opportunities in Nepal.

As stable government and consistency of policies are critically important to create a conducive environment for investment, Nepal stands to meet both of these vital elements.

“ **I wish to share with you that concluding bilateral investment promotion and protection agreements, double taxation avoidance agreements and participating in regional investment agreements are our top priority.**

Following the promulgation of new constitution and the conclusion of local, provincial and federal elections, the long-awaited political stability has been achieved in the country with the strong federal government of two-third majority.

Political stability, in fact, brings in policy continuity and consistency. Favourable political milieu equally entails a conducive atmosphere for undertaking much-needed socio-economic transformation in the country.

In line with this vision, the present Government has set its utmost priority to realize the motto of ‘Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali’. It essentially means leaving not a single Nepali behind and making the entire country rich. In that sense, political stability and economic prosperity complement each other in a virtuous cycle.

Our vision of socio- economic transformation embraces the targets to graduate from LDC status at an early date; to become a Middle-Income Country and achieve SDGs by 2030. These targets are being taken up by the upcoming five-year plan.

The plan also aims to attain double-digit growth to meet these targets.

Mobilization of domestic finance alone will not be adequate to achieve these ambitious development goals. Foreign direct investment is, therefore, essential to meet our resource requirements.

Over the last three decades or so, the country has been pursuing liberal economic policies and competitive market regime. The new constitution has categorically espoused this spirit with the provision of welcoming foreign capital and technological investment in priority sectors.

Almost all sectors have been open for foreign investment and the sensitive list for investment is kept very short. Hydropower, agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, infrastructure, ICTs, mines and minerals are some of the promising sectors for investment in Nepal. The labour cost in Nepal is competitive and low. Qualified and skilled workforce is available at reasonable cost.

With a view to creating an enabling environment for domestic and foreign investors in line with the constitutional spirit, the present Government has undertaken a number of policy, legal, institutional and procedural reforms.

On the policy and legal front, many new laws have been made consistent with the new constitution. Recently, the two key legislations, namely Foreign Investment and Technology Transfer Act (FITTA) and Public-Private Partnership and Investment Board Act (PPIBA) have been enacted.

The FITTA ensures national treatment for any foreign investment and repatriation of return has been guaranteed. The introduction of automatic route system will facilitate foreign investment-related procedures in a simple and predictable manner. The PPIBA provides one stop service for foreign investment exceeding 6 billion rupees or hydro project over 200 MW capacity.

Governance and rule of law plays an important role in creating environment for making investment and doing business in the country. Needless to say, good governance is a *sin qua non* for the expansion of economic activities as well as for the attainment of economic prosperity.

We have accelerated our crusade against corruption with absolute zero-tolerance policy on it. The introduction of social security system for workers will promote congenial industrial relations and thereby contribute to conductive investment climate.

Nepal offers an attractive tax and export incentive structure to investors. Procedures for land acquisition, company registration, environmental assessment and infrastructure development have been simplified. Online registration and payment system has been put in place.

Connectivity remains critical in making investment decisions and also for smooth business operations.

Reliable infrastructure network reduces the cost of doing business. It is the policy of Government to build critical infrastructure. Electricity supply for industries has been made almost 24/7. Major power projects are on the verge of completion. We will soon become power surplus country.

Road networks within and across border have witnessed much progress. Construction of Kathmandu-Terai Fast Track is moving ahead. One SEZ is in operation and some others are in the pipeline. Digital connectivity also remains under our priority and is under expansion.

Sound management of macroeconomic fundamentals have made investment in Nepal risk-free. Conclusion of BIPPA with friendly countries ensures protection of investment and that of avoidance of double taxation provides investment incentives. The upcoming policy and legal reform in the intellectual property sector will offer more benefits under various multilateral instruments.

We understand that reform is a continuous process. We are committed to it. We will do it with the private sector on board. We will undertake necessary measures to sustain an investment and business-friendly atmosphere in the country.

As I said earlier, Nepal is located between the world's two largest markets—China and India. Nepal enjoys preferential market access to both with duty-free export facilities for most of its products. Nepal as an LDC

enjoys similar preferential arrangements with many developed countries, including EU and USA. Some developing countries have also offered DFQF facilities. With rising middle-class population, even the domestic market is expanding. For prospective investors in Nepal, market will not be the problem.

Connectivity tops the agenda in our engagements with neighbours. Port facilities in India have improved. New transit route through inland waterway is being developed. Transit procedures are being simplified through the use of modern technology. Transport Transit arrangement with China will provide us another transit corridor for international trade.

The prospect of regional electricity market is growing. Policy and regulatory framework for power trade is being developed. Cross-border transmission lines are being constructed. The conclusion of MoU on BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection has enlarged the prospect of regional power trade. The MoU on Power Trade between Nepal and Bangladesh has further expanded the power market.

I am glad to share with you that Nepal is resource-rich country with abundant water resources, population dividend, biodiversity, and wonderful landscapes together with trainable workforce and hospitable people. It is a virgin land for lucrative investment. Business profile of multinationals operating in Nepal reveals that none of them have gone bankrupt. They have made handsome return and have contributed huge amount to our treasury.

In a nutshell, investment in Nepal is a profitable venture. Political climate is favorable. Policy, legal and institutional framework is enabling and encouraging. Regional ambience is equally promising. In this context, we call upon and welcome investors to think about investing in industrial venture and business operations in Nepal. This will turn out to a win-win situation for both investors and Nepal.

With these words, I now have the pleasure to inform you about the format of the plenary session quite briefly. There will be altogether two presentations-each will take about fifteen minutes, which will be followed by floor discussions. At the end I will wrap up the session with my concluding

observations.

Globally, foreign direct investment accounted for two fifths of total foreign financial flows to LDCs in 2018. This is a huge portion of money that matters to our economic development. Therefore, I assure you that our commitments to attract and facilitate foreign direct investment in the best possible business climate will stay the course for decades to come. That is, we will adopt more and more foreign investment friendly policies in the days ahead.

Perhaps I underline that regional business climate is improving both under bilateral and regional frameworks. Thus, investing in this country also opens the way for integrating into regional value chains thereby gaining efficiency and sustainable growth of businesses.

As a matter of fact, the scale of foreign investments to date is scanty. But the growth in FDI is impressive as it stands at 26 percent per annum in the last five years. I think this alone is a pointer that business climate in Nepal is improving steadily.

In my capacity as the Foreign Minister, I wish to share with you that concluding bilateral investment promotion and protection agreements, double taxation avoidance agreements and participating in regional investment agreements are our top priority. We have already concluded half a dozen BIPPAs, nearly a dozen DTAAAs and negotiating regional investment agreements in BIMSTEC and SAARC. I am confident that this will further ameliorate business environment in the days ahead.

Furthermore, I am delighted to inform you that large-scale connectivity projects with neighbouring countries India and China including BRI projects are already underway and accordingly we have focused on massive infrastructure developments within the country as well. Thus, I believe that investments in these projects will be profitable and completion of these projects further open up new business opportunities and help existing businesses to flourish further.

Currently, we are working on Country-Specific FDI Facilitation Strategies in order to ensure matching potential foreign investors of a particular

country and priority investment sectors in Nepal. We are also planning to catalyse building close relationships between research and training institutions in investment sectors. I think this will facilitate win-win investment partnership between host and source countries.

Likewise, we are well-poised to mobilize all our missions across the globe to facilitate foreign investment through essential services to investors: they include quick responding to inquiry and information seekers, solving problems, facilitation of first-time country visits for investment purposes and after-care services throughout investment cycle.

At this juncture, it is pertinent to realize the indispensable role of NRNs that have been a succor in almost every sphere of national life since some decades. I fondly recall the NRN Global Knowledge Conference held last year, which provided us with inputs on how to best utilize their knowledge, skills, capital and experiences. I appeal NRNs to come forward more vehemently.

It is true that foreign investors sometimes roll back or retract their decisions due to some uncertain local factors. But we have the greatest resources to our rescue. Nepali Diaspora abroad, which is around 5 million, has their steering committee in about 80 countries. I would like to sincerely recommend all foreign investors not to flinch back but find an NRN partner who aids you to cut across any hurdle at local level. So, I appeal both NRNs and foreign investors to come forward in partnership or separately whichever way suits you best.

I hope this Summit helps you in tapping the best business opportunities in Nepal and it will be a huge success for us and for you all equally. Do believe that we highly value your insightful and pragmatic comments and suggestions to chart our future course.

Finally, I want to commit before you that we will also hold bilateral investment meetings through our embassies as and when necessary. I am confident that we will have continuous engagements in the coming days.

Once again, I heartily thank you all for your active participation, keen attention, and invaluable contributions to this plenary session.

# Development Strategy for the Water Resources Management in Nepal

At the outset, I would like to thank the Association of Former Career Ambassadors of Nepal for inviting me to attend this seminar on “Development Strategy for the Water Resources Management in Nepal”. I appreciate AFCAN for taking this noble initiative. I found the theme of the seminar highly relevant as it covers an important aspect of Nepal’s national priority area. I am sure that the deliberations made during the seminar would be helpful in generating insights into the subject matter and providing policy inputs.

Nepal is rich in water resources. With more than 6,000 rivers, we have abundant opportunity to harness this precious resource for the benefit of our people in all provinces of the country in an equitable manner.

We have been attaching high importance to water resources as a major contributor for the socioeconomic development of Nepal. Our plans and policies have always prioritized this sector and we have also utilized external assistance to a greater extent. However, we have not been able to achieve the desired results. If we compare the vast potential with the current use, a large gap becomes apparent.

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*Keynote Address at the Seminar on Development Strategy for the Water Resources Management in Nepal, organized by the Association of Former Career Ambassadors of Nepal, Kathmandu, 29 June 2018*

With the increasing population and effects of climate change, water resources sector is likely to encounter more challenges in coming days. Himalayan mountains and glacial lakes are melting. Rivers are getting polluted. The ecosystem has been adversely affected. Our objective of achieving SDGs by 2030 largely depends on the prudent utilization of our water resources. In this context, I am happy to share that in order to conserve our water resources for us as well as our posterity; the government has initiated the programmes of climate change mitigation and adaptation. Protection of Himalayan mountains and glacial lakes that are the source of fresh water as well as river basin protection remains our top priority.

“ **We can do a lot to tap the full potential of water resources with timely measure. There is a need to have a focused strategy and a comprehensive national water policy.**

We can do a lot to tap the full potential of water resources with timely measure. There is a need to have a focused strategy and a comprehensive national water policy. The sustainable development of water resources can substantially contribute to improve the livelihood of our people as well as enhance the economic growth of the country. As agriculture traditionally remains a major source of livelihood and employment with 27.6 percent contribution to the GDP, utmost utilization of water resources holds much significance for the advancement of this sector.

In the context of our federal set up, proper utilization of water resources would enhance the efficiency of the provinces and local levels. Judicious use and distribution of benefits of this resource would be a priority of the federal and local governments in the days ahead. The Constitution is clear about the responsibility of federal, provincial, and local governments in the utilization and management of water resources. Institutional arrangements need to be made in federal and provincial levels for the management of water resources related issues. Legal framework would also be essential to regulate these aspects. The Government of Nepal is contemplating a water resources policy to guide our future course of action in this sector.

The Government has identified energy as a driver of economic growth. We have vast hydropower potential with about 43000 MW considered to be economically viable to harness. This provides us opportunity to fulfill our needs as well as that of our neighbours. Major investments of the public, private and cooperative sectors will be concentrated in the generation of hydropower. Foreign investment and resources from the development partners will also be mobilized in this sector. Non-resident Nepalīs will be encouraged to utilize their capital. With the promotion of electricity-intensive industrial activities, we can create congenial atmosphere for further hydropower generation. This will also help achieve balanced regional development. We will create conducive mechanisms for more foreign investment.

Given the vast energy potential of Nepal, the Government envisages to generate 5 thousand megawatts of electricity within 5 years and 15 thousand megawatts within 10 years from small, medium and large hydro-electricity projects through the investments of public and private sectors.

Trade of hydroelectricity with neighbouring countries equally remains our priority. The Power Trade Agreement signed between Nepal and India in 2014 holds promise in facilitating cooperation in the power sector, including developing transmission interconnections, grid connectivity, power exchange and trading. This has provided a solid ground for the free export of power from Nepal to India. The Indian side has issued guidelines on cross border trade of electricity. We consider that certain provisions of the guidelines contradict with the PTA. During the recent high-level visits, the Indian side informed that it is reviewing the guidelines in line with the PTA and our suggestions. An MoU on Energy Cooperation has also been signed with China during the recent visit of the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister to China.

Nepal has been importing power from India to meet our energy deficit. Soon we will be in a position to export power to India. With the construction of New Butwal Gorakhpur cross border transmission line, the trade of electricity will be firmly institutionalized. The concept of power banking is also being examined between the two countries to explore the opportunity created by the seasonal complementarities.

Besides bilateral arrangements, we can also benefit from trilateral initiatives. Bangladesh has expressed interest in investing in the hydropower projects in Nepal as well as buying the electricity from us. We are exploring the possibility of having a trilateral arrangement to materialize it.

Equally important is the utilization of water resources for irrigation. Ensuring irrigation facility for all irrigable land within 5 years is our target. Nonetheless, use of rivers in Nepal is not limited to hydropower generation and irrigation. We can also use them for cultural and recreational purposes. This can also become a major attraction for foreign tourists given the fact that we are celebrating the year 2020 as the Visit Nepal Year.

It appears that in the past there was an approach on developing isolated projects of hydropower, irrigation, drinking water and flood control focused only on supply side without much attention to environmental and social impact. This resulted in unsustainable pattern of development. Our approach should be on the basin wide development of water resources. The lives and livelihoods of vast population depend on the optimum utilization of water resources. Economic development, food security, and upliftment of living standards of people are inextricably linked to this.

While utilizing water resources, the government will develop multipurpose projects including electricity, irrigation, drinking water, river training and environmental protection. Collaboration with provinces and local levels including the participation of the community will be the modality of operation. Projects will be implemented along with celebrating the period of 2018-2028 as the Energy Decade.

Developing inland waterways is an important aspect of our vast water resources capacity. This should be an integral part of our water resources plan. Given our landlocked status, it is important not only for movement of people but also for expansion of trade and utilization of transit of goods. All rivers of Nepal drain into the Ganges system. As India has been developing waterways in Ganga River from Haldia to Allahabad, our connection with this would be important for us. During the visit of the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister to India in April 2018, it was agreed by the two sides to develop the inland waterway for the movement of cargo, within the framework of Trade and Transit arrangement, providing additional access to sea for Nepal. Our

officials are engaged at technical level to advance this connectivity.. We are working with India for the implementation of all the agreements and understanding reached in the past. The bilateral mechanisms in water and energy sectors would now meet regularly. Outstanding matters would be addressed by September 2018. Advancing cooperation in areas such as river training works, inundation and flood management, and irrigation have been prioritized. In order to address the problem of inundation in the southern areas of Nepal, a joint team of experts is currently carrying out studies in the affected areas. It would suggest appropriate measures for sustainable solution to the problem.

Early finalization of the DPR of the Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project is essential to gain mutual benefits in the areas of energy, irrigation, and flood control. In this context, a joint Team of Experts/Officials is working to finalize the DPR.

Two mega projects – Arun III and Upper Karnali are being developed with Indian investment. To ensure completion of these 900 MW projects within specific timeframe, implementing agencies of both the countries are working in close cooperation and coordination.

Our teams are also engaged for the early start of construction works of head regulator with the agreed sill level and link canal from Tanakpur Barrage to the Nepali side. With this, Nepal will receive water for irrigation as per the Mahakali Treaty.

With our neighbours, we work together to take our relations to newer heights on the basis of equality, mutual trust, respect and benefit. Creating win-win situation would guide us in our pursuit for harnessing of Nepal's water resources. In the end, I believe that the thoughts and ideas that this seminar generate will make significant contribution to enrich the discourse on water resource management and development in Nepal and thereby help the government and all stakeholders to take timely measures and initiatives to tap the maximum benefit from this sector for Nepal and Nepalis from economic, social and environmental perspectives. Importantly, proper and sustainable utilization of water resources would significantly contribute towards fulfilling our long-term vision of creating "Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepalis". I wish this seminar a great success.

# Nepal-Japan Relations and Potentials for Economic Cooperation

We are happy that our friendly country Japan has entered a new era after the accession to the throne by His Majesty Emperor of Japan Naruhito on May 1, 2019. On this auspicious occasion, I would like to congratulate the Government and the people of Japan and express best wishes for the continued peace and prosperity of the friendly people of Japan. There will be high-level representation from Nepal in the coronation ceremony of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan in October this year.

Nepal and Japan are traditional friends. Both countries have been enjoying cordial and friendly relations marked by mutual respect, trust, understanding and cooperation ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1956. These relations have been further strengthened by the exchange of high-level visits at different times.

Nepal and Nepali people have tremendous love and goodwill towards Japan and Japanese people. Buddhism has brought our two countries and peoples closer. We have strong people-to-people contacts. In this context, I would like to recall the visit of a Japanese Buddhist Monk Rev. Ekai Kawaguchi who visited Nepal in 1899 on his way to Tibet in search of

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*Keynote Speech delivered at Nepal Investment Seminar jointly organized by the Embassy of Nepal, Tokyo, Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), Tokyo and UNIDO Investment and Technology Promotion Office, Tokyo on November 20, 2018*

holy Buddhist scriptures. He was the first Japanese national to visit Nepal. He introduced Nepal and the birthplace of Lord Buddha – Lumbini - to the Japanese people through his writings and publications. He laid the foundation of the people-to-people relations between Nepal and Japan. Since then, the people-to-people contacts between the two countries have been expanding. Currently, over 85,000 Nepali people are engaged in various professions in Japan.

Our relations cover political, economic, cultural, and people-to-people dimensions.

Japan has been one of the major development partners of Nepal for long time. Japanese development assistance to Nepal dates back to early 1950s. Both countries have signed the Agreement on Technical Cooperation in 2003, under which Nepal receives cooperation in the fields of training, Japanese experts, volunteers, study missions, project type assistance, machinery and equipment, and development studies. Truly speaking, the cooperation of Japan has reached the grass root level in Nepal.

We are happy to note that Kulekhani Hydropower Project, Dhulikhel-Sindhuli-Bardibas Highway Project, TU Teaching Hospital, Nagdhunga Tunnel Construction Project, Improvement of Water Supply System in Pokhara, School Sector Reform Programme, Human Resources Development (JDS) Scholarship are some of the major projects under cooperation of Japan. Government of Nepal highly appreciates Japan for its continued support and cooperation in the socio-economic development endeavours of Nepal. Japanese projects are highly appreciated for their quality and modern technology.

We welcome the decision of the Government of Japan to enlist Nepal as a source country for inviting Nepali workers in the Japanese labour market. The signing of Memorandum of Cooperation on the specified skilled workers in March this year has added new dimension of bilateral cooperation in the labour field.

Tourism is another promising area where both countries have tremendous prospects for cooperation. Every year a significant number of Japanese tourists visit Nepal. In this connection, I am happy to share with you that

Nepal Airlines Corporation is going to operate its direct flight between Kathmandu and Osaka sector from early July this year. We are also expecting direct flight of Nepal Airlines Corporation between the capital cities of the two countries.

We believe that operation of these flights will significantly contribute to making the Visit Nepal Year 2020 a success.

We appreciate Japan for its active role as an observer in the SAARC. The establishment of SAARC-Japan Special Fund (SJSF) has facilitated implementation of many activities since its inception in 1993.

**“ We applaud Japan’s achievements in socio-economic and technological development. Japan is a success story for the world to narrate how a nation builds back better. Many developing countries around the world get motivated in pursuing their ambition to development and economic prosperity.**

As the current Chair of the SAARC, we sincerely appreciate the Government of Japan for its assistance to SAARC members in various fields.

The world is in the state of flux. New developments are taking place with speed and pace not witnessed before. The change has both positive as well as negative prospects. Safe and secure future of the world depends on the proper management of change.

The world is interconnected and interdependent. Interdependence among the countries across the world is growing stronger. Cooperation among the countries is expanding and deepening. Yet trends of unilateralism, protectionism and populism are also rising. This has generated confusion, uncertainties, and contradictions.

It is known to all that geo-political weight of Asia is growing. Global balance of power is shifting to this part of the world. With the changes in global power structures, norms and values are also naturally redefined. Increasing competition for either maintaining or gaining supremacy is

the fact of the day.

We need a peaceful and harmonious world where all countries get opportunities to grow and prosper. We stand for a just, fair, inclusive and equitable world order founded on the principles of sovereign equality, mutual respect, non-interference, and cooperation.

Japan's rapid socio-economic development within a short span of time has been notable. It has the experience of growing out of the worst devastation caused by the rivalries among the powerful countries. It truly understands the value of peace and harmony.

I am confident that the new Reiwa Era, that is interpreted as a beautiful harmony will be successful in developing harmony among different countries and civilizations. It will be successful in promoting commonalities that bind us together.

I wish to begin by thanking the Embassy of Nepal, Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) and UNIDO Investment and Technology Promotion Office for organizing this important event focusing on investment prospects of Nepal.

As Foreign Minister this is my first official visit to Japan but I have visited this beautiful country a couple of times before in different capacities.

We admire the JETRO's role, since its inception, in establishing relations between Japan and the rest of the world- connecting business with government, business with business and fostering people-to-people contacts for the promotion of bilateral trade and investment.

Similarly, the role of UNIDO in the promotion of investment and technology transfer is commendable.

Dear friends,

Nepal and Japan enjoy historically warm and friendly ties. Our bilateral relations acquired more substance after the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1956. These relations are multidimensional encompassing political, economic, social and cultural spheres. We celebrated the year

2016 as the Diamond Jubilee of the establishment of our diplomatic relations.

I held delegation level talks with Foreign Minister His Excellency Taro Kono yesterday. The meeting was very fruitful. We agreed to further enhance bilateral cooperation in diverse fields for mutual benefits. Japan has been a valuable partner in our development efforts. We thank the Government of Japan for their generosity and cooperation.

Apart from regular development assistance, Japan has extended valuable support during difficult times. We particularly recall Japan's humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of the April and May 2015 earthquakes and the support provided for the reconstruction.

Dear friends,

We note with pleasure Japan's phenomenal progress in the last seven decades. Japan has pioneered in the fields of technology, commerce, science and medicine during this period.

We applaud Japan's achievements in socio-economic and technological development. Japan is a success story for the world to narrate how a nation builds back better. Many developing countries around the world get motivated in pursuing their ambition to development and economic prosperity.

Having witnessed a long period of conflict and instability, Nepal was successful in promulgating a highly progressive, inclusive, and democratic constitution in September 2015. The Constitution has institutionalized political gains that we have achieved during the struggle of over 7 decades and made people of Nepal truly sovereign.

After the successful holding of elections at three tiers of federal setup, governments at all levels have been formed with strong majority. At the centre, the Government enjoys three-fourth support of the parliament. After a prolonged political transition, we have now entered an era of political stability, an era of peace and prosperity.

Building on political stability, we have undertaken a decisive journey

towards development and prosperity with the motto ‘Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali’. We want to overcome poverty, underdevelopment and social impediments.

We aspire to become a middle-income country by 2030 and graduate from LDC status at an early date. To achieve these goals, we require massive investment in infrastructure development and induction of advanced and innovative technology.

Nepal is endowed with abundant natural resources. But we have not been able to convert them into wealth due to financial and technological gap. There exist immense opportunities for economic growth. Investment in hydropower, transport, agriculture, tourism, information technology, mines and minerals, health and education and forestry sectors could transform Nepal’s development landscape.

Nepal aspires to collaborate with Japan in utilizing available resources and opportunities for the benefit of both the countries. I am confident that Japan, with its huge financial and technological capability, can help us to achieve our development objectives. I am very optimistic about the future of our economic partnership which will unlock new frontiers for innovation and unleash new opportunities of prosperity for our citizens.

As the CEO of the Nepal Investment Board will shortly present details about the investment prospects in Nepal, I will briefly share a few words with you on the same topic.

Investing in Nepal, now, is really a profitable business. In recent years, we have worked very hard on the front of Ease of Doing Business. The Government is determined to create investment friendly environment, not by word but by deed, and not by process but by results.

In order to attract foreign investment, we have paid attention to legal arrangements, responsiveness of bureaucracy, infrastructure development, increasing capacity of banking and financial sector, availability of human resources, and internal security, among others. We have already started reforms and we are fully committed to further improving business climate.

We are equally committed to maintain liberal economic policy with private sector as a key partner. Stability in policy regime is a prerequisite for foreign investment. The Government assures you that there will be policy stability and continuity.

In line with this, we have enacted progressive laws and policies on foreign investment, Public-Private Partnership, industrial enterprises, labour, banking and intellectual property.

Almost every sector including hydropower, manufacturing industries, IT, services, tourism, mining, herbal medicines, and agro-based industries is open for foreign investment. Our negative list is very small. All these sectors have immense potentials for foreign investment as well.

The Investment Board Nepal headed by the Prime Minister is working as a high-level Government agency for creating an investment friendly environment in the country. The Board is being strengthened as a government agency to provide approval of mega investment through one-door system promoting public-private partnership.

Market is an important factor to be considered in investment and business. Nepal, located as it is between the two giant markets of Asia- India and China, offers market opportunities in the neighbourhood. In order to facilitate easy access to these big markets, connectivity with neighbouring countries in all modes including roadway, railway, waterway and airway is being advanced within the framework of bilateral cooperation.

Our law permits full repatriation of income earned from investment and reinvestment.

Foreign companies registered in Nepal can purchase, own and sell land. No discrimination is made between national and foreign investors. There is no policy of nationalization of private industry. We have amended laws related to labour and industrial relations making them more investment friendly.

Investment in Nepal has yet another competitive advantage of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers at low wages in comparison to other countries. Large number of Nepali workers who are going abroad in search

of jobs will stay back when they see the flourishing opportunities at home. Similarly, many young talents who have pursued higher education in foreign world-class universities abroad, are now available in our labour market.

I have found that people often speculate and express their doubts on the Government's ability to meet its promises of easing of doing business, including protection of investment. The Government has accorded top priority to the protection of investment. The situation in Nepal has been improved. I assure you of further improvement.

Market competition is very low at the moment. Therefore, it is the prime time for Japanese company to enter into Nepali market for reaping optimum profit from their investment.

We are fully aware that without reliable and efficient physical infrastructures, businesses cannot attain competitive edge. That's why public sector investment in roads, power transmission lines, customs checkpoint infrastructures has increased substantially. The Government has prioritized infrastructure projects. We have asked the support of financing 291 from donor countries in the projects where our resources are not enough. I would like to request you to think of investing in commercially viable infrastructure projects as well.

Ancient culture and spectacular beauty of Japan has left a lasting impression on me.

Equally beautiful is our country, Nepal. The highest mountain range on the earth, 8 out of 10 highest peaks of the world including the highest peak of the world Sagarmatha-Mt. Everest, varied topography and biodiversity combined with unique cultural heritages including Lumbini-the birthplace of Lord Buddha offer huge potential for tourism development in Nepal. Mountaineering, trekking, sight-seeing, spirituality and pilgrimage and adventure activities are some of the products we offer.

Every year around 25,000 Japanese tourist visits Nepal. The Government is very much committed to the safety and security of the tourists. Special provisions are being made for the security and emergency rescue of the

mountaineers and trekkers.

The government has announced to observe 2020 as “Visit Nepal Year” with the goal of welcoming two million tourists each year.

We are happy to note that renowned travel guidebook publisher- Lonely Planet has recently announced the world’s top ten destinations for visit in 2019 in which Kathmandu city has been ranked in the fifth place.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to request the travel/tour agencies to enlist and publicize Nepal as one of popular tourist destinations and encourage the Japanese tourists to visit Nepal.

I would also like to encourage the Japanese investors to invest in tourism infrastructure of Nepal.

The aim of my visit to this great country is to renew our friendship and age-old ties and thereby elevating the government to government and people-people relations. It is also about to enhance cooperation on economic front in the days to come. With the strength of our friendship and mutual trust, I invite more and more Japanese companies to invest in Nepal.

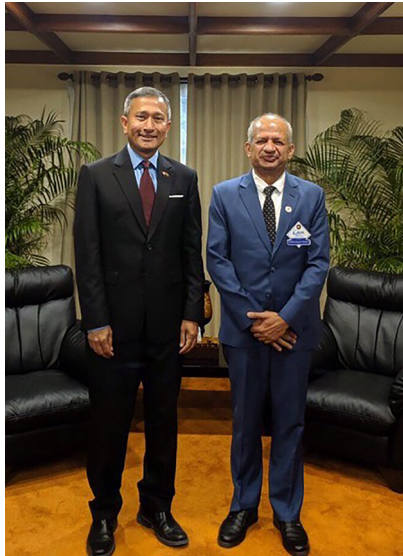
Nepal is not a new destination for Japanese investors. There are already few Japanese investors investing in Nepal and the trend is positive. Japan can tremendously benefit from the potentials and opportunities, we possess. In fact, all of our development priorities are attractive for Japanese companies. The Government is committed to extending all kinds of support for your business ventures in Nepal. Let’s work towards creating a win-win situation for both of our countries and people.

I assure you that your venture in Nepal will be profitable and secure. You will gain, not loose. With these words, I would like to once again thank the organizers for inviting me to this programme.

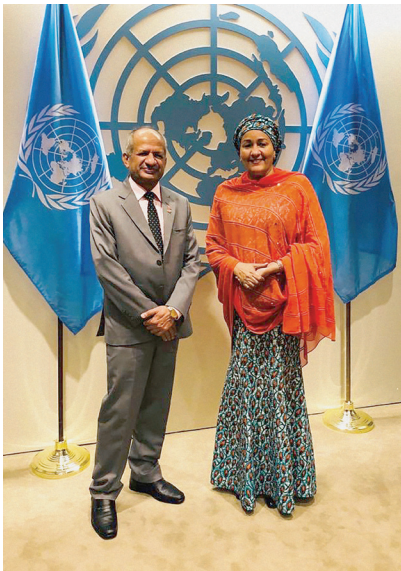




With Secretary General of SCO H.E. Mr.  
Vladimir Norov



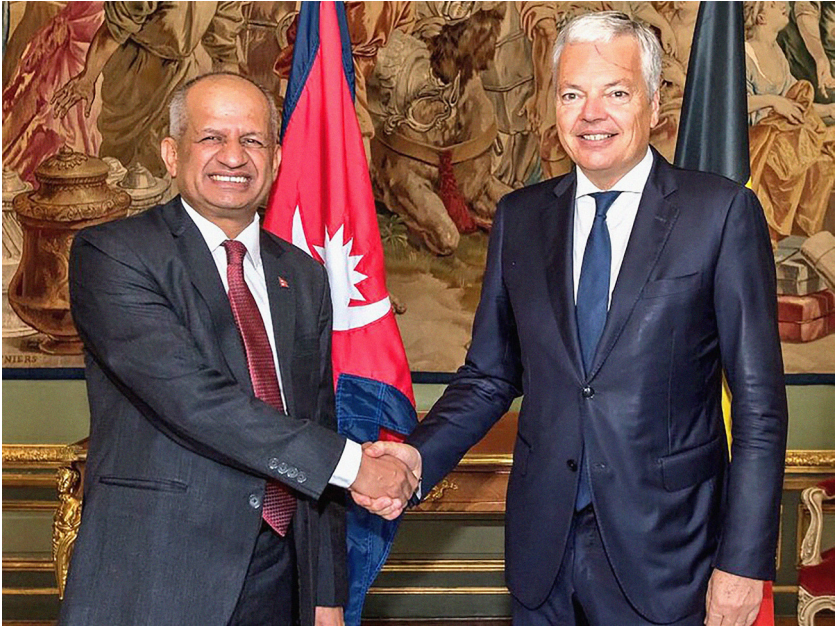
With HE Vivian Balakrishnan, FM,  
Singapore @ Male



With Deputy SG of the UN HE Amina J  
Mohammed



With Foreign Minister HE Jean Asselborn,  
Luxemburg



With Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Belgium H.E. Didier Reynders @ Brussels



With DR Tedros Adhanom, Director General of World Health Organization



With Fellow Foreign Ministers @ Nam-Summit-2019



With Foreign  
Minister of Ghana  
H.E. Ms. Shirley  
Ayorkor Botchwey



Addressing the  
74th UNGA



With HE D. Tsogtbaatar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia @ Ulanbator



With Irish Minister of State for European Affairs H.E. Helen McEntee



With Her Highness Princess Astrid, Belgium



With HE Epsy Campbell Barr, Vice President of Costa Rica, Geneva



With HE Mr Neven Mimica, EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development @ Brussels



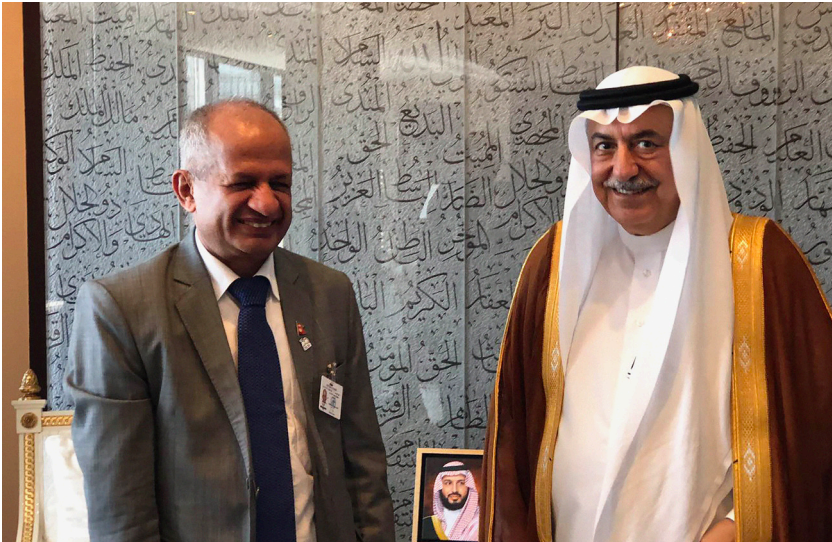
With Mr Guy Ryder, DG, ILO



With Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Mozambique  
H. E. Mr. José Condugua António Pacheco



With Minister of State  
for Foreign Affairs of  
UAE H.E. Ahmed Al  
Sayegh



With Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
H.E. Dr. Ibrahim Abdulaziz Al-Assaf



With the FM of Austria,  
HE Ms Karin Kneissl,  
Vienna



With HE Augusto Santos Silva,  
Foreign minister of Portugal@  
Lisbon



With Rt Hon Mark Field,  
State Minister of UK at  
Kathmandu



With Foreign Minister of  
Kingdom of Bhutan H.E.  
Mr. Lyonpo (Dr.) Tandi  
Dorji



With World Bank Country Manager for Nepal, Mr. Faris Hadad-Zervos



With Ms Michelle Bachelet, High Commissioner, OHCHR

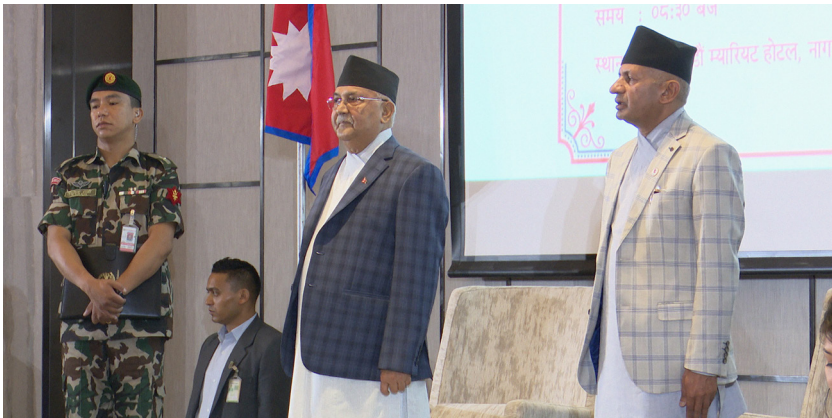


With H.E. Ivica Dacic, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs,  
Serbia @ Belgrade



With Pakistani counterpart  
H.E. Shah Mehmood Qureshi  
@ New York

Glimpses of National Dialogue on Foreign Policy organized by  
Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA) on 29th June 2019





Interaction with Ambassadors Designates to USA and South Africa  
from 17th-19th January 2021



Interaction with Ambassadors Designates to Bangladesh, Qatar, Australia and Spain”  
from 25th-30th August 2019

## Sustaining Political Gains through Socio-Economic Transformation

First of all, I thank the Chief Executive Officer Mr. Axel Goethals and the whole EIAS team for generously hosting this programme during my visit to Brussels.

I would also like to thank you all for taking your time and making it to the event.

This is my maiden visit to Europe as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal. I had a meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal yesterday. This morning, I met with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium. Both meetings were quite good and fruitful. Our meetings focused on enhancing bilateral partnership as well as strengthening cooperation through the European Union.

Please allow me to speak briefly on three topics today. First, I will talk about Nepal's recent political developments. Then, I will highlight the major priorities of the present government. Finally, I will discuss the major focus of our diplomatic engagements.

Nepal has undergone the transformations of historic proportions over the last decade.

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*Address at an event on 'Nepal's Key National Agenda: Sustaining Political Gains through Socio-Economic Transformation' Jointly Organized by the Embassy of Nepal and the European Institute for Asian Studies, Brussels, 26 July 2018*

It was in 2006, we concluded the Comprehensive Peace Accord, which ended the decade-long armed conflict between the State and the then Maoists. The Accord paved the way for peace process, which was unique and home-grown in nature and truly Nepali in character.

After nearly eight-year long arduous years of the peace process, the Constituent Assembly was able to promulgate the Constitution in 2015. This materialized, for the first time, the aspirations of Nepali people to have a Constitution written by their own elected representatives.

The promulgation of the constitution was a milestone in Nepal's political history. It not only marked the shift from the unitary and centralized form of governance to a federal structure but also turned the page towards peace, stability, and progress.

The constitution, as an epitome of people's sacrifice, dreams, and aspirations, guarantees equal rights, opportunity and dignity to all Nepali people. It institutionalizes our hard-fought gains of proportional representation and social justice and inclusion as well as the historic political achievements made over the years through various people's struggles and revolutions.

Holding of elections at all three levels- federal, provincial, and local- as stipulated in the constitution was another milestone achieved in 2017. This was not just from the perspective of the implementation of the constitution but also from the perspective of sustaining peace and stability.

This has also concluded fundamentally the transition of Nepal.

With successful holding of elections, the federal system of governance has been fully functional.

Strongly mandated governments have been formed at all three levels. At the central level, we have a government with more than 3/4th majority support of the House. All provincial governments enjoy above 2/3rd majority support of the respective assemblies.

We know the mandate given to these governments has to do with people's

aspirations for long overdue socio-economic development of the country. It is only the socio-economic transformation that can bring peace and political stability in the country. While development is not possible in the absence of peace, socio-economic development is a precondition for sustaining democracy and peace.

The present government has set its plans and priorities that are centred around the goal of socio-economic development and prosperity. Our motto at present is ‘Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali.’

We also know that in order to translate this motto into reality, our efforts must be augmented with the clear focus on building on the political gains made so far and take on the generational challenge of economic development. There is indeed a need to move forward the agenda of sustainable peace, good governance, development and prosperity.

Our policies and programmes are based on some fundamental pillars. They include strengthening nationalism and promoting national interests, strong commitment to democracy and fundamental freedoms, and social justice based on equality. Our efforts for stability, progress and sustainable development will be guided by the goals of good governance and inclusive public participation.

Our plan is to graduate from the LDC status at an early date and to become a middle-income country by 2030. We know this is not easy.

After quite a number of years, we were able to achieve an economic growth of about 6.9 percent last year. We have a challenge to continue the momentum of higher economic growth.

We must ensure that economic opportunities open up in the country. Job creation and poverty reduction are our topmost priorities.

Our focus at present is at least on five major areas. We aim at modernizing agriculture, tapping the energy, and in particular the hydropower potentials, infrastructure development, tourism and development of human resources.

Our goal of progress and prosperity may remain a mere rhetoric in the absence of investment in our priority areas. Investment of about 13 to 18 billion US dollars will be needed to meet our goal of graduating from the LDC status.

Investing in Nepal is a profitable business. There are a number of reasons for this. Thanks to our demographic dividend, there is availability of cheap labour.

“ **Our focus at present is at least on five major areas. We aim at modernizing agriculture, tapping the energy, and in particular the hydropower potentials, infrastructure development, tourism and development of human resources.**

Because of our geo-strategic location between India and China as well as growing domestic demand, market is not a problem. Nepali products have access to two vibrant markets of the world, India and China with a combined population of over 2.5 billion.

Under ‘Everything But Arms’ scheme, we also enjoy duty free access to European market and preferential market access to the USA for over 70 products as an LDC.

We have reduced tariffs, simplified tax regimes, and focused on the development and operation of trade related infrastructure. Legislative and institutional arrangements are put in place to ensure that labour relations are smooth and help build a conducive business environment.

Advanced, modern and efficient technology is the key to promote knowledge-based economy that is the base of sustainable development. Prosperity through the development of science and technology is our mission.

Achieving economic development and working towards realizing the goal of prosperity is not a question of ‘to do or not to do’. It is not a question of why and when. It is the question of how and by whom.

It is by internalizing this notion that the present government has devised its plans and programmes. We know there are persisting old challenges and we are not prone to new vulnerabilities. But we are confident that we will be able to realize our goal of economic prosperity.

We have developed our strategies in line with these priorities. Our overall aim is to promote 'an economic orientation' throughout the country.

The government is determined to maintain an enabling environment for investment, not by word but by action.

We are ready to do everything possible that enhances the confidence of investors; that facilitates their economic engagements in Nepal.

At the external front, our motto has always been and will continue to be 'amity with all, and enmity with none'. Development imperatives at home will be the guideposts for our diplomatic engagements abroad.

Our diplomatic engagements will be based on mutual respect and cooperation. Our focus will be to open up and diversify our relations especially in the economic areas such as trade, investment, tourism and people-to-people exchanges.

The mainstay of today's diplomacy is the pursuit of economic agenda. Our endeavors will be aimed at contributing to the development efforts at home. We will continue to engage with a view to attracting investment in our national priority sectors, expanding our export trade and promoting tourism, among others.

Having said this, I wish to urge you and all high officials, diplomats, academics, and intellectuals, to see Nepal in a new perspective. This perspective, I believe, should be based on a numerous positive facts that Nepal and the Nepali people often take pride in.

Historically Nepal has a glorious history of being always an independent country.

Nepal is the country to which peace remains an intrinsic characteristic. It was Buddha who propounded the principles of peace and harmony some

2500 years ago in Nepal. Our recent political peace process is a testimony of how important the values of peace continue to remain to Nepal and Nepali people.

Nepali people are known for their resilience and strong character. This was evident in the aftermath of earthquakes that hit Nepal in 2015 and many other crises.

Economically, it has immense potentials and prospects to grow.

Socially and culturally, Nepal is an epitome of unity in diversity.

Given these realities, we expect our valued friends and partners to see Nepal as a country, which has entered a new era and is ready to take off with a mission of progress and prosperity.

We must admit that political achievements do not automatically lead to economic transformation. Neither do they have a linear relation. But, they are rather mutually reinforcing and complementary.

To conclude, Nepal has come out of political transition. We have a clear goal to achieve economic development and prosperity. For this, we have been reaching out to our international friends for their continued goodwill and partnership to help accelerate the economic transformation of Nepal. We expect enhanced partnership and solidarity from our friends and partners. We are confident that we will continue to receive their constructive support and cooperation as always.

Thank you for your attention. I will be happy to respond to your questions or comments, if any.

# Climate Change and Sustainable Mountain Development

At a time when the world is confronted with an unprecedented crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have gathered virtually in today's Summit.

First, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the ICIMOD in organizing this important Summit. It is a timely initiative in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to deliberate on the impacts of the pandemic to the people of Hindukush region and reaffirm our collective resolve and further strengthen cooperation among the member States.

The Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region represents the largest reserve of ice and snow on the earth outside the polar region. It serves as a fountain for fresh drinking water for billions of people, an indispensable water reservoir for the major river systems, and an important source of clean, green, and renewable energy in the region.

Likewise, the HKH region treasures a variety of herbs and plants having medicinal and aromatic values. It also caters the genetic diversity of crops, contributing to the food security and nutrition, and preserves mountain resilient indigenous knowledge and technology, among others. It is esti-

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*Remarks at the Virtual Hindu Kush Himalaya Ministerial Mountain Summit 2020, 15 October 2020*

mated that nearly 1.9 billion people are directly or indirectly dependent on the region for the fulfillment of their requirements of food, water, and energy.

The region is blessed with spectacular mountains, lush green valleys, picturesque lakes, alpine meadows, and emerald grasslands; a true heaven on the earth that one could imagine. Culturally, it is one of the most diverse regions in the world. It has been a unique laboratory and true source of

“ **Mountains have been facing immense challenges over the years. The rising temperature and extreme weather conditions have caused a depletion of snow, disappearance of grasslands, meadows and wetlands, and negative impacts on natural and cultural heritages, among others. Global warming and climate change have been rapidly changing the socio-cultural and ecological landscapes of the region.**

knowledge for many scholars, disciples, and researchers due to its richness in natural and cultural heritages, biodiversity, and flora and fauna, many of which are yet to be discovered.

The ancient silk roads and trails passing through these Himalayas speak louder than words in today's intensely globalized world order. These ancient mountain heritages have witnessed our prosperity in the form of business and trade, knowledge and innovation, arts and crafts, and friendship and shared prosperity across the Himalayas and among the societies.

The HKH region houses the 14 highest mountain peaks above 8000 meters, among many others. Out of them, Nepal is the custodian of the eight highest peaks, including the Mount Everest—the top of the world. Nepal highly values mountains as these are the lifelines of our people to earn livelihood and to lead lives. Mountains are the sources of freshwater, diverse flora and fauna, and natural and cultural heritages coupled with mountain resilient indigenous knowledge and traditions. Let's not forget that these

mountains have been crucial in stabilizing global climate change which bear an organic, intrinsic and natural connections with the sea level rise.

Located on the lap of the Himalayas, we have inherited mountain resilient cultural heritages from our forefathers and have been working with the international community in conserving mountains and their ecosystems and preserving mountain-based civilization. Therefore, mountains are our unique identity as well as the core elements of our development aspiration towards “Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali.”

It was natural for Nepal to have played a leading role to establish the ICIMOD in Kathmandu. Our predecessors visualized the importance of such a regional organization long back, which has made tremendous progress since then to grab the opportunities and address the challenges confronted by us all. At this opportune moment, let me also mention here that Nepal had decided to convene the first episode of Sagarmatha Sambaad, a global dialogue forum in April this year under the theme of ‘Climate Change, Mountains and the Future of the Humanity’ but had to postpone due to the outbreak of COVID-19. We are determined to organize it next year.

Mountains have been facing immense challenges over the years. The rising temperature and extreme weather conditions have caused a depletion of snow, disappearance of grasslands, meadows and wetlands, and negative impacts on natural and cultural heritages, among others. Global warming and climate change have been rapidly changing the socio-cultural and ecological landscapes of the region.

The Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment report published by ICIMOD, with a particular focus on mountains, climate change, sustainability, and people, depicts the alarming situation in the HKH. The report resonates broadly the issues that Nepal is confronting today. The evidence-based and actionable policy solutions and recommendations highlighted in the report may potentially be helpful to deal with the adverse effect of climate change in the Hindu Kush Himalaya Region. The scientifically plausible solution put forward by the report could be useful for our climate change policy and diplomacy.

Countries like Nepal bear the brunt of climate change despite of their negligible contribution to GHG emissions. It is imposing extraordinary burden on us at a time that we need to invest in development to attain a decent living and quality of life for our people. Therefore, I believe, this is a high time to speak louder to make the world respond to our concerns.

Hindu Kush Himalayan region to which we belong is a great source of diversity. An estimated 250 million people are directly dependent on the resources of this region for their livelihoods while more than one billion people are indirectly dependent it for their food, water and energy. Besides human lives, an extraordinary diversity of plants and animal live on the resources of this region.

Since mountains are more vulnerable to climate change, the effects of climate change in the region appear as an existential threat for us. Glaciers retreating, glacial lake outburst, avalanches, floods, landslides and draught are becoming more devastating.

I believe, to address these problems and to receive due attention in the international deliberations; effective cooperation, coordination and partnership at national and international level is important.

The Government of Nepal is committed towards the Paris Agreement and its implementing rules. As the Agreement comes into force from 2020, it is very important that our national policies and action remain coherent, coordinated and well prioritized so that the country can benefit from the international cooperation and climate financing mechanisms envisioned by the Agreement. It is equally important to keep alive the issues of the mountain countries as they are the issues of our existential significance. It is for this reason climate change figures prominently in the agenda of the Sagarmatha Dialogue that we have decided to launch soon.

As a founding member and the host country, Nepal accords high importance to the partnership with ICIMOD and has been working closely in the areas of poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability in the Hindu Kush Himalaya Region.

Nepal could take up a leadership role in promoting agendas of moun-

tain countries in the climate change discourse and diplomacy. With a well-coordinated national spirit it is all possible that we can do this. Let's make today's presentations and interaction as a step forward towards that direction.

The degradation of habitats has endangered thousands of our rare and endemic species, many of which are at the verge of extinction. Reports have shown that the temperatures of Himalayan region have increased at a rate three times higher than the global average.

Consequently, the region has experienced an increased occurrence of natural catastrophes and extreme weather conditions, severely impacting the lives and livelihood of our people. Nepal's mountain-based ancient civilization, including the ethnic life-styles, traditional knowledge, and unique practices are immensely threatened.

Amidst these challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic is another wake-up call for us to understand the potential consequences, which might occur if we continue to ignore these ground realities and place relentless pressure on nature and ecosystems. We cannot afford to waste any more time. This is a time for collective action and renewal of our commitments in building a resilient mountain ecosystem for the safety and benefits of the humanity.

We have to realize the challenges and devise our strategies accordingly. Let us mark the year 2020 as the decade to translate our collective commitments into concrete actions that could strengthen the resilience of mountain people and environment as envisioned in the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

Let us call together for the full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement along with commensurate climate financing to deliver better results in the spirit of regional cooperation. Together, we can save our planet and people both from the climate change as well as the COVID-19 pandemic. Having said so, I once again reaffirm that Nepal attaches a high priority for the conservation of mountains and their ecosystems and look forward to work closely with the ICIMOD member States in the days ahead.

Before I conclude, let me once again welcome you all to this important

Summit. I hope that the Summit will act as a platform to facilitate the exchange of information, scientific knowledge, research, and the best practices that would be crucial in translating our commitments into actions.

I am confident that the Ministerial Declaration of the Summit to be adopted will be helpful in charting out the joint actions and promoting cooperation at regional and global levels in line with the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

Let us not allow the on-going pandemic to weaken our collective resolve and endeavors to protect and conserve the Hindu Kush Himalaya. As mountainous country rich in natural and cultural diversities, Nepal remains committed to work together with the concerned stakeholders in the region and beyond to mitigate the challenges of climate change and their adverse effects.

I, once again, commend the leadership of ICIMOD for organizing such an event of global significance, and for the support and contributions it has made in the conservation of mountains and their ecosystems over the years. It is my earnest hope that this Summit will make substantial contribution towards addressing the climate change and sustainable mountain development issues in the Hindu Kush Himalaya region and beyond while keeping people's lives and livelihood at the center. I am confident, the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration on the HKH Call to Action would go a long way towards meeting these shared objectives. I wish the Ministerial Mountain Summit all the success.

I thank you all for your attention!

## Post-Pandemic World Order: Navigating New Normal

Good morning and greetings to all distinguished scholars and participants. It is a pleasure to participate in this discussion on “Post Pandemic World Order”.

I would like to congratulate NIICE and Water Policy Center for assembling a stellar list of scholars from the region and beyond to deliberate on the consequences of COVID-19. I am also encouraged by seeing a retinue of young scholars participating in the discussion. They are the ones who will lead and shape our future. These young people will have to live with the decisions that we take today and deal the consequences thereafter.

I believe your deliberations will help to understand the challenges and opportunities ahead of us; and inform policy makers. I am sure this will stimulate a constructive deliberation on a topic that everyone is keen to understand and debate about.

Having said that, let me make a brief remark on COVID-19 and its consequence in terms of the world affairs.

The current Covid-19 crisis has been regarded as the most serious threat

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*Inaugural Remarks at the Joint International Conference jointly organized by Nepal Institute for International Cooperation and Engagement (NIICE) and Water Policy Center, 29 August 2020*

the humanity as a whole has faced ever since the end of the World War II. As we navigate through this crisis to the best of our abilities, it is difficult to predict what the long-term impact of the pandemic will be.

We do not know how long this crisis will last, nor do we know how this pandemic will be ended. We are seeing some rays of hope on the horizon through recent news of progress in the research and developments of the vaccines. Let's hope the vaccine trials will be successful and the product will be evenly available to all the people across the world.

**“ We consider that the prosperity and progress of the international community as a whole is in the interest of international peace and harmony. Serving our national interest in an atmosphere of peace, understanding and cooperation is embedded in our policy of “Amity with all, enmity with none”.**

This pandemic has put Governments around the world under tremendous strain. It has disrupted the usual modus operandi of work and service delivery. It has exposed the inequalities within and among the countries and societies. It has also exposed the vulnerabilities of societies where Governments have retreated from delivery of vital social services, such as health care.

On top of that, wheel of economy has been interrupted. With markets and industries closed, the long-term impact on the economy due to the pandemic is yet to be ascertained. Major economies of the world have undergone contraction. As the crisis prolongs, the economic costs will be higher. Governments will need to find ways to deal with the impacts long after the pandemic is over.

Schools have been shut, hospitals and health care systems have been overloaded, borders have been sealed, international trade has been interrupted, unemployment has risen, and the gap between the rich and poor has been widened. These are just a few instances of how our lives have been affected by the crisis.

The progress made in the sustainable development goals risks backsliding. And the crisis has disproportionate impact on the poor countries and peoples.

While the pandemic has posed critical challenges ahead of us, every crisis brings opportunities with it. Pandemic has been a time of fear, but it will certainly allow us to reflect and contemplate on our priorities. It has already intensified the bond of family, taking care of the elderly and value of cooperation and support.

At the same time, the pandemic has also exposed the vulnerabilities of humankind and fragility of globalization the benefits of which, until recently, we took for granted, such as international travel, recreation and global distribution of goods and services. The pandemic has forced us to look back to the basics and reflect upon the limitation of progress. Never before in modern times had the world attached importance to human health as it is doing today.

In the midst of the ongoing crisis, it is still not clear how the post pandemic world order would be like. However, broadly we must see it through the challenges and opportunities that it may produce as we go on. We have seen in the annals of history that every large-scale crisis has been a turning point for a new beginning. COVID-19 pandemic too has come as an epoch-making event in our lifetime dissecting our era in pre- and post-pandemic world.

The rapid spread of the disease itself has demonstrated the interdependence and inter-connectedness of our world. It has been reaffirmed that today's global problems cannot be resolved in isolation. It is the international cooperation and solidarity that is required to confront this crisis effectively. We need to act together to extricate the world out of the crisis.

While physical travel has been severely curtailed, we have witnessed increased interactions amongst leaders, scholars, experts and others through virtual platforms. This conference being one of them. We might be disconnected physically, but the digital connections have just been amplified to an extent never seen before. Now the challenge is how to translate these connections into a tangible output on the ground.

I do not intend to sound an alarmist. But I do acknowledge that we live in a world of contradictions. We cannot rule out that global crisis of this magnitude will not repeat in the future. Global warming, climate change, renewed arms race, international conflicts could very much push the world into grave dangers. As with this current crisis, we will need to work together in solidarity to steer the world away from tomorrow's potential crises.

We live in a period of uncertainty. Post war world order is in flux. While the multilateral institutions, norms and principles that were formed after the Second World War are still in existence and functioning, the power relations that designed these institutions, norms and principles have changed significantly. New global actors other than the states have come as well. This might induce some kind of reorder in the international system.

One thing is certain. If we have to retain the human progress made so far and advance further, we cannot retreat from what has been achieved. By nature, human being cannot give up trade, travel, recreation, innovation, research and development, and scientific advancement. We cannot avoid interactions between and among nations. For that to continue, we may need reforms and adjustment of international norms and institutions to cope with new reality.

We may also need some new set of institutions and norms to deal with the new normal. While doing so, it is important to ensure that the progress made so far is not reversed, that the new norms do not curtail human freedoms, impose limit on human ingenuity, and restrain progression of societies. The new norms must be at the service of humankind not the other way round. The post pandemic world order must be human centric. We must uphold human life and dignity in all circumstances.

The pandemic has already evoked self-sufficiency. It has also exposed the limitations of market. The post pandemic order will naturally look for the remedy of those shortcomings that will potentially increase the role of state.

A critical element of post pandemic world would probably be the capacity to innovate and distribute the vaccine. It is not merely the innovation of

vaccine, what is important is the capacity to supply in global scale and in an affordable price. Capacity of scientific innovation and mass distribution would likely be an indicator of power in the new normal.

We are witnessing the old values and equations gradually giving way to the new ones. There are promises and there are challenges for countries with limited capacity to trade and invention. It is likely that the rise of Asia will continue in the post COVID era as well.

The post pandemic business order may likely be shaped by digital revolution in international and local economic transactions; production, trading and delivery of goods, services and customer care; and bring renaissance in health, wellbeing, food habits and search for organic contents. Economy of scale both in production and trading may likely benefit more. It may also bring innovation in conducting inter-state meetings and conferences and the way states negotiate.

As far as Nepal is concerned, the economic imperatives and the changing global context demands our close attention and policy response to the post COVID new normal. We consider that the prosperity and progress of the international community as a whole is in the interest of international peace and harmony. Serving our national interest in an atmosphere of peace, understanding and cooperation is embedded in our policy of “Amity with all, enmity with none”. With strong faith in the principles of the United Nations, panchasheel, non-alignment and international law, we believe in multilateralism and international cooperation. Our policy of strengthening close and cooperative relations with both of our neighbors, extended neighbors, major powers, development partners and the labor destination countries and promoting regional cooperation through SAARC and BIMSTEC will continue to guide us.

## Solidarity for Shared Prosperity

At the outset, let me thank Mr. Pradeep Kumar Shrestha, Honorary Consul of the Republic of South Africa to Nepal and the Dean of Honorary Consular Corps in Nepal (HCC-N) for hosting the World Federation of Consuls (FICAC) Regional Conference in Kathmandu and inviting me to speak a few words.

I am happy to see so many Honorary Consul Delegates from abroad.

I welcome you all in Nepal and wish you a pleasant stay here. This time of the year is a pleasant period in Nepal. Hope you will enjoy your stay in Nepal, which is the land of Sagarmatha, known as Everest, the tallest peak on earth, and Buddha, the immortal son of Nepal and the apostle of peace.

I found the theme of the Conference “Solidarity for Shared Prosperity” quite pertinent.

Let me begin by a few remarks on Nepal’s political transformation and the road ahead.

The promulgation of Nepal’s Constitution by an elected Constituent Assembly, a rare example of inclusivity, has settled all the political issues that we

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*Inaugural Address at the World Federation of Consuls (FICAC) Regional Conference, Kathmandu, 13 November 2019*

fought for almost 70 years. Our Constitution embraces all the advanced features of a democratic system such as fundamental rights and freedoms, rule of law, separation of power with check and balance, competitive multiparty democracy with periodic elections and independent judiciary. Social justice and inclusion are at the heart of our polity.

Nepal's political transformation is of historic proportion. Within a short period of time, we have transformed our political system from a monarchical rule to a republican order, from a unitary state to a federal state and

“ **If we can make a qualitative difference in our political system, we have every reason to believe that we can also make a difference in the socio-economic condition of our people . We can change the economic face of our country.**

from a Hindu state to a secular state. The armed conflict that dominated the national scene for a decade was successfully resolved through a home-grown, nationally owned and led peace process. What was unthinkable a decade ago has now been realized. Our constitution has institutionalized the democratic gains achieved through successive people's movements and struggles.

After the settlement of political issues, our priority has now shifted to socio-economic transformation. We are convinced that without socio-economic transformation, political gains cannot be sustained.

If we can make a qualitative difference in our political system, we have every reason to believe that we can also make a difference in the socio-economic condition of our people . We can change the economic face of our country.

For this, the vision of the present Government is clear. Its objectives and goals are well-defined. And, its actions are bearing results. We have to intensify the pace of development as we have no luxury to watch and see and do nothing.

Our immediate priority is to graduate from an LDC status at an early date. This will lead our efforts to become a middle-income country by 2030 and realize the SDGs by the same time frame.

We have articulated a 25-year vision for the country within the overarching national aspiration of ‘Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali’.

We pursue development goals by keeping social justice at the core of our efforts. This is essential to ensure that fruits of development is judiciously shared by every citizen of the country and that no one should be left behind. Economic disparities and inequalities fuel social tension and conflict which is harmful for society and the country.

We are confident that we will reach our development objectives as planned. There are well-founded logics and reasons:

Political stability which has been achieved in decades has ensured predictability, consistency, and coherence in pursuing development goals. There are no confusions and uncertainties. When the roadmap is clear there is a high chance to be successful.

Despite many difficulties, our economy has performed well in the last two years, witnessing an impressive 7 percent economic growth rate. All economic fundamentals are sound.

We have created an enabling environment for attracting foreign and domestic investment in key transformative sectors through enactment and adjustment of key legislations such as Foreign Investment and Technology Transfer Act and Public Private Partnership and Investment Act. We have put in place One Stop Service to facilitate foreign investment and provide hassle-free services in a time-bound manner. Reform will continue.

There exists favourable external environment with our neighbours and other partners demonstrating their keen interest to support or development drive. Moreover, we have developed strong economic partnership and connectivity agenda with both of our neighbours that would help Nepal leapfrog in development journey.

Nepali diaspora is willing to contribute to our development efforts through their intellectual and material resources and we have put in place appropriate policies and strategies to secure this.

While these facts assure us of a steady course ahead, we believe that partnership among key stakeholders- the Government, the private sectors, community organizations, cooperatives- is absolutely essential to advance development agenda and realize prosperity in the national context.

Likewise, collaborative partnership among nations, regional cooperation mechanisms and international and multilateral financial institutions is critical to create a favorable development architecture and supportive environment in the international context. Every country should get a fair chance to grow and develop. For this, entrenched inequalities and imbalances in the international system must be removed and justice must be allowed to prevail.

Taking advantage of this gathering, I wish to briefly speak on the foreign policy orientation of the present Government.

Our foreign policy is guided by the Principles of Panchasheel, non-alignment, UN Charter, international law and norms of world peace. 'Amity with all and enmity with none' is our mantra that guides the conduct of our international relations. Based on this cardinal principle, we have established diplomatic relations with 168 members of the United Nations and our efforts are continuing to cover the remaining members.

The present Government has been pursuing an independent and balanced foreign policy keeping the national interests of the country at the center. Our world view is free from prejudices and biases but is grounded on independent and objective analysis of the situation and developments.

The Government is committed to expand and consolidate ties with neighbors, development partners, labour receiving and other friendly countries on the basis of the principles of sovereign equality, mutual respect and benefit. We believe that adherence to these principles provides a solid foundation for a healthy interstate relationship.

Regional cooperation features in our foreign policy priority. We have consistently called for meaningful regional cooperation in our region under SAARC and BIMSTEC. Regional cooperation is not a choice but a compulsion to galvanize our efforts towards collective development and shared prosperity.

Nepal is an ardent supporter of multilateralism. We underscore the centrality of the United Nations in global affairs and believe that today's complex

“ **For us, honorary consul generals and honorary consuls in Nepal and abroad as a strong bridge between the countries they are living in and the countries they are representing.**

and diverse problems can best be addressed through this approach alone. Multilateralism promotes solidarity and shared responsibility for peace, security, human rights and development.

Solidarity and partnership on the external front will be guided by this orientation of Nepal's foreign policy.

Economic and commercial relations among nations are at the core of modern diplomacy. Today, diplomatic machinery is guided by the overarching objective of furthering economic interest and promoting national development.

Our country has also given top priority to economic diplomacy which is a key instrument to create a favourable international environment and mobilize resources for national development. Nepal's 30 embassies, 3 permanent missions and 6 Consulate Generals (one to be opened soon in Chengdu, China), have been tasked to pursue in earnest economic diplomacy agenda.

As countries like ours do not have economic capacity to maintain a diplomatic mission in each and every country having diplomatic relations with us, the appointment of honorary post is a necessity to represent our vital national interests. The growing presence of Nepali nationals overseas and

diaspora has put heavy demand on consular services in many countries.

Against this backdrop, we must underline the role and responsibility of honorary consul generals and consuls.

We consider them as important pillars and agents for the promotion of trade, investment, tourism other business and economic relations and people-to-people contacts. These are vital components of economic and public diplomacy.

For us, honorary consul generals and honorary consuls in Nepal and abroad as a strong bridge between the countries they are living in and the countries they are representing.

We entrust our honorary consuls general/consuls with important responsibility of projecting Nepal's image and brand positively to promote Nepal's interests abroad and to provide consular services to Nepali nationals. We understand the similar responsibility you all carry on behalf of the respective countries you represent.

What we need more is even stronger solidarity among ourselves for deeper connectivity, linkages, support and cooperation among ourselves and the countries we represent.

In this sense, this gathering of honorary consuls from the Asia region in Kathmandu assumes a special significance in promoting regional dimension of the cooperative endeavors you all are undertaking in course of the conduct of your duties.

The ethos of our ancient virtues such as Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्) which means 'the world is a one family' carries this essence. It is in this respect; I say that we stand together in promoting our common agenda of shared prosperity.

Let me underline the potential areas where we can work together to achieve our shared prosperity.

Trade is an engine of economic growth of a nation. However, Nepal's trade relations are lopsided with huge deficit volumes. Lopsided trade is

neither sustainable to exporting countries nor to the importing ones. We have crucial roles in expanding our trade relations both-ways so that they can be balanced and sustainable. These can be done by reviewing tariff and removing non-tariff measures and other trade restrictive measures. We want your cooperation for more collaborative approach on trade. We will try our utmost from our side.

For us, equally important is tourism sector. Our country is known as the land of Buddha and Majestic Himalayas with Sagarmatha (Mount Everest) as the highest peak on earth. Nepal's richness in natural beauty--flora, fauna and biodiversity, cultural heritage and warm hospitality of local people treating guests as gods (अतिथि देवो भवः) make Nepal an attractive tourist destination. Nepal is observing the year 2020 as Visit Nepal Year with the target of welcoming at least 2 million tourists from abroad. To make this event a grand success, we count your support and cooperation. It is a great opportunity to promote people-to-people relations between our respective countries. It will help promote business, sustain trade, and promote investment, among others. The economic benefits that accrue from this will be in circular motion, and will be beneficial for all.

Nepal is increasingly becoming an attractive country for foreign investment. Almost all sectors of economic activities are open for foreign investment, including energy, tourism, agriculture, industry, transportation, infrastructure, information and communication technology and agriculture. Our negative list is very short. You can be an effective source for conveying this information and encouraging the potential investors in the country that you represent to apply for the investment Projects in Nepal.

Huge market in the neighborhood, abundance of natural resources, huge demographic dividend, attractive package of incentives, high degree of profitability, sound regulatory framework, strong commitment, and legal provisions to protect investment, facilitating rules and procedures for investment and repatriation of capital should encourage foreign investors to have enough confidence to invest in Nepal.

Prosperity agenda hinges on connectivity agenda. Connectivity goes beyond the simple notion of physical connectivity. It is a much broader

concept that seeks to promote people-to-people contacts in the wider context.

For economic prosperity to be realized, connectivity in all forms -roads, rail, waterways, aviation, transmission lines, communication networks, etc. are very important. Our desire is to become a land-linked country in all practical purposes and we have made significant strides in this area in recent months with the opening of more avenues of connectivity with both of our neighbours.

I also wish to say that you are the pioneers and excellent business people, entrepreneurs and innovators. What the world needs today is more innovation, transfer of technology, investment and world class service. I wish you to take up a collaborative spirit and a win-win approach in your engagements between the countries you represent and the country that you are assigned to, including Nepal. Together, we can promote our joint economic interests for the prosperity of our people.

In closing, I would like to express my confidence that this Conference will be a fruitful exercise among the honorary consuls from across the region in forging collaborative partnership for shared prosperity.

The conference will bring you all further closer and help chart effective and innovative ways of cooperation and interactions among your fraternity in order to better achieve the common objective of 'Solidarity for Shared Prosperity'. The Government of Nepal, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and our diplomatic and consular missions abroad, are always ready to cooperate and walk extra mile for deeper engagements and partnerships with the honorary consuls in discharging their duties and towards achieving the goal of shared prosperity.

I wish to extend my best wishes for a productive and beneficial deliberations ahead in the conference.

I thank you all for your kind attention.

## Sustainable Mountain Development

First of all, I would like to thank the organizers for inviting me to participate and speak a few words in this 'International Forum on Mountain Tourism, Nepal'. I am also pleased to learn about the launching of 'International Mountain Tourism Day' today.

I express my congratulations and best wishes in the occasion of Sagar-matha day.

On behalf of the Government of Nepal, I would like to welcome all delegates to this programme. In particular, special welcome to the international delegates from our friendly countries!

I thank you for travelling all the way to Nepal and wish you a very pleasant and fruitful stay here. In fact, it is really heartening to learn that this event has brought together experts and tourism entrepreneurs from more than 30 countries. I appreciate the initiative and thoughtful decision of the organizers to host this event on mountain tourism.

Nepal is a country full of nature, culture, and adventure. One can feel and experience different kinds of climate within a half an hour drive. There

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*Remarks at the 'International Forum on Mountain Tourism' and Launching Ceremony of 'International Mountain Tourism Day', Kathmandu, 29 May 2019*

are ten heritage sites in Nepal including seven only in Kathmandu Valley. Similarly, tourists can enjoy rich and diverse natural beauties along with adventure tourism, trekking, rafting, and mountaineering.

The enriched and diverse culture of Nepal, both tangible and intangible, are always appealing tourists across the world to visit and enjoy.

As per the Economic Impact Research Report 2017, tourism sector accounts 7.5 % of Nepal's GDP. This sector has been contributing to poverty alleviation and upliftment of economic condition of the rural people.

“ **That historic landmark achieved by Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay Sherpa left to us not just an event in the history of mountaineering and adventure tourism but also a way of realizing our potential and understanding our relationship with nature.**

We say Naturally Nepal as our tourism tag line. We define our tourism speciality in three words – Nature, Culture and Adventure. A broad spectrum of climatic zones, a wide variety of biodiversity, and an exceptional demographic diversity with 125 ethnic and 123 linguistic communities make Nepal a must-visit destination for tourists of all ages and from all regions and countries of the world.

Through this event, we would like to give message to the world that we have successfully settled decade-long internal conflict, completed reconstruction of the infrastructure damaged by the 2015 earthquake, promulgated the Constitution from the elected Constituent Assembly, held election to the federal, provincial and local level government under the new constitution; and the present government under the able leadership of the Right Hon'ble Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli, Nepal is heading to realize the national aspiration of Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali.

I am much hopeful that this broader network stands fruitful in sharing of experiences and expertise, and learning from each-other in the field of mountain tourism.

When asked about his feat of reaching the summit of Mt. Everest on this day back in 1953, Sir Edmund Hillary said, 'It is not the mountain we conquer; but ourselves'. If we go by what he said, we have come a long way in 'conquering ourselves' over the last sixty-six years.

That historic landmark achieved by Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay Sherpa left to us not just an event in the history of mountaineering and adventure tourism but also a way of realizing our potential and understanding our relationship with nature.

Climbing mountains is a process, not an event. Mountaineering, in particular, and other forms of tourism in general are therefore a process of befriending nature by human beings.

In Nepal, which has eight out of ten tallest mountains on earth, mountains, of course, constitute a fascinating destination for adventure tourism with their majestic beauty and pristine nature.

The history of mountaineering tourism in Nepal dates back to 1950s. Since then, Nepal has always been a lifetime attraction for mountaineers. Thousands of Nepali nationals and foreigners have already reached the summits of various mountains.

This is a happy story that we all cherish. We are effortful to retain the primacy of our mountains as the centre of global attraction for adventure tourism.

However, the vignettes of man's scaling up of mountains do not suffice to describe their splendour and beauty.

Mountains are neither fair nor unfair, neither good nor bad, neither friendly nor dangerous. There are 'just there' for us to admire and ponder on.

For us in Nepal, mountains are our identity markers and promoters of our image at the international arena. And for everyone interested to know about them, they are most powerful, 'most awe-inspiring and most unconquerable'. Mountains are the places where legends live and where

everything is bigger than life.

Today, we all are concerned about the growing consequences of climate change upon these ‘wonderful gifts’ of nature. It is not simply because of their value in the eco-system but also because of their importance as a source of livelihood and survival for millions of people living downstream.

In the last five decades, rise in global temperatures and a fall in the amount of precipitation in the mountain region have led to mountain glaciers shrinking by over 30 percent. This comes as a strong reminder that mountains are not at all immune to the climate assault.

Climate change has been posing serious threats to both humankind and nature. Scientific estimates are alarming. Many worlds’ mega cities are under threat that they will be under water by mid-century; The Himalaya will have lost 2/3 of its glacier volume by the end of the century, if the present trend continues.

In this context, a major challenge before us is to implement our resolve to preserve mountain ecology in the larger interest of mankind. It is imperative therefore that we all take concrete actions before it is too late.

It is not least in realization of this fact that mountains and issues concerning their promotion and conservation have received priority in the policies and programmes of the Government of Nepal.

The new policies and programmes of the Government of Nepal for 2019/20, for example, emphasize the promotion of tourism sector with proper utilization and conservation of topographical diversity including mountains.

This is in line with the SDG goal number 15.4 that relates the need for conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, for sustainable development.

Given the country’s topography and landscape, Nepal has abundant prospects for touristic activities such as mountaineering, trekking and travel, among others. In addition to the mountains, the ever-flowing Himalayan rivers, glaciers, large lakes, green valleys, beautiful waterfalls and the

national parks are the major attractions for tourists visiting Nepal.

Tourism has been an important sector of Nepal's economy. It, like in any other developing country, has been playing a very significant role in poverty reduction. It has also contributed to employment and income generation with its linkages to different sectors of the economy.

We remain effortful in attracting more quality tourists to Nepal. Visit Nepal Campaign 2020, which will be run with a goal of bringing in two million tourists, is one such effort. Of course, mountain tourism will be, as always, a major priority in our Campaign.

To conclude, I am confident that the deliberations in this programme will add value to our continued efforts towards promoting sustainable mountain tourism. I am equally confident that it will help enhance our understanding of mountains and our relations to them.

I wish this International Forum all success.

I thank you all for your kind attention.

## Committing to a Healthier and Better Nourished Future

First of all, let me welcome all distinguished delegates from SUN Movement Member Countries to Nepal and wish you a comfortable stay.

I would also like to thank the SUN Movement Secretariat for choosing Nepal as the venue of the global gathering this year.

I feel privileged to be at this important event today.

Today's food for thought is that the food merely is not enough. It is the good nutritious food that makes people healthy, a pre-requisite for the development of a nation. Nutrition is the best investment for the future. Good nutrition provided during the first 1000 days determines the quality of life for the next 1000 months.

However, it is sad that millions of people around the world still lack enough food and many more eat poor quality diets. Malnutrition in all its forms continues one of the leading causes of poor health and poverty globally. We need to focus on developing sustainable food systems that have the potential to nourish human health as well as prevent environmental degradation. The theme “Nourishing People and Planet Together” is a

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*Intervention at the Panel Discussion on 'From Kathmandu to Tokyo and Beyond - Committing to a Healthier, Better Nourished Future' at Scaling Up Nutrition Global Gathering (SUNGG) 2019, 5 November 2019, Kathmandu*

fitting choice for this gathering.

### **Nepal and Scaling Up Nutrition Movement:**

Nepal is one of the forerunners in the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement.

In 2010, within the framework of Multi-sectoral approach, Government of Nepal launched the Golden 1000 Days Initiative, a nationwide Public Awareness Campaign, in collaboration with different development partners.

For better nutritional outcomes among most disadvantaged children, in 2010, the Government of Nepal launched a nationwide targeted program of Universal Child Cash Grant to the Dalit children under five and children under five in five districts of Karnali, the remotest area in Nepal.

“ **The Constitution of Nepal enshrines the right relating to food and health. For this, we have been focusing on reducing the poverty and inequalities among the women and marginalized ethnic and caste groups; prioritizing actions for the poorest and most vulnerable people to ensure that no one is left behind and to follow the principle of universality without any discrimination.**

On 5 May 2011, Nepal became the fifth country to join the SUN Movement. Ever since, the Government of Nepal has taken various measures to scale up nutrition by developing coherent policy and legal framework; aligning programmes around a common results framework; developing a periodic financial tracking and results framework; and strengthening political commitments. The SUN Movement has proven to be a valuable platform to convene, mobilize, share, learn, advocate for, and drive a coordinated approach to ending malnutrition.

Nepal was also one of the countries that launched the ‘Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and Under-nutrition (REACH)’ initiative in 2011

aiming to strengthen nutrition policies and procedures in alignment with the multi-sectoral approach.

## **Challenges of achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2**

The Sustainable Development Goal 2 aims at ending hunger by 2030 and ensuring access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food for everyone, all year round, thereby ending all forms of malnutrition.

In Nepal, we have challenges to reduce number of stunted, under-weight, wasted and under-nourishment and anemia among the children and women. Conversely, for a growing number of children, obesity has become an emerging challenge - contributing to the double burden of malnutrition.

The proposed targets for Nepal for SDG 2 include a reduction in the prevalence of undernourished to 3 percent and the reduction in the prevalence of underweight children - under five years of age -to 9 percent by 2030.

The other targets aim to reduce the prevalence of anemia among women and children and increase per capita food grain production.

Enabling institutions, strengthening partnership, creating conducive environment and encouraging more investments are essential to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Government of Nepal is making every effort to scale up nutrition and deliver for their people a place free of malnutrition by 2030.

## **The Multi-sector Nutrition Plan**

The Government of Nepal is fully committed to achieving Sustainable Development Goals and the World Health Assembly targets related to nutrition. While our efforts to tackle malnutrition began much earlier, it gained considerable momentum after joining the SUN Movement in 2011.

In 2011, the Nutrition Assessment and Gap Analysis was carried out and endorsed by the Government which led to the development of the Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan in Nepal. While the first plan covered the period from 2013 to 2017 and integrated different sectors from agriculture and water and sanitation to education and governance, the second

Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan - for the period of 2018 to 2022 - builds on the first plan and is being implemented throughout the country. The second plan places emphasis on achieving nutrition-related Sustainable Development Goals for Nepal. The second plan:

- focuses on gender empowerment and equitable emphasis on populations disproportionately affected by malnutrition;
- takes a life cycle approach, starting with the first Golden 1000 days;
- aims to forge a strong relationship with the 753 local governments and provides a special directive on operationalization of MSNP in the context of federalism;
- gives a stronger emphasis on monitoring and accountability for implementation; and
- establishes a strong link with Universal Child Cash Grant for better nutritional outcomes.

The estimated budget of implementing MSNP II is nearly USD 500 million, out of which, the government will be contributing 60 percent and development partners are contributing 40 percent to implement the Plan.

The Constitution of Nepal enshrines the right relating to food and health. For this, we have been focusing on reducing the poverty and inequalities among the women and marginalized ethnic and caste groups; prioritizing actions for the poorest and most vulnerable people to ensure that no one is left behind and to follow the principle of universality without any discrimination.

### **Way forward and commitments**

The Government of Nepal aims at meeting the Sustainable Development Goals and World Health Assembly targets along with the targets set by 15th periodic plan of Nepal through a number of key commitments:

**Commitment 1: Increasing investment to eliminate all forms of malnutrition and ending hunger::**

The government of Nepal remains committed to expanding nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programmes nationwide by 2020 under the framework of the Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan, benefiting more than three million children under the age of five through nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions; providing iron-folic supplementation to all 3.5 million adolescent girls and 1.9 million pregnant and nursing women. The total budget for the Plan is nearly USD500 million, but there is an urgent funding gap of approximately USD200 million. We urge our partners to help us fill this critical gap.

**Commitment 2: High-level political commitment to tackle impacts of the climate and environment related crisis:**

Nepal is prone to natural disasters such as earthquake, floods, landslides, and avalanche. We are one of the climate vulnerable countries. To tackle the food and nutritional challenges that are consequently affected, Nepal will formulate and implement a robust policy and strategy by 2020 in a coherent and integrated fashion that strengthens humanitarian development drive. This includes a social protection and sustainable agriculture system for sustainable nutrition impact. The Government of Nepal is committed to developing a strong policy framework connecting Disaster Risk Reduction with regular ongoing nutrition programs at federal, provincial and local government levels to mitigate adverse effects of the different types of natural disasters, shocks on nutritional outcomes.

**Commitment 3: More nutrition-sensitive and nutrition specific research and development: Considering the climate and environment related crisis, the Government of Nepal will prioritize agricultural and other research and development with stronger focus on nutrient-dense foods such as fruits, vegetables and legumes, treatment of severe and moderate acute malnutrition, control of micro-nutrient deficiencies, and Infant and Young Child Feeding and Care in a life cycle approach. Appropriate policy measures will be initiated by 2022 to significantly promote production of nutrient-dense and locally grown traditional foods. The implementation of the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Act will be further promoted.**

In addition, the Government of Nepal will review existing policies and

ensure key policy measures are in place to tackle the impact of the climate related crisis and improve the resilience of rural production systems and value chains - while managing a sustainable increase in its goods and services. We will also ensure the environmental sustainability while promoting the technology transfer in agriculture.

**Commitment 4: Investing resources to strengthen advocacy and awareness around all forms of malnutrition including under-nutrition, obesity and micronutrients deficiencies.**

By 2020 the Government of Nepal will endeavor to develop policy measures to address adverse effects of processed and packed foods on nutrition, especially on infant feeding, micronutrients deficiencies and overweight/obesity.

To conclude, let me emphasize that this Global Gathering has provided an opportunity to reinforce the government's commitment to eliminate all form of malnutrition including emerging nutrition challenges due to climate related crisis, changed lifestyle and processed foods as well as to achieve the World Health Assembly Targets 2025 on nutrition and Sustainable Development Goals 2030. This has also been a platform to promote new investment in this critical area and to provide clear strategic direction for the future.

I believe this is an excellent opportunity to share our stories – our achievements in nutrition and the challenges we collectively face. This is also a forum to renew our commitment and pave the way for the next phase of the Movement both at the country level, and 2020 Global Nutrition Summit, Tokyo.

I thank you for your attention.

# Realizing Sustainable Development for Peace and Prosperity

I feel honoured to be amongst you this afternoon at the Launching Ceremony of the SAWTEE Centre for Sustainable Development (SAWTEE-CSD).

I congratulate SAWTEE and its pioneers for establishing the Centre for Sustainable Development. I also congratulate Gyan Chandra Acharya ji for leading the Centre and wish him success. As someone who was in a position to advocate for the cause of LDCs and LLDCs during the negotiation of Sustainable Development Goals, this is a fitting job that Gyan Chandra ji has chosen to undertake.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the distinguished former speakers have shed light on different elements of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), I wish to limit myself to share my perspectives on some of the critical areas that are important for us.

The SDGs represent the most comprehensive development agendas ever evolved through consensus of the world community. Adoption of this in 2015 reflected the resolve of humanity to fight poverty and extricate itself from the state of under-development.

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*Statement at the Launching Ceremony of the “SAWTEE Centre for Sustainable Development” (SAWTEE-CSD), Kathmandu, 06 August 2018*

This bears a special meaning to the least developed countries like Nepal. It has generated enormous hope in LDCs as this represents the most holistic development promise to them ever since the vulnerabilities and special needs of the group was recognized in 1971.

The SDGs build on the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) but encompass much more than that. For LDCs and LLDCs, SDGs represent the substantial addition to the MDGs, Istanbul Program of Action (IPOA), the Vienna Program of Action (VPOA), Addis Ababa Action Agenda and other internationally agreed development goals and targets.

While all the earlier efforts have made positive contributions in bringing shared understanding, shared commitment as well as visible improvement in the human condition, SDGs aim at leaving no one behind and taking forward everyone in this journey.

Through the implementation of cross-cutting 17 goals and 169 indicators, SDGs intend to culminate in ending poverty and hunger from the face of the world. This is ambitious but through our collective efforts it is achievable. We must start this journey from the local and national level.

Nepal remains committed to achieving these goals before 2030. Building

“ **Implementation of SDGs is critical for Nepal’s ambition of graduating from the LDC status. Progress in SDGs can contribute for smooth and sustainable graduation as we endeavour to raise our performance in income criteria.**

on our experience and relative success in the implementation of MDGs, the Government of Nepal has fully internalized the SDGs into the national policies and plans. It is imperative now to mainstream and integrate them in the provincial and local level plans and programmes.

We were the first country to prepare national plan of action for SDGs. Nepal participated in Voluntary National Review at the High-Level Political

Forum last year and we are preparing for the next year's review of the progress after 4 years of the SDGs' adoption.

Implementation of SDGs is critical for Nepal's ambition of graduating from the LDC status. Progress in SDGs can contribute for smooth and sustainable graduation as we endeavour to raise our performance in income criteria.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

After years of political transition, Nepal has now achieved political stability. The conflict had its toll in terms of a generation of youth flying from the country and remaining outside of the school. We invested our valuable time, enormous political capital, economic resources, and that of people's resilience to conclude the peace process. This has established culture of dialogue and accommodation among the stakeholders within the country, which is manifested in the promulgation of a democratic and inclusive constitution in 2015. This has also raised people's expectation.

One of the biggest challenges of our time is ending poverty which is the overarching goal of the SDGs. The government intends to address this situation by aligning targeted programs with economic, social, and environmental pillars of the SDGs. The recently pronounced policies and programs of the government and the federal budget for this fiscal year are aimed at fulfilling that objective and building foundation for making "Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali".

Nepal has abundant natural resources. We have potential to meet our energy needs and generate resources for other development purposes by tapping hydropower potential. Geographical proximity to India and China provides Nepal a unique opportunity to benefit from unprecedented economic transformation taking place there that opens up immense opportunities for trade and investment.

In order to realize SDGs, Nepal needs to attain higher productivity and economic growth. Promotion of innovation, entrepreneurship, manufacturing, and the small and medium-sized enterprises can play critical role in this process. Nepal also needs to focus on capacity building and infrastructure development.

As a least developed country, Nepal has to invest its limited resources with great prudence. Agriculture is the largest contributor in national GDP. Majority of our population lives in rural areas and depends on agriculture for livelihoods. However, for agriculture to be an attractive enterprise for younger generation, we need to modernise it, encourage commercial farming, and search market access for agro-products.

Dear Friends,

Progress on all SDGs will be stalled if women's empowerment is not put at the top of the agenda. Realization of gender equality hinges upon the full empowerment of women and girls. So is the importance of ensuring inclusion of marginalized communities and the Dalits in the mainstream of the development process and render social justice to all of our people.

The Constitution of Nepal has guaranteed gender equality and equal rights for all. Investing in education is the call of our time. Providing technical and vocational training and creating job should be our priority. Quality and inclusive education has the capacity to bring positive social and economic transformation in the country. Our own experience of inclusiveness has proved this reality.

Our demography is young but lacks modern skills. Finding decent jobs for them at a time when the world is witnessing the fourth Industrial Revolution is a challenge for us. For over a decade, migration and by extension remittance has remained a major component of our economy. Nepal attaches great value in ensuring safe, orderly, and regular migration. We have stressed on creating a fair and win-win situation for all, including the migrant workers. At domestic level, we are pursuing this matter in earnest and are committed to eradicate all forms of labour related issues by 2028.

The cost of natural disasters is rising sharply in terms of human tragedy and devastation. Nepal is one of the most vulnerable countries in terms of natural disasters. The pain of earthquake in 2015 has not fully subsided yet which resulted in pushing 2% of our population into poverty. Nepal disproportionately suffers from climate change despite its negligible contribution in greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, it has been our

endeavour to implement the Paris Agreement in line with the spirit of 2030 Agenda. At international level, we call for the common but differentiated responsibilities, equity and respective capabilities should be at the centre of its implementation.

Rule-based international trading system has potential to create win-win situation for all if it is implemented with special but differentiated treatment to the LDCs and LLDCs. Nepal has identified its major export items and devised strategies to address trading and competitiveness challenges faced by export sector.

We intend to address the constraints of institutional capacity, trade and investment promotion, trade facilitation, intellectual property rights, and issues related to trade in services. Reducing the trade deficit is of paramount importance. Identifying new sources of exports and reducing the cost of exporting goods has been our priority.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a shared commitment, the Government of Nepal has started the process of effective implementation of SDGs. However, our effort alone will not be enough. Realization of the most ambitious goals will remain elusive in absence of the means of implementation. There exists a gap between the ambition and the resources commitment internationally. It cannot be realized without multi-pronged approach and solid international partnership. We need reliable and sustainable financing and technology transfer to overcome capacity and structural impediments.

Developing multi-stakeholder partnership to share knowledge, expertise, technology, and financial support is seen as critical to overall success of the SDGs. Public-private and civil society partnership as well as timely and full implementation of the IPOA, VPOA, and Addis Ababa Action Agenda in full synergy and coherence with the 2030 Agenda are equally important.

Implementing SDGs is a collective responsibility of all stakeholders including the non-governmental actors. All out efforts from our partners within the country and outside through investment in the activities that directly contribute to propelling growth and economic development are required

to bring a change in the ground. Nepal faces development challenges in all fronts. This requires sustained investments and complementary efforts from all fronts to yield concrete results in the ground. I hope the CDS that is being launched today would play its role in this effort.

The Government of Nepal welcomes the contribution from civil society partners and is keen to join hands with all stakeholders in our journey to achieving the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

## State Restructuring and Governance Reform

I take it as a distinct honor and a privilege to have this opportunity to participate in NSA International Conference 2019, and share my thoughts and perspectives on such a highly relevant topic Sociology of Nepal: State restructuring, Governance, and Participation.

Let me begin by thanking the organizers, Nepal Sociological Association-NSA, for inviting me at the inaugural session of this conference. I would also like to congratulate NSA for being able to organize such an important international conference within a couple of years of its foundation.

Like elsewhere around the world, Nepali society is undergoing tremendous changes at the moment. Recent political transformations have had great impacts on the very nature and dynamics of Nepali society. Ever-growing Interdependence and interactions between countries and societies due to globalization and widespread use of modern means of communications have brought people across countries and societies closer. Societies everywhere are exposed to new values and norms. Existing social values and norms are changing, and new values and norms are taking shape. Things are in a state of flux.

From the foreign affairs perspective, it could be quite an interesting time to examine how the conduct of foreign affairs is affected by these sociological

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*Remarks delivered at the inaugural session of NSA -International Conference 2019, at Local Development Training Institute, Jawalakhel, Lalitpur on 3 August 2019*

changes, and how these social changes themselves are, to some extent, effected by the new dynamics in international relations and evolving world order.

Nepal is currently in the midst of a critical socio-economic transformation. Our priority now is on economic transformation. This policy shift comes after successful completion of the peace process started in 2006, following the end of the ten-year insurgency and the historic People's

“ **Nepal is currently in the midst of a critical socio-economic transformation. Our priority now is on economic transformation.**

Movement - Second. The complex and arduous transition that followed involved the uniquely home-grown peace process, promulgation of the Constitution in 2015, free and fair elections to the three tiers of federal set-up in 2017, and state restructuring. Now, Nepal is a Federal Democratic Republic, with an inclusive and open political framework to channel the will and aspirations of the Nepali nation for a just, inclusive, equal and open-minded democratic society.

Politically, Nepali people now enjoy fundamental democratic and human rights the level and scope of which is unmatched in Nepal's history. In some respects, we have aspired greater ambitions. However, despite the constraints of limited resources and experiences, we have achieved remarkable successes, particularly in the areas of social inclusion and social justice.

The core foundation of Nepal's democratic Constitution are the ideals of equality, non-discrimination, and social justice. Based on our past experiences under various forms of autocratic governments, it is our shared belief that democracy without economic right and social justice remains incomplete and meaningless for the larger segment of the population. Mere formalities such as formation of political party, participation in electoral process and enjoyment of freedom of expressions do not guarantee the true exercise of democracy. Such a political system in our

socio-economic context proves unsustainable. Evolution of any society into a modern, tolerant and inclusive space to live needs to be supported by a comprehensive democracy. Such a democracy empowers individual in all dimensions- political, economic, social and cultural.

Therefore, we have provisions in our constitution which are designed to ensure social justice and promote social cohesion and harmony. Proportional representation, reservations and quotas in legislatures, constitutional bodies, and various government services are aimed at providing social justice. Inclusion remains at the core of our polity. For instance, one-third representation of women is constitutionally guaranteed in the Federal Parliament and Provincial Assemblies. Elections in 2017 have resulted over 41 per cent of women's representation in elected bodies. Similarly, representations from other marginalized and backwards sections of society have also increased in the same way.

On top of these measures, there are provisions of specialized Commissions. These commissions are responsible to oversee and promote the interests and rights of various social groups such as women and marginalized sections.

There are constitutional and legal provisions to ensure rights against exploitation, and rights against discrimination based on race, religion, casts and creeds. Similarly, rights to work, remuneration and social security, as well as right to trade union and collective bargaining are some of the constitutional provisions aimed at promoting social justice. Other fundamental rights guaranteed in the constitution include rights to education, health care, food, housing, culture and language.

Government has launched a comprehensive social security system with universal social security coverage for childhood and old age. Whereas, for the working-age people, contribution-based overages under the new Social Security Act provides benefits such as unemployment, maternity, sickness, old age, accident, dependent family members, and disability.

Though Nepal still has a long way to go towards achieving its goal and potential as a prosperous, modern and inclusive society, our course towards this direction has already been firmly charted by these political

changes. A conducive environment for a better society has been created with a relatively stable government in place.

While political and economic framework are of paramount importance to advance a society, cultural values and ethos of a diverse society like Nepal also need to be carefully handled and nurtured within a bigger democratic political space. Nepal, as a unique nation-state made up of hundreds of ethnic, religious, cultural, linguistic and geographical groups and sub-groups, needs to design and practice democracy and inclusion in a very sensitive and subtle way. Any experimentation and direct copy of political, economic and social system from elsewhere and planting it into Nepali society will not work. We should let our own system evolve. This requires patience and compromise as our new political and economic system take roots. Despite ongoing changes, Nepali society will retain its own unique characteristics and values. Tolerance, harmony and unity in diversity are the enduring characteristics of Nepali society.

In course of the ongoing state restructuring and governance reform, we have found that balancing individual identity and identity of a social group within a democratic polity is a very challenging job for the state. This is the reason why we chose federal set up and divided the political constituencies into federal, provincial, and local, as well as, special regions, where certain social groups are provided with special arrangements to preserve their unique socio-cultural identities and values. We have also adopted a mixed electoral system with significant number of parliamentary seats elected under proportional representation system.

Our political gains and social transformations need to be sustained by harnessing available productive capacities of our economy among which agriculture, hydropower, tourism and other services sectors are important. The whole Nepali nation, across the political spectrum, is fully committed towards prioritizing economic development as the primary agenda. We are, therefore, now focusing our whole energy and attention on our national aspiration of 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali'. It is in this background that we organized Nepal Investment Summit 2019 in Kathmandu in March this year with the view to attracting foreign investment to complement limited capital available within the country.

For the same reason, our foreign policy priorities are also on the economic front. We have been reorienting our foreign policy thrusts by aligning the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Missions along the broader economic objectives of the country.

Ultimately, such a focus on economic diplomacy will contribute to the benefit of larger society and people. This is a new shift in our foreign policy priorities and conduct of diplomacy. This orientation will bring economic and social benefits to the lowest strata of the people. This is reflective of increasing democratization of foreign policy making and its implementation.

In the same spirit, we would like to project and promote our foreign policy's soft-power elements such as our uniquely successful peace-process, social inclusion and justice, egalitarian and tolerant democracy, respect for human rights and other fundamental rights, among others, in the international arena. One of the most precious characteristics of traditional Nepali society is tolerance and harmony. People of diverse ethnic, religious, linguistic, geographical and cultural social groups have been sharing this beautiful landscape from the time immemorial in peace, harmony and unity. We would like to promote these unique values and characteristics of Nepali society by sharing our views and experiences in international arena. It is my expectation and hope that international participants in this conference will be able to share these uniquely Nepali experiences and ideas with their Nepali counterparts.

Once again, I congratulate NSA and its members for successfully organizing such a topical conference involving so many enlightened international participants, particularly from our neighboring countries - India, China and Japan.

I am confident that the deliberations will prove fruitful. I am sure exchanges during the conference will contribute towards better understanding Nepali society from sociological perspective in a larger regional and international context.

I wish the conference all success. I thank you for your time and kind attention.

## Transforming Public Education

Let me, at the outset; convey my deep gratitude to National Campaign for Education (NCE), Nepal for hosting the Sixth Global Campaign for Education (GCE) World Assembly in Kathmandu. It is my pleasure to be here and welcome you all in our beautiful country Nepal.

I am proud to say that Nepal is a fountain of eastern philosophy, education, and culture. Education, knowledge, wisdom, and innovation are the inherent characteristics of our civilization. Our mountains cultivated the learned rishis and munis, saints and sages, great philosophers, and truth-seekers. Our ancestors gave the world the profound wisdom of Vedas and Upanishads, yoga and Ayurveda, grammar, and linguistics.

In this context, hosting the Sixth World Assembly in this sacred land has special importance.

Education is a light of life, source of civilization and origin of knowledge, wisdom and awareness. Education is the foundation of development and progress of any country.

I believe that education in twenty first century should not only spur creativity, innovation and exploration but also cultivate culture of peace,

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*Statement at the Sixth Global Campaign for Education (GCE) World Assembly held on 16-18 November 2018 in Kathmandu*

harmony, and tolerance. Education should be not only for serving self-interest but also for nurturing greater good of the larger society. It should inculcate compassions, respect diversity, accommodate differences and foster moral values and shared benefits.

Education should be a common thread that connects the people and uphold the feeling of togetherness. Education should be a process of enlightenment that illuminates not only a person but also the whole society. It should contribute to the development of societies and nations.

Education should enable us to bridge the gaps between haves and have-not and ending deprivation and backwardness. Doing so will contribute to defeat the cause of social tension, discord, and conflict.

Education should be a building block of peace and prosperity.

Particularly, public education should be a means of equality, inclusion, and social justice. This is one of the most urgent calls of the day. In this context, the theme of this World Assembly, that is, ‘Transforming Public Education System for Equality, Inclusion and Justice’ is highly relevant and worth discussing.

I am happy to know that the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) has been contributing to strengthen the voice of civil society in the development of national education and to ensure education for all in the countries with the greatest need. This campaign ultimately helps governments to deliver the right of everyone to a free and quality public education. In the same way, it is worth mentioning the role of National Campaign for Education (NCE), Nepal to representing civil society voices to improve public education sector.

I firmly believe that the partnership between government and non-governmental sector including civil society organization is important to enhance public education system in Nepal.

Constitution of Nepal has ensured right to education as a fundamental right. The Constitution clearly spells out that every citizen shall have the right to get compulsory and free education up to the basic level and free

education up to the secondary level from the State. The constitution has provisions to make higher education easy, qualitative, accessible and free gradually.

Government of Nepal attaches high importance to public education. We have education policies and programs to ensure equitable access to all levels of education and to enhance the quality of public education.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the remarkable achievements in education sector of Nepal.

The adult and youth literacy rates are estimated to have increased 13 times in last 60 years, from 5 percent in 1951 to 65.9 percent in 2011. In the same way, net enrollment rate in primary education increased from 66.6 percent in 1988 to 96.9 percent in 2015 growing at an average annual rate of 4.51 percent. Similarly, gender parity index (GPI) in School enrollment (in primary level) has reached 1.08 in 2016 from 0.17 in 1973.

We have expressed commitment to allocate 20 percent of the national budget and 4-6 percent of the GDP amount in education sector and are striving to meet the commitment.

We have recently passed the Bill on Compulsory and Free Education which will pave way to implement education-related fundamental rights of the Constitution of Nepal. Soon after the adaptation of the SDG, Nepal has developed School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) as a sectoral plan.

Despite huge efforts, our public education sector is not free from challenges. Particularly enhancing the quality of public education and reducing the disparity between public and private education are big challenges. Ensuring effective management of public education institutions and reducing school drop-out rate particularly in higher education are other challenges, among others.

Ensuring effective coordination among federal, provincial and local level policies and programs regarding public education is not an easy task.

But we have enormous opportunities in this regard. An extra-ordinary

awareness has been increased among Nepali guardians to send their children to School. All sections of Nepali society including dalits, janajatis and minority people are eager to educate their children. In the same vein, basic educational infrastructure has been significantly increased in all levels. Increased use of education information system and focus on good educational governance and unprecedented expansion and use of information communication technology (ICT) in public education are some of the opportunities available.

In terms of education, we are living in an era of contradictions.

In the one hand, literacy rate has been sharply rising but on the other hand, social crimes such as rape and violence against women are also reportedly growing.

Why we are not getting an opportunity to be proud that rising level of education and awareness has substantially reduced embezzlement and corruption.

Sometimes, I am disturbed to read the news about increasing unemployment among the educated youth.

Why our education could not create job opportunities? Why our education could not motivate our youth to be entrepreneur? Why our education could not inspire them to work at home rather than going abroad?

I hope this world assembly will seriously contemplate on this. Your profound deliberation and recommendations will help governments to make public education more effective and qualitative.

There are myriad of challenges that we face today in public education. Today, the challenges are more interconnected than ever. They are not confined to the borders of countries and continents. They are not confined to a particular race and nation. So, your collective efforts should be further consolidated and strengthened to tackle our common challenges and problems.

Government of Nepal is always ready to go hand in hand with all stake-

holders to further improve public education system in Nepal.

This government with an overwhelming mandate of people is determined to accelerate its drive for prosperity and sustainable development.

This government is guided by the vision of “Prosperous Nepal Happy Nepali”.

To realize this goal, our priority is to ensure equitable, inclusive, and qualitative public education that could contribute to creating decent jobs and gainful employment for our working age population and to achieving lasting peace, prosperity and happiness.

Against this backdrop, your deliberations during this assembly will be an important push for us to ensure not only education for all but also qualitative and equitable education for all.

I wish a great success of this Assembly.

Wish you all a pleasant stay in this beautiful city of Kathmandu.

# Role of Diaspora Communities in Nepal's Development

I am delighted to address this august session on the theme: Role of Nepali Diaspora for Development Policies.

First of all, I thank the organizing committee for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts.

I touched upon the role of Nepali diaspora to some extent in my remarks at the inaugural session yesterday. I will be brief this time.

With this convention, an important platform for NRN experts and professionals and their counterparts at home has been created to engage in intellectual discussions, debate and knowledge exchange. Cross-fertilization of ideas, views and thoughts is certainly a matter of our mutual interest to deepen quality of knowledge, learning and policymaking.

In this sense, I commend all the panelists for their comprehensive and insightful views focusing on the “Role of Nepali Diaspora for Development Policies”.

NRNs and Nepali Diaspora have been making important contribution to

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*Speech on the theme: “Role of Nepali Diaspora for Development Policies” at Plenary Session 4 of the First NRN Global Knowledge Convention, October 13, 2018, Kathmandu*

Nepal's development process for quite some time. There is much larger scope for their engagements in development policies.

The NRNA has over the years expanded networks to bring together and organize Nepali diaspora for the common cause. Its commitment, efforts, and actions towards promoting the interest of Nepali community living abroad in particular and building 'national image' through diaspora-development nexus in general are commendable.

**“ The NRNA has over the years expanded networks to together and organize Nepali diaspora for the common cause. Its commitment, efforts, and actions towards promoting the interest of Nepali community living abroad in particular and building 'national image' through diaspora-development nexus in general are commendable.**

Nepali diaspora has contributed to national economy in the form of remittances, which have helped achieve important development objectives. More importantly, the quality of technological knowhow and innovative ideas that 'flow' to the country through the NRNs of this region has benefited the country in its efforts to develop and modernize.

Their contribution vis-à-vis promoting Nepali identity and image abroad is equally important in these times of global inter-dependence and inter-connectedness.

Migrants play a crucial role in promoting relationships between their country of origin and destination. They can function as a bridge between the two cultures. It is what is theoretically called 'double consciousness' that can, on the one hand, help them promote Nepal's image and identity while on the other, allow them to use their knowledge and skills to suggest better policy options and delivery in Nepal.

As you all know following the successful holding of elections at federal, provincial, and local levels in 2017, Nepal has come out of political transition. The topmost priority of the present Government of Nepal is to build

on the political gains made thus far and take on the long overdue agenda of economic development. Our attention is solely oriented towards the motto of ‘Prosperous Nepal and Happy Nepali’.

The Government of Nepal recognizes the contributions that Non-resident Nepali have made in diverse spheres of development of the country.

We believe that migrants at present need to realize that they no longer live in their ‘imaginary homelands’. They no longer need to ‘join the dots in the broken mirror’ to form a sense of ‘fragmented identity’. The image of their self and identity is very much a complete whole. It may belong to two-places- the country of birth and new country of residence. The need is to appropriate the idea of self to both places and forge a strong belongingness to one own’s homeland.

Amidst these facts, it is high time we realized the importance of forging partnerships for the productive and innovative utilization of our collective experiences, knowledge, and skills for the betterment of the country. After all, it is our collective responsibility to build a strong and prosperous Nepal.

As you know, following the promulgation of the new constitution and successful holding of three-tier elections, we have ushered in a new era of peace and stability. It is absolutely necessary for us to make this hard-earned peace sustained for generations to come.

Peace and stability can only be enduring when we achieve and maintain a high, broad-based, and inclusive economic growth. The growth that is essential to realize our dream of Prosperous Nepal and Happy Nepali. The present Government has, therefore, accorded top priority to economic transformation to make this dream come true. Our collaboration is necessary for giving support to meet this goal.

In this context, let me underline that maintaining stability, advancing socio-economic transformation, ensuring social justice, good governance and rule of law in the country become all the more critical.

Studies have demonstrated that the rate and quality of development largely depends on evidenced-based policies and sound institutions that

implement them in a result-oriented manner. Towards this direction, the Government is making necessary policy and institutional reforms.

However, there are many challenges that lie ahead on our path to fulfill the development dream.

First challenge is to build progressive and inclusive institutions;

Second challenge is to enhance quality of factors of production;

Third challenge is to gain efficiency in the economy;

Fourth challenge is to meet double-digit growth rate;

Fifth challenge is to reduce poverty and inequality;

Sixth challenge is to bridge massive infrastructure gaps;

Seventh challenge is to build greater financial resilience;

Eighth challenge is to address risks of climate change vulnerability;

Last challenge is to allocate resources equitably in federal setup.

In overcoming those challenges, an enhanced level of economic partnership with NRNs, Diaspora and private sector is essential.

We have undertaken liberal policy framework in the country. . There is a further need to Government undertake policy reforms. Diaspora can certainly contribute to making more conducive development policies at home as they are well-versed in concepts at work place and context at birth place.

Human capital is a key component in policymaking. Role of knowledge, skill and technology ideas is vital in human capital formation.

Besides investing more in the active factor of production (human capital) within the country, we are eager to make best use of knowledge of those who love Nepal, whose blood is Nepali and whose heart is Nepali. It is undoubtedly the NRNs and Diaspora who are in a unique position

in enriching the quality of our human capital. We take every measure necessary for their meaningful engagement.

For a country grappling with brain drain, this event is a stepping stone for reversing it in the form of brain gain. Our ideal goal is to attract best brains into our beloved motherland.

In this context, I congratulate NRNA for their timely initiative to set up Nepal Policy Institute (NPI). The Government of Nepal has also made a similar institute named Policy Research Institute. The collaboration between both the institutes would be relevant and useful for making sound development policies in our country.

**“ It is high time we realized the importance of forging partnerships for the productive and innovative utilization of our collective experiences, knowledge, and skills for the betterment of the country.**

No doubt, we need a high economic growth for prosperity. For this, we have a goal of double-digit economic growth. To achieve this goal, physical, social, legal, administrative, and economic institutions and infrastructure need be put in place.

Yet again, there is a need to improve good governance, policies, rules, and laws and utilize excellent professional capabilities in government, private sectors and diaspora as well.

Once we create positive and inclusive institutions through legal reforms, quality of factors of production such as land, labour, and capital will certainly go up.

By using these factors efficiently, we hope to achieve efficiency in our country's economy.

The gain in efficiency will cause an expansion in the economy which will result in higher economic growth.

It is only through continuous high economic growth and its equitable distribution can prosperity sustain in the country.

In the course of economic development, we require huge resources. Since our domestic saving is not sufficient to meet our resources need, we have to mobilize foreign resources through foreign direct investment.

The Government has been taking various policy, institutional and programmatic initiatives to encourage and facilitate FDI and NRNs' investment through economic diplomacy.

We are constantly striving to attract investment on export trade and tourism sector. We are also focusing on foreign employment management, technology transfer and climate change financing.

Undoubtedly, knowledge, skills, technology and capital from NRNs and Nepali Diaspora will provide a much-needed impetus for economic development.

Let me give a brief account of NRNA and Nepali diaspora's contributions in the country. NRN Investment and Infrastructure Company that already financed in hydropower sector and a recently initiated investment fund worth of ten billion are an encouraging gesture. Installation of Buddha statue in International Court of Justice; Laprak VDC Post Earthquake Model Residence Project (573 Houses Construction); Local Community Support Programs in Various Districts and many more can be added up in the list. Your promising efforts in making investment in the motherland are really appreciative.

Allow me to spell out our priority areas where you can make a visible difference.

- Technologies and techniques for high-yielding agro-varieties that are exemplary in Israel and Australia;
- Agro-mechanization as can be found in Japan or USA; commercial, educational and governance digitalization as practiced in Korea;
- Education and human resource development strategies as those of

Singapore and Australia;

- Infrastructures like that of China, development of alternative energies alongside hydropower, science, and technology as well as best practices in environmental protection.

As I lead the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and as the Ministry is also the focal point for NRNs, we expect insightful, well-researched policy inputs and recommendations from the Convention.

The Foreign Ministry is always supportive of NRNs right from the beginning to create an enabling environment for them and make most of their meaningful engagements in the country. We are planning to conduct a census like NRN survey in order to take stock of NRN expertise and explore a suitable area of their engagements.

I am confident that knowledge sharing between NRNs and the Government of Nepal will pave the way for developing creative and innovative use of tangible and intangible resources that NRNs and Nepali Diaspora have in order to brighten the face of the motherland.

To conclude, Janani Janma Bhumischa Sworgadapi Gariyasi (Mother and Motherland are greater than heaven). We will march ahead shoulder to shoulder as one to accomplish our duty to the motherland.

Thank you for your kind attention.

# **|07| Tributes and Attributes**

## In Memory of Nelson Mandela

I feel honoured to offer sincere tributes to a statesman extraordinaire of our time. He is indeed an epitome of struggle, freedom, human dignity, and democracy.

The strength of unity; power of discipline; influence of humility; and result of diligence are the lessons we learn from his life. He taught the importance of reconciliation, forgiveness, and compassion, even by forgiving those who had taken his everything away.

Truth eventually emerges triumphant, no matter how strong the adversaries are. The sense of fortitude and sacrifice defeat even the most invincible. His career spanning anti-apartheid activist to visionary President is a living testimony. His ideals will continue to inspire humanity.

Nepal, the birthplace of the apostle of peace, Buddha, has unwavering faith in peace. Our long contribution to the UN peace operations testifies it.

Nepal shares the vicissitudes of Africa's revolutionary past. Our history is illustrated by long struggles against aggression of imperialists; authoritarian regimes; socio-economic and political oppression; and the most recent peace process.

Nepali people have demonstrated exemplary resilience in pursuit of peace. Political forces exhibited wisdom and chose path of peaceful resolution of conflict through dialogues and accommodation, the ideals embraced by the late Nelson Mandela.

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*Statement at Nelson Mandela Peace Summit, New York, Monday, 24 September 2018*

The home-grown, nationally owned and led peace process successfully transitioned the country to a state of stability and peace after the peaceful democratic elections were held under the Constitution adopted by people's representatives.

Each conflict situation is unique and demands context-specific solution. As there is no universal model for conflict resolution, there is no single model for addressing the issues of peace and justice. Some of the elements in the declaration that this body is going to adopt today, especially those contained in para 19 do not reflect the essence of our experience and represent our views.

“ **Nepal shares the vicissitudes of Africa's revolutionary past. Our history is illustrated by long struggles against aggression of imperialists; authoritarian regimes; socio-economic and political oppression; and the most recent peace process.**

Nepal has allowed independent transitional justice process to take its course as per the laws. We are now well on the path of reconciliation by ensuring social justice, nurturing inclusive society, and delivering good governance.

Nepal reaffirms its faith in the values of world peace. We stand ready to share experiences of our successful peace process.

While I share this success story, conflicts around the world continue unabated. Aspiration of millions for equality, justice, peace, and development continue to elude us even after seven decades of the establishment of the United Nations.

Our commitment to forgiveness, reconciliation, humanity, and peace – not just in words but in actions – would be true tributes to Madiba.

I thank you.

## Buddhism: Quest for Understanding and Peace

I particularly appreciate the organizers for choosing Lumbini as the venue of this conference. There cannot be a better choice. It is an honour and privilege to speak on peace from the birthplace of Lord Buddha, the apostle of peace.

Lumbini is not just the birthplace of Lord Buddha, it is the fountain of Buddhism as well. It is the common heritage of global humanity. Lumbini represents a civilization and culture transcending national frontier and surviving the vicissitudes for history through the sheer of its spiritual values centering on the most precious commodities sought after by the whole of humanity-peace. No wonder, therefore, three Secretary Generals of the United Nations professing different faiths have made it a point to visit Lumbini.

Government of Nepal is committed to developing it as world peace centre. We are grateful to the support we have been achieving from our foreign friends, and we are hopeful to the enhanced level of goodwill, support, and cooperation in the days ahead.

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*Remarks at "International Conference for Understanding and Peace" Lumbini, 11 December 2019*

Quest for peace and understanding has been a long and cherished goal of humanity all along the history. Civilizations have evolved, thrived, and prospered due largely to the prevalence of peace. They have died due to lack of it.

We are talking about peace in the world, peace among the States, peace among the communities, peace among the religions and cultures, peace among civilizations and peace of mind within an individual. They all are inter-related and mutually reinforcing.

We have seen unprecedented prosperity and progress achieved in a state of peace at all levels.

## “ Government of Nepal is committed to developing it as world peace centre.

At the same time, major catastrophes have occurred in the course of history in absence of peace and temptation to war.

We have seen devastating world wars. We have seen making and unmaking of nation States. We have seen long and perennial animosity between and among civilizations and death of civilizations. We have seen crusades between religions to prevail one over the other. We have seen massacres and genocides between and among communities. We have witnessed ethnic cleansing and mass exodus of people due to their colour, faith, ethnicity, or origin.

As if this is not enough, we have seen race for armament of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons. It is an irony that competition for weapons of mass destruction basically emanates from the rich and prosperous parts of the world and now extends to lesser prosperous regions as well.

Though it is pretended for ensuring effective deterrence for their security, in reality race of nuclear arms never ensures security, rather creates a state of suicidal security dilemma.

Let me quote the teachings of Buddha from Dhammapada that seems

pretty relevant to this state of affairs.

“The kind of seed sown will produce that kind of fruit. Those who do good will reap good results. Those who do evil will reap evil results. If you carefully plant a good seed, you will joyfully gather good fruit.”

Race for weapons of mass destruction exactly resembles this irony. It is not a good seed to be sown. Nor will it produce good fruits to enjoy.

Gautam Buddha spread the message of peace across the world. His was the message for reason, harmony, co-existence and love. His humanistic teaching like Metta (loving kindness), Mudita (sympathetic joy), Karuna (compassion) and Upekshya (equanimity) are most relevant today.

It was an inclusive message of peace for all without any distinction on the basis of nationality, race, colour or any other denomination. It was a message for equality, justice and truth which constitute the fundamental basis for peace.

Regrettably, whenever Buddha’s message has been crossed or ignored, there have been wars and devastation, human suffering and destruction.

Dialogue and engagements are the tools to promote peace. Dialogues have potentials to prevent wars as well as to conclude war and restore peace.

A more systematic global attempt for the establishment of peace and promotion of cooperation among the nation States began in the ashes of the First World War.

However, due to lack of dialogue and understanding, peace could not prevail for long. The world was pushed into another devastation of Second World War.

Then we created an edifice of United Nations to ensure peace and collective security through cooperation and collaboration among Member States.

This edifice has been largely successful to avert a world-scale war. However, many parts of the world unfortunately have been engulfed in internal conflicts, inter-state conflicts, communal strife, and low intensity wars.

Scales of damage wrecked by these conflicts compound in millions of lives, trillions of dollars of properties and immense suffering of human being, including innocent children, women, and elderly.

None of these conflicts have brought stability and peace by themselves. It is ultimately the dialogues, negotiation, engagements, and collaboration that have transformed conflicts into peace.

Our own experience of ten years of armed conflict followed by successfully negotiated peace process speaks volumes of the importance of dialogue and understanding in promoting peace. Our peace process is a testimony of how requisite political will and accommodation, negotiation and dialogue can resolve conflicts.

Having achieved political stability, we are now focused on socio-economic transformation with the overarching aspiration of “Prosperous Nepal Happy Nepali”.

Harmony and co-existence make essential ingredients of our culture. We believe in “Bhavatu Sabba Mangalam (May all be blessed with auspicious) and “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” (The world is a family). Unity in diversity is our basic mantra of cohesive society.

At the international level, Nepal believes in friendship and harmony in the world. Nepal has always stood for total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. We support peaceful resolution of international and inter-state disputes. We have stood for fairness, justice and peace in international affairs. We have passionately espoused the cause of the LDCs, LLDCs and the countries in special situation and called for greater international solidarity for their development. We have consistently promoted the agenda of climate justice as well as implementation of the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development.

For over 62 years, Nepal has been rendering extraordinary contribution to international peace and security through our participation in UN peace operations. Currently Nepal stands as the 5th largest troop and police contributing country to the UN Peace operations. Our troops and police have successfully protected civilians from violence, helped respond

to humanitarian crises, create an environment conducive to peaceful settlement, helped maintain truce, implement peace agreements, clear landmines and assist in laying foundation for durable peace.

We are a member of the UN Peace Building Commission and active member of the Group of Friends of Mediation that promotes the peaceful means of dispute settlement.

Our voice of reason and conscience resonates in other important UN entities and international forums as well. In the Human Rights Council, we speak for the voiceless in an objective and impartial manner. In ILO we promote social justice and dialogue.

Overall, we support multilateralism, rule-based international order, and international cooperation and collaboration to address global issues of common concern.

Pursuit of peace has always been humanity's highest aspiration. Sometimes, peace is understood as the opposite of conflict, violence or war. Certainly, war historically has been the fundamental antithesis of peace. But a sound state of peace is more than that.

Albert Einstein says,

“Peace is not merely the absence of war but the presence of justice, of law, of order- in short, of government”.

Absence of conflict or war merely provides a condition for the beginning of peace. True peace includes personal wholeness, righteousness, political justice, human dignity and equal opportunity for development in all dimensions- individual, cultural, social, ecological and political.

They all collectively and individually contribute for political peace in a larger organized society. Sense of partnership, collaboration, participation, respect for voice and dissent and legitimacy are the source of political peace. Few exceptional individuals like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Junior and Nelson Mandela followed non-violence as a means of attaining the goal of political peace.

Development is the prerequisite for peace. Deprivation, lack of basic human needs and underdevelopment fuel the dissatisfaction in the society, which eventually invites the conflict. So human centric development is the foundation for sustainable peace. The adoption of the Agenda 2030 was a display of the commitment for inclusive development at its best. The Agenda can be implemented if similar spirit holds at the core of our actions with renewed sense of partnership and each side shouldering the responsibility, to attain the most desired peace in the world.

In the last years, Poverty has decreased but the rate of reduction is decelerating. The unemployment levels have dropped but the wages remain stagnated. Food insecurity and hunger is in a regressive track. The world has made great strides in wealth creation and advancement of technology. So has been the progress in life expectancy, literacy, basic education and reducing maternal and infant mortality.

Sadly, the progresses have not been evenly distributed. Women and girls, people with disabilities, ageing population still disproportionately share the consequences of poverty and inequalities. Inequality within and between countries is growing.

Achieving the sustainable development goals hinges on resources.

Desire for peace is human nature. However, peace needs continuous nurturing. Conflicts, discords, armaments, animosity breeds wars. Wars become devastating when they are aided and assisted by advanced automated technology. The world has produced enough ammunition, nuclear or otherwise, to destroy the world several times. Display of arms against arms is not a solution to the problem. Neither arms can foster peace. What is the need of the hour is dialogue and understanding. Dialogues enable and nurture greater understanding between and among individuals, communities, leaders, nation States, civilizations and religions. Understanding facilitates dialogues and helps to establish and sustain peace.

The incessant race for the wealth, excessive consumerism and individualism has severely damaged the humanitarian and spiritual values. So, the Buddhist teaching for benevolence, and sacrifice of self-interest are gaining more importance

All stakeholders have a role to play in promoting peace and understanding between and among nations. Governments, civil society, religious institutions and scholars, academicians, think tanks all can play a role in promoting peace and understanding. Events like this can be useful forum to promote the message of peace. Such an effort carries greater attention when it is held at the birth place of Lord Buddha.

# Global Dimension of Gandhian Thought

First of all, let me extend my sincere thanks to the Policy Research Institute, Nepal and the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre, Embassy of India for jointly organizing this webinar on the theme of “Global Dimension of Gandhian Thought” on the eve of the 151st Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and inviting me to share my thought on the theme.

I am happy to know that this year the 151st Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi is being celebrated. As the birth date of Gandhiji is just a day away, it is quite befitting that we discuss the Gandhian thought that has spread over the whole globe with the invaluable message of peace and non-violence.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was given the title of ‘Mahatma’ by the Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore. Mahatma, as we know, is a great soul, not an ordinary one. For he showed human beings a path of peace and non-violence where prosperity and happiness thrive as opposed to war and conflict that result into death, decay and degeneration.

Gandhiji always championed the cause of weak, down-trodden, and

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*Statement at Webinar on “Global Dimension of Gandhian Thought” organized jointly by Policy Research Institute, Nepal and Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre, Embassy of India on occasion of 151st Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi , 1st October 2020*

helpless people. He wanted human civilization to grow on the robust foundation of equality, rights, and justice. He could not see anyone oppressed or suppressed.

Power of arms succumbed to his moral and ethical values. He believed that by firm and resolute action with peaceful and non-violent means, the unarmed can defeat the armed, the weak can overpower the strong and the moral force can beat the oppressor. It is love and care that matters for genuine human relationship, not force and injustice, he held. He said, “A coward is incapable of exhibiting ‘love’, it is the prerogative of the brave.”

Throughout his life, Gandhiji espoused peace, both at home and the world, as reflected in his thought and action. He held that lasting peace could never be achieved by means of violence, war or repression. For him, such peace must ensure freedom, equality and justice.

It is rare to see such a human being in the world with unremitting courage and robust determination to oppose injustice, cruelty, oppression and misuse of state power. He did so even through undergoing painful suffering, hardship, and torture. With a very simple strategy of non-cooperation and non-violence, he made the gigantic state power collapse terribly. He viewed, “In a gentle way, you can shake the world.”

Gandhiji’s simple lifestyle has remained exemplary for many people around the world. His handmade cotton attires, wooden sandals, a thatched mud house all are the reflections of his simple and content life. This simple life with great thought was itself a message to the humankind as to how they can attain happiness in their life. Following a simple way of life, he became a great philosopher and leader with innumerable followers. He was, in fact, a great soul.

The Mahatma relentlessly pursued truth, equating truth with God. He believed that non-violence was the means to achieve truth, which was the end. This quest for truth led him to tread on the path of a crusader for human liberty and dignity.

The ideals, principles and practices of Mahatma Gandhi, which became so popular in the world then, also bear great relevance in the world today

which is marked by the lust for armament, conflicts, hegemony and dominance.

On the eve of Gandhiji's 151st Birth Anniversary, I place my deep appreciation for his invaluable contributions to make a peaceful, non-violent and just world where every human being could live in dignity and honour. Though he is not with us today, his thoughts and ideals continuously guide the humanity to create a better world.

## Role of Media in Strengthening International Cooperation

I feel honoured to be amongst you this morning at the launching of Nepal Chapter of the World Communicators' Council (WCC). I congratulate WCC and MB. Jayramjee for the launching, and Laxman Datt Pantjee, for leading this Chapter. I also wish for the success of the Chapter and this conference.

Distinguished former speakers have already shed light from various perspectives on the role of media. I am afraid, I might be echoing some of those perspectives.

Due to the enormous importance, it assumes, media sector is rightly recognized as the fourth organ of the State. Media is instrumental in creating and shaping public opinion and strengthening democracy. No other entity has presence, network, and access to information comparable to the media. Therefore, media is an omnipresent sky in which nothing hides from the eyes of the people.

A free and independent media sector can keep the public informed. Through impartial and fact-based reporting, media helps citizens to make

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*Remarks at the launching ceremony of World Communicators' Council (WCC), Nepal Chapter and South Asia Media Conference organized by WCC, Nepal Chapter, Kathmandu, 07 September 2019*

informed choices about their governments, market and public issues.

Transparency, neutrality, objectivity, and independence are some of the defining features of free and responsive media. It is with this principle in consideration that media has been attributed with the role of watchdog of civil liberties, voice against corruption, the guardian of human rights, promoter of public accountability and good governance. Adherence to these principles helps strengthen rule of law, the very foundation of democracy, free media and good governance.

Media gives voice to the voiceless. Media people therefore are people's unelected representatives. I consider them as undeclared good ambassadors and envoys as well for the role they play in shaping international understanding and bringing peoples and countries together. Media is playing an important role in the public and track two diplomacy. Media people reach conflict areas, war torn regions, often risking their own lives, and cover meetings of peace negotiations.

The issue of disproportionate impacts of climate change among the least developed countries, small island countries, and landlocked developing countries is one of the under-reported areas. It is our view that climate issues need to be highlighted at the level matching the level of threat it poses to the wellbeing and very existence of humankind.

Similarly, issues related to migrant workers and their contribution to the destination and home countries' economies are mostly under shadow, or under reported. More than 4 million Nepali young men and women are in foreign countries as migrant workers, mostly in the Gulf and Malaysia. We attach huge importance to the protection and promotion of their rights and wellbeing. It is my sincere request to all media fraternity to take a fresh look at these issues and accord top priority in terms of media coverage.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Evolution of modern media in Nepal started with the publication of GORKHAPATRA as a weekly newspaper in 1901 and AWAZ, from 1951 as the daily newspaper. It was only after the democratic revolution of 1951 and our opening up to the outside world that the doors were opened for

wider development of media sector in Nepal. In these 70 years, media has grown phenomenally in Nepal. So far, the traditional media have stood the ground weathering hard times given by the rise of social media.

We believe in inclusive and integrated approach to democracy, development, and human rights. Our constitution has guaranteed freedom of opinion and expression. Seventeen (17) Rights to Freedom, nineteen (19) Rights to Communication and Information (Article 27), among others, constitute the trio of thirty-one (31) fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution. Protection of civil liberties, equality and non-discrimination, and fundamental freedoms are core features of our Constitution.

We firmly believe that access to information for the citizens is an essential element in democracy to ensure good governance and accountability. It is with this view that Nepal has enacted the Right to Information Act in

“ **We firmly believe that access to information for the citizens is an essential element in democracy to ensure good governance and accountability.**

2007 and established an independent National Information Commission. The Commission has been empowered to protect, promote and ensure the implementation of the right to information and ensure proactive disclosure of activities of the public entities.

Nepal has now entered a new era of political stability following the successful conclusion of peace process and promulgation of an inclusive and democratic Constitution. Nepal's unique and nationally led and owned peace process sets an example of a successful transformation of armed conflict into peaceful democratic political order. We would be happy to share our experience for the benefit of the countries in conflict or those in transition.

Maintaining international relations on the basis of sovereign equality, mutual respect and shared benefit to enhance the dignity of nation in international stage is our foreign policy objective. We want amity with all, enmity with none. We want to promote Nepal's credentials as an

open, progressive, and democratic State. And we seek media support in projecting these features of our foreign policy.

Development imperatives at home guide our diplomatic engagements abroad. In line with the vision of SDGs - “leaving nobody behind” and creating more equal societies within and among nations - Nepal wants to join the mainstream of international economic prosperity. Looking at the high economic trajectory of our neighbours, Nepal seeks to develop itself as a land-linked country by promoting connectivity and trade to both sides.

Graduating from LDC at the early date, realizing the SDGs, attaining the middle-income status by 2030 are our developmental milestones. The national aspiration of “Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali” carries the essence of our economic and social transformation agenda.

Nepal is observing ‘*Visit Nepal Year 2020*’ with a view to bringing in more than 2 million tourists by the end of the year. I urge you all for a positive and helpful coverage of this mega campaign. Tourism brings peoples, cultures, and nations closer. Media has a huge role to play in this area too.

Let me take the opportunity to share with you today an important initiative the Government of Nepal has recently undertaken. In the spirit of our ancient saying वादेवादे जायते तत्वबोध – which means essence of knowledge comes through discourses - and with the objective of exchanging views and best practices on contemporary issues of global importance, the Government has established a permanent global dialogue forum, named Sagarmatha Sambaad. The forum will provide a platform for global leaders including head of state/government, ministers and leaders from various sectors including business, think tanks, media and common people to participate and share their views the dialogue.

Named after the world’s tallest mountain – Mt Everest, सगरमाथा in Nepali, the initiative has born out of Nepal’s deep conviction and faith in the notion of common good and collective wellbeing of humanity. The Sambaad will be held biennially in Nepal on pertinent themes such as environment, governance, development, economy, society and culture. The first edition of the Sambaad will take place in Kathmandu on 3 and 4 April 2020, and will feature the theme of ‘Climate Change, Mountains and the Future of

Humanity'. In the face of climate change crisis and its most visible negative consequences seen in the melting of the Himalayas and rising sea level, we thought it fitting to conduct the first Sagarmatha Sambad on this topic.

Distinguished participants,

Before I conclude, I would like to emphasize that foreign policy and external relations are sensitive areas that require careful reporting and prudent analysis. Media should help foster relations among nations and

“ **Nepal is always committed to the promotion and protection of democratic liberties and media freedom. We are equally responsible to promote peace, social harmony and protect privacy of the people within the constitutional parameters.**

should not do anything that undermines those relationships. Speculative and baseless news reporting and analysis detached from ground realities do not serve our vital interests.

Let me also reiterate that Nepal is always committed to the promotion and protection of democratic liberties and media freedom. We are equally responsible to promote peace, social harmony and protect privacy of the people within the constitutional parameters.

Today's world is facing many challenges in the areas of environment, trade, social justice and equality, migration, and technology. Media can serve better if they give more space in their coverage to such issues with a view to fostering international solidarity and strengthening international cooperation.

I wish for successful deliberations during the conference, and hope that the outcome of the conference will contribute towards improving media situation in Nepal, South Asia and beyond.

I thank you all for your attention.

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## Nepal's Foreign Policy Priorities

Ever since Pradeep Kumar Gyawali took charge as Nepal's Foreign Minister in March 2018, the country has been in overdrive to stabilise its relations with the two Asian giants, India and China, and a variety of actors on the global stage. Gyawali, a self-taught communist and an underground party worker from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, has been working on the peculiar issues facing landlocked countries. He was entrusted with the spadework ahead of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli's visit to China. Gyawali's focus on resetting relations with India hinges on India's treatment of Nepal as an equal sovereign nation—something that the Indian establishment is reluctant to accept. In a wide-ranging interview to Frontline, Gyawali discusses the challenges facing the new government and the path ahead. Excerpts.

*The new government inspires hope because after a prolonged period of instability, Nepal will finally have stability in governance because of the constitutional provision which limits the scope for moving a no-confidence motion. In over two decades, no government has lasted beyond eight or nine months. In practice, has this provision led to a sense of complacency because the government cannot be dislodged? The provision will also apply to any future government.*

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*Resetting relations by R.K. Radhakrishnan (The Frontline)*

The major problem that Nepali people were facing so far was instability. This was the most detrimental element which disturbed policy coherence and continuation and made our state structure so weak that it led to unnecessary and unwanted foreign intervention and a feeling of chaos. State power was less effective and this was a byproduct of the instability. We focussed on having a stable government so that it can fulfil its tenure of five years. And if it does not work properly, then the people have every right to change it. So making those objectives the topmost priority, we set out some provisions which we think might contribute to stability.

*This, and the merger of the two communist parties, give you brute strength in Parliament. You have 174 members in Parliament out of a total of 275. Does this majority embolden you to throw normal democratic norms out of the window?*

I would like to say that the communist movement here is unique in nature and is on a specific path of development. And the most important thing that I would like to say is that all the universally accepted democratic values of pluralism and human rights have been incorporated into the core component of the Nepali communist movement. So that is the typical

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nature of the communist movement and government here. Some people are trying to create a fear psychosis that with a two-thirds majority [in Parliament], the Left forces will gradually control society and move in an undemocratic direction. That is totally wrong. It is a well-accepted fact that we are the front runners of the democratic movement. So this background gives many of the answers. Yes, there are some perceptions [that the brute majority will be used to steamroller all opposition] because it is

unprecedented here in South Asia where right-wing politics is increasingly finding appeal among people. Here, the Left movement is popular, strong and leading the country. I would like to clarify that we will follow those traditions which are in favour of the nation and the people, we will strongly follow the path of democracy, and we will strongly follow the path of open society and pluralism. I have to add that socio-economic transformation is our major agenda. So we would like to translate this mandate into one that makes tangible changes in people's lives. Our efforts on this front might create some disappointment to those forces which are not in favour of these changes.

*How does the communist movement in Nepal reconcile with the concepts of nationalism and patriotism, given the fact that the Communist Party of Nepal [CPN] was founded in Kolkata?*

The fact is that the trajectory of the movement in countries that were colonised, or the countries whose sovereignty was challenged in the past, is entirely different. While protectionism in the United States or the United Kingdom represented the interest of the multinationals, the capitalists and a handful of the elite there, here in Nepal the nationalist feeling represents the aspirations of the broader mass of people, who want to be independent in the real sense. Independence is not a word or a terminology. We talk about its real implications. We have every right to choose our path of development, to choose our system of governance and to choose our foreign policy independently.

The communist movement is here because we represent all major trends of the Nepali people's movement. These comprise first the patriotic and nationalistic trend, which grew during the anti-British struggle; second, those movements which were reformist and humanist in nature prior to the establishment of political parties here; third, the democratic trends and the struggle for democracy. The Nepali communist movement reflects all these three trends. That is why it is so strong and popular. Yes, Marx said that we are internationalists, but prior to that every working class in its particular society has struggled against colonising and imperialist forces.

*Are the two communist parties willing to come together for a unified approach on the question of the Madhesi and the tribal people as an*

*underclass rather than treating this as an issue of ethnicity or caste?*

The communist movement in Nepal started its journey not entirely based on class struggle but guided by a political ideology. Gradually, it came to represent various groups of the working class. But a country such as Nepal has two different aspects of exploitation. One is class discrimination and the other is various forms of social discrimination such as gender discrimination, the discrimination of Dalits and the cultural exploitation of minority groups. We are striving for a balance between the class struggle and the movements that are targeted towards social justice. So on the one hand, we represent the working class and, on the other, those sections of society that are discriminated against. The communists are the real representatives of women who want an equal place in society, the Dalits who want a dignified life, the Madhesi Muslims and those residing in the remote areas who have no access to state power. We represent them as well. But what differentiates us from those advocates of ethnic-regional struggles is that they undermine the class struggle. They retain the class attitude. At the end of the day, they represent the elite or creamy layer of that particular group. We represent the real aspirations of the people.

*How does the dichotomy in views between the two communist parties in the coalition play out in governance? You first had an agreement for a merger, and then it took about eight months to materialise. Now there have been talks about some leaders wanting positions of power in the new structure.*

Actually, during the 1990s, the two strands of the communist movement were on the surface. The period from 1996 to 2006-07 was when the two trends were sharply divided, negating each other and vying to become the largest political party in the country. But in Nepal, armed struggle, the violent path, was not successful. And then the Maoists realised that if they did not change their policies and practices, if they did not change their course, then there would be serious damage. So, later on, they changed their course, accepting multiparty democracy and agreeing to dismantle the army that they had [created]. That was the turning point which created a solid ground for the cooperation between the two parties [CPN-Unified Marxist Leninist and CPN-Maoist Centre].

In the past 10 years, there was another round of competition. There were some dilemmas amongst the parties. Comrade Prachanda [Pushpa Kamal Dahal] once wondered, “Am I Prime Minister or am I the rival leader?” [He was Prime Minister at that time.] That was the mindset. At the back of their minds, they were seeking to take over power but the first decision, to sack the Army Chief, was not a wise one. Later on they realised that the time had come to totally discard those feelings that one fine morning they could capture state power.

It was quite obvious, given that the UML has strong roots, that it would emerge as the single largest party. But that was not enough for the UML. We wanted stability. We spent more than seven decades in the democratic movement and now the time had come to take the responsibility of making our society prosperous and providing the benefits of political change to the people. Political slogans were not sufficient. We should also collaborate with progressive forces that wanted to change. That was the realisation on our part. On the Maoists’ part, they tried their best to stand alone as the single largest party but the coalition with the Nepali Congress Party cost them a lot. So they realised that the time had come to collaborate with the UML.

In the initial days, there was some scepticism whether this alliance would go through with the merger [of the two parties] or not. After all, we were from two different schools, two different backgrounds and had different mindsets. But later on, the joint election campaign was the catalyst and was instrumental in bridging the gaps and emotions as well. That created a solid ground for the unification. With our different backgrounds, maybe new problems will emerge. But we are fully confident that we can manage them. The party is united not only ideologically and organisationally but also in the style of working.

*I have to now ask about the integrity policy which your government has brought in, because this is constantly being debated and has been flagged by several international NGOs [INGOs] and diplomatic missions. What is the rationale behind this policy and why does it attract so much international attention?*

Those institutions that are working in a transparent manner, in compliance

with the priorities of the Nepal government, do not need to be suspicious or scared. First of all, we want those resources which are being spent by INGOs to be focussed on our priority areas. Many of the INGOs spend the money, which is the money of the taxpayers in their country, on non-substantive issues such as training, workshops, excursions and so-called leadership grooming. Not in a productive manner.

*You want them to focus resources on capital works such as infrastructure building.*

Yes. Physical infrastructure, job creation and those areas where we can substantively improve people's lives. So first of all, the aim of the policy is to channel the resources of the INGOs to the priority areas. Two, those budgetary expenditures should come under the umbrella of the national budget system. No arbitrary spending, and no spending in non-priority areas in an unaccountable manner. So the government should know that the particular NGO is spending its allocation on one particular project. If the government has this information, then it can use its resources for other sectors that need focus. This will ensure no replications or repetitions.

Third, some institutions have suspect [sic] activities as well. Whether they represent the spirit of that particular institution, we do not know. But some people are interested in forcible conversion [from one religion to another] by offering people money, some make unnecessary interferences in sociocultural issues, sometimes creating or fuelling tensions in society in the name of culture or religion. So we have to make a clear boundary line, a lakshman rekha, so that they cannot go beyond that and they keep to the broader framework of rules and regulations. Those are our priorities. No need to be sceptical or suspicious or scared of this policy. It is basically to properly coordinate the resources which need to be aimed at the betterment of the Nepali people. The government does not want to squeeze the space of civil society. But if there are no regulations, then there could be chaos.

*On your June 3 meeting with Nepali editors, you said that from now onwards, internal politics would never become an agenda of bilateral discussions with other countries. Is this post-blockade politics?*

Yes, although this should have been our consistent and coherent policy all along. In the past, in various cases, our internal politics became the bilateral agenda [between Nepal and India]. We were a bit embarrassed when our Prime Minister visited another country and said that our Constitution would be amended in this way or that way; when he expressed his commitment saying that this time I was defeated but next time I promise I would fulfil my commitment. This is absurd.

So not only in discussions with India and China but elsewhere too, we want to draw a clear boundary line stating that internal matters will never be the issues in a bilateral discussion. Second, we have an independent foreign policy. Sometimes we have seen in the past in Nepal that some Prime Ministers pledged to go in compliance with your foreign policy in the United Nations and in other multilateral fora. That is totally unacceptable because Nepal is an independent country. It has its own priorities and concerns. India has its own regional and global aspirations. Similarly China, too, has aspirations. We cannot be a part of these ambitions. We just want to be benefited by the rapid economic growth of both our neighbours. We want to create an environment in which our products can easily go to their markets, we can take advantage from their innovations and technologies. That is our principled position.

*On relations with India, a few things have been there forever: the open border, Nepalis in the Indian Army, and the Reserve Bank of India guaranteeing the Nepali rupee. Given the special relationship that Nepal and India enjoy now, should these be relooked at?*

Sometimes the word “special” can have various connotations. So we shall refrain from using that word. But it is a unique one. You are absolutely right about the open border, about the cultural proximities, similar cuisines, and so on. Even the movies we like are similar. So many things. Second, the Eminent Persons Group [EPG] is working hard to totally evaluate our relations. At a lecture at Banaras Hindu University, probably in 2011, I said that the time had come to redefine our relationship in the changed context of the 21st century. So the EPG is trying its best to review all these things. The open border will not be closed but will need to be regulated. Otherwise there may be misuse of the border and this can pose a security threat. So

some regulations will be needed. The 1950 treaty [Indo-Nepal Treaty on Peace and Friendship] must be reviewed and replaced by a newer one that reflects the present-day situation. The Rana [Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana] signed the treaty which had some very unfair provisions. We have to review it and make a new treaty based on mutual trust and friendship.

*Finally, the India-China question. Every single country in South Asia is grappling with this issue, including Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Bangladesh. How are you dealing with it? You have a rather large wish list, which was presented to the Chinese in the Prime Minister's recent trip.*

We want a broader partnership [with China]. We would prefer soft loans to grants because grants sometimes bring unnecessary conditions as well. But what we do want to reiterate is that Nepal's ultimate desire is to benefit from both sides. And we have time and again told our neighbours not to doubt or be suspicious about Nepal's relationship with other countries. When we talk about having a good relationship with China, it is not aimed against India. India and China share a large common boundary and have a huge economic and investment relationship. Then what is the reason for the suspicion [against Nepal]? It is our principled position that we will never allow our soil to be used against a neighbouring country and we will try our best to take care of the genuine concerns of both countries.

## Boundary Issue

*Nepal has moved to provide constitutional guarantee to the claim for Kalapani region. It is being said that such a move has sealed hope for finding diplomatic solution to the dispute. Do you think Nepal can still negotiate flexibly after the new map is given constitutional guarantee?*

The constitution is the fundamental law of the land. The constitution has to recognize country's salient features, including territory. Every country's constitution stipulates the provision pertaining to territory in one way or the other.

We are consistent in our view that the outstanding boundary issues between Nepal and India should be resolved through dialogue. Our firm conviction is that this can be done. The measures we have taken lately in assertion of our sovereign territory does not at all preclude settlement of boundary matters through talks.

*Reports say that Nepal's ambassador in Delhi has been trying to meet Joint Secretary (North) Piyush Srivastava and Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla but have been snubbed by South Block. It is also said that there have been some contacts between both sides. What is the status of dialogue on the issue. Is it not happening at all or is there some kind of*

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*India should pull out forces from Kalapani by Kallol Bhattacharjee on May 27, 2020  
(The Hindu)*

*back channel talks that are happening. India has said that a dialogue is possible after the COVID-19 phase. Do you think Nepal is willing to wait till the end of the pandemic?*

Nepal's effort has always been for early holding of the dialogue. Even before the Covid 19 crisis started, we pursued with the Indian side for fixing the dates of the meeting of the Foreign Secretary level mechanism that was mandated by the Prime Ministers of the two countries to work

“ **We are consistent in our view that the outstanding boundary issues between Nepal and India should be resolved through dialogue.**

on the outstanding boundary issues. That did not happen, as there was no confirmation from the Indian side. As resolving boundary issues is our priority, we will continue to pursue the matter with the Government of India. Our firm view is that this boundary issue, which is not a new one, rather an issue left by history, should not overshadow the overall bilateral relations between our two countries which are deep, extensive and multifaceted and demand regular dialogue and engagements at all levels.

On your question about our Ambassador's meeting with the officials in Delhi, the situation is not like the way it is presented in some media.

*Nepal's position is based on the Sugauli Treaty, whereas Indian sources maintain that the region has been part of India always. Do you think an agreement between the Nepal's rulers of the early 19th century and a commercial entity like the East India Company can be considered the cornerstone of diplomatic disputes in the twenty-first century when India has undergone three layers of political change starting with the East India company, the British Crown's rule and the post-1947 government?*

Historical documents should not be seen in that way. In fact, the Sugauli Treaty was a product that came up after Nepal lost wars with the British India. It is not at all a matter of pride for Nepalis to recall the Treaty, as Nepal lost nearly one third of its territory. Nonetheless, the fact cannot

be denied that the same treaty defined the boundary between the two countries in the area we are talking about. It is pertinent also to mention here that modern boundary mapping by the joint Survey teams of the two countries started in 1981 and through that nearly 25 years long joint exercise, the Survey teams were able to jointly prepare Maps of most of the international boundary alignment between the two countries. On what bases did the Survey teams do that exercise? Of course, on the bases of historical treaties and maps and documents, geographical attributes and other agreeable bases of international boundary delineation. Again, except the Sugauli Treaty and its subsequent agreements including that of 1860, no other treaty between Nepal and India define our boundary. Where will we reach then discarding this historical document? As regards the status of the territories in question, these are Nepali territories as per Sugauli Treaty and we have evidences to prove that.

*Indian army chief has referred to the hand of a third party (China) behind Nepal's move to highlight the Kalapani region. Nepal has protested against the comments. But there are also evidences that the Chinese have moved elsewhere along India's Himalayan borders to assert its dominance. Is it all coincidental that the Kalapani dispute erupted more or less simultaneously with the moves by the Chinese forces at the Ladakh region?*

Nepal has remained an independent and sovereign nation throughout the history. It was never been colonized by any external forces. This has had an important bearing on our foreign policy orientation. Nepal pursues an independent foreign policy and the policy of close and friendly relations with both of our neighbors. It is totally baseless, therefore, to link our independent decisions with developments elsewhere. Why do people simply ignore the fact that Nepal has been insisting on the resolution of boundary question in Kalapani region ever since the formation of the joint technical team in 1980? Why both countries have accepted that there are some outstanding boundary issues between the two countries including Kalapani area and Susta? Why do people ignore that when India and China agreed to open up Lipulekh trade point in 2015, we protested and wrote to both parties expressing our deep concern over the matter? Why is it ignored that when India published its new political map in November 2019, we firmly opposed and made public our views against the unilateral

act and insisted again that the dispute be resolved through talks? And this time, when there was announcement on the unilateral act of road construction, we were bound to raise our point. Therefore, the tendency of ignoring how the issue evolved and weaving, instead, a baseless narrative that Nepal is acting in other's behest is not helpful and may distract us from a more constructive approach of tackling the issue. We are doing a disservice to our relations by such negative insinuation and by ignoring and brushing aside the real issue, which is early working for agreeable boundary alignment in Kalapani-Lipulekh-Limpiyadhura region.

*Nepal says it is open for diplomacy. But is there a formula for solution of Kalapani? Some have suggested the formula of swapping territories (Susta eg). Will you consider that as an option?*

I know people are most interested on this question; the question of how this contesting claims on territory can be settled. Only the outcomes of talks would determine the nature and the content of the future agreement. It is apparent that resolution may not be easy, but there is no other way than settle it respecting the historical facts and evidences. In Nepal and India, everyone with knowledge of history and geography knows Kalapani, together with Lipu Lekh and Limpiyadhura, belongs to Nepal. We cannot deny this fact. What we are asking for is early convening of bilateral talks to resolve this issue in keeping with traditionally warm and cordial ties that exist between our two close neighbours.

*What is the status of the Susta dispute. Can you please state the latest negotiating position of Nepal on this issue?*

It is well known that Susta is one of the two spots where boundary alignment between the two countries remains to be agreed. In rest of the 1800 odd km long Nepal-India international boundary, as I already stated, joint survey has been done, agreed maps have been prepared and initialed at the level of Survey chiefs of the two countries. In Susta, as in Kalapani, the understanding between the two countries is to maintain the status quo until an agreement on boundary alignment is reached.

*Nepal had lost a decade because of the phase of insurgency and political instability. There are several pressing issues including post-earthquake*

*reconstruction. Nepal's forceful response on Kalapani has surprised many. Do you think the high decibel protest could have been avoided?*

It is true that the armed conflict and decade long transition was a painful period in the history of our country. Due to conflict, lives were lost; our social fabric was disrupted; development works slowed down; growth was halted and we lost an important time. The period of political transition presented to us another set of challenges related to successfully concluding the peace process and constitution making, thereby giving a shape to the long held aspirations of Nepali people. It was a tough call. But thanks to the wisdom and sagacity of leadership, support of our people as well as

“ **Except the Sugauli Treaty and its subsequent agreements including that of 1860, no other treaty between Nepal and India define our boundary.**

support and goodwill of our friends around the world, we could overcome the colossal challenges, conclude the peace process and promulgate the Constitution. The country was struck by the devastating earthquakes in the meantime and huge need of reconstruction and restitution added up. A few years down the line, things are on track now. Politically, we have had strong elected governments at all levels of federal set up. Post-earthquake reconstruction works have made tremendous progress. Beyond reconstruction, the overall mission of socio economic transformation was on track until the crisis of Covid 19 started.

On your question of Kalapani again, there is no element of surprise in our statement. As you are aware, the territories east of Kali River, including Kalapani, Lipu Lekh and Limpiyadhura belong to Nepal as per Article (V) of the Sugauli Treaty. We want India to honor the letter and spirit of the Treaty. You may recall that Nepal had opposed when India published new political map in November 2019, and urge the Government of India to rectify the map.

The most appropriate way of doing this would be to withdraw security forces from Kalapani and handover the above territories back to Nepal.

We merely reiterated that unilateral acts like road construction in Nepal's territory should not have been done and the issue should be resolved through talks at the earliest.

*Nepal and China had signed almost 20 agreements last October. A cargo agreement has been operationalized on Monday. What are Nepal's long term connectivity plans for Nepal through China?*

As a landlocked country situated between two big neighbors, large economies and vast markets, Nepal's ambition is to enhance and expand linkages, connectivity and engagements with both. In our pursuits of connectivity agenda, we are motivated by the fact that better infrastructure linkages will help us offset the geographical disadvantage of being a landlocked country. Smooth connections would help us reduce our trade and transit cost; speed up movement of our goods and boost up our industrialization and growth. As stipulated in the Trans-Himalayan Multidimensional Connectivity Network, our connectivity agenda with China encompass transport infrastructure, transit arrangements, and transmission infrastructure, among others. With India, we already have a vast network of connectivity that include road connection which is being further upgraded; railway connection under progress; integrated check-posts; transit arrangements and port facilities, transmission interconnection and lately, the planned waterways. The agenda of transit treaty review is on in order to make transit arrangement more streamlined. Railway Service Agreement is also being reviewed to further expand its scope. So, Nepal absolutely looks to both its neighbors when it comes to connectivity.

*Nepal's Defence Minister Ishwor Pokhrel has drawn the Gurkhas of the Indian army into the controversy saying that the Indian CoAS' comments are an insult to the Nepali Gurkha soldiers working in the Indian army. He also said that the army will fight if necessary.*

He may simply have been referring to a feature of arrangements that a number of Nepali nationals have been serving in Indian Army and have made sacrifices for India's peace and well-being, thereby emphasizing that India should be sensitive to Nepal's concerns.

*Some of the comments especially by the political leadership in the*

*Nepal parliament on India and Indian symbols are being interpreted as unexpectedly harsh. Can you please give a context to these comments, especially by PM Oli on India's symbols like the Ashokan lions?*

A bit of clarity is needed here. In fact, the Prime Minister in his statement was elevating the dignity of India's national emblem by underlining the sanctity of 'Satyameva Jayate'. He was simply saying: let the truth prevail, not our ego and arrogance. I do not see any harm on that. Let's not, therefore, make unnecessary noise about the Prime Minister's statement. Let's instead focus on the substantive issue before us. In fact, Prime Minister Oli is firmly committed to strengthening Nepal-India relations and taking them to a new height by overcoming the historical baggage such as the one we are taking about today. Since coming to power, Prime Minister Oli and Prime Minister Modi have devoted considerable time and energy to develop and expand Nepal-India relations. As a result, our relations witnessed qualitative jump in many areas. One pertinent point I would like to mention here that with a view to making Nepal-India relations reflective of the 21st century needs, we established the Eminent Persons Group on Nepal-India Relations (EPG-NIR). After detailed study, deliberations and consultations for over two years, the EPG has come out with a consensus report. It is waiting for the submission of the report to the two governments. I believe, implementation of their recommendations will help address some of the difficult issues left by history and enrich the substance of our relationship consistent with the present day realities.

## We urge India to accept the truth

Nepal has said that Kalapani, Lipu Lekh and Limpiyadhura, currently controlled by India, are her territories. Although Nepal has been raising the border issue for years, it has now created a diplomatic stand-off between the two countries. This began after India published a revised political map in November 2019 that included Kalapani, Lipu Lekh and Limpiyadhura in its territories. Nepal strongly objected to the move. The issue took a new turn earlier this month when India's Minister of Defence Rajnath Singh inaugurated the 80-kilometre Lipu Lekh road that Nepal maintained passes through her territory. In response, Nepal published a new map that includes Kalapani, Lipu Lekh and Limpiyadhura. How will the two countries resolve this decades-long issue that has taken Nepal-India relations to a new low? Republica's Subhash Ghimire and Nagarik's Gunraj Luitel sat for an extensive conversation with Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali at his office in Singha Durbar on Saturday.

*Now that we have issued a new map, how will this border issue with India end?*

We have always said that the only way to resolve this issue is by negotiating

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*We urge India to accept the truth by Subhash Ghimire/Guna Raj Luitel published at The Republica*

in good faith. Without impulse or unnecessary excitement, and without prejudice, Nepal wants to resolve the border issues via dialogues.

This border dispute is not new. This is history's unresolved, pending and outstanding issue that we inherited. This is a baggage, and the sooner we resolve this, the quicker we can set our sights to the future.

Nepal wants to have a relationship based on trust and free of ups and downs, predictable friendly relations. We know that we do not have an alternative to this. So, all our efforts have been to conclude the history's baggage. We are confident that the only way to resolve the issue is via diplomatic talks and negotiations.

*After Nepal published the new map, have there been high level phone conversations or contacts with India?*

We have been trying to do that. However, formal talks and conversations have not taken place yet. But different channels are actively working. The Indian side is also deeply concerned and feels the responsibility to address the issue. We feel that when we read between the lines in Indian media. Saner heads in India have urged their government to play a constructive role to end the border disputes with Nepal. We are hopeful that our formal and informal channels of communication will yield something positive.

*The 80 kilometers road from Dharchula to the Lipu Lekh pass has been under construction for years. Why didn't the successive governments do anything on this?*

When India and China decided to open that road in 2015, we objected to the decision based on three logic. First, the tri-junction point has not been identified in that area, and so we objected to that bilateral agreement to use the Nepali soil without our consent. Second, we repeatedly told both the countries that the land is ours. This did not borne out of emotion, but was based on historical facts and evidence. Third, when India published its new political map on November 2, 2019 showing Nepali land on its map we protested the decision. We requested for talks multiple times. We even sent two sets of possible dates for talks to New Delhi, but there was no response.

We also communicated via other channels. And then South Asia was engulfed by the pandemic by the end of March. We have claimed that the territory is ours, and the historical facts prove our point. We then sent a diplomatic note to both India and China in 2015 and to India in 2019, protesting their decisions to use Nepali soil without our consent. We had expected a status-quo in the area. That was our expectation back then. No one had expected that the road project would be inaugurated, virtually, in the midst of this pandemic. We have questioned the validity of the road and protested accordingly, and so Nepal's position is clear on this.

*Some in the Indian media say the move by New Delhi to inaugurate the road is a subtle counter to Nepal cozying up to China in recent years.*

This is the Indian media's paranoia. India has a longer border with China than with Nepal. India and China have more than \$80 billion annual trade.

“ **We have two neighbors, and we cannot and will not close doors to one to open to another. This has been our established position since the ages. For us, both the neighbors are of equal importance.**

Our trade volume is small. We protested the Lipu Lekh decision in 2015. India and China have been working to open up Nathula pass and another pass to directly connect with each other. Therefore, questions on Nepal-China relations, especially in the Indian media, are driven by prejudice and paranoia.

We have two neighbors, and we cannot and will not close doors to one to open to another. This has been our established position since the ages. For us, both the neighbors are of equal importance. However, our relations with the two countries are multifaceted. They have different dynamics, and cannot be replaced one by another.

We have always said that we will not allow our land to be used against our neighbors. We have shown this in our actions as well. Managing more than 1,880 kilometers of open border with India is not an easy task. However, we have done everything to address valid security concerns of both the

countries. We have also told both of our neighbors that we are extremely sensitive to their security concerns, and that they can be confident of our promise.

These are facts. But those who promote any other narrative of Nepal either have no clue of the historical fact that we are a sovereign, independent and a country that was never-colonized or there are some other concerns that they direct them to a small neighbor like us.

I totally reject the idea of dragging other countries in border disputes between Nepal and India. We had disputes with China on Lipu Lekh, and the issue is still pending.

*What can be China's role in the current border dispute between Nepal and India?*

We have clearly stated our position on the issue to both India and China. Without Nepal's presence and permission, we won't accept such agreements. Lipu Lekh is Nepal's territory. The tri-junction is at some distance in the west. We request both of our neighbors to understand this fact.

This is a bilateral issue, and Nepal and India should resolve this. But at some point, the three countries will have to sit for talks. After we announce the Nepal-India border, then we have to work on finalizing the tri-junction point. But that comes at a later date.

*What will happen to the 80 kilometers of road that India has constructed?*

We have told them to accept, and respect the historical facts. The only treaty to determine Nepal-India border is the 1816 Treaty of Sugauli. It has three supplementary treaties: 1860 and 1875 and a small change in 1920 during the construction of Sharada Barrage where we swapped lands. But none of these treaties change the fact that Nepal's western border is the Kali river.

The Treaty of Sugauli never perceives boundary points other than the rivers. The British India made cartographic changes, manipulated and then started to misinterpret them. First there was no dispute over the origin of

the Kali river, which actually originates from Limpiyadhura. Any other interpretation of the origin of the river is the manipulation of facts, and it does not have any legal justification. Borders are based on bilateral treaties.

After the cartographic changes, India started to occupy the land. The Indian army has been in Kalapani for many years. The rulers of the time permitted them to stay there for a particular purpose. But without treaties, temporary or forcefully enforced presence do not establish legitimate and legal claim on lands. The argument that we are there and therefore that land is ours has no meaning.

Sometimes we feel that the Indian side wants to make an argument on the border dispute as a *fait accompli*, which Nepal will not accept. Nepal will not accept border changes that we have not signed. That is why the Indian force has to respectfully return from Kalapani and accept the origin of the Kali river as Limpiyadhura.

*Do we have historical records of Indians asking for permission to stay in Kalapani?*

We do not have such records. But if we look at the events of the time: the India-China war of 1962 to a new autocratic system in Nepal, where people were not in a position to talk about such issues, India took advantage of the situation. However, those do not establish India's legality on our land.

*Do we have the original copy of the Treaty of Sugauli?*

Nepal has submitted a certified copy of the Treaty to the United Nations in 1955. And Nepal was unanimously granted a UN membership during the time. The documents we submitted validate our international borders.

*Why didn't Nepal discuss the Kalapani issue during the time of Mahakali treaty?*

I think it was a serious weakness on our part to sign the Mahakali Treaty without confirming the origin of the river. The Integrated Mahakali Treaty accepts river Mahakali as our international border. This is more than 6,000 MWs of hydro project and an agreement on water distribution between

the two countries. When we talk of water distribution, we also need to talk of its catchment area. We should have discussed these issues back then.

We formed a joint-technical committee in 1981, and started to scientifically mark our borders: from erecting pillars to clearing Das Gaja. Then the committee could not resolve Kalapani and Susta issues. When Indian prime minister IK Gujral visited Nepal in 1997, the two prime ministers issued a joint statement, where they have accepted Kalapani and Susta as unresolved issues. The two prime ministers directed a technical committee to address the issue. A joint statement of the time reads: “Boundary matters have continuously featured in the high level discussions between Nepal and India.” During the official visit of the prime minister of India to Nepal in 1997, the two prime ministers “directed the joint working group constituted by a joint technical committee to examine the relevant facts relating to the demarcation of the boundary alignment in the western sector, including the Kalapani area and to propose, if necessary, further measures in this regard”.

In 2005, when the joint technical team reached to Garvyang, the Indian security personnel stopped Nepali team to go further up. That was a joint team, but the Indian team did not come. The Nepali team was not allowed to go further up for surveys even after multiple requests. The joint team then presented a report in 2007, stating that Kalapani and Susta were unresolved issues.

When Indian PM Narendra Modi visited Nepal in 2014, it was agreed that a foreign secretary mechanism would resolve this issue. That is why even India has accepted this as a pending and unresolved issue. The developments afterwards have ignored and sidelined the relevant facts.

*What if India does not want to resolve the issue?*

We have not thought of the alternatives. We are confident that this issue will be resolved via bilateral talks. We are confident that India will accept the historical facts. I want to tell our Indian friends that this is a baggage left by history. And so I request them to be not so possessive about this.

Nepal and India have unique and close relations. We are interdependent,

interconnected. We should accept this reality. We want a relation based on sovereign equality, mutual respect, and mutual benefit.

Countries are small and big. But this does not determine a country's sovereignty. All nations are equally sovereign.

Nepal is not a threat to India; be it culturally, economically or security-wise. We want to live in harmony. We request the Indian side to understand this and leave aside the prejudices. We have to accept the historical facts.

Compared to India's outstanding border disputes with other countries, the dispute with Nepal is the easiest one to resolve. It is easy for India to resolve this issue with Nepal.

Nepal makes its own decision, and is not dictated to anyone. And we do not respond to threats. If we all understand these facts, we can resolve the border issue.

*Has Nepal thought of a time frame for bilateral talks?*

I had requested my Indian friends to sit for talks and initiate a diplomatic procedure after they issued a political map on November 2, 2019 so that the people, and even the media would focus on talks. If we do not sit for talks, then people speak out. Some Indian friends had told us about the protests in Nepal.

And there is this rhetoric that "anti-Indian sentiment" has increased in Nepal. I do not believe in this. India should also be aware of Nepal's sensitivities. We welcomed Indian PM Modi in 2014 with a big heart. We deeply appreciated India's first response in the aftermath of the 2015 earthquakes. Be it in Janakpur, Muktinath or in Kathmandu's City Hall, PM Modi was received with fanfare.

Nepal complains when someone questions her sovereignty. It hurts Nepal when someone questions her sovereignty. We do not want to prolong the border issue. It will only provide a space to those bent on spoiling our relations. Instability is not beneficial to both the countries.

We are all fighting against the corona pandemic. We cannot predict the

world in the aftermath of this pandemic.

If we are not ready to sit for talks, it will not help us. We are ready to sit for talks.

*Have we activated different formal and informal channels to initiate a dialogue with India?*

We are communicating via formal and informal channels. We are fully confident that the two countries will resolve the border issue by peaceful means. Our moves are not reactive. After initial efforts did not yield results, we made the move based on all the evidence at our disposal.

We do not have geo-political ambitions. We need to work in good faith, and not question our motive. We have to respect the idea of sovereign equality, and have to accept the facts, and the truth.

We should look to the future. This is Asia's century. India and China are huge players. We feel lucky to be in the middle of these great powers. We take this as an opportunity, and we can leapfrog if we can connect to their economies.

However, despite our size and economy, no one should take us for granted.

*Nepal and India were coordinating on fight against the pandemic before Nepal issued the new map. Will the new development impact our coordination to fight against the coronavirus?*

I hope it won't. Our debate on history's pending issues is still out there, but the main challenge now is to fight against the virus.

We have millions of Indians and Nepalis living and working across our borders. It is not true that millions of Nepalis live and work in India, but none of their people live and work here. The numbers are almost the same.

In terms of remittances, India takes three times what Nepal brings in from India. We are the seventh largest source of remittances to India. Thousands of Nepalis are in India, and vice versa. Citizens of both countries want to return home, and that is their rights. But it is a shared responsibility of both

the governments to support and help foreigners stuck in their respective countries.

Nepal is working in full faith, despite our shortcomings. We are providing basic services to Indians and others stuck in Nepal. We expect the same from India as well.

We believe that our border disputes should not and will not have ramifications in our fight against coronavirus.

*Some reports say that thousands of Nepalis are being sent to Nepal. Is it true?*

I do not believe this is a deliberate move. India has been trying to help millions of its people to go to their home states. Railway services were resumed. And Nepalis also took the opportunity to come to our borders. It is now a new challenge for us.

Those in India want to return home, and that is understandable. I do not believe there is a political motive behind the upsurge of Nepalis returning home.

*Are we struggling to balance our relations with India and China?*

I think it's all based on issues. I am happy with the way our relations have developed with both India and China. After a low point during the blockade, we have entered into a new phase of development partnership with India. Indian PM Modi visited Nepal four times during his first tenure. PM KP Sharma Oli visited India twice in his second tenure. The projects that were pending for years, including the Arun III and the Postal Highway, the Integrated Check Post, the post-earthquake reconstruction works, have been expedited. South Asia's first cross-border pipeline has been inaugurated. Works on cross-border railways and waterways, the Kathmandu-Raxaul railways, and partnerships in agriculture have been initiated.

Nepal and China signed a transit trade treaty in 2016, and the protocol was signed. Our transit facility has been diversified, and we are now land-linked. Nepal and China have termed the new relationship as a strategic

partnership for development and prosperity.

However, we have outstanding issues. History has left us some unfinished works. The Eminent Persons' Group (EPG) was formed in 2016, and the joint team produced a consensus report. If we accept the report and implement it, a lot of our bilateral issues will be resolved. I am not sure why there is some reluctance on India's part to receive the report.

Nepal was lost in transition for many years. We had lost our space and voice in the international stage. Our genuine concerns were not heard. In the changed political context, Nepal has expanded her image and space. It is bound to make a difference in the traditional power structure.

I believe we have not, and will not, pivot from maintaining excellent relations with both of our neighbors.

