ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Ministerial Conference on Transport, Moscow, 5-9 December 2016

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<th>Name of speaker: (Mr)-(Ms.)</th>
<th>HONOURABLE SITA RAM MAHATO</th>
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<td>STATE MINISTER, MINISTRY OF PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORT, GOV. OF NEPAL</td>
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<td>Country/Organization:</td>
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Please indicate the agenda item on which you wish to speak:

Agenda Item No: 9

If you have a prepared statement, the Secretariat would find it most useful if you could kindly provide us with a copy, preferably in electronic format or hardcopy (typed or handwritten), for use by those listed below:

**Interpretation**: He will put his statement in **NEPALI** language

Draft Report and Secretariat

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Mr. Chairman,
Your excellencies-Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to lead the Nepali delegation at this third Ministerial Conference on Transport, being held in this historic and beautiful city of Moscow. I would like to express gratitude to the Government and people of the Russian Federation for the warm hospitality extended to me and my delegation and for the excellent arrangements made for the conference. I sincerely appreciate the UNESCAP for organizing this important Ministerial Conference on Transport, which my delegation believes will have significant impact on improving transport connectivity in the Asia-Pacific region.

Sustainable transport forms the bedrock of sustainable economic development and social progress, over and above its direct contribution immensely to poverty reduction and delivery of vital services. A number of SDGs are directly or indirectly linked to sustainable transport. The issues of road safety, importance of resilient infrastructure, reduction of emissions and fuel consumption, enhancing sustainability of urban transport, improving rural access and cross-border transport are to name few. Also, numerous cross-cutting sectors of the SDGs have a direct bearing on the development of sustainable transport.

Mr. Chairman,

Sustainable transport development is critical in Nepal’s context. The interlinked nature of transport can make positive impacts on every sphere of development, such as trade and transit, investment, tourism, as well as on education, health, gender, and other social dimensions. The challenges facing Nepal at present relate to quality construction of infrastructure, regular and quality maintenance, roads safety, and expansion of multi-modal network of transport including in the remote areas. Let me highlight some of the programs and policy initiatives being pursued in Nepal in transportation sector.
The total length of the roads of strategic importance in Nepal has reached 15,000 kms and local road length more than 50,000 kilometers. Strategic road network provides more than 90 percent of total transport services. The number of vehicles has increased to 2.3 million, which is extremely high given the carrying capacity especially in Kathmandu valley. At the same time, since the two-wheelers dominates the means of road transport, it is challenging to reduce the number of road accidents. Various national pride projects are being implemented to east-west and north-south part of the country. Nepal is undertaking development of a Fast Track Project to link Kathmandu with Terai plain of the country that will substantially reduce the travel distance and time.

Air transport accounts for about 8 percent of the transportation services, while railway development has not yet gained momentum. Despite some good potential, water transport is still at the exploratory phase. Nepal has encouraged private investments, nationally as well as internationally, for transport related infrastructure building.

In the area of road safety, Nepal is implementing the National Road Safety Action Plan (2013-2020) for reducing the road fatalities by half by 2020. Road Safety Council is being established and Road Act and Transport Management Act are being reviewed and amended. Do not 'drink and drive' campaign in Kathmandu is very successful.

In order to enhance connectivity with India and China, policy of developing India-Nepal-China corridors are followed and currently eight North-South Transport corridors are under construction and improvement. After the signing of Motor Vehicle Agreement among Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal, Nepal is looking forward to its implementation to have improved access to sea ports. In order to promote multimodal transport, dry ports are being developed in strategic trade locations.

In the area of urban transport, we have made mandatory for municipalities to develop urban development master plans including urban public transport plans. Nepal is working to develop metro system in the capital city Katmandu and new fleet of large public buses has recently been added in the city. Nepal collaborated with ESCAP to organize the regional meeting on sustainable urban transport system in Kathmandu in September 2015 that discussed sustainable urban transport index (SUTI).
Various policy initiatives to improve rural accessibility such as labour based construction of rural roads, construction of pedestrian suspension bridges, and improvement of trails are being implemented.

Mr. Chairman,

It is my pleasure to share that Nepal has commenced the integration of SDGs into the national development plan. The difficult geographical terrain and landlockedness have rendered Nepal disadvantaged and less competitive in terms of physical infrastructure. Consequently, the cost of development as well as international trade has been much higher than the fellow countries with direct access to sea or favourable geographical landscapes. However, we are striving to overcome these challenges.

There exists a huge gap between development needs and resources available. The countries in special situation are in need of an enhanced level of support and facilitation from the international community. My delegation calls for the fulfillment of commitments made under global development agendas. Cross-border transit facility for the landlocked countries has to be made more efficient and effective under bilateral, regional and multilateral frameworks. This is equally important for multilateral trading systems and international financial institutions to accord higher priorities to the vulnerable countries.

Despite mixed results, many countries lagged behind in achieving expected SDGs in absence of timely execution, resources and capacity building. Development of sustainable and quality transport must receive the priority consideration from all stakeholders, including development partners and the United Nations.

Nepal endorses the proposed regional action programme (2017-2021) and is committed to work closely with Member States in its implementation and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Nepal extends its full support to the initiatives under the aegis of the United Nations ESCAP.

I thank you.