

**72nd Session of UNESCAP
Country Statement of Nepal
by
The Leader of the Nepalese Delegation
18th May 2016
Bangkok, Thailand**

Your Excellency Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies Deputy Prime Minister and Ministers
Madam Executive Secretary of UNESCAP
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, on behalf of the Nepalese Delegation and on my own, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and other members of the Bureau, on your elections to the respective seats in this 72nd Session of UNESCAP, which is being held under the theme of Science, Technology and Innovation. This theme is very relevant and appropriate, especially in the context of attaining the Sustainable Development Goals. I also assure you, Mr. Chairman, of full cooperation from my delegation in steering this session to a successful conclusion. Let me also take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to the Executive Secretary of UNESCAP and her team in the Secretariat for their hard work and the excellent arrangements made for this meeting.

Mr. Chairman,

With the adoption of the 2030 development agenda last September, the world development discourse has been centred around the ways and means to achieve the SDGs. This is also a reflection of the commitment of the international community to take the level of development among all states to an acceptable level, or raising the standard of living of our peoples to a level that can fairly be called 'human'.

My country, Nepal, is an LDC and an LLDC. We have spent many decades struggling to improve the standard of living of our people. We have made progress, but, still, we have to work hard to realize the SDGs, and raise the people's quality of life. Things are easily said than done. Our situation has shown that we should be prepared for new situations, and unforeseen difficulties and problems. We have

seen the example of the deadly earthquakes that hit Nepal in April-May last year, which caused immense human loss and sufferings, and destruction of public assets and private property. The Government of Nepal has recently brought out the five-year reconstruction work plan, in the form of Post-disaster Recovery Framework. According to the Framework, the damages and losses are estimated at about 8.38 billion US Dollars. We are thankful to the international community for their immediate response after the earthquakes, and also for their pledges to assist us in the reconstruction.

Mr. Chairman,

The devastation caused by the massive earthquake has directly hampered the momentum of economic recovery and growth that we were gaining after the reinstatement of democracy in the country in 1990. Here I would like to mention that despite a decade long insurgency, resource crunch and devastation resulted by the earthquakes, we have achieved most of the MDG's targets. Nepal is on track to graduating from the status of a Least Developed Country (LDC) by 2022. Out of the 3 criteria - GNI, EVI and HAI, we have already met two, the EVI and HAI criteria. With growth scaling up and rebounding, Nepal was very much optimistic about improving the GNI criteria, and continue maintaining the other two. However, the earthquakes have new macro-economic consequences.

Besides, there are some other critical challenges facing our economy. The trade deficit is alarming, with imports accounting for over 80 percent of total trade. Development of infrastructure, especially in energy and transportation, which are key to improving the competitiveness of our economy, have been identified as critical constraints. We have, therefore, to create a more conducive environment for foreign investment, especially in infrastructure building. Moreover, climate change, which has become a global risk, has made a serious impact on our development efforts. As a result of climate change, glaciers in the Himalayas have become prone to melt-down and burst, posing a serious threat to the livelihood and ecology of the entire Himalayan and surrounding regions. It has become a major concern to the Government of Nepal.

Mr. Chairman,

Nepal has already prepared national report on Sustainable Development Goals and is currently preparing its 14th Periodic Plan focusing on mainstreaming the SDGs at national plan and programmes. The national report has identified the main challenges that Nepal is likely to face in attaining the SDGs. They include:

- i) mainstreaming the SDGs into periodic plan and annual budget
- ii) localisation of SDGs at subnational level

- iii) up-scaling implementation
- iiii) mobilising financial resources, both domestic and external
- v) capacity development at the national and subnational levels
- vi) post-disaster recovery and reconstruction challenges, and
- vii) strengthening governance and service delivery.

Effectively facing and resolving all these challenges is an arduous task. But, with commitment and determination, and the support from the international community, we are confident of making progress in all areas.

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished delegates,

As I mentioned above, Nepal has made good progress in social development. We are committed to creating favourable environment for all sections of our people, and attaining the objective of inclusive and sustainable development. In September last year, Nepal promulgated the new constitution, prepared by the Constituent Assembly. The Constitution is a very good example of inclusive democracy. It provides for equal opportunities for all sections of the society, and special arrangements for mainstreaming women, Dalits, Madhesi people, and people from marginalised and backward communities by enhancing their participation in political process and administration. The new constitution provides a solid foundation for economic development and social harmony in the country, underpinned by all basic features of a democratic society.

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished delegates

The year 2016 is a historic year in global development policymaking as it is the beginning of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which, with its 17 Goals and many targets, provides a comprehensive and universal framework for development policy over the coming 15 years. UNESCAP is a very useful and truly representative intergovernmental platform to discuss and shape-up the Asia Pacific region's strategy for achieving the global targets. It is time for the Asia-Pacific region to adopt a development strategy that relies more on domestic and regional demand that, among other things, nurtures inclusiveness, equality and social stability. Against this background, we are confident that the ESCAP will play a more active and effective role in the years ahead in assisting the needing members in alleviating poverty, promoting regional co-operation for economic prosperity and achieving internationally agreed goals in the region.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Before I conclude, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of my delegation and on my own, I would like to express our gratitude to UNESCAP Secretariat, for inviting us to attend this 72nd session of the Commission. It has indeed been a great opportunity for us to share with our friends important issues, concerns and development challenges of Nepal, and learn lessons from other ESCAP member countries.

Thank you for your kind attention.