

NEPAL
Country Statement

Delivered by Honorable Prof. Dr. Puspa Raj Kadel
Vice Chairman, National Planning Commission,
And
Leader of the Nepalese Delegation

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Madam Chair,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

1. At the outset, please allow me to sincerely congratulate you, Madam Chair, on your election as the Chair of the 74th Session of the Commission. I, on behalf of the Government of Nepal, my delegation and my own, would also like to express sincere thanks to the Royal Thai Government and the people of Thailand for their warm hospitality and support. Also, please allow me to appreciate, and thank the UNESCAP Secretariat for the excellent arrangements for this meeting.
2. Equality is not only a goal but also a means of progress. Sustainable use of natural resources is a must for survival and progress of this human civilization. The development of information technology has created unprecedented opportunities and challenges.
3. One of the most significant challenges confronting all of us is to take steps towards economic prosperity in a way that reduces the inequality among the strata of society in our countries. In this context, the choice of "Inequality in the era of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" as the theme topic for this session is very appropriate, and offers a guidance for us to reduce this social evil.
4. We need to focus on actions to make a qualitative difference in the lives of our people. Otherwise, our goal of generating, sharing and sustaining prosperity for all will remain elusive, without resources and true commitment for the implementation of the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.

Madam Chair,

5. This region has become more inter-dependent, and inter-connected now. This growing interdependence has unleashed both opportunities and challenges. Among the challenges, inequality remains as one of the most persistent issues in this region since a longtime.
6. A sub-regional cooperation between the countries in the same stage of development could help minimize the disparity. Moreover, technological innovations addressing the issues and opportunities in the third-world economies would allow us to contribute to the global agenda of reducing inequality. We all have to work hard towards creating a conducive environment for the countries with special needs, including the other developing countries, to truly benefit from technological innovations including frontier technology.
7. The LDCs need reliable and sustainable financing, partnerships, and technological innovation to overcome their structural impediments to reduce poverty and inequality.
8. The SDGs are not mutually exclusive. In order to address the key development challenges, we, the policymakers should identify interrelationships and synergies between the 17 SDGs and 169 targets.
9. The Constitution of Nepal has explicitly enunciated 31 different fundamental rights. The rights to equality, education, health, employment, food, housing and the right against discrimination are directly related to reducing inequality in the nation. There are special rights for women, children and senior citizen, too.
10. The Government of Nepal has initiated several measures to reduce inequality. All provincial and local governments are empowered with financial and legislative

powers to act on their won. More than forty percent of the forty thousand elected representatives are women in 2017 elections. In line with the national policy, the public service is becoming more and more inclusive in recent years. The social security in terms of resources and coverage has been expanded significantly.

11. Meanwhile, with the onset of identification of poor households and providing them with identity cards, there will be an opportunity for taking the targeted programs ahead.
12. In Nepal, there has been significant progress towards poverty alleviation as a result of several efforts since the last six decades. Nepal experienced a sharp decline in poverty, about an average of one percentage point per annum in the last two decades.
13. However, about one-fifth of the population is still below the national poverty line and severe prevalence of inequality exists among certain social groups and strata of society. The intensity of inequality is relatively higher especially among women, indigenous people, minorities and vulnerable communities in the remote rural areas.
14. The progress was also disrupted due to the devastating earthquakes of 2015. A third of the population was affected and 3 percent of the population was pushed below the poverty line. The Post Flood Recovery Needs Assessment estimates about 70 billion Nepalese Rupees additional resources for recovery from the heavy flood occurrence in the southern part of the country last year. Similarly, the restructuring of the state into a federal system demands huge resources in the future as well.

Madam Chair,

15. Nepal is committed to working its best towards achieving the SDGs by or before 2030. We have undertaken various measures and have created enabling environment. The majors include the publication of SDG-Roadmap which takes stock of Nepal's

present development status and provides a roadmap to 2030, with intermediate milestones for 2019, 2022, 2025 and 2030. The monitoring framework in this roadmap aligns and updates national indicators with global ones. Besides, the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for 2018-22 is aligned with national priorities and Nepal's target of becoming a middle-income country by 2030.

16. For the realization of SDGs, we have created enabling environment in the country. The new Constitution of Nepal provides guiding principles and framework for inclusive socio-economic development. The Government has started mainstreaming the SDGs into national planning and budgeting systems. National Steering Committee presided over by the Prime Minister, Coordination Committee chaired by the Vice Chairperson of National Planning Commission and thematic committees under the convenorship of NPC-members are in place to guide SDGs through plans and programs.
17. The private sector, the cooperative sector, the civil society organizations and our development partners are collaborating with the government on implementing the SDGs. With our concerted efforts, we are hopeful of achieving our goals within the stipulated time, and realizing our long-term goal of making a prosperous Nepal.
18. We have also realized that achieving SDGs is not an easy task for countries like Nepal. The challenges include inadequate financial resources and access to technology, capacity development, horizontal and vertical coordination, and production of disaggregated data for monitoring. As we are in the formative stage of federal structure of the state, localization of the SDGs, that is cascading national efforts to sub-national levels and mainstreaming the SDG-agenda into the state and local levels, remains one of the major challenges.

19. Despite a consensus among all of us to reduce domestic and regional inequality, the diverse levels of development and different situations we are in imply that there is not a single and simple method for us to achieve our goals. The policy mechanisms that the countries need to adopt could vary across regions, and each country should calibrate its own particular response. This further stresses the need for further cooperation within the region, and beyond.
20. We have a strong commitment for achieving our development objectives. But, what we need here is the capacity, means and resources to address the challenges, as well as vision, partnership and collaboration, complemented by intensive investment.
21. Finally, I wish the 74th Session of the UNESCAP full success.
22. I thank you all!