

(Unedited)

Key Note Address by Honorable Dr. Min Bahadur Shrestha, Vice
Chairman, and National Planning Commission of Nepal during Asia
Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2017: Mainstreaming Disaster
Risk Reduction for Poverty Eradication in Asia-Pacific.

31 March 2017

UNCC, ESCAP Building, Bangkok, Thailand

1. Thank you, Ms. Bonapace,

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

A Very Good Morning!

2. First of all, I would like to begin by thanking the organizers of this event, the *Thematic Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience of the United Nations Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism* for giving me the opportunity to deliver this Keynote Address. I would also like to thank you all for being here and look forward to a lively and fruitful discussion on how we can mainstream disaster risk reduction for poverty alleviation in our own countries and across the region.
3. Let me allow to dwell on some aspects of disaster and poverty nexus.
4. The social impacts of disaster further cause loss of life, injury, diseases outbreaks, disruption of social services and malnutrition. Economic losses include the loss of livelihood, physical capital, infrastructure and communication including interruption of development programmes. More indirectly, poor people are more affected by the cost of emergency relief and response because the resources are diverted from poverty reduction and other developmental initiatives to disaster response programmes. The environmental loss are often the most significant, as the poor generally depend on a healthy environment for their livelihood.
5. In other words, disaster leads to social, economic and environmental losses. It is often the case that the disaster mostly affects the poor and marginalized section of the people. The losses becomes heavy for poor people because they possess little or no financial and or physical resilience.
6. Now coming to on my own country Nepal, with the promulgation of a new Constitution in 2015 with federal system of governance as main feature, Nepal is now headed towards a path of rapid growth, catch-up and modernization. The National Planning Commission has already started reorienting the priorities and direction for the socio economic development of Nepal. The latest periodic plan, the 14th Plan (2016-2019) has accommodated all three global agendas- the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris (Climate) Agreement and the Urban Development Agenda.
7. Building on the relative success of the Millennium Development Goals, Nepal aspires to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, and also become a middle-income country. These ambitious goals need to be steered by the strategies and plans of a professional advisory body with suggested policy and program interventions in major sectors like agriculture, energy, infrastructure, and tourism, among others.

8. Mainstreaming disaster risk reduction across all the important sectors is critical. To that end, we have developed a national strategy for integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into our development planning. In addition, our national strategy involves a number of phases of activities including (i) understanding the hazards, assessing disaster risks, and creating awareness, (ii) actions to reduce community vulnerability to hazard and risk and to increase community coping capacity largely through Prime Minister's Agriculture Modernization Programmes and other programmes directly aimed at poverty reduction, (iii) development of early warning system.
9. Just last week, the Government of Nepal approved our plan to rollout and implement the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The Government has formed two High Level Committees.
10. The apex body for guiding the pursuit of SDGs is the National Steering Committee, chaired by the Right Honourable Prime Minister who is also the Chairman of the National Planning Commission comprising of members as follows: myself, as the Vice Chairman of the National Planning Commission.
11. The second mechanism is the Implementation Coordination and Monitoring Committee, which I am chairing in the capacity of the Vice Chairman of the Commission. These two committees are supported by nine Thematic Working Groups.
12. This shows that Nepal's plan to achieve the SDGs has already received full support from the highest level of our government,
13. Important in Nepal's context in the days ahead will be to introduce, execute, coordinate and monitor development activities in a newly federated country with three tiers of government at the central, provincial and local levels. The challenges are great, but so are the opportunities.
14. We appreciate the support we have received from many UN agencies over the years. As you know, Nepal is a low-income country and our vulnerability to natural disasters ranging from earthquakes, drought, floods, landslides, and even Glacial Lake Outburst makes achieving economic progress that much more difficult, with the 2015 Gorkha earthquake being the most recent setback.
15. The 2015 Gorkha earthquake recovery is based on the principle of inclusion where affected poor attracts the highest priority. We are building resilient houses, schools, hospitals, cultural monuments and community infrastructures to protect the poor from the disasters in the future. We have learnt 'the building back better' practices from the region. In this regard, we thank ESCAP for organising the Regional Earthquake Recovery Dialogue for Building Back Better in Kathmandu in October 2015 to support Nepal's reconstruction efforts.
16. Coming again towards coping with the disaster globally, we may need to revisit the existing but somehow fragmented models and also a funding model based primarily on appeals or way of backwards working. Such backwards working undermines the importance and the need of a credible pre-disaster plan, fails to bring in scientists, bureaucrats, implementers and financiers together. A thinking towards better mix of instruments for financing disaster from both Ex-ante and Ex-post perspectives also need to be considered. In this context, while appreciating the support we receive in terms of capacity building, technical cooperation, financial assistance, and regional coordination, I would like to request UN agencies to design their support strategies in

an integrative way. This will be a critical contributions to of our overall plans to achieve sustainable and resilient development by 2030.

17. In closing, I would like to stress that, in post-2015 development agenda, the coherence of Disaster Risk Reduction and resilience across the frameworks is critical. I am happy that ESCAP, through Asia-Pacific UN Regional Coordination Mechanism, has taken this agenda forward.
18. Again, I would like to thank the organizers for giving me opportunity to share my views in this forum and I look forward to hearing from the rest of the presenters and participants as we discuss the way forward.
19. Thank you.