



PERMANENT MISSION OF NEPAL TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Statement by Mr. Shanker D. Bairagi, Deputy Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations at the forty-ninth session of the Commission for Social Development on agenda item 3(a): Poverty Eradication

(11 February 2011, New York)

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, let me congratulate you on your assumption of the Chair of the forty-ninth session of the Commission for Social Development. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation in discharging your important responsibility.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the comprehensive report on this agenda item.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the distinguished Permanent Representative of Argentina, on behalf of G-77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

Eradication of poverty and hunger remains one of the major challenges facing the world today, particularly in LDCs. It is disheartening to note that the number of people living below poverty line in the world still surpasses one billion, of which, according to recent LDC Report, 421 million poor are in LDCs.

The dehumanizing conditions of poverty and hunger severely undermine human and social development. It deprives people of many opportunities to live a decent life in dignity, leads towards social exclusion and fuels tensions, threatening peace and stability within the national border and beyond.

Our efforts for poverty eradication have been further constrained in the wake of multiple yet mutually exacerbating economic and financial as well as world food, fuel and financial crises, coupled with severe and unacceptably disproportionate impacts of climate change. We, therefore, need a holistic approach to address poverty in all its dimensions. Sustained economic growth, sustainable development and inclusive, pro-poor development policies and programs will be critically important towards this end.

Mr. Chairman,

We attach high importance to this year's session of the commission for social development and the consideration on the theme poverty eradication, as it is taking place after the High Level Summit on MDG Review September last year and in the context of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Conference to be held in May in Istanbul this year.

We believe that the fourth UN LDC conference will be critically important in designing a new and robust international support architecture to address a multitude vulnerabilities facing by LDCs including eradication of poverty and hunger. In this connection there is a strong need for the early fulfillment of all the commitments made by the development partners to enable the LDCs to achieve the internationally agreed development goals and MDGs including eradication of poverty and hunger.

Mr. Chairman,

Nepal's efforts to poverty eradication are guided by the rights-based approach to development, as enunciated in the state policies of the Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2007. Pro-poor and broad-based economic growth, social sector development and the targeted programmes to the poor are the three-pillar strategy undertaken by the current Interim Plan of Nepal to meet the overarching goal of poverty reduction in the country. In its annual policies and programmes as well as the current budget, the Government of Nepal has initiated several programmes related to poverty eradication. Our poverty reduction strategy basically focuses on the agricultural sector, rural and remote areas and the vulnerable and marginalized people, groups, communities including women and children. As for example, reservation in the government employment opportunities, skill development training for employment promotion and access to microcredit for self-employment have given priority attention to the poor segment of society.

Our social security programmes cover senior citizens, widows, endangered ethnic and indigenous groups, disabled and fully incapacitated persons. The Health Shelter for Elderly Citizen Programme aims at providing appropriate care, medical treatment and attention to the conflict-affected elderly citizens. The Government is committed to ensuring that all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to a free and compulsory primary education.

In addition, the Government is making ongoing efforts to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of basic services to the people, including the poor through the implementation of Citizen Charter and public sector reform.

As a consequence of these initiatives, Nepal has made tangible progress on the ground in terms of reducing poverty. According to report by the National Planning Commission, the level of poverty was reduced by 11 percentage points from 42 per cent to 31 per cent between 1996 and 2004 and, it has further reduced by six percentage points from 31 per cent to 25.4 per cent between 2005 and 2009. However, within this positive trend, disparity between rural and urban areas is still a persistent problem. Urban poverty was 10 per cent in 2004, while rural poverty was 35 per cent; now it is 8 per cent and 22 per cent, respectively. In addition, the income inequality is unacceptably high and is further widening. The persistent level of economic disparity has had a consequential effect on other sectors such as education, health and the environment.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite this progress, Nepal is still trapped in a vicious circle of poverty and underdevelopment with low level of economic growth, low level of productivity, and low level of human development. Moreover, Nepal still lacks strong industrial base and are largely dependent on the traditional farming system and a few commodity exports. The widening gap between the rich and the poor across the development regions and the ecological belts as well as between the rural and urban areas of the country seriously threatens to undermine the very fabric of our social cohesion and harmony.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we strongly view that poverty eradication is critically important to prevent conflict and sustain lasting peace in the society as well as to achieve sustainable development in the country. As a country emerging from a decade-long conflict, we are committed to bringing about massive socio-economic transformation in the country. We, however, need an enhanced level of support and cooperation from the international community to complement our development efforts.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.