

**NEPAL**

**Statement by Mr. Sudhir Bhattarai member of delegation of Nepal on agenda item 66: Indigenous Issues at the Third Committee of the 64<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly**

(New York, October 19, 2009)

(Please check against delivery)

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation would like to express its sincere thanks to the Secretary-General and his staff for the presentation of comprehensive report on indigenous issues for our deliberation.

Mr. Chairman,

Indigenous peoples around the world have retained unique social, cultural, economic and political characteristics and they have better conventional wisdom. They share common problems of identification of their identities and protection and promotion of their basic rights worldwide.

Yet, even after the creation of number of normative policy and other practical tools in international level on indigenous peoples' issues, indigenous peoples continued to face exclusion, exploitation, discrimination and extreme poverty. The indigenous people around the world deserve better future, a dignified life and an honourable treatment.

The international community should step up and reaffirm its commitment to ensuring the rights of the indigenous peoples and in raising their living standards, in preserving their culture and tradition, and in promoting their development in accordance with their aspirations and needs.

Mr. Chairman,

The adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples is an important step towards the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples. The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues is playing an important advisory role in promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples. The United Nations Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous peoples from the year 2005 to 2015 demonstrates the importance of the issues related to Indigenous peoples. The reports, resolutions and recommendations of the Permanent Forum and other UN bodies dealing with indigenous issues are instrumental for raising awareness, protecting the rights and promoting the development of ethnic and indigenous communities worldwide.

Mr. Chairman,

Nepal is a rich garden of over five dozen ethnic groups and indigenous peoples. We are a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious country. The Interim Constitution of Nepal guarantees the rights and freedoms of traditionally marginalized groups of peoples, including women, Dalits, indigenous peoples, ethnic groups and people from disadvantaged areas.

Nepal's Constituent Assembly is one of the most-inclusive assemblies in the world, with a greater representation of people from various ethnic groups, indigenous peoples and geographic regions. Almost one-third of members are women and it has a fair number of members representing the various ethnic minorities' in the country. For the first time, the elected representatives of the people are engaged in the process of writing a new constitution of Nepal with the Nepalese peoples' aspirations standing for decades.

The Government is committed to move forward consistently with the necessary legal practices of proportional inclusiveness, incorporating at all fronts and levels of the State, including women, ethnic and indigenous communities, marginalized minorities, Madhesis, and people in backward regions. This would be on the basis of the principles of equality and progressive values and social justice. The Government is making special arrangement for the preservation and socio-economic and cultural upliftment of the livelihood, health care and education of endangered, minority and indigenous nationalities residing in various parts of the country.

Special budgetary provision has been made for special program for uplifting and empowerment of different castes, indigenous people, neglected groups, oppressed, Dalit and other communities which have fallen left behind from the socio economic development. It has adopted policies and programs for social justice and affirmative action for women, Dalits, indigenous groups and other excluded or disadvantaged groups.

The indigenous peoples in Nepal have been highly skilled in conservation of their natural environment and resources. Nepal's highly successful community forestry programs owe its success to the active participation of the involving various ethnic and indigenous people in the management of forests and their resources. We can further utilize their creative potentials and wisdom for the task of nation-building as well as for uplifting their standard of life.

Mr. Chairman,

Nepal attaches great importance to the work of the United Nations on indigenous issues. Nepal has been regularly participating in the activities of the United Nations including human rights mechanisms and particularly the

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Nepal has ratified the ILO convention 169 in recognition of the rights of the indigenous peoples. UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and fundamental freedom of Indigenous Issues visited Nepal in 2008 under the invitation of the Government of Nepal.

The government of Nepal is committed to safeguarding the interests of various ethnic groups and indigenous peoples. We fully reiterate our commitment to protecting and promoting human right and fundamental freedoms of all people, including that of ethnic and indigenous peoples. We hope that international community would lend its valuable technical support and cooperation in our noble efforts in this direction. My delegation stresses on the urgent need for the concerted and coherent efforts for speeding up social and political inclusion of the indigenous peoples and promoting their education, health, employment all over the world.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.