

Statement by H.E. Mr. Amrit Bahadur Rai, Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations at the Fifty-fourth Session of the Commission on Population and Development

20 April 2021, New York

Theme: Population, Nutrition, Food Security and Sustainable Development

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to congratulate you and all other bureau members on your election to steer the 54th Session of the Commission on Population and Development. I assure you of my delegation's full support in discharging your important responsibilities.

The Commission has been an important platform to deliberate on the interdependence between population and sustainable development and to assess the progress made on the implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action at the national, regional, and international levels.

We believe that this year's priority theme 'Population, Nutrition, Food Security and Sustainable Development' is both timely and pertinent in the context of disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable groups of people.

Mr. Chairman,

The Secretary-General's report on the priority theme rightly highlights the problem of food insecurity, and micronutrient deficiencies as well as the challenges of keeping food systems within planetary boundaries.

The world is not on track to achieve the SDGs by 2030. The goals on ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition and on ensuring sustainable food production systems are no exception.

On top of this, the current pandemic has further exacerbated the condition of food insecurity and poverty. Global hunger is once again on the rise. Today, estimation shows that more than 800 million people go to bed on an empty stomach each night worldwide and most of them live in developing countries. The world, which is in possession of global wealth as high as \$360 trillion, should not continue this plight of humanity.

We must be bold enough to review our policies and re-strategize our efforts towards a world that is not only free from hunger but is also more just and equitable.

Mr. Chairman,

Nepal's development efforts have embedded the elements of the ICPD Programme of Action. With the right to food enshrined in our Constitution, the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Act provides a strong foundation to address the problems of hunger and malnutrition.

National Population Policy 2015 incorporates the rights-based approach to development with a vision to achieve the key demographic targets in line with the SDGs.

In line with our national aspiration of 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali', we strive to uplift people's livelihoods in a society where they have equal rights and choices in their journey towards higher state of dignity, prosperity and happiness.

Nepal has been continuously striving towards addressing the challenges of poverty, hunger, undernourishment and stunting in children.

Programmes on food security and nutrition such as Multi-Sectoral Nutritional Plan, the Zero Hunger Challenge, the Agriculture Development Strategy, the Food and Nutrition Security Plan of Action, *Sunaula Hazar Din*, KISAN and the Prime Minister Agriculture Modernization Programme have been instrumental in this regard.

Providing of midday meal in schools based in food-deficient areas have also been helpful. Schools have played an important role in inculcating Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) behaviour among children and in promoting safe drinking water and improved sanitation facilities.

Over these years, Nepal has made some important strides in women's empowerment. Today, Nepali women enjoy their rights on a par with men; be it in economy, education, social protection, health services, or any other sphere of public life.

As per the constitutional provisions, women are guaranteed at least one-third of representation in federal and provincial parliaments, and at least 40 percent in local governments.

Mr. Chairman,

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, development assistance in the sectors of food security and nutrition remained low and funding gaps to implement the ICPD Programme of Action continued to widen.

The pandemic has further added woes to the worry.

Hence, it is critical that the aid targets are fulfilled in line with the commitments.

I conclude by emphasizing the need of global efforts to end the problems of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition to keep the population healthy and productive to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

I thank you for your attention.