

**Statement by Honourable Mr. N P Saud, Minister for Foreign Affairs  
of Nepal, and Chair of the LDCs Group at the Opening Session of  
LDC Future Forum**

**Helsinki, Finland, 05 March 2024 at 9:30-9:55 AM**

**Her Excellency Ms Elina Valtonen, Foreign Minister of Finland  
Her Excellency Madam Rabab Fatima, High Representative and  
Under Secretary General of the United Nations,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,**

It is my distinct honor to deliver this statement as the Chair of the Group of Least Developed Countries. At the outset, I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to the Government and people of Finland for the warm hospitality extended to us.

I also thank USG-OHRLLS Madam Rabab Fatima for her unremitting efforts in holding this Forum.

As we gather here for the second time, allow me to express our sincere gratitude to Finland for its noble initiative to convene the LDC Future Forum as well as for its unwavering support to the cause of the LDCs.

While the First LDC Future Forum in 2021 helped frame the agenda of the Fifth United Nations Conference on LDCs in Doha, this Forum will contribute to the full implementation of the DPoA.

**Excellencies,**

The world has accumulated so much wealth and achieved prosperity as human civilizations have gone through transformational changes in their journey from primitive societies to advanced industrial economies.

It is deeply disheartening that the wealth, prosperity, and technological advancements we made over the years have not alleviated the misery of the bottom billions living in the LDCs. Similarly, the formidable challenges posed by climate change and conflicts rising in different parts of the world have further complicated the growth trajectories of the LDCs.

Almost one-fourth of the UN members are still trailing far behind on the road to economic growth, prosperity, and technological advancement. They have no resources to provide their people with basic needs such as food, shelter, water, sanitation, health, education etc.

It has been an uphill task to address their inherent vulnerabilities. Various international development initiatives failed to bring them out of poverty and deprivation. Graduation from LDCs status to developing countries has remained an illusion to them as most of the promises made in the successive Program of Actions have ended in peril.

Only six LDCs have graduated so far since 1971, which speaks volumes about our development history. On the contrary, the LDCs are bearing the huge brunt of all external shocks.

- They are the ones hardest hit by the pandemics and other epidemics.
- They are the ones hardest hit by rising prices of food and fuel.
- They are the ones hardest hit by triple planetary crises, to which they have insignificant contributions.
- They are the ones that are increasingly entrapped in debt crisis.

As a result, the years of progress toward SDGs have been reversed or off track in many LDCs. They are not able to catch the momentum of the much-hyped ‘fourth industrial revolution’ due to the growing digital divide.

Therefore, I call for full and effective implementation of the Doha Program of Action:

- To address multidimensional vulnerabilities facing the LDCs.
- To get them out of a vicious cycle of poverty and underdevelopment.
- To provide people with hope, aspiration, and optimism for their lives in the present and future.
- To support them in achieving SDGs and attaining the 2030 Agenda.
- More importantly, to enable at least 15 more LDCs to graduate from the LDC category in the coming decade.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The only way of tackling these issues is to address them collectively with innovative ideas and an integrated approach. I am confident that the Future LDC Forums will continue to bring about innovations for the sustainable development of the LDCs.

The DPoA is our partnership venture. We must own and implement it collectively. History has witnessed that without the progress and prosperity of the poor people, our vision and commitment to peace, security, development, and human rights will remain unsustainable.

There lies a silver line of hope. We are encouraged to see an increased level of support from the international community for the cause of LDCs in recent days in different international forums, including the SDGs Summit. This spirit and momentum must be maintained.

### **Excellencies,**

Science, technology, and innovation have huge potential to unlock the growth prospects and overcome multidimensional vulnerabilities in the LDCs. STI will be a game changer for LDCs to boost their productive

capacity, increase competitiveness, diversify economies, industries, and service sectors, and add value to agriculture.

Similarly, digital trade enhances the opportunity for small and medium enterprises to compete in the market. Technology can facilitate access to education and knowledge through e-learning platforms, digital libraries, and online courses enabling LDCs to provide quality education.

Advancements in biotechnology and medical research hold the promise of eradicating diseases and improving overall well-being of the people. The LDCs can also take benefit of technology in climate change, especially the early warning system and enhancing mitigation.

This is why DPoA has given importance to leveraging the power of science, technology, and innovation to help LDCs achieve accelerated economic growth. In this context, the theme of this Forum has become even more important as we are negotiating the Pact of Future and the Global Digital Compact.

As LDCs are facing huge deficits in terms of capacity to leverage STI, it is crucial to enable them with STI to leave no one behind. STI must be fully utilized to leapfrog the structural transformation of economies of LDCs for their sustained growth. For this, the LDCs must be given high priority in the ongoing and upcoming negotiations at the UN and beyond.

Finally, I call upon our friends, development partners, and the UN agencies for an enhanced level of support and meaningful partnership to the LDCs for the effective implementation of DPOA, placing STI at its core.

**I thank you all.**