

**Draft (time limit:
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**Statement by Hon. Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, Minister for Foreign Affairs
of Nepal, at the 19th Annual Ministerial Meeting of LLDCs
(23 September 2020)**

**Mr. Chairman,
Honorable Ministers,
Secretary-General Mr. Antonio Guterres
USG and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS Ms. Utoikamanu
Distinguished Delegates.**

Let me extend sincere appreciation to Kazakhstan for providing excellent leadership to the Group.

I thank the UN Secretary-General Mr. Guterres for his solidarity and support.

I also commend the role played by Madam Utoikamanu and her team in promoting the cause of LLDCs.

Mr. Chairman,

At the dawn of the defining decade in achieving SDGs, the COVID-19 has shaken the world.

The disruptions of pandemic have been profound. It has revealed the gaps, compounded the challenges, and multiplied the hardships.

With preventive restrictions on travel and transportation, the fallouts of the crisis on LLDCs have been much severe. As the means to respond to the crisis are limited, our countries are struggling to fend off this double-edged sword of health and economic crisis.

LLDCs face several challenges because of their remoteness and geographical isolation. Distance escalates the cost of development and trade. The dismal productive capacity has further crushed our trade competitiveness.

Excessive commodity dependence has exposed LLDCs to the shocks and fluctuations in international markets. Perennial and large trade deficits have been a sad reality for many LLDCs.

Unhindered, cost-effective and accessible infrastructures coupled with smooth trade-facilitation measures open up the doors of global market.

Investment in infrastructures for LLDCs is an investment in the lifeline of their trade and development.

The potentials unleashed by e-commerce and digital technologies could transform LLDCs by liberating their economies from the rigid clutches of geography. Access to easy, affordable and reliable technology becomes critical for that.

Adverse impacts of climate change such as outburst of glacial lakes, floods, retreat of glaciers, desertification also pose a serious threat to LLDCs. Unfortunately, the current climate finance architecture has no dedicated window for LLDCs.

Mr. Chairman,

The Mid-term review of the VPOA has given us a clear idea on the progress and gaps. We must build on the Call for Action, contained in the political declaration, and intensify our efforts to implement six priority areas of VPOA at all levels – national, regional and global.

An effective partnership between and among LLDCs, their transit neighbors, development partners, UN and other stakeholders will be crucial for this.

Secretary General's roadmap for accelerating the implementation of VPOA is therefore an important step.

What else could be a better way for a system-wide response as we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Organization?

In the quest of transforming LLDCs to land-linked with vibrant economies, our response needs to be two-fold.

First, we must put in place a predictable and reliable transit regime and connectivity infrastructures.

And second, we must enhance productive capacities by capitalizing on the new technologies and embracing low-volume high-value products.

For the present, international solidarity should be there in containing the COVID pandemic and addressing the economic fallouts.

In the long run, all means of support, including ODA, trade, technology, and capacity building need to be deployed to support the LLDCs.

Only a genuine spirit of global solidarity to complement the efforts of the LLDCs can ensure that they ride out the current storm and emerge stronger in future.

In Nepal, we have mainstreamed the 2030 Agenda and the VPOA into our national plans and programs. Transforming Nepal to a land-linked country underpins our national aspiration of “Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali”.

To materialize this aspiration, we have focused on building transport infrastructures, enhancing connectivity, and improving investment environment, among others. Our investment in social and human development sector, and reforms in governance have produced positive results.

Let me conclude, **Mr. Chairman**, by reaffirming Nepal’s commitment to cooperation and solidarity for promoting the Group’s common interests and making the leap to land-linked-ness by leaving no one behind.

I thank you all.
