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Nepal

**Statement by Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of Nepali
Delegation**

**Hon. Dr. Narayan Khadka at the General Debate of the
76th Session of UN General Assembly**

**New York
27 September 2021**

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***Theme: Building resilience through hope-to recover
from COVID 19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the
needs of the planet, respect the rights of people,
revitalize the United Nations***

Words to read: 2909

**Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates.**

I bring warm greetings to this distinguished audience from the people and Government of Nepal, and their best wishes for the success of this Assembly.

I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your well-deserved election. It is so significant to see that a South Asian is chosen to preside over the proceedings of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly at a time when the world is ferment in the midst of COVID-19 and climate crisis.

Please be assured, Mr. President, of Nepal's full support in the discharge of your important responsibilities.

Let me also commend the outgoing President His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkir for successfully leading the 75th session of the Assembly during the trying times.

I would like to place on record our warmest congratulations to UN Secretary General His Excellency Mr. Antonio Guterres on his reappointment for a second term of office and commend his leadership of our organization.

Mr. President

I would like to join world leaders in expressing our deepest condolences to the people across the world, who have lost their loved ones due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 has silently and cruelly claimed over 4.5 million lives. The crisis has brought the world to a grinding halt, devastated the global economy, pushed an additional 150 million people into extreme poverty, and threatened to reverse hard-earned development gains.

The covid crisis has exacerbated pre-existing and perennial challenges such as poverty, hunger, unemployment, inequalities, and climate change.

This has exposed systemic weaknesses, vulnerabilities, and inadequacies in health system around the world. Nowhere is this distinctly visible than in the most weak and vulnerable countries where people remain deprived of access to even basic civic amenities.

The theme of the General Debate 'building resilience through hope' is both timely and pertinent.

Recovering from COVID 19, rebuilding sustainably, responding to the needs of the planet, respecting the rights of people, and revitalizing the United Nations aptly mirrors the pressing priorities, challenges, and needs.

Reviving hope is critical in times of crisis. We appreciate the efforts made by the international community including the United Nations system to address the challenges posed by COVID-19.

We also welcome the pledges of funds and vaccines. Increased commitment and resources are needed for these initiatives.

Deepening vaccine inequality is leaving adverse socio-economic impacts in many low-income countries.

Fair and equitable access to vaccines must be ensured for everyone, everywhere. People's lives should come first. Vaccines must be declared as public goods for the benefit of people's lives.

In Nepal, saving lives, strengthening the health system, and pursuing economic recovery and transformation underpin our efforts to build a sustainable and resilient recovery. Despite constraints and challenges to access COVID-19 vaccines, we have been able to vaccinate close to 20 percent of our population.

We remain grateful to our immediate neighbours-India and China for their support in fighting the covid crisis.

We also sincerely thank friendly countries, like United States, Britain, Japan and others for providing vaccines, critical medical equipment, and medicines in our fight against the pandemic.

Mr. President,

Recent developments in Afghanistan are of common concerns to all of us. People of Afghanistan deserve better. We call for an unhindered humanitarian access and full resumption of public services, including health and education for all sections of Afghan society.

We urge all parties involved to ensure peace, security, and stability so that the Afghan people can live in dignity and enjoy their fundamental rights and freedom. We also urge Afghanistan to engage with the international community on the basis of the principles of the UN Charter and norms of international law.

We call on all concerned parties in Myanmar to respect the will of the people, restore the democratic and constitutional process, and uphold the fundamental rights and freedom of the Myanmar's people.

We call for an immediate end to the hardships and sufferings of the common people in Libya, Syria, and Yemen.

In the Middle East, we reiterate our long-standing position and want to see peace and security with a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine living side by side within secure and recognized international borders.

Mr. President,

For over 63 years, Nepal has consistently contributed to the UN peace operations to promote peace, security, and stability in the conflict-ridden parts of the world.

We attach high importance to the safety and security of UN peacekeepers and the need for adequate training, resources, and modern technologies. It is in this spirit that we endorsed the Declaration of Shared Commitments in support of the 'Action for Peacekeeping' initiative.

Nepal has endorsed the Kigali Principles on the protection of civilians and supports the UN Secretary General's system-wide zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse and aims for zero case scenario in peacekeeping.

As one of the largest troop and police contributing countries, Nepal believes that such countries deserve more senior level positions both at the headquarters and in the field based on the level of its contributions.

Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

Nepal condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and denounces all activities aimed to fuel social discord, communal conflicts, and intolerance.

There is a need of robust global cooperation to effectively implement the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, to combat and control financing of terrorism, and to fight the organized trans-border crimes. This underlines the urgency for conclusion of a comprehensive convention against terrorism.

It is worrisome to see new signs of arms race through modernization of nuclear arms, and weaponization of outer space among big powers. We call upon them to divert precious resources from military spending to addressing the covid-19 pandemic and lifting the most vulnerable people out of poverty.

The mechanisms of disarmament as well as the measures of non-proliferation and confidence building have been stalled. Nepal calls for general and complete disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction in a time-bound and verifiable manner.

As the host to the UN Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, we are committed to supporting the works of the Centre and reviving the Kathmandu Process for promoting regional efforts on disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation.

Mr. President,

Whether it is the rising of sea levels or melting of Himalayan glaciers, hurricanes, storms, floods or fires, climate change has become an existential threat to humanity. Reports indicate that warmer conditions have even prompted animals and plants to adopt new habits and evolve new traits.

Nepal is home to eight of the world's 14 highest peaks including the top of the world- Sagarmatha, the Mount Everest. Sagarmatha stands as an icon of adventure seekers and Himalayan heritage for us. As the environmental concerns are growing, we need to raise environmental awareness. While we welcome climbers from around the world, we expect climbers' cooperation to bring back the garbage from the high mountains to maintain their sanctity.

Nepal has a number of snow-fed Himalayan rivers that are connected to identity and civilizations and sustain one fifth of the global population. Our efforts have been to accord due ecological diligence while undertaking development activities in the Himalayan region.

Nepal is at the sharp end of climate change despite its negligible share in greenhouse gas emissions. On our part, we reiterate our commitment to delivering climate-resilient development pathways by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050.

The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, equity and respective capabilities should be at the center of the climate agenda to ensure climate justice.

The Glasgow COP26 must provide a breakthrough. Climate ambition of developing countries must be met with easier access to adequate financial and technological support for adaptation and mitigation. It must be a gateway to greener, cleaner, and smarter energy transition.

Mr. President,

With just less than a decade left, the world is not on track to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The pandemic has strained our efforts to realize the SDGs.

As we strive for resilient recovery and building back better and stronger, achieving SDGs should be at the center of our priorities.

Nepal has mainstreamed the SDGs into its national plans, policies, and programmes. Significant progress has been achieved across major sectors, such as education, health, gender equality and women's empowerment.

Changing the lives of people lacking wealth, dignity, and human rights has been our commitment.

The Least developed countries (LDCs) are the most vulnerable group of countries even at the first quarter of the 21st century. They should be freed from the dehumanizing conditions of poverty and under development.

LDCs and LLDCs need reliable and sustainable financing, partnerships, and technology transfer to overcome their structural impediments to benefit from globalization.

As both an LDC and LLDC, Nepal's structural challenges are unique. We see our plan to graduate from the LDC category by 2026 as an opportunity to bring structural transformation and make the long-held national aspiration of graduation smooth, sustainable, and irreversible.

We look up to the LDC-5 to be held in Doha early next year as an important opportunity to renew the bond of international partnership. It must build on the unfinished business of IPOA, with a commitment to enhanced level of support to the graduating countries.

The development of multi-modal transport infrastructure and unhindered transit rights of landlocked nations are critical to their sustainable development.

We call for the implementation of past decisions and programmes in full synergy and coherence with the 2030 Agenda and expect development partners to increase their support to establish a secure, reliable, and efficient transit transport system for the landlocked developing countries.

The ongoing crisis must not be a pretext for retracting from ODA commitments.

The development potentials of South-South cooperation in terms of trade, investment and technology must be fully exploited.

It is time to reform global economic governance architecture to ensure fair and equitable representation of all. We welcome the steps taken by IMF and G20 on debt relief and debt service suspension. Nepal calls for a reformed and more equitable international debt restructuring to address the debt crisis of low-income countries.

WTO is not only about maintaining rules-based international trading order, it must also be a platform to enable the developing countries benefit from it with an enhanced level of international cooperation in the areas of aid for trade, technology transfer, and capacity building.

Connectivity is lifeline for peace, progress, and prosperity. Connectivity forms a premise for enduring cooperation, deeper integration, building of trust and confidence among nations. Nepal attaches utmost priority to cooperation through connectivity and underlines the need to create a win-win situation between and among countries.

Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates,

Nepal calls for concerted efforts to ensure the safety, security, dignity, and well-being of all migrant workers. We call for the effective implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and underline the need for a more robust international governance for the protection, safety, and welfare of the migrant workers.

Protection of minorities and their rights makes the world more humane and contributes to world peace and security. Despite not being a party to the Refugee Convention and its Protocol, Nepal has hosted thousands of refugees on humanitarian principles.

Nepal considers the forced eviction of citizens as a grave crime against humanity. We call upon the international community to respond responsibly and act decisively for refugees' right to return to their homeland in safety and dignity.

Mr. President,

Nepal has chosen the democratic path to development. Democracy is about people and therefore democracy is indispensable for people's welfare.

The constitution of Nepal accommodates aspirations of all its citizens. Proportional representation of all sections of the society is at its core. It guarantees a comprehensive set of internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms. The constitution establishes powerful commissions to promote and protect rights and interests specific to women, Dalits, Muslims, Madhesis, indigenous people and other disadvantaged communities. It makes it mandatory to have 33% women representation in federal and provincial parliaments and 40% at the local level. This has firmed up their role in politics and development.

We are committed to conclude the transitional justice process through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons. There would be no blanket amnesty in the cases of serious violation of human rights.

As a member elected for the second term in UN Human Rights Council, we continue to add value through apolitical and impartial approach to human rights.

Mr. President,

Nepal's worldview is shaped by our adherence to the principle of 'amity with all and enmity with none'.

Our friendship with both of our neighbors, India and China, remains of paramount importance in the conduct of our foreign policy based on the principles of *Panchsheel* – five principles of peaceful co-existence, derived from the teachings of Lord Buddha, the enlightened son of Nepal.

The relevance of these principles as a framework for interstate relations cannot be overstated in the present context.

Principles and purposes of the UN Charter, non-alignment, international law and norms of world peace form the basis of our foreign policy.

The present government of Nepal led by Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba is committed to conduct the foreign policy on the basis of sovereign equality, mutual respect, and mutual benefit and remains engaged with all friendly countries in the wider international community.

Nepal firmly believes in the indispensability of multilateralism with the United Nations as its centre. We consider this the only way to build global understanding and cooperation, promote shared interests, and secure our common future.

We add our voices in support of the measures and initiatives aimed at UN reforms. Under-representation of developing countries must be addressed in recognition of their growing contributions.

We want to see a more representative, inclusive, and transparent Security Council and a more revitalized General Assembly. Reforms must be inclusive and representative, accountable, and effective in its delivery.

We consider regional cooperation arrangements important for building trust and confidence among nations, managing harmonious relations and making the best use of complementarities for shared prosperity. Nepal's active engagement in SAARC, BIMSTEC and ACD manifests our ardent faith in regional cooperation, connectivity, and integration.

Over the last sixty-five years, Nepal and the United Nations have enjoyed a strong partnership- driven by trust, cooperation, and mutual respect. We thank the United Nations for its continued support in our development endeavors.

Nepal commends the Secretary-General for bringing out a comprehensive report '*Our Common Agenda*'. We support the report's focus on the agenda of action designed to accelerate the implementation of existing commitments.

Mr. President,

We live in troubled times. There has been dramatic shift in geopolitics and geo-economics in the post-Cold War era posing unprecedented challenges on all fronts.

The world's economic center of gravity is shifting decisively towards Asia, centered on the economic growth of China and India.

At the same time, the world is becoming more complicated and polarized, with transnational challenges ranging from terrorism to climate change to food security to mass migration to political radicalism and extremism.

Under the cumulative impact of all these factors, we are experiencing with new ways of life in the midst of confusion and uncertainty.

We see conflicts in different parts of the world, these conflicts are more within nations than between nations. This has given rise to identity politics. Nations find themselves increasingly divided along lines of race, ethnicity, gender and religion.

We must find a common ground and practice tolerance and harmony to confront these unimaginable problems. My delegation considers that democracy and multilateralism have no alternative to overcome the stresses and strains of the day. It is also the best antidote to the risk of civil conflict in ethnically diverse societies.

I feel happy to share with this august audience that the unity in vast diversity is Nepal's national strength. Thanks to the democratic culture and harmonious way of life, Nepali people's resilience in times of hardships and sufferings has remained exemplary as seen in the aftermath of the devastating earthquakes of 2015, and the COVID-19 pandemic in recent times.

As I stand here today, my thoughts go back to 1960, when the first elected Prime Minister of Nepal, late B.P. Koirala, while addressing the UN General Assembly, said, and I quote,

"As we look at the world, we find that it is the economic disparity between countries, as between the rich and the poor people within the nation, that is the source of much friction and tension.The main function of the United Nations at the present moment is the creation or recreation of a climate of confidence and trust."

End of quote.

Creating a climate of confidence and trust is as relevant today as it was in 1960. It is upon us to work together for a more equitable, just, fair, resilient, and sustainable world.

In conclusion, I believe the time is now to turn the crisis into opportunity, despair into hope, and risk into resilience.

The time is now to build a stronger, interconnected, and inclusive multilateral system grounded in cooperation, solidarity and mutual trust.

We must rise to our responsibility to re-build for the sake of the people we serve and the planet we live in.

I thank you for your attention.