

Statement by The Right Honorable Sher Bahadur Deuba, Prime Minister and the Leader of Nepali Delegation to the 72nd Session of United Nations General Assembly

New York, 23 September 2017

Mr. President,

I bring warm greetings from the people and Government of Nepal, the land of Lord Buddha and Mount Everest, to the delegates and best wishes for the success of this session.

I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the seventy-second session of the UN General Assembly. I pledge full support in the discharge of your important responsibilities.

I also wish to place on record our appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Peter Thompson of Fiji, for his sterling leadership.

I warmly congratulate His Excellency Antonio Guterres, on his appointment as the Secretary General of the United Nations. With his experience, vision and versatility across a wide range of areas, we are assured of his wise leadership of the organization in this challenging time. We extend best wishes and full support to him, including on his reform efforts to make our organization fit-for-purpose.

I also commend his predecessor Ban-ki Moon for his dynamic leadership of the organization.

Mr. President,

It has been almost two decades since I first addressed from this podium.

In decades that followed, the world has witnessed profound transformation. While there are some notable achievements in poverty reduction, school enrollment, gender equality and combatting communicable diseases, it is not without multiple and complex challenges.

The world has become more inter-dependent, and better connected. Growing interdependence and pluralism have unleashed both challenges and opportunities.

A big geopolitical transformation is in the making.

The rise of inward looking tendency in some of the nation-states marked by the tide of populism on both the left and the right have created confusion over the course of world politics.

Global community faces a more complex and polarized environment with multiple transnational challenges ranging from terrorism, climate change, energy deficiency, food insecurity, and mass migration to extremism.

Ethnic tensions and intra-state conflicts have taken toll on millions of innocent lives. The sufferings of people in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen have not abated.

Unfortunately, our efforts have been too little, and often too late.

All these challenges reinforce the role and responsibility of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

As we embark upon a path of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, such challenges are the litmus tests for our leadership.

The choice of the theme for our deliberations at this Assembly "Focusing on people: striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet" provides a clear direction ahead.

Path to peace and decent life for all will remain elusive without resources and commitment for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals. A very small fraction of trillions of dollars spent in armament can help the countries in need to attain these goals.

Delivery on commitments, inclusive process, coordinated efforts and shared responsibilities backed by adequate resources are essential to secure sustainable future and ensure that no one is left behind.

Mr. President,

The vicious race for weapons of mass destruction continues to threaten the world.

Nepal calls for a time-bound, general and complete disarmament.

Nepal welcomes the confidence-building measures on conventional weapons, ending nearly two decades of stalemate in the UN Disarmament Commission.

Nepal has signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as a step towards nuclear disarmament.

Nepal deplores the continued defiance by DPRK of the repeated calls of the UN Security Council and the international community. We urge DPRK to abide by all the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council. We believe this alone safeguards peace and promotes stability on the Korean Peninsula.

As the host to the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament for the Asia-Pacific, Nepal underlines the need to reactivate the regional disarmament deliberations under the Kathmandu Process.

Mr. President,

Violent extremism and religious fundamentalism have undermined peace and security in different parts of the world - with more youths being radicalized, with more lives being devastated, societies turning intolerant.

Terrorism is a curse to humanity and biggest threat to democracy and development.

Nepal condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and anywhere in the world.

The world must come together to address not just its symptoms but the root causes. Early conclusion of the anti-terrorism global convention is the call of our time.

Mr. President,

Successful peacekeeping demands objectivity, impartiality and ability of the Mission to deliver with the consent and confidence of the host governments.

Having contributed over a hundred and thirty thousand peacekeepers in some of the most challenging theatres and true to our commitment to the success of UN peace operations, Nepal remains prepared to provide additional troops and civilians for this noble cause.

While we welcome the new standards and assessment mechanisms, a sustained partnership for capability building of peacekeepers is crucial for improving performance in peace operations. The UN should play a supportive role in capacity building of peace keeping related institutions.

Nepal has been a host to a world class peace-keeping training center- the oldest one in the region. The United Nations can make the best use of this facility and help develop it as a regional centre of excellence for peacekeeping training.

Nepal firmly believes that all troop and police contributing countries must get fair opportunities to serve in leadership positions both in the field and at the headquarters commensurate with their level and length of contribution.

Protection of civilians should be at the center of peacekeeping operations. Nepal believes the safety and security of the peacekeepers is the key to enhance their ability to deliver from the high moral ground.

On sexual exploitation and abuse, we must move from zero tolerance to zero case scenario. It is in this spirit that Nepal endorsed the Kigali Principles in its entirety, and signed the Secretary-General's Voluntary Compact on the Elimination of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

Mr. President,

All human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and should be accorded equal emphasis including the right to development.

The constitution of Nepal accommodates aspirations of all of its citizens. It guarantees a comprehensive set of internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We are fully committed to the promotion and protection of those rights and their full enjoyment by our people.

The constitution establishes powerful commissions to promote and protect rights and interests specific to women, *Dalits*, Muslims, Madhesis, indigenous people and other disadvantaged communities.

The National Human Rights Commission, an independent constitutional body, is responsible for overall monitoring of the human rights situation and investigation into the cases of their violation.

Nepal views the right to life as the most important of all human rights. Nepal's constitution bans death penalty in all circumstances. As a party to 24 international human rights instruments, including 7 out of 9 core instruments, Nepal has been fulfilling its international obligations with all sincerity, and to the best of its ability.

Against this backdrop, Nepal has presented its candidature to the UN Human Rights Council for the term 2018-2020.

Nepal's first-ever election to the Council would be the recognition of our long commitment and contributions in the field of human rights and an encouragement to do more at national as well as global levels. We seek invaluable support of all Member States to Nepal's candidature.

Mr. President,

Migration is a mega-trend.

Ensuring safe, orderly and regular migration is the need of our time. Nepal eagerly looks forward to a successful outcome of the 2018 Global Compact on Migration.

Nepal calls for concerted efforts at the national, regional and international levels to ensure that the migration process creates a fair and win-win situation to all.

We call for safety, security, dignity and well-being of all migrant workers.

Although not a party to the Refugee Convention and its Protocol, Nepal has earnestly upheld humanitarian principles by hosting thousands of refugees

Protection of minorities and their rights makes the world more humane, and contributes to world peace and security.

Forced eviction of citizens is 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 and rapid rehabilitation under all circumstances.

Mr. President

The cost of natural disasters is rising sharply in terms of human tragedy and devastation. We call for greater global cooperation and coordination in prevention, mitigation and recovery.

The trauma of Nepal earthquake 2015 has not subsided yet. The post-disaster reconstruction is ongoing. We thank our neighbours, development partners, other friendly countries and UN family for their generous support in our reconstruction drive.

Poor and vulnerable countries disproportionately suffer from climate change despite their negligible role in greenhouse gas emissions. The implementation of Paris Agreement should be done in synergy with the 2030 Agenda. The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, equity and respective capabilities should be at the center of its implementation.

Mr. President,

The LDCs are the most vulnerable group of countries. They cannot be perennially equated with dehumanizing conditions of poverty and under development. They must be enabled to smoothly and sustainably graduate at an early date.

LDCs and LLDCs have not been able to benefit from the process of globalization.

They need reliable and sustainable financing, partnerships, and technology transfer to overcome their structural impediments.

As cost of doing trade is higher to the LLDCs than the coastal countries, development of multi-modal transport infrastructure and unhindered transit rights of landlocked nations are critical to their sustainable development.

We call for full implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, Vienna Programme of Action and Addis Ababa Action Agenda in full synergy and coherence with the 2030 Agenda.

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

After years of political transition, Nepal now seeks to project a clear roadmap to prosperity. Aligned with economic, social and environmental pillars of the SDGs, Nepal's development priorities will be framed around the imperative of generating, sharing and sustaining broad-based prosperity.

Geographical proximity to India and China provides Nepal a rare opportunity to benefit from unprecedented economic transformation in its neighbourhood, opening up immense opportunity for trade and investment.

Mr. President,

We exercise political pluralism at home and believe in multipolarity in international relations.

The essence of Nepal's foreign policy is Panchasheel –five principles of peaceful co-existence that are derived from the teachings of Lord Buddha-the enlightened son of Nepal.

These principles serve as foundations for managing harmonious relations among nations in this time of increasing uncertainty and turmoil.

We believe in nonalignment. In exercise of our independent foreign policy, we judge every issue on its merit without fear or favour.

We consider regional cooperation an important means for building trust and confidence among nations and making the best use of complementarities for shared prosperity.

Connectivity remains at the core of deeper integration and for creating a win-win situation.

Nepal firmly believes in the indispensability of the United Nations in multilateral affairs and global governance. All countries, particularly major powers have the responsibility to contribute to the global good by fulfilling the obligations and responsibilities.

The Security Council's reform is long overdue. Under-representation of developing countries must be addressed in recognition of their growing contributions in shaping global agenda.

Reforms must be inclusive and representative in structure, transparent and efficient in procedure, and accountable and effective in delivery.

The Secretary-General's reform proposals are a step forward. We believe a clear statement support of the Member States, such as the Declaration made earlier this week, helps make our organization fit-for-purpose.

Any repositioning of UN development agenda should address gaps, build synergy and improve the accountability, steering clear from the politicization of development under any guise.

Nepal supports the revitalization exercise of the UN General Assembly for streamlining its functions and ensuring fair gender and geographical representation at higher UN positions, among others.

Mr. President,

Before concluding, I would like to share some insights into Nepal's recent developments.

Nepal's transition to democracy from a decade long armed conflict through peaceful means demonstrates the power and promise of dialogue and negotiation over the perils of violent methods for political power. The national peace process that began in 2006 concluded with the promulgation of a democratic and inclusive constitution in 2015 through a popularly elected Constituent Assembly.

This unique peace process was home-grown and nationally-driven. Its successful conclusion has firmly established the culture of dialogue and accommodation, and could serve as a model for similar situations elsewhere. We appreciate the support and understanding provided by the international community.

Proportional representation of all sections of our society is at the core of Nepal's inclusive democracy.

Recent local level elections have firmly established women's role in politics and development. The constitution guarantees 40% women representation at the local level and one third in the federal and provincial parliaments.

After successful local level elections, held in 20 years, the dates have been announced for the provincial and federal parliaments in two months from now.

The ongoing transitional justice process combines our international commitment and ground reality of delivering justice and sustaining peace.

To conclude, Mr. President,

Let me reiterate Nepal's profound commitment to the principles and purposes of the United Nations.

The United Nations is made of big and small nations. Vast majority of UN membership comes from smaller countries, confirming the universality and legitimacy of the world body. An edifice for a peaceful, stable, rule-based and just world order cannot be erected without addressing their genuine concerns for security, development and wellbeing.

We believe small nations have been sincere and serious in discharging their responsibilities as members of this body. Even with their negligible economic and security resources, they have been playing a constructive role under the aegis of the UN for promoting peace, security and cooperation under the most difficult circumstances in various parts of the world.

I would like to recall the wise words of BP Koirala, the first elected Prime Minister of Nepal, who told the fifteenth Session of this august Assembly in 1960, and I quote "Our physical strength may be negligible, but our moral strength, if we are true to ourselves and to the peoples for whom we speak, may be great." End of quote.

This statement is as relevant today as it was then.

Let us collectively display wisdom, knowledge and capacity to address the pressing issues of peace, security, disarmament and sustainable development with due respect to the internationally accepted rules to ensure a safe and stable world order.

I thank you all.