VISION TO ACTION

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Selected Speeches of **K P Sharma Oli**
(Vol. III)

Editor:
Bal Krishna Kattel

Credit:
To those who involved
in this publication

Cover/Sketch:
Mahendra Shrestha

Layout:
Kiran Mali

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MsMouse, Putalisadak

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A NOTE ON THE SPEECHES

We yearn for leaders with clear vision and determination but have very few with such attributes. Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli is probably the leader of present Nepal who has both the qualities. He is the symbol of sacrifice. When he was young, he saw something wrong in the society in which he lived. He witnessed the widespread prevalence of injustice, discrimination and inequality, and tried to beat them. The struggle that he led for the same and for the rights, dignity and justice for all took him to the prison for 14 years, including four years of solitary confinement. But it did not deter him. Rather, the prison steeled him and molded the statesman we see and know today.

Extraordinary man, K P Sharma Oli stays abreast of every issue and happening. He is optimistic and confident. Even when the burden of challenges is on his shoulders, he carries them easily. He is the leader who engineered the unification of two largest communist parties and formed a single largest Nepal Communist Party. Celebrated orator and persuader, he led the elections campaign in 2017 and ushered the party to victory with nearly two-thirds majority in the parliament. His only mission now is to prosper the country and make the Nepali people happy. For this, he is continuously engaged in keeping people inspired with hope and urging all those concerned to nurture hope in people, not despair. A leader with towering personality, he knows well that people are motivated by aspiration, not by dejection.

This book is a collection of speeches he delivered, as the Prime Minister, over the last one year in different national and international forums on different themes and sectors. Through these speeches, he dialogues with his fellow citizens, interacts

with the world leaders and receives his audience with his artistic and fascinating articulation. He picks the words from the everyday life of the people, weaves them to make his vision for nation building, and shares it back with the people again for their ownership. As a dreamer of prosperity and happiness of the country and the people, he knows well that vision in the absence of people's ownership will cease to make a difference.

Some speeches in the book speak about vision on various issues while some others shed light on the results achieved so far in the journey to prosperity. There are also the speeches which help the readers understand how Nepal is reclaiming its rightful position in the global stage. As Prime Minister, he says, Nepal is not in isolation anymore and we cannot be. Nepal has started to be heard and understood. Our voice is loud, and our message is clear.

The book is divided into four sections according to themes and sectors. To avoid repetition, we have omitted the ceremonial parts from all speeches. However, some contents may seem repetitive. We have left them the way they are to keep the originality of the speeches as far as possible and also with the comprehension that they are delivered for different audience on different occasions. We feel, it is the most reader-friendly approach, particularly for the reader who chooses to select some out of all at a time, and dive in them.

We find unwavering optimism in all the speeches. They are embodiments of clear vision and resolute actions of Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli to accomplish the national vision of 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali'. In his words – Nepal can prosper, and it must. Prosperous Nepal is within our reach in our own lifetime.

●

MY DREAM

'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali' is possible in our lifetime. It is a journey we have chosen. It is a path we have taken. It is a destination we have set. Roads ahead may be murky. But we are well-equipped for this. We tap into our talents. We maximise the use of our natural resources and allow them to blossom. We nurture our creativity. We build on our potential and make it the source of our joy. Together we can make it. We will create a new story of success and growth about Nepal. We will realise new achievements to shower our citizens with happiness. Our guests or visitors who come Nepal from abroad after ten years will be astonished seeing us in a new height of development and prosperity. They will get a new impression of us. If they are asked about Nepal upon completion of their visit to our country, they will probably say the following ---

Nepal is a paradise mutually created by human being and nature. There is no difficulty for Nepalis to meet their basic needs. The country is way ahead in production and creation. People are healthy and fit. Wellbeing is the top priority of all Nepalis. Since they have a good health insurance facility, they have access to good medical treatment. It is the law of nature that everyone has to die one day. But no Nepali dies because of scarcities or the lack of basic facilities any more. No one is too poor to provide health and education for their children. Every child goes to school and learns the discipline in which they have interest and attention. They have every opportunity and facility to hone their talents in the areas of their passion.

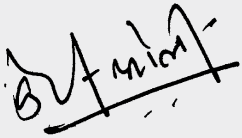
The scientific knowledge that the Nepalis possess is powerful enough to identify the immense possibility of nature and utilise it for the maximum benefit of Nepalis. Nepal is utilising the extraordinary potentials of the nature to prosper the country. The happy Nepalis of prosperous Nepal are civilised and friendly.

At times, you may hear the sound of gunfire in the country. It is, however, not a call for a war but for a celebration of peace. The gunfire is to herald the launch or the culmination of a major event, or to mark an auspicious beginning or a conclusion of a celebrated occasion. We hear or read the headlines that guns in some other parts of the world are fired to silence or coerce people. But, in Nepal, it is done so to share joy and happiness among people.

Houses in the country are pretty and clean. Streets are nice and up to the standard. Roads are wide and washed. Railways are built through tunnels. Ships are navigated through large water canals. The Bagmati River is so clean that you can drink water directly from it. You feel like taking off your shoes at the gate of the Pashupatinath Temple, if you go there, not only because you are going to offer respects to the deities but because the premises of the temple are very clean. There are nice and beautiful places for tourists to visit. Hotels are brimming with the spirit of hospitality. Homestay is even more beautiful and their natural welcoming is so live and delightful. You feel like you extend your visa for a month or even longer if you have planned to stay in Nepal only for three days initially. You will encourage your relatives or colleagues to go to Nepal for a visit together. You will be spontaneously showcasing Nepal as a must-go place.

The rivers in the country are well managed. There is an excellent irrigation facility. Farmers are happy. Nepal is a place to visit and

see how fruits and cereals are grown and utilised. If you want to see Himalayan herbs and yak, there is no other place than Nepal to pay a call on. I have brought some pure and nutritious cheese as a gift for you. It is a mix of herbs processed in the lap of Himalaya. Give a bite to it and take a taste! The taste will give you some flavour to feel about Nepal. The quality will take you to the foothill of *Himal*. Nepal is a heaven on earth and the land of the blessed.



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I

VISION AND ACTION

Democracy is an ideal for us. It is not a business to earn a livelihood. Democracy that we are practicing today is rule-based, coherent and refined system won through well-thought and conscious struggle. Believe me, democracy is the foundation for our journey to prosperity.

We are implementing a new federal system in our context. It is entirely a new experience for us. The system is not free of challenges. But we are moving forward by learning by doing and overcoming the difficulties. Even in a short period of time, we have made a good stride in our progress. We have made a record success in school enrolment campaign. Expansion of health facilities is getting momentum. Mega projects have started yielding results. Infrastructure development is moving forward with an encouraging feat. We are effortlessly working on creating conducive environment for trade and investment. We have been able to maintain a balanced

foreign policy. Our presence in global platforms is visible. As a result of it, the global community has grown their interest and attraction towards Nepal. We are accorded a 'Rising Star in South Asia' in economic performance by the international financial institutions.

What was beyond our imagination some years back has now started to become a reality. Nepal will develop, and we have to develop it. It is not a daydream. Neither is it like the famous song where the singers promise to bring the moon along with the stars down to the earth for their beloved. Yes, we have limited time, so may be our ability and knowledge. But we have infinite integrity and loyalty. Prosperity is possible in our lifetime. I am here to steer the process. Together, we can make our country reach and shower our face with happiness. For this, we have the democracy that we believe in.

A corrupt person cannot be a genuine Nepali*

Cordial greetings on the occasion of Nepali New Year 2076 BS.

We bade farewell to the Nepali Year 2075 BS. We began the last year with hope, enthusiasm and expectations. We all worked hard throughout the

* Address to the nation on the Occasion of Nepali New Year 2076 BS, 14 April 2019.

year from our respective roles and positions to make the country prosperous. At the dawn of this new year, I wish to extend thanks to all Nepali brothers and sisters.

Last year, when we started the New Year, we had launched the campaign for school enrolment from Rara of Karnali Province. Several queries were surging through my mind then.

- How to build standard schools, reliable roads and bridges to enable the young children to have access to their schools?

- How to arrange adequate human and physical resources for the expectant mothers who undergo labour pain in those remote areas?
- How to illuminate the villages and rural settlements engulfed in darkness by generating electricity from the Karnali river and its tributaries?
- How to render the farms and fields green, which are left barren due to the lack of irrigation facilities?

Similarly, I was also reflecting on:

- how to strengthen the foundation of recently institutionalised federal system of governance?
- how to dispel the negative stereotype that nothing will happen in Nepal from the minds of people and instil confidence in them that prosperous Nepal is within our reach in our own lifetime?

Today, we have come to the stage of sharing progress that we have made over the year and brush off the negative apprehension. We have come to the level to transform the country into a gradually stable system by eliminating the severe anomalies that have gripped the country. We have been able to enact legislations consistent with the constitution and have come to the stage of mobilising the state structures as per the law.

Here are some examples to share with you:

- A recently published report 'A World Ready to Learn' by the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) mentions that Nepal's school enrolment rate in pre-

primary education is 86%. The report states that this progress remains ahead of other countries in the world.

- While acknowledging the congenial and reliable investment climate in the country, the officials from the international financial institutions who attended the recently concluded Nepal Investment Summit have termed Nepal as a 'Rising Star' in South Asia.
- Various countries of the world have acknowledged Nepal's peace process and our competitive, and participatory governance system as inspiring and worth emulating.
- The formation of a stable and strong government through a mixed electoral system has been taken as the reflection of Nepali peoples' informed decision-making and their strong penchant for attaining development.

I have reiterated time and again that federalism is completely a new experience for Nepal. Challenges lie in its implementation. Despite this, the governments at all levels of the country are moving forward by learning from doing and overcoming the shortcomings. Our federal democratic republic is built on a strong foundation. This home-grown system of governance is maturing gradually. I extend felicitations and best wishes to all those who have been patiently involved in the process of making the political and economic transformation of the country institutionalised and functional.

In the last general elections, Nepali people voted for peace, stability and development. Therefore, we spent the last one

year to create legal, structural and policy foundations for attaining peace, development and prosperity. Now, standing on that pedestal, we will accelerate our journey towards development and prosperity. So far, we have utilised all our resources, means and efforts to that end. We have sought collaboration with our friends by realising the fact that our own resources alone will not be sufficient to meet our aspirations.

Nepal Investment Summit marks the beginning of such collaboration. The Summit has helped invite foreign capital and technology to the country. The next move would be to develop skilled human resources and implement targeted development goals.

One may cynically question 'did anything really happen in the past one year?' I call upon all those inquisitive minds and ask them to change the way they pose a question. Let's question the government in this way:

- What have we achieved over the past one year?
- It was said to be the year of the enactment of laws. How many laws are enacted? How many of them are amended?
- How many kilometres of road get black-topped? How many concrete bridges are built so far?
- What is the benefit of building bridges by replacing *tuins*?
- The DPR of East-West Railway has been prepared. When does the work of planting railway tracks begin?

- Maritime shipping office has been opened. When do the inland-water ways start, and from where?
- How many unused airfields have been brought to operation? Visit Nepal Year 2020 is being observed. How many aircrafts does Nepal hold of her own?
- What sort of impact the Social Security Programme that was introduced as heralding a New Era has created in the lives of citizens? What benefit the Senior Citizens Health Insurance Scheme that is commencing today can offer to our parents?
- What is the 'Let's Open the Bank Accounts' programme? How does it benefit the people?
- What is the status of Work and Employment Campaign? How is the Prime Minister Employment Programme going to benefit the people?
- How much will the Nepal's Water, People's Investment scheme benefit the country and individual shareholders?
- What benefits has the country received from our visit to neighbouring countries and participation in the United Nations General Assembly and various other international forums?
- The fundamental trend of Nepali society henceforth is peace, unity and development. If so, what is the government doing for development?

I believe all these questions will revert to answers day-by-day by bringing about changes in the lives of people. People

will innately feel the changes brought into their lives by our deeds. The government is prepared to answer these questions with facts and figures.

At the centre of our national vision 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali' lies the people and the planet: Making people's life comfortable and happy, and keeping our planet safe!

Prosperity is the foundation of happiness. Happiness comes with easy availability of biological and material necessities that are reasonable and just. The indicators of prosperity consist of high and sustainable production and productivity, modern infrastructure and deeper interconnection, human capital formation and its full utilisation, and high and equitable national income. Prosperity means progress with social justice.

Good governance, cultured and decent life, civilised and just society, healthy and balanced ecological system, strong democracy, national unity and dignity are the indicators of 'happiness'. Various programmes of employment and investment that we have initiated are the part and parcel of prosperity. Good governance is the precondition for prosperity.

Corruption is the enemy of good governance. It is my firm public declaration of not maintaining conspicuous silence to protect corruption and corrupt person when action is taken. It is not our culture to engage in corruption and immorality. Nor is it our tradition. We Nepali people believe in the earnings of hard work and toil. Nepalis are honest. They never break their vows or breach their promises of not engaging in wrong doings. Our culture and tradition dictate in such a way

that once it is solemnly taken to do something or not to do something by invoking sacred prescripts and placing hand in holy symbols such as *tama-tulsi* (literally known as copper and basil) or banyan tree or a consecrated stone at cross-roads, that is fulfilled in earnest. Therefore, a corrupt and unethical person, by character, is not a Nepali in true sense. S/he can never be.

Last year remained the year of campaign against anomaly and corruption. Let us give a thought: had any office bearer working inside the institution responsible for ensuring good governance and deeply involved in undesirable activity ever been brought under investigation at this level and extent? Why the postings of public service officials of their first choice until the last year are no longer so now? Why have the persons under suspicion and tainted for their undesired activities of the past now become restless? Why have they been responding with action/reaction in an unexpected way?

On the first day of the new year, I would like to state that the activities carried out in favour of good governance by the government under my leadership has started yielding results. Investigation in all types of unwanted and undesirable activities are ongoing, be it real estate business or organised smuggling, matter of customs or immigration or *hundi* transaction and misuse of foreign exchange, or fake VAT bill issues. Public lands captured through forgery are being returned one after another, and that will continue. The government will never allow unauthorised exploitation of the state property. The positive impacts of such activities are known to public.

We know, the fight against corruption is challenging and it takes a long time. But I am committed to the mission of eliminating corruption by paying whatever price it exacts and time it takes.

I would like to express my gratitude to every segment of society for the support to this campaign against anomaly and corruption. Special thanks go to all activists, media and conscious citizens who supported to this campaign. Once again, I express a resolve to dedicate myself to make this year even more outcome-oriented.

Peace is another precondition for prosperity. In the past year, the country accomplished important political achievements. It is not an ordinary matter for a group which was campaigning for a separate country, a separate national flag, a separate national anthem and a separate constitution to declare that it would participate in the political activities as per the constitution of Nepal. It is a matter of satisfaction that secessionist tendency has come to an end with this development in this country.

Now, a national campaign has begun to control violence and extremism under various covers and the criminal activities predicated in that pretext. Another cycle of violence will never be tolerated in the country as it has just started to move ahead with stability by ending long period of conflict and transition. Our constitution guarantees peaceful protest and dissent. However, undesirable regressive attempts and anti-constitutional activities will be firmly checked. I earnestly call upon all not to pretend and engage in legitimising violence by giving political colour, practice double standards and follow populist agenda in these matters.

I wish to recall a portion of a book- 'My Vision: Challenges in the Race for Excellence' by the Prime Minister of UAE, which I like: In the early dawn, a lion in the African jungle just awake from his sleep stretches and thinks, 'I will die out of hunger if I run slower than the fastest running deer of this jungle. Therefore, I must run as fast as I can.' Similarly, a deer in another corner of the jungle also awakes and thinks - 'Oh! Now I must run as fast as I can. If I get slower than the lion of this jungle, I will be killed. I must live.'

While we are bidding farewell to the bygone year and welcoming the new one, I would like to stress on the importance of time. There are numerous tasks ahead of us. Within the present tenure of the government under my leadership, we must lift our country from the pitiable status of Least Developed Country. We must meet the Sustainable Development Goals ahead of the deadline of 2030. For this, the pace of competition among us must be like that of the African lion and deer. Whatever we need to do, we must do within this one-decade. Our youth population will grow older in 10/11 years and the demographic dividend for our development will come to an end. We have limited time; however, the works to be accomplished are unlimited.

I have also engrossed myself in this speedy race in order to catch the pace of time. Like every hardworking Nepali, I have also kept myself active, normally from early in the morning till midnight every day. Even if I take account of my major official engagements, I have participated in 314 various programmes in the past one year. I have continued the dialogue with the public in one form or the other.

After I took the leadership of the government, I started the journey of dialogue with the public from Rara of Karnali Province. Rara is a beautiful place situated far away from road-network. I travelled to Dolpa, Humla, Jumla and Surkhet, albeit for short time, and listened to the people's sentiments and shared my plans. While addressing the six provincial assemblies, I conducted dialogues with the representatives of the people there. Today, I have seen positive results of those dialogues.

I feel immensely happy like the people of Dunai when the promise I made last year that 'we will connect Dunai (headquarters of Dolpa district) with the national road network by Dashain' is fulfilled. As we discussed in Simikot, the work to manage the border crossing point through Taklakot is bearing the fruit. The demand put forward by the citizens of Darchula for at least a suspension bridge over the border river of Mahakali has come into implementation. It has contributed to realise our campaign for safe river crossing.

I have participated in the programmes in Panchthar, Ilam, Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari and Dhankuta of Province- 1 on various such occasions as laying foundation stone for roads and so on. I have addressed people's gathering in Siraha and a huge public meeting in Rautahat. Leaving aside the prior commitments of official programmes, I have connected myself with the agony and pains of the people of Bara and Parsa when they were hit by windstorm. I have been to Manang to encourage the commercial apple farming; and travelled to Dolakha to encourage the speedy completion of hydroelectricity project. In this way, I myself have physically

reached to 29 out of 77 districts in the last one year to have dialogue with the people.

The visits to these districts have inspired the government to enforce the directives for the management of unsafe settlements of various nature existing in the hilly areas of Karnali and Sudurpaschim (far western) provinces, and most parts of the Terai.

Thus, navigating through the challenges, and instilling hopes and enthusiasm, the last year has gone from us. The bygone year has further strengthened our confidence. The Nepali New Year 2076 BS is welcoming us with full of national aspiration and a list of works to be completed. Under the law of nature, we must wait for one year for the spring to come. However, the laws of social development are complex.

Unlike in nature, the spring does not come automatically in human society; it must be achieved. Arrival of the spring in human society is influenced by various forces and trends. However, we are confident that the spring will arrive in Nepali society, which will bring sustained peace, prosperity with social justice, development with democracy and happiness with wellbeing.

I pay tributes to all those pioneers who guided us through their thoughts and encouraged us to move forward.

May this New Year bring added happiness to all Nepali people. Once again, greetings and best wishes!

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Good governance: The bedrock of development*

I would like to thank the Asia Pacific Summit 2018-Nepal for their decision to confer on me the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) Leadership and Good Governance Award. I am delighted to accept the Award. To me, this honour is not only the acknowledgement of my

* Speech delivered at 'Leadership and Good Governance Award' Ceremony organised by UPF, 2 December 2018.

struggle for democracy, human rights and rule of law in Nepal, but also the respect of the sacrifice and long struggle of Nepali people for the same and their achievements.

I have also taken this gesture as a recognition of my sincere efforts to promote good governance in the country. Good governance is a prerequisite for peace and stability. It is a bedrock of development, and foundation of sustainable democracy. So, I would like to reiterate that we all need to collaborate in enhancing governance and, thereby, consolidating democracy, promoting human rights and

strengthening rule-based institutions. This Award has encouraged me to take further bold initiative to this end.

Let me briefly touch on the subject. Good governance has a wider meaning. It is not limited to managing administration only. My conviction is that there is no development without good governance. Good governance is pivotal to achieve larger development objectives, deliver public services in a transparent manner and bring prosperity in the life of people. Without good governance, it will be difficult to mobilise institutional apparatus and resources meant for delivering services to the people.

My Government adheres to the universally accepted values of good governance. Our efforts are directed towards promoting comprehensive democracy. For this, we put emphasis on the rule of law, periodic elections, transparent and accountable bureaucracy, and inclusive and equity-based participation. While adhering to these universally accepted attributes of good governance, we also need to consider our economic, social and administrative capacity and ground realities.

The foremost principle of good governance is the respect for the rule of law. We should be guided by the idea that every person is equal before the law and no one is above it. Public accountability and transparency are the pillars from which good governance derives strength.

I am of the view that good governance means an accountable government; the government that provides security and promotes effective delivery systems. A government which is accountable to its actions and responsible to its people. The

relationship between the government and the people can only be consolidated through accountable government.

When we talk about good governance, we mostly tend to focus on national context. I would like to underline that good governance in international context is equally important. Strict adherence to such vital principles as justice, fairness, equity, transparency and accountability helps promote healthy inter-state relationship and enhances the credibility of the international institutions as well.

Corruption is a challenge to good governance. It is a complex subject. Technological advancement provides a useful tool for us to trace and check corruption. But the other side of the story is that it also promotes new forms of corruption.

Corruption, in its various forms, weakens the basic foundation of public service delivery. It is a hinderance to the overall socio-economic development of the country. Corruption is not only about using money to influence decision-making. It also involves misusing policy, power and responsibility to favour or disfavour any individual, institution or group with *malafide* intention.

In this context, there is a need to reduce the rent-seeking or favour-seeking opportunities by bringing greater transparency. Government's actions should be made open, results predictable and policy comprehensive. My government is committed to providing corruption-free administration and has introduced the policy of zero tolerance on corruption.

Corruption cannot be controlled or eliminated with the efforts of the government at all layers alone. Every institution - whether public or private, business or civil society and media, or academic institutions, and above all, every conscious citizen of the country - has an important role to promote the culture of honesty, transparency and accountability with high moral standard in order to control corruption. The issue of corruption control should not be a tool to suppress oppositions, rather, it is a tool to establish a system of good governance and promote ethical values.

Democratically elected representative bodies have even greater role to play in this regard. And, we should take our responsibility seriously and faithfully.

The topmost agenda of my government is economic transformation and prosperity of Nepali people. Maintaining political stability, ensuring social justice and the rule of law have been the overarching objectives of the present government. Good governance is critical to realise the vision of 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali'. It guides our orientation towards development and prosperity.

We are taking various policy initiatives and programmes to improve the quality of life of people from all walks of life. We are, by all means, ready to confront development challenges and not avoid them. Our policy is that all institutions and individuals have to take a '*one step forward everyday*'.

But I also believe that policy reform alone is not sufficient to bring an all-round development. We need to design and

implement programmes and take initiatives in an integrated fashion so that we can have maximum impact.

I affirm that there is a need of comprehensive development of all sectors. While improving the performance of public enterprises, we should also provide conducive economic environment for the private sector to thrive. Equally, participation of a strong civil society gives necessary inputs for agenda setting. When private sectors, NGOs, government institutions and other stakeholders work together, its outcome will be impactful.

●

Disseminate facts, not rumours*

On the occasion of the completion of one hundred days of the government under my leadership on 26 May 2018, I said that I was thinking of you, my fellow citizens, and the moment of my oathtaking ceremony too. In both the occasions, I promised to

* Address to the nation on the occasion of the completion of one year of present government, Kathmandu, 14 February 2019.

serve you as the Prime Minister, not alone, but together with you, by taking you all into confidence and being true to your affection, faith and trust in me.

The government has completed 365 days today. You are in my thoughts and minds as always. And, on this occasion, I extend my warm greetings to you all, once again, for entrusting me with the responsibility of leading the task of nation building.

During the period of one year, I have made public statements, on different occasions, on the overall condition of the country and the performance of the government under my leadership.

What I am sharing with you today might sound familiar to you all since it is the continuity of my previous views and experiences.

I recall the days of last year. It had been three months following the completion of the general elections. Those who were rejected by the people through votes were still running the government. They were reluctant to handover the legitimate power to the coalition, which had won two-thirds seats in the parliament and was preparing to form a new government and lead the country in my leadership. In the name of 'a need to have a legal clarity', they jeopardised democracy and downplayed democratic values for three months. Public opinion was reaching the level of frustration. The coalition that had won the popular mandate was willing to take the responsibility but those who were supposed to handover the responsibilities were baffled and confused because the elections result for them was a disaster. They were looking for an excuse to cling to power.

Indicating to this very situation and the elections results, I had emphatically said, "It was not a disaster. It should not be taken that way. It would happen and finally it happened. So, all need to realise it and accept it accordingly."

People had a general perception that no single party would win a clear majority due to the complex electoral system we had adopted. They had thought that the elections would result in a hung parliament. The Nepali people, who were fed up with years of 'messy and unpredictable coalition governments' and the resultant care-taker type of governance based on parochial and short-term planning, voted for our

coalition with the overwhelming support. Our complex electoral system produced even such electoral outcomes that astonished the world.

I recall that though we had the constitutional provisions of Federation, Provinces and Local Level, there were no structures even to house the government offices. The situation was unclear. The provincial capitals were designated but were no offices even for the Chiefs of the Provinces. Provincial Parliaments were formed, but there were no buildings and other physical facilities for their operation. Ministers were appointed but they had no offices and residences. There were piles of work ahead but there was no human resource, no legislation, no established procedures, no financial procedures and arrangements.

Our past should not be the erasers of our footprints. Let us think once what was the situation when we took the office and where we stand now. Despite a complex electoral system, a single party government has been formed with a strong mandate after two and half decades. Vicious circle of political transition has ended, and stability has been achieved. This has formed a strong platform for us to focus on long-term development planning instead of focusing on works with short-term benefits. We should be encouraged by this situation rather than remaining dispirited.

Addressing the House of Representatives on 6 January 2019, I had said, "Today, we are not just running a government that displaced the previous one. We rather are in a historic situation after a colossal change. Similar situation was created in 1959 following the first general elections after the end of

Rana regime. Similar situation was created in 1991 following the elections after the end of Panchayat system. The current change leads us to a new system – from unitary system of governance to federalism, from just 'a formal democracy' to participatory democracy, and from monarchy to the republican system. Today, the country is a federal democratic republic."

A political change took place in 1951. In 1957, the foundation was laid for developing democratic institutions. But the regressive move of 1960 reversed the gains. Now, we are in the phase of implementing an entirely new system, new governance and new constitution. This new system incorporates the values of participation and inclusion, principles of federalism, and separation of power. Our democracy is not limited to the political rights for speaking and writing freely. Ours is a 'comprehensive democracy' with social justice, equality and dignity. But some individuals appear to be holding ideological biases against us. In order to divert attention from our mission of making people sovereign by all means and empowering them, rumours are being spread that democracy has started shrinking and authoritarianism has emerged. To see an ever-flourishing comprehensive democracy as shrinking is a worrying illusion. I want to reiterate that democracy is an ideal for us. It is a rule-based, coherent and refined system – not just a business for livelihood. Neither is this established by the grace of anyone nor is it a system meant only for enjoying benefits and privileges by someone. It is an ideal established through our conscious and well-thought struggles, which were full of sacrifices.

Therefore, the current government has referred to its first year in office as the year for structural management of the country

and the foundation year for prosperity. This is the reason why I termed this year as the foundation not only for upcoming five years but also for the future. What we do today creates the base for the future. And, I believe that political stability is a citadel for the journey towards prosperity.

While digging foundation for a building, we also consider the design for the floors and the roof. But what if someone asks for the details about the floors and the roof merely at the sight of the foundation? We are facing similar questions about the building of the complete house by those who themselves have obstructed the levelling of the ground and laying of its foundation.

I often consider why I should react to such questions. Now, federalism has come into operation. On its foundation, participatory system of governance has been created. State power has been transferred to the local level. We all have to understand that the exercise of federalism and transfer of power is not easy. It is not unusual for our political cadres who were conventionally running the erstwhile VDCs and municipalities to lack the practical knowledge of running the newly established municipalities that are local governments in true sense. It is not abnormal for the people's representatives who had the experience of parliament under unitary system to have confusions about practices under federal set up. Province-level structure is totally a new experience for us and we are working hard to set it in a system.

Therefore, the Inter-Province Coordination Council under my leadership has brought the federalism implementation facilitation workplan into operation. The task of implementing

fiscal federalism is a more technical matter. But it has already been implemented during this period. Detailed basis and structure of revenue allocation has been determined with the provision of providing 15% each of the value added tax and excise duties to the province and local level. Arrangements have been made for the provinces and local level to receive the revenue allocation amounts within the first 15 days of every month.

Financial equalisation grants of 3.8% of total budget to the provinces and 6.5% of total budget to the local level has been made available from the federal consolidated fund. It was done following the formulation of an indicator on the basis of the expenditure needs and revenue generating capacity of province and local level.

The government has formulated provisions relating to transfer of the conditional grants to provincial and local governments. The federal government has transferred 4.8% of the total budget to the provinces and 8.2% to the local level for the implementation of programmes/projects in the fiscal year 2018-19. The guidelines for distribution of complementary grants and special grants to the province and local level have been approved. Twenty billion rupees has been released to the province and local level on the basis of specified criteria.

For the management of budget deficits in provinces and local level, the ceiling for domestic debt mobilisation has been set to a maximum of 10% of the total sum of their inland revenue, and the funds transferred through revenue sharing mechanism.

The consolidated fund of province and local governments and the divisible fund for the revenue sharing among the federation, provinces and local level have come into operation. In order to simplify the management of public expenditure, arrangements have been made for the submission to the federal line ministries the physical and financial reports of the programmes and projects, which are sanctioned by such ministries and run by provinces. Similarly, arrangements have been made for the submission to the provincial ministries the physical and financial reports of the programmes and projects, which are sanctioned by provincial ministries and run by federal offices in those provinces.

Inter-Provincial Financial Commission has been facilitating the resolution of problems related to implementation of fiscal federalism. In order to enable and strengthen province and local level as per the spirit of federalism, and maintain uniformity and functional coordination among them, seventeen Sample Guidelines and Directives have been prepared and sent to the provinces. Twenty-one similar documents have been prepared and sent to local level. A total of 51,465 representatives and officials from the local level have been trained on themes such as planning and budgeting, integrated property tax, functioning of judicial committee, procurement and public finance.

A total of 1,081 offices have been maintained at the federal level including 22 ministries, 12 constitutional bodies, 54 departments and department level offices, and four other commission secretariats. In each province, seven ministries, a Provincial Assembly Secretariat, a Provincial Financial Comptroller General's Office, 63 directorates, 717 divisions

and offices have been set up. The local levels have been classified into ten categories. Organisation structures for all 753 local levels have been approved.

For the required human resource management at the federal, provincial and local level, a total of 137,371 bureaucratic positions have been maintained. This includes 47,920 positions at the federal level, 22,685 at the provincial level and 66,766 at the local level. Adjustment of civil servants in the federal set-up, which was considered a tough task, has now been almost completed. Compared to experiences of other countries restructured into federal system, our progress so far is highly encouraging.

Formulation of necessary legislations was another milestone for us this year. Constitution is our fundamental law. It is the obligation of the government to translate the words of the constitution into action. I became Prime Minister for the first time after the promulgation of the constitution but had to step down in nine months. The successive governments had also known that the new national codes needed to be implemented from 17 August 2018. Necessary laws for the implementation of the fundamental rights as stipulated in the Articles from 16 to 48 of the constitution had to be introduced before 18 September 2018. But no progress was made to this direction. When I assumed the office again last year, the tasks were pending. Country was awaiting a government that could carry out these tasks. I had the responsibility to instil hope in the people that the provisions of the constitution were not there 'just to show and say.' They were there to translate them into action. The present government put it in priority by drafting a

Bill in every five-day on an average and has gradually brought to implementation the constitutional provisions.

Sixteen laws related to fundamental rights have been introduced and are put into operation. The Federal Parliament has passed twenty-five Acts. Five Ordinances have been proclaimed. Twenty-three Bills are under consideration at the Federal Parliament. Preparations are at the final stage for tabling 24 Bills to the Parliament. A total of 47 Regulations and seven Formation Orders have been issued. A total of 33 directives and guidelines have been formulated in the past one year.

Among the 339 existing laws, some laws are being aligned with the provisions of the constitution. Some new laws are being formulated as per the constitution and the process of amendments to 165 laws, which were inconsistent with the constitution, is underway.

Nepal has become party to 95 various bilateral and multilateral treaties and agreements. As many as 108 draft texts for bilateral and multilateral treaties, and loan and grant agreements with donor agencies are under consideration.

Issues relating to political rights have been basically resolved. Now, the remaining task is to fulfil the aspirations for prosperity. That is why I have been reiterating that the motto of the present government is 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali'. Investment climate has now become more conducive than ever before. Along with the amendments to Labour Law, thirteen relevant Acts, Rules and Directives deemed

instrumental for creating investment friendly environment are also being formulated and amended.

The long-overdue Foreign Investment and Technology Transfer Bill will be tabled in the Federal Parliament soon. The processes of making amendments to legislations such as Public-Private Partnership and Investment Act, Industrial Enterprise Act, Foreign Exchange (Regulation) Act are at the final stage with a view to ensuring more investment friendly environment. The model agreement on Bilateral Investment Protection has been prepared.

The government is effortful in creating conducive environment for investment through development of mega energy and transmission-line projects, expansion of industrial area and establishment of Special Economic Zones. Preparations have been completed for establishing and operationalisation of 'One Stop Service Centre' that provides all investment related services starting from registration of a company to its exit.

The government has been calling for domestic, foreign and inter-state investment. Invitation to Nepal's Prime Minister to participate in the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, for the first time since its establishment 50 years ago can be considered as a recognition of the increasing business profile of Nepal.

The Industry-Commerce Promotion Dialogue Council has been constituted under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister. Participation of private sector in the economic and infrastructure development has been encouraged through

this Council. Preparations have almost been completed for holding the International Investment Summit in March 2019.

A Policy Research Academy has been established as an autonomous think-tank body. During my address to the House of Representatives on 6 January 2019, I had presented some statistics and figures. Those who liked to find 'sheer emotions' in my statement questioned why I cited those facts and figures. Those who felt averse to the progress made by this government mistook the data as 'false statistics.' They seemed to be assuming that Nepal is the country where its people are destined to hear only about damages, destruction and degradation. "Is it sensible in such a country to present statistics of progress? It is not statistics; it is false statistics", they seemed to contend.

I am aware of the problems. I am also aware that whatever we have been doing is not enough. I am fully conscious that the gap between people's thirst for development and our delivery must be bridged. People want the vehicle of development to run in the highest gear. But, I humbly appeal that the gear can only be changed step by step. Let me briefly mention some aspects of the progress we have made during this year:

- Tribhuvan International Airport has started operating 22 hours a day. During this period domestic air services have been started in the nights from six airports including those in Dhangadhi and Chandragadhi. Construction works of Gautam Buddha International Airport are ongoing rapidly with the objective of conducting test flights from June 2020 and operating regular flights from September 2020. The construction

work of the Pokhara International Airport has gained momentum with a view to completing it by 2020 prior to the stipulated schedule. Of the required 110 *bigahas* of land, 65 *bigahas* have already been acquired for the construction of Nijgadh International Airport.

- In energy sector, decisions and agreements have been made. It has far reaching implications including in energy banking. During this period, the new users who will consume 300 thousand units of electricity have been added. Per capita consumption of electricity has increased from 177-kilowatt hours to 200 kilowatt hours. The construction of Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower project has reached the final stage of completion. Construction works of Arun III Hydropower Project has commenced. The construction of 8 kilometres of the tunnel of Bheri Babai Diversion Multipurpose Project has been completed.

- A total of 497 of new roads has been constructed during the year. A total of 589 kilometres of rural roads has been upgraded out of which 221 kilometres has been black-topped. Similarly, 7,500 kilometres of roads have been repaired and 87 motorable bridges have been constructed. 417 suspension bridges have been installed. Encouraging progress has been achieved on Kathmandu-Terai Fast Track. The construction work of Dhalkebar-Simara section under Mechi-Mahakali railways has been expeditiously advanced. Jayanagar-Kurta railway has been completed and we have reached the point of operating Nepal's own train.

- The campaign I had launched to replace the wire crossings (*tuins*) is nearing a success. This year alone, a wire crossing has been replaced on every three days on an average.

These facts demonstrate that the capacity of our development administration is getting stronger and an investment-friendly environment has been created for private sector. The Integrated Customs Check Post has been operationalised in Birgunj since 7 April 2018. Few cynics ask: 'where is investment and where are the industries?' I simply want to tell them that 499 industries have been registered during the year with the commitment of the capital amounting around USD 1.8 billion. Similarly, 416 enterprises with foreign investment have been approved during the same period with the commitment of a total capital of more than USD 460 million.

I have frequently referred to the ingenuity of our ancestors and the biological diversity of our landscape. As I referred to the vast storage of minerals that we possess, a friend quoted the famous Nepali proverb rather satirically, 'the gold in Lhasa is useless for my ears'. He meant to say that speeches are not enough. Of course, mere speeches are not enough. We need to act. We need to be ready to act. There is nothing for those who do not act. For an innovative and active person, even the invisible air can be a source of income.

Yesterday on 13 February, I inaugurated a world-class bioscience company. It will produce 'virus' out of the air, convert it into vaccines and export them to foreign countries. It employs graduates in bioscience fields.

A huge deposit of around 100 million metric tons of iron ore has been identified in Dhaubadi, Nawalparasi. People might ask what this will do. How does it contribute to our progress? I humbly inform you that, as per the metallurgical test carried out in China, sponge iron can be produced from this iron ore. I do not think it is necessary to explain more of its benefits.

To ease the exports and imports from Vishakhapatnam Port, electronic cargo tracking system has been put in place for clearance of goods directly at Birgunj. Electronic cargo tracking system is also being introduced from this month for transactions of goods via railways from Kolkata and Haldia Ports. Security locking system has been installed in petroleum tankers in all entry points to control leakage of petroleum products while being transported from India. The task of laying of petroleum pipelines has gained momentum.

The foundation stone for the construction of Inland Clearance Depot was laid in Chobhar on 17 January 2019. 'Nepal's Water, People's Investment' programme has just been launched today with an objective of making every Nepali a shareholder of electricity projects.

During my address to the House of Representatives, I had stated that inaugurations and laying of foundation stones of few dozens of projects would be completed by mid-February 2019. I am not going to repeat today the details I presented then.

I recall a comment from a well-wisher that, while listening to me, he could feel that some progress was being achieved. But he inquired rather innocently why the others would not trust

what I was saying. It was a serious question. I did not ask him who the 'others' were. I just said, "I have filled half an empty pot. If those people are calling the pot 'half empty' when I see it 'half full', how should I respond to them?"

We have a strange habit. We want to see new governments every nine months. We keep quiet for the first three months, we question its performance in the next three months, and we overthrow the government in another three months. I can guess how surprised those people are to see this government functioning well over a year. Sometimes, I feel that the questions I am facing are in essence the manifestation of our experiences of such nine-month governments. If it is so, I request all to change the old habit. Let's adopt new habits.

Our consciousness is based on the physical matters. Only a few people may be able to guess the shape of an object without seeing it. I doubt, for this very reason, questions are raised when we talk about ships, water transports and railway services in Nepal. We all see that aeroplanes are flying around the globe. Ships have been navigating the seas and meandering the river courses. But why do we make an issue in our country when we plan to develop and utilise these facilities? My plan and resolve to navigate our own flag carrier ships in the rivers and oceans is not a daydream. It is not just like the famous song of Narayan Gopal and Aruna Lama where the singers promise to bring the moon along with the stars down to the earth for their beloved.

This morning I inaugurated the Ship Office. This is not for fun. This is to ensure that we have been working for ship transportation. Some might try to make fun of it. They might

say, "Now that a new office has been established, should we buy tickets from this office?" I would advise them not to go there to buy the tickets now. That office is not for buying tickets. There will be a day when people will get to an office to buy tickets and board the ships. I myself will inform you then.

This one-year has seen tremendous progress in our relations with neighbours. We have made good achievements in foreign policy. Media have also reported on this. Nepal has improved its foreign relations in the spirit of 'amity with all, enmity with none'. We have maintained balanced foreign policy while maintaining visible presence in global affairs. It is a matter of satisfaction for us that Nepal's voice is being heard in regional and international forums. Attraction, appreciation and confidence of the global community towards Nepal has grown.

In the year, the Right Honourable President paid a visit to Qatar and Poland. Nepal's investment potentials were discussed on those occasions. The Right Honourable Vice President participated in the 17th Western China International Exhibition.

My official visit to India and the official visit of Indian Prime Minister to Nepal has elevated the relations between our two countries to a newer height. Some pending issues concerning both the countries are being resolved through mutual discussion. The implementation of the projects run under development cooperation from India has gained momentum. Apart from the agreements on increasing cooperation in agriculture, railways and cross-border waterways, the scope of development cooperation has been extended.

During my visit to China and the subsequent meetings with the Chinese President and Premier of the State Council and with other important high officials, 14 various MoUs and Agreements have been signed on cooperation in projects related to railways, road and energy sector. With the agreement on the text of the Transport Transit Protocol, door has been opened for Nepal to use roads and ports of China to have access to the sea.

I addressed the 73rd United Nations General Assembly in September last year. I presented Nepal's views on world peace, international security, human rights and sustainable development, among others. I also briefed the global community about the unique and nationally led peace process of Nepal. I could feel the global sentiment that this unique and homegrown experience of ours could be an exemplary reference to conflict-ridden countries for establishing peace. I felt that the international community was amazed at the tremendous success of Nepal in conflict management, peace building, implementation of special and unique election system and conclusion of political transition. During my visit to the UN, I met the President of Switzerland and Prime Ministers of UK, Canada and Cambodia, and had fruitful discussions on matters of mutual interests.

Ridiculous comments were made about this visit even by the people who claim themselves to be 'intellectuals' and 'opinion makers.' It is incomprehensible to know what kind of psychological disorder some of the people suffer from to markdown the independence and progress of Nepal and take pleasure in disseminating the message that the country is 'going down' and is dependent on others.

Nepal's relationship with Costa Rica has achieved a new height following my official visit to that country. Nepal has become a party to the International Agreement establishing the UN-mandated University for Peace in San Jose. Addressing a progamme organised by the University, I shared the salient features of Nepal's peace process with the international community. The University also conferred on me an honorary doctorate.

This year, the President of Sri Lanka and Myanmar, the Prime Ministers of Bangladesh, Pakistan, Cambodia and Thailand, and State Councillor of Myanmar visited Nepal. The visits of Minister for Foreign Affairs to India, China, Portugal, Belgium, Luxembourg, Austria, Japan and United States of America have helped enhance Nepal's relations with these countries.

The Fourth Summit of Heads of State and Government of Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) was held in Kathmandu. All these visits and events have cemented our relations. I do not want to go into details of these. But, I reiterate that Nepal has made clear, through them, its interests and concerns to the international community.

Nepal has been elected as the coordinator of Asia-Pacific Group in the Human Rights Council and as a member of the UN Peace Building Commission. We have presented our membership bids in various elections to UN bodies.

Over the period of one year, Nepal established diplomatic relations with Saint Kitts and Nevis, Rwanda, Madagascar

and Suriname. With this the number of countries with which Nepal has diplomatic relations has reached 163.

Macro-economic condition of the country is mostly in positive direction. I do not want to dwell on data, but we have been able to change the facts with visible progress. Looking at the expansion of economic activities of the current fiscal year, we can be confident of achieving overall economic growth closer to the target we have set. The average inflation rate of the current fiscal year is under control.

I want to draw the attention of those who argue that, "Market prices have risen extremely. Was it to see this day that we brought democracy?" Of course, I am not saying that the goods are cheap and that our wages can buy the whole universe. But, comparison has to be made between the realities of yesterday and today. The average inflation is around 4.25% now. I ask them who spread rumours to check the fact what it was last year.

The number of companies registered has increased by 26.7%. Industrial capacity has increased. The investment of banks and financial institutions in the industrial sector has increased by 28.3%. Industrial activities have expanded.

The import of industrial goods, construction materials and goods that support capital formation has increased by 32.1%. Improvement in labour relations has led to innovation in the development and enhancement of industrial activities. Loans and investments from banks and financial institutions have gone up by 20.3%. The loan-flow to the private sector has also increased by 24.1%.

Nepal had aspired to welcome one million tourists long back in 1998. That aspiration has now been fulfilled after 21 years. Arrival of tourists has increased by 32.5%. Even in the month of January, which is considered off-season for tourism in Nepal, the arrival of over 90,000 thousand tourists is an encouraging sign. Service sector continues to expand at the backdrop of enhancement of tourism sector and increment of tourist arrivals. Increase in the number of tigers has also helped Nepal get listed as one of the top 15 most-favoured tourist destinations in the world.

As of mid-January 2019, the foreign currency reserve with the banks is sufficient to sustain the imports of goods for 8.9 months and goods and services for 7.8 months. This implies that we have comfortable foreign currency reserve.

This year, the farmers could get fertilizers on time. Irrigation facilities were expanded to additional two thousand hectares of land. Arrangements have been made for farmers to have easy access to high-quality seeds. Compared to the last year, the production of rice has increased by 8.9%. Maize production has risen by 3.5% and that of vegetables by 16.5%.

The remote areas including the districts such as Dolpa, Mugu and Humla have received 103,145 quintals of food items. According to Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, no place in the country faced food crisis last year.

Each educated but unemployed youth and the returnee from foreign countries has been provided with grants of two hundred thousand rupees for agricultural enterprises.

Nineteen Custom Hiring Centres have been constructed under the Prime Minister Agriculture Modernisation Project in order to advance agricultural mechanisation. Additional 25 centres are under construction. Small farmers' loan worth 1.32 billion rupees has been exempted.

Seventeen thousand youths have been self-employed under the Youth and Small Entrepreneurs Self-Employment Fund. The number of people going abroad for foreign employment has declined by 39.1% over the last six months, as compared to the same period of the last year. Despite it, the remittance inflows have gone up by 30.2%. The growth in national gross domestic product indicates that employment opportunities have been generated in the country.

Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security has established eleven Labour and Employment Offices. Issuance of labour permits and other services concerning foreign employment have begun in all provinces. This has ended the compulsion to travel to Kathmandu merely for obtaining labour permits. Applications from 20 thousand people, who returned from foreign employment in last three years, have been collected with a view to providing them with loans at minimum interest rates.

Minimum wages of private sector workers have been increased by 39% with the mutual consent of employers and trade unions. Contribution-Based Social Security Scheme was launched on 27 November 2018. As of now, 950 enterprises of the employers have been registered in the Scheme and the registration continues. Effective implementation of this Scheme has ensured both the present and future of the

workers. Creation of workers-friendly industrial environment has put an end to agitations and strikes.

I inaugurated the Prime Minister Employment Programme yesterday. This will prepare a database of both skilled and unskilled people looking for jobs and will help the government ensure people's right-to-employment as stipulated in the constitution. These initiatives are directly related to our work and employment.

The government has already started providing concessional loans and grants to those who want to work. The available loans range from three hundred thousand to 50 million rupees in seven different sectors. Arrangements have been made to guarantee a minimum level of employment to the jobless people. In case employment cannot be guaranteed, provisions are made for providing an unemployment allowance based on certain criteria.

A handful of people who benefit without working and contributing labour will still be there to make noises of some sort. But we keep going. As many as 309 drinking water projects have been completed over the last one year. Access to drinking water has been ensured to additional six hundred thousand people. Continuous efforts are being made to resolve problems related to Melamchi Drinking Water project and complete it at the earliest.

Health insurance scheme has been implemented in 36 districts. The number of people covered by insurance has reached to about 15 hundred thousand, which was about 7 hundred thousand before the formation of this government. Nepal is

the first country in South Asia to have received a certificate for controlling the disease called *rubella*.

Two hundred and fifty-four thousand additional students were enrolled in schools during the academic session of 2018-19. One hundred and twenty local governments have declared that no child of school going age is outside the school. All students have been provided with books and stationery on time. This will continue this year too. This is only the second year when students were provided with books and stationery on time.

While assuming the office one year ago, I had promised to ensure that technical education is provided from all local levels within two years of the formation of the present government. CTEVT has established technical schools at 101 local levels this year alone. The CTEVT claims that this is the first time in history that technical schools in such significant number have been established in the country.

Post-earthquake reconstruction gained momentum this year. A total of 66,875 households received the first instalment, 332,455 the second and 314, 502 the third instalment of reconstruction grants. Reconstruction of 1,072 schools has been completed.

As a plan to expand broadband connectivity to all local levels, free internet services for two years have been installed in 1,371 ward offices, 1,460 community secondary schools and 1,063 health centres.

A campaign of incorporating online payment, license, land revenue, pan number, company registrar, social security fund, passport and registration into one single network is underway with a view to making services efficient through consolidation of information. The campaign of Digital Nepal has been advanced, together with addressing the public grievances through '*Hello Sarkar*' and monitoring the public offices through the digital portal. Work to ensure easy access of people to the government services has been initiated through the "citizens' rights app".

I have said, "Neither will I commit any act of corruption nor allow anyone to indulge in corruption". It will be a mistake if anyone takes this commitment for granted. I want to make it clear- I have no second thought with regard to corrupt people and corruption.

The machinery of good governance has been functioning well. Those who were involved in corruption in the past are enraged today. Those willing to indulge in corruption are frightened. Those who look for loopholes for corruption are agitated. What baffles me is that these are the same people who 'lament' in the media on the lack of good governance. It is an irony that even those who themselves admitted the act of corruption have now started questioning our integrity. Even those involved in petty business of seeking benefits in the regular transfer of civil servants are teaching us lessons of good governance.

Still I hear the same complaint: "Where is the action against corruption?" Statistics are self-explanatory: 82 cases, of which 49 are related to revenue leakage and 33 to misuse of

foreign exchange, have been filed with a total claim amount and penalty of 7 billion 628 million and 252 thousand rupees against 99 individuals including eight government officials.

Cases have been filed against 33 individuals with a claim of penalty equal to thrice the claim amount of 5 billion 916 million and 96 thousand, and 3 years of imprisonment for illegal transfer of currency through *hundi* system.

Remarkable success has been achieved in dismantling the network and decimating criminal tendency of those indulged in gold-smuggling and other organised crimes. Out of 75 defendants, 46 have been arrested, 31 are absconding and 34 are under judicial custody for hearing. Assets and bank accounts of 36 of the accused have been frozen.

A total of 29 companies, firms and construction houses failing to comply with the terms of the contract, not completing the work on time, and doing sub-optimal work have been blacklisted. Peace and security arrangements have been further strengthened through effective implementation of the security mechanisms. Organised hooliganism has been crushed.

Comments are made against the present government with the groundless allegations of 'over-ambition, slow delivery, underdevelopment and counter-democratisation'.

I had a different picture in my heart, while I was living a life of hardship during the struggle against the autocratic regime, and for the establishment of democracy. The picture I had then in my heart has been manifested in the form of the resolve of

'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali'. I have been repeatedly saying that Nepal will develop, and we have to develop it. Yes, everything has a deadline. Time is limited, and so are people's ability and knowledge. However, as I have always highlighted, there is no limit to integrity and no finite lifespan of loyalty. Those who work with integrity and loyalty do not need any additional training.

We have achieved political stability after the elections. Now we are moving towards achieving economic stability. We know very well both what and who stand as challenges on our path. The stability that we have achieved may have become a curse for some. That is why, they are inclined towards undermining this political stability by fabricating facts and events and, based on that, spreading social unrest. As we march ahead with the historic goal of building a prosperous Nepal, we will be able to overcome such obstacles being armed with integrity and loyalty. We are committed to do so.

Constructive suggestions, comments and criticisms of the people are our guidelines. We always pay high respect to the sovereign rights of the people to warn and caution us. We always welcome the constructive criticisms from the opposition, media and civil society, which are an integral part of democracy. But, it will not be appropriate to attack democratic system, institutions, and social harmony in the name of criticism. It is also not good to disappoint people, portray negative image about the country's future, and make the people frustrated by ventilating ill-feelings with an aim of creating perpetual cycle of instability in society. History has bestowed on me the responsibility to prosper Nepal and make Nepali happy. I am here to steer the process. But it is

our common responsibility to make the country rich and people joyous working together. Together we can shower our face with happiness and hold our heads high. This only sustains when our country becomes strong, developed and prosperous.

Integrity is at the heart of this government's activities. This year we have built a foundation for further work. Years ahead will be the years of achievements and success. On completion of the five-year term, as we go for next elections, we will be able to proudly declare that all the promises we made in the election manifesto have been fulfilled. We will have new and different dreams for Nepal and Nepali people.

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Our relationship is deep and dense*

I have great pleasure to speak on this occasion of the inauguration of the flagship project of Motihari - Amlekhgunj Petroleum Products Pipeline completed under Nepal - India cooperation. I remember it was just last year in April during my visit to India that Prime

* Statement made at the ceremony of Joint Remote Inauguration of Motihari - Amlekhgunj Petroleum Products Pipeline by the Prime Minister of Nepal and the Prime Minister of India, Kathmandu, 10 September 2019.

Minister Shree Modiji and I attended the ground-breaking ceremony and formally launched this Project.

It is heartening to note that the Project has been completed so early, within half of its scheduled timeframe. It has enabled us to inaugurate it for its operationalisation starting today.

This Pipeline Project is the first of its kind between Nepal and India, and in South Asia. I believe that it will not only save time, reduce cost, lessen road traffic, and reduce air pollution in transporting petroleum products from India to Nepal, but

also open avenues in Nepal for expanding similar pipelines across the country.

As I talk here about the positive impact of the Pipeline on consumer price, I am happy to share with you that Nepal Oil Corporation has already reduced both diesel and petrol prices by NPR 2 per litre effective from today.

Similarly, the Project will, without any doubt, enhance interconnectedness and interdependence between our two countries. It is one of the best examples of connectivity in terms of trade and transit infrastructure of Nepal and India. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Prime Minister Shree Modiji and the Government of India for the support and cooperation to bring into the operation of such an important project.

Nepal-India cooperation is not limited only to a few projects. Many other bilateral projects covering various areas of cooperation including railways, inland waterways, roads, hydropower generation, Integrated Check Posts, bridges, agriculture, tourism, are in the pipeline. Early completion of the projects with similar pace and efforts will, I believe, enormously benefit both the countries and the peoples. Also, I am happy to note that implementation of various India-aided projects has gathered momentum in recent years following the understanding reached between Prime Minister Shree Modiji and myself in our previous meetings.

At the moment, I would like to appreciate the works related to the post-earthquake reconstruction of about fifty thousand houses in Gorkha and Nuwakot districts of Nepal with

India's financial assistance. These houses stand as a symbol of India's support and friendly gesture to the people of Nepal. Such development works, many of which directly benefit the people, contribute to make our relationship stronger and fruitful.

Nepal attaches great importance to its relations with India. The relationship between our two countries is so deep and dense that no area of cooperation is left untouched. There is always a scope of expanding it further.

We are now at the important juncture of history. Today, Nepal and India are in a better situation of political stability with strong majority governments in both the countries. Rising economic growth rates, availability of dynamic and capable human resources and rich natural resources endowments offer promising environment for development and prosperity. This has also created an enabling environment for further strengthening partnership and cooperation between the countries for mutual benefit.

On top of it, we have similar visions of development, prosperity and happiness of our peoples. Our visions are backed by solid political commitment and strong determination. Prime Minister Shree Modiji's '*sab ka sath, sab ka bikas and sab ka bishwas*' (everyone's support, everyone's development, and everyone's trust) and my vision for 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali', capture the essence of our commitment, determination and efforts to transform the development landscape of our respective countries.

Prime Minister of Nepal

Prime Minister of India

In this context, what I believe is that we need to inject new vigour, dynamism and direction to Nepal-India relationship so that it could continue taking new heights in the days ahead. I am ready to work hand-in-hand with Prime Minister Shree Modiji towards attaining this objective.

While recalling the exchange of successful visits in the past, I take this opportunity to extend a cordial invitation to you, Prime Minister Modiji, to pay a visit to Nepal at your earliest convenience.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the government officials, local authorities and the institutions concerned of Nepal and India, who worked tirelessly in bringing into operation this important pipeline project of Nepal-India cooperation.

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Inculcate hope in people to build the nation*

Following long struggle and sacrifice, we had promulgated the Constitution of Nepal exactly this day five years ago. On this historic occasion of the Fifth Anniversary of the constitution, and the National Day of Nepal, I, on behalf of the

* Address to the nation on the occasion of the Constitution Day and National Day of Nepal, Kathmandu, 20 September 2019.

Government of Nepal and on my own, extend my hearty congratulations and best wishes to you all. The constitution was written by the people's representatives.

On this joyous occasion of enthusiasm and celebration, I offer sincere tributes to all the known and unknown martyrs. I pay heartfelt reverence to all fellow country people who made incomparable contribution to take the country to the path of the rule of law. It is not an easily earned achievement. Many Nepalis have endured disappearances and homelessness, survived physical and mental traumas, tolerated sufferings

and family losses in the course of realising it through democratic movements.

A month ago, in the first meeting of the main ceremony committee of the Constitution Day and National Day, I had said that the Constitution Day should be observed with great magnificence making it the ceremony of all Nepali people from this year onward. Instead of paying a formality, this Day should create celebratory fervour in the hearts of all Nepalis.

This is the Day for which we Nepali people have struggled for seven decades. The Day has spread the message of unity in diversity by weaving the flowers of Nepali populace into a garland. It is such a day when all Nepalis are celebrating the ceremony on the happy occasion of successful codification of the gains of the decades-long struggles. With this day, the Nepali people have got what they were waiting for, and the awaiting was to begin the perpetual festival.

Therefore, the 3rd of Ashoj (20 September) is our Constitution Day. This is the National Day of Nepali people. This is the greatest festival of all festivals. This is the unity-day being observed throughout the country with the dynamic initiatives of our 761 governments operational in all three levels.

The Day is filled with the stories of glory for those who spearheaded the struggles for decades and have endured and felt the pain. Today is equivalent to Independence Day for all Nepalis who were liberated from the family separation, suffering and suffocation. This is the celebration to take a pride on the gains achieved. Hence, the Day is neither a mere ostentatious event, nor like a decree of dictatorial rulers and

its compliance, which was of total disinterest to the common people.

On the occasion of the National Day last year, I had said that this Day is an important benchmark of the history of modern Nepal. I had talked about articles and sub-articles of the constitution. I had briefly mentioned about the seven-decades long struggle for the constitution and subsequent success. I had expressed faith in democracy and democratic polity, and commitment to dynamism.

It is the faith where there is no space for undemocratic system like supremacy by birth or heredity. The dynamism where rights achieved are used in actual behaviour. Instead of getting entangled into the question of how many rights have been enshrined in which parts, articles or sub-articles of the constitution, we have to take forward-looking approach to implement the constitution unhindered. Constitution is always open to accommodate all voices in a legitimate way.

On that occasion, I had talked about our national aspiration and goals incorporated in the constitution. I had mentioned about our national aspiration of 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali.' This is the dream we cherished together and must be materialised by transforming the Nepali society into prosperity.

I reiterate those commitments even today. And, I would like to take your permission to share the achievements made by the government over the past one and half years.

Economic growth rate has reached 7.1% in in Fiscal Year 2075-2076 (2018/19). It is the highest rate of this decade. Growth of all economic sectors has remained between 5% and 9%. Economic growth rate of all provinces is somewhere in between 6% and 8%. The growth rate, thus, is balanced and equitable in both sectoral and provincial forms. It has indicated that the country has moved ahead on the path of equitable development and prosperity even in the initial stage of the implementation of federalism.

Export has increased by 19.4% and import is limited to 13.9% the same year. The increase in export is the highest in a decade for the first time. Average increase of import in the last decade was 23% except in the year hit by the earthquake and the blockade in the southern borders.

The same year, revenue collection has increased by 22.6%. Bank loans have expanded remarkably to various sectors. For instance, the loan has increased by 42.5% in agriculture sector, 20.3% in industrial sector, 22.2% in construction sector. Transport and public sectors saw the increment by 32.8%.

Likewise, seven types of concessional loans and grant interest have been provided in the same period. Under this programme, 18,295 persons have received loans amounting NPR 32.8 billion. The government provided grant interest NPR 1.5 billion until now.

The number of commercial banks at the local level has reached 737. It was 394 at the time of the formation of the government under my leadership. In a period of eighteen months, the

number of bank branches has risen to 8,805 from 5,837. This is an increase by 51%.

Over 165,622, bank accounts have been opened (as of 17 September 2019) under the 'Let's Open the Bank Account' campaign since 14 April 2019 (the first of Baishakh 2076 BS).

The formulae regarding the allocation of responsibilities, sharing of revenues and distribution of grants at the federal, provincial and local levels have been operational in 635 local bodies.

We have been able to make arrangements for an important aspect of federalism, the fiscal federalism, in one and half years. Resource management, revenue sharing, and expenditure system of the province and local levels have been well organised. Income, expenditure and disbursements can now be reported online. Nepal's rapid implementation of fiscal federalism is not only an extraordinary achievement for us. It is also a successful example for the rest of the world.

The vehicle/consignment tracking system commenced this Fiscal Year will contribute to controlling revenue leakage. Over 30,000 firms have already joined the system.

Import and export trade has resumed across the Tatopani border. It was closed following the 2015 earthquakes. The construction of Larcha Dry Port at Sindhupalchok has been completed and it has come into operation during this period.

A direct monitoring of Projects of National Pride through telepresence has been implemented. The government has

begun the distribution of National Identity Cards for the modernisation of public services. Preparations have been completed for the operationalisation of e-service delivery in security and police administration, land management, transport administration, industrial services, revenue administration, visas and passports, integrated citizens' apps and electronic voting system.

As many as 89 Land Revenue Offices have commenced e-services throughout the country so far. About 1,600 kilometres of black-topped roads and 243 bridges along the roads have been constructed during the last fiscal year.

Projects are being implemented to generate 1,000 megawatts of electricity and renewable energy this year. At the time of the formation of this government, an average energy consumption was 110 kilowatt hours. It is now 245 kilowatt hours.

Afforestation in a total area of 7,377 hectares of land has been completed during the period. In the Fiscal Year 2075/76 alone, plantation covered an area of 4,100 hectares, 141 percent up from the previous year. The plantation also includes over 45 lakh saplings of fruits.

Irrigation facility has been extended to an additional land of 3,700 hectares. A total of 492 thousand private houses, 5,000 schools and 665 health posts damaged by the earthquakes have been reconstructed in the same period.

A total of 869 newly constructed houses have been handed over to the victims of tornado in Bara and Parsa districts in March 2019.

The construction of Motihari-Raxaul-Amlekhgunuj cross-border petroleum pipeline is completed now. The foundation stone of the project was laid after the formation of this government. The pipeline has come in operation after joint inauguration by the Prime Ministers of Nepal and India on 10 September 2019. This is the first transborder pipeline in South Asia.

A three-fold increase in the number of citizens covered by insurance has been recorded over the period. The number of the insured has increased to 21 lakh 95 thousand from 7 lakh 84 thousand. As of February 2018, the insurance scheme covering 229 local bodies of 25 districts have been expanded to 471 local bodies of 48 districts.

The number of local bodies where all children of school going age enrolling in schools has increased to 127. This year, an additional three hundred thousand children are enrolled in schools. All 5.6 million students from grade one (1) to 10 received textbooks right at the beginning of academic calendar.

There were 43 districts declared as fully literate prior to the formation of the present government. This now has reached to 51 districts. Libraries have been established in additional 1,000 secondary schools.

Employment of a total of 2.3 million working days has been created in 646 local bodies under the Prime Minister Employment Programme. It has benefitted one hundred eighty-eight thousand and 346 persons providing with employment for 13 days in an average.

In order to make foreign employment affordable, safe and dignified, bilateral labour agreements have been concluded with Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates and the Mauritius on the basis of a no-cost principle. Those traveling to Malaysia free of cost as migrant workers are guaranteed equal pay, medical, health and accident insurance equals to their Malaysian counterparts. A bilateral labour agreement has been signed with Japan. It proves Nepali migrant workers equal pay as Japanese workers.

Beginning this year, the Social Security Scheme based on contributions of employees has come into operation. The Scheme has covered 66,409 contributing employees from about enlisted 5,000 participating employers beginning from 30 November 2018.

A Bill establishing a separate public transportation corporation is currently under consideration in the Federal Parliament. The law will put an end to syndicate and improve the public transportation system in Kathmandu valley. Electric buses will soon come into service for the benefit of the public. Preparations are at final stage to procure and bring into services three hundred electric buses through Sajha Yatayat. They will operate in Kathmandu valley and major provincial cities.

The complicated task of adjusting the civil servants into federal, province and local levels to implement the provisions of federal structure in the constitution has now been completed. Public Service Commission exams were held for the recruitment of employees in 13,645 permanent posts, out of 23,101 posts, for 515 local bodies. Total permanent posts

sanctioned for local bodies are 66,908. Publication of results for the exams are at final stage. Out of the total of 21,399 posts sanctioned for the province level civil servants, adjustments have been made for 13,821 permanent posts. Provincial Public Service Commissions have been established and works have already begun to recruit in the remaining vacant posts.

Japan has been reconnected to Nepal through direct air services. Preparations are in full swing for the Visit Nepal Year 2020. Infrastructure building for hosting the upcoming South Asian Games in Nepal are at final stage. In line with the commitment of the government to increase the old age allowance up to NPR. 5000 per month, the amount has now been increased to NPR. 3000 per month. It has come into implementation effective from July 2019.

During this period, heads of states and governments from 8 different countries have made official visits to Nepal. Right Honourable President of Nepal visited four different countries in official capacity, while Right Honourable Vice-President made two such visits. The Prime Minister undertook 10 official visits during the period.

These visits have contributed to further strengthening our foreign relations. Relations with our neighbouring countries have been further strengthened. Consistent to our policy of 'friendship with all, enmity with none', our diplomatic success has firmly reinforced Nepal's voice and visibility in the global community. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has established 'Brain Gain Centre' to mobilise the knowledge and skills of Nepali diaspora to our national development efforts.

With a view to making public procurement management more effective and transparent, Public Procurement Rules have been amended with provisions of mandatory actions against contractors who routinely delay the execution of their contracts. Actions will be taken even for those who fail to complete the contract even after extending the duration by a definite period.

Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority is actively carrying out operations against corruption. Strict actions continue throughout the country against criminals, land-mafias, revenue leakers, smugglers and corrupt individuals through regular administrative procedures as well as through special string operations. Since the formation of the current government, the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority has filed cases against 540 individuals claiming a total fines of NPR 4.24 billion.

Cases have been filed against 568 people with charges of NPR 14.69 billion on the ground of tax evasion, foreign exchange fraud and illicit financial transaction (through *hundi).*

First year of my government in office was declared as the base-year for prosperity. Laws have been formulated and human resources have been allocated. The basic physical infrastructure to operationalise governments at all three levels has been built. The base for the development has been created. Foundation stones have been laid in some places, and first or second story have been built in others. The other stories of development will be added step by step.

Questions can be put for the sake of question: Where is rail? Where is ship? Where lies the tunnel? Where runs the container ship on the in-land waterways? It can further be asked more stressfully- why were the dreams sold to us? Why were the aspirations raised in us?

I accept- yes, we did. We dreamed! We dreamed when we were awake, not when we dropped asleep. I sprayed the water on the benumbed dreams. I had told – let us dream when we are awake, not when we fall asleep.

Country survives and thrives only when it is optimistic about future, when it harbours beautiful dream and when it believes that good days will surely come. Then only that nation can work and strive for the results.

My job was to revitalise the benumbed dreams and inculcate hopes in people that those dreams can come true. It is through encouraging all to contribute to make the dreams a reality, and through this to instil faith in the hearts and minds of people that development of a nation and society is possible. I have put my efforts for this cause.

My party and I myself by no means are the 'dream dealers'. We dreamed in order to change the mindset of 'we are finished' 'dismantled' and 'there is no hopes' and to inculcate faith in the people that now on, there will be 'something good'. The leaders of our coalition and myself injected hopes into people that 'something good' will happen after the elections. You all placed your trust in us, believed in our commitments and gave us strong majority votes. I thank you all for this; and I would like to express my deepest gratitude to you all from the

bottom of my heart for the opportunity you have given to us to serve you.

I have said it many times that I have seen death from a close range. To put it in popular term, I have lived after dying time and again. Like me, many of my teammates have been living the 'life of profit'. I have asked myself many times: what was the reason I left my home for along with my friends at a very young age, nearly half a century ago? I get the reply: it was for building the nation and for fulfilling our common dreams. My involvement in all these struggles was not for the post of Prime Minister. On the occasion of the National Day today, I would like to express my commitment: the country will

transform; our dreams will certainly be fulfilled. I am at the helm of this campaign now.

Let's be patient. Let's rethink before posing questions. The disarray of the past two and half centuries does not come to order in the past two and half years.

There are solid foundations for the country's advancement and prosperity. We have natural resources hitherto unharnessed. We have favourable climate and weather conditions. We have political stability. We have strong government that enjoys popular support.

We are in a position to gain from the demographic dividend. As high as 65.5% of our population is under 34 years of age. Even if we discount the percentage of young people under 14, which is 34.8%, the ratio of active youth between 15 to 34 years age group remains 30.5%. The population of elderly citizens above 65 is just about 4%.

This very situation has necessitated us to act in a hurried way. We must complete the high-speed race towards development before our youth populations lose their vigour. That only would ensure the Nepali generation after the establishment of the republican setup as fortunate. I am proud of those youths who have started various innovative endeavours. Through the production of goods, and through the creation of services, many of them have benefitted the society.

I am, however, a bit worried about those few idle youths who are wasting their energy on futile discussions in social networks, rather than engaging themselves in constructive creativity. I am also worried about another adult generation who is failing to exchange their civility and positive experiences with society. It seems their expressions through public platforms in the name of 'critical approach' have been emboldening the whole society towards practicing the language of hatred, resentment, impoliteness and brutality.

I have been repeatedly asserting that social harmony, unity and tolerance, but not chaos and anarchy, are the needs of the day. Our fight today is not for the achievement of democracy; it is for the institutionalisation and consolidation of federal democratic republican system.

How to run even without taking a single step? How to give the feeling of change without breaking the status quo? Why and how long to get entangled in a fruitless process - only reaction but no transformation? Why to create a setting for discourse on a topic of non-issue disguised as the main issue? Why still to allow depressed notions such as 'can't happen/ nothing left to thrive?'

We must change our way now.

Performance contract has been initiated from this fiscal year in order to make our activities result-oriented. The contracts between the Prime Minister and the Ministers, between the Ministers and the Secretaries, and between the Secretaries and their subordinates mention each and every action to be carried out within a year as defined by the Policies and Programmes of the Government. Digital portal and action room have been operationalised in order to make the 'monitoring of the monitoring' process further effective.

With a view to making the function of the provinces effective, senior Joint Secretaries have been deputed as the Secretaries of the provincial government. In order to establish a system of reward and punishment, a policy has been initiated to evaluate the performance at the province level government as one of the criteria for promotion to the special class. To end the lassitude ensuing from the file promotion system, priority will be given to efficiency rather than age seniority or year of service for the promotion. The tendency of avoiding decision-making even in the time of urgency and as per necessity with an aspiration of keeping oneself immune from taking responsibility will be discouraged.

A timeline has been set to complete all the possible large projects, which are known as national pride projects, on time. Those projects if they have no detailed project reports and resources will be put on hold.

The construction of the dry land port started at Timure of Rasuwa district will be completed within thirty months. The detailed project Report (DPR) of Kathmandu-Terai/Madhesh Fast Track has been approved on the terms that the project will be completed within the tenure of this government.

The Gautam Buddha International Airport will come into operation within this fiscal year. The Pokhara Regional International Airport will come into operation by the end of the next fiscal year. A company called Dhauwadi Iron Mining Limited has been set up in order to operationalise the iron ore at Dhauwadi, Nawalpur.

Initial preparations have been completed to realise the dreams of tunnelway, railway, inland waterways. We will bring the ships in operation soon.

The size of our economy stands at around NPR 350 billion at present. We are aiming to make it NPR 500 billion by the tenure of this government.

In the implementation the constitution, none of us are ruling or opposition parties. It is my belief that there exists no ruling and opposition parties on such matters.

Our democracy is broad-based. We have become successful to bring the extremist thoughts and institutions to mainstream.

Such thoughts and institutions were taking different course until sometime back. My request for those who have lost track is that they should not delay joining the mainstream.

Along with the promulgation of new constitution and the successful elections of all three levels under it, the phase of political movement is over now. The process for the consolidation of democracy and institutionalisation of the achievements is in progress. Even after this, if there are any attempts to disturb peace and security and national unity from anyone or from any corner in the name of politics, the government will firmly deal with them.

People are the foundation of democracy; and so are the institutions of democracy. The institutions of democracy become strong when people become strong. When such institutions become strong, the democratic system strengthens. When the system is strong, it supports to deliver better service to the general public.

The government takes the responsibility for equitable distribution of dividends of democracy among the citizens. The government always emphasises on the high-level understanding and unity between the state and the citizens for prosperity and sustainability. It is my conviction that we can create a prosperous, happy, civilised and just society building on this foundation.

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Press is independent and free in Nepal

[During the World Economic Forum in Davos, Prime Minister **K P Sharma Oli** shared the stage, on 23 January 2019, with other speakers **Daniella Ballou-Aares**, Chief Executive Officer, Leadership Now Project, USA; **Ivan Duque**, President of Colombia; **Nikol Pashinyan**, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia; and **Arthur Gregg Sulzberger**, Publisher, New York Times, USA to discuss on the themes of Shaping the Future of Democracy. The lead question for discussion was 'Disappointed with ruling political elites, voters around the world have turned to a new generation of

political change-makers willing to introduce reforms and bold ideas. How are they shaping the future of democracy?' Following are the edited excerpts of the views expressed by the Prime Minister in the discussion. The event was moderated by **Martin Wolf**, Associate Editor and Chief Economics Commentator, Financial Times, United Kingdom.]

Martin Wolf: Prime Minister Oli, could you talk a little bit about state of democracy in Nepal? I understand that some controversy about degree of centralisation in the government, so you might want to refer how that fits in the democratic framework. I have just been to India and there are lots of complaints about centralisation in the government in India.

How do you make government effective in the developing country, which is democratic? Describe briefly what you see as big challenges?

Prime Minister: Thank you Mr Wolf. First of all, I would like to make it clear that democracy is a system. It should be the system of people, and for the people. We have brought tremendous changes in the field of democracy. We abolished autocratic system and have established democracy. Nepal is Federal Democracy Republic now. The present government that I am leading is elected by the people. When the elections were held, my party was in the bench of opposition in parliament. Then ruling party held the elections. Elections were free, fair, impartial and peaceful. So were the results too. In the present time, it is very important that elections are free and fair.

We have Prime Ministerial system. Executive power is in the cabinet and with the Prime Minister. There is no question of

the centralisation of power. I have fought for democracy for more than half a century. I myself have spent many years in prison for democratic struggle and democracy. I don't want to be a ruler, but a servant of the people. I want to serve. But, of course, I want to expand democracy beyond political limits, and to the extend to fulfil rights, and freedoms of the people, and to bring about changes in their lives. The democracy that I am talking about is comprehensive democracy with rule of law.

As you have asked me---, yes, there is system. We have promulgated the constitution in 2015. We have a democratic system in place now. There is a separation of power, check and balance, and independent judiciary. We have parliament elected by the people. There is a rule of law. We don't want to centralise power. We do not have that kind of intention and facility. We do not want to make any pretension and excuse. We have to bring about changes to the lives of people. We have a focus on bringing about changes in economic field now. We want to concentrate us in the question of good governance and economic development. So, our motto is 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali' and we can meet it.

Martin Wolf: What is your relationship with the press?

Prime Minister: I have normal relationship with the press. In democracy, I think there are always normal relationships with media. In autocracy, media is controlled because autocracy uses press to praise the rulers. But in democracy, even if the media criticises us, that is a normal thing. We have press freedom. Press are free and independent. But my opinion is

more than this. There is a term "yellow journalism". That sort of journalism is not good. It derails things. It misleads people.

Press is very instrumental to strengthen democracy. It contributes to bring development and prosperity in the lives of people. It informs and educates people. This way, the role of the press is very important. Meantime, people also want to see that media is responsible and it should be. Of course, press criticises me a little. We have raised expectations of the people. We have brought about so many changes so fast. With the change, people's aspirations are increased. So are the aspirations of the media too. They want that changes and expectations are realised fast. But, sometimes, development process cannot be like a magic. It takes time.

Press wants us to speed up. It wants us to be clean, clear and transparent. It is good, and this way press is instrumental for strengthening democracy. It is necessary for development. ICT or technology is also equally important. But with the development of ICT, there are problems too to some extent, like – young generation is being misled by some social media. We should be very careful about it to create a civilised and developed society.

Martin Wolf: There was a specific charge by Arthur Gregg Sulzberger that some of the legislations that you have introduced go against press freedom. How would you respond to that?

Prime Minister: I would like to make it clear that Nepal is a democratic country. It believes in democracy. In democracy, everything happens as per the constitution and the rule of

law. We have the separation of power. We have the woman President, as the Head of the State. We have parliament. We have the judiciary. We have the press and the people. People are sovereign. There is no intension and no action to control or bring press under restriction. Press is completely free in Nepal. There is no question of restriction. But again, I want to say that, in the name of freedom, if somebody gives false news and hurts others, and damages others' family life or prestige or business, it is not good. I can say that much. And, I want to educate my people in this way that we must be responsible because democracy is the system for all, not only for the people who are involved in media. The system is for all, not only for the press. And, press is independent and free, but it must be careful about the life, prestige, loss and benefit of other people. That is my opinion.

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II

FRIENDSHIP AND DIPLOMACY

A visionary leader can transform the country fighting several adversities. Revolutionary changes are possible by peaceful means. Recent success in Nepal is an example and it has a message to the world that socialist movement may suffer setbacks and upheavals, but it will always come back with even greater steam and power for the liberation of the people.

Even in other parts of the world, the people of the 21st Century have succeeded to resolve many intractable global problems and improve the quality of their life. They have been able to enable humanity to look forward to enjoying even better time ahead. Today, we live in a world which is more prosperous and wealthier than ever.

Despite successes, numerous challenges lie before us. Poverty, illiteracy and infectious diseases continue to suffer people across the globe. Climate change continues to

reel the world with rapid degradation of environmental sustainability. Globalisation has led to an uneven global platform benefitting some advanced economies at the expense of developing economies.

This is unacceptable. An immediate remedial approach is inevitable in order to create a new world order based on justice, universal fraternity, peaceful co-existence, and human dignity. We must develop a world that belongs to everyone and enables all humanity to live a life of peace and prosperity. Socialism provides correct answers to the rising global problems, and it is the only path to attain global prosperity. We must forge active partnership among nations. Everyone has to sacrifice for a collective good. Prosperity cannot be achieved at the expense of others. Socialism is more relevant than ever for addressing humanity's urgent challenges.

Develop a universal system of values*

I feel privileged to extend you, our distinguished guests, a warm welcome to Nepal, the land of Sagarmatha and Buddha. I am impressed by the gracious presence of many important political leaders and eminent personalities in this Summit from various

* Inaugural statement at the Asia-Pacific Summit, Kathmandu, 1 December 2018.

countries. I wish you a productive and enjoyable stay in Nepal.

Today, we stand at a critical juncture in the history of mankind. We are facing several critical and sensitive issues at local, national, regional and global levels.

The scientific and technological revolutions over the past several centuries have significantly empowered human beings. The revolutions have succeeded to treat or eradicate various diseases, enable most people to read, write and calculate, help humanity to communicate better and faster,

and make it possible for human beings to live better, healthier and longer lives.

The unprecedented achievements in biology, information, transportation and communications, and agricultural technologies; and in space science have delivered to us the fruits of human ingenuity as never before.

Now is one of the most peaceful periods in the world's history. International trade, cross-cultural interactions and technological innovations drive the global society much more deeply than ever.

We, the people of the 21st Century, have been successful to resolve many intractable global problems and improve the quality of people's life across the world. We have been able to enable humanity to look forward to enjoying even better times ahead.

Despite the success, numerous challenges and problems continue to suffer us, and they demand our urgent attention. Poverty, illiteracy and many infectious diseases have been subsided, but they still continue to beset and beleaguer the lives of millions of people across the world.

In addition, the world continues to reel from the adverse impacts of climate change, natural and created disasters, and terrorism. Nothing worries us more than the deteriorating condition of the planet and rapidly degrading environmental sustainability.

Climate change cannot be treated simply, only taking it as a development challenge. It has emerged as a challenge to survival, and existential threat to humanity, particularly those living in mountainous and small island countries.

Let me elaborate a little more on this. Climate change has upset the organic linkage between the mountains and seas. The melting of glaciers leads to the rise in sea level. The natural recharge system, which is critical to maintain temperature and humidity in the land, has been increasingly affected by the climate change due to irresponsible human activities. The contamination of the sources of water downstream leads to pollution with negative consequences on the bio-geo chemical cycle. It, in turn, disturbs the mountain ecosystem as well.

Our mountains, which occupy more than 15% of our land, and forests with more than 45% of coverage, must be seen as global asset. It calls for global attention in view of their significant contribution to check temperature rise. The mountains help keep the air cold throughout the year and in all seasons below -50 degree Celsius. The melting of snow is absorbed by rocks which then discharge it in a normal way in the form of several rivers and tributaries, which help maintain downstream ecological balance. Likewise, forests' contribution in carbon sequestration is equally important.

It is worth-mentioning here that 60% of our land is dedicated to containing temperature rise. In this way, the contributions of both of our mountains and forests in maintaining environmental sustainability in a natural way is matchless. However, the irony is that the severest burden is felt by those who have not committed any fault. This is unacceptable. So, we

very much emphasise the need for effective implementation of climate justice principle.

In order to address multiple global problems, I believe that the way forward should consist of three major approaches: the promotion of peace and interdependence among nations by strengthening and upholding multilateralism; the pursuit of mutual prosperity by both developing and developed countries by protecting natural ecosystems and habitat; and the inculcation of universal values among the peoples of the world.

The era of relative peace and tranquillity that has dawned on earth with the end of the Second World War has many causes behind it. One of them is of paramount importance, which is the interdependence among nations of the world.

Just as no modern human being can live alone in the state of nature, no nation in today's world can sustain itself - or even survive - solely on its own in the absence of an international system that it is intricately embedded into.

The creation of worldwide networks beyond national borders have made it insuperably difficult, and expensive, to wage large-scale wars. The pursuit of peace has been a direct beneficiary of such integration, inter-connections and interdependence. Integrative processes and interdependence have led us to globalisation. It has brought us all closer towards greater harmony and co-operation. Reversal of these gains under any pretext may invite untold consequences.

Contrary to its underlying meaning, globalisation has led to uneven global platforms where the benefits accrued by some

advanced economies have, sadly, been at the expense of the many developing economies.

An immediate remedial approach should, therefore, be devised in order to create a world which belongs to everybody, and that enables all humanity to live a life of peace, harmony and prosperity. The pursuit of mutual prosperity is the path for attaining the goal of universal peace and harmony. For this the countries rich and poor must walk together. We need to forge active partnerships among governments, the private sector and diverse social groups to ensure mutual prosperity.

In the international context, more advanced nations should encourage the flow of capital and technologies to the developing world, and help the socio-economic transformation of less developed economies through enabling policies in development assistance, trade, investment and technology transfer. They should also avoid restrictive policies that limit global mobility of people.

When we talk about partnership among nations, we must not forget that equity, justice and shared benefit should be the outcome of such a partnership. It must be based on the principles of sovereign equality, mutual respect and benefit. Everyone has to sacrifice for a collective good. Prosperity cannot be achieved at the expense of others.

Our collective efforts should be underpinned in universal values that all humanity shares as its core norms. These values are peace, harmony and tolerance among peoples in the world. In today's age of rapid technological revolutions,

we are set to face moral dilemmas which are never faced by humanity in its history so far.

Advancements in science and technology without an underlying system of moral and ethical values will not only bring disaster of incalculable magnitude, but may also wreak havoc to the very foundations of human civilisation.

We need to be prepared for the coming new age not only with new intellectual tools, but also with commensurate moral compass and ethical standards that can help us negotiate the many dilemmas that it will bring.

Our motherland, Nepal, and *Himavatkhanda*, the Himalayan region that we belong to, is an ancient fountainhead of wisdom and practical knowledge. It is in the land where the profound contemplations were first made for the entire Universe being a shared space for all sentient beings.

The phrase वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् encapsulates that profound wisdom of common humanity: the world is one family.

It is also the land of Buddha, the beacon of peace, wisdom and moderation, and of a humanist and universal philosophy which extols the virtue of seeing the other in one's own self, and which calls for peace and harmony in the entire universe.

We are the proud inheritors of one of the most ancient civilisations on earth. The civilisation has given the world with arts, literature, science, innovation and, most importantly, the ideals of peace and political philosophies. The light of knowledge was first lit in the Asia-Pacific region. We should

be proud of our rich Asian values and legacies handed down to us from generation to generation.

In this philosophy of our ancient seers, which we inculcate in our daily lives to this day, there is no Other Self. The blessings of this ancient, generous, profound, humanistic and universalist civilisation of Nepal make our country one of the best-placed cultures to help identify and further develop the values. The values will be needed for our future generations to live full, meaningful, happy and decent lives.

Based on the teachings of our ancient civilisation, I believe that the norms and values that should guide the future of humanity are universality, harmony, acceptance, peace, empathy, non-violence, and dispassionate action.

Universality is a value that disregards petty distinctions of race, creed or geography, and strives for imbibing the principles of the world being one place. Similarly, universal harmony is not possible without the acceptance of our distinctive identities and unique particularities. When we talk about harmonious coexistence, we can learn from nature. Just as nature accommodates diversity and helps preserve overall balance in the ecosystem, we, human beings, should also develop the culture of peaceful and harmonious coexistence, respecting diversity of our society. Thus, diversity is inevitable, whether it is in nature or society. It makes our world beautiful and colourful.

Therefore, universality and particularity are complementary and harmonious. They fit perfectly into a single paradigm of universal unity with distinctive individuality. Where there is

empathy and acceptance, there is harmony. Peace and non-violence are their natural corollaries.

We take enormous pride in our own culture, traditions and heritage. We sincerely believe that we have much to offer to develop a universal system of values. The values that bind all nations and all peoples to create a harmonious world and live together in peace, amity and friendship. Poverty of material goods that some parts of our society are still facing does not mean that we are morally submissive or that we are eager to imitate the culture and values from others.

I am quite sure that the sublime wisdom and eternal serenity animates this ancient Himalayan city with the teachings of seers from countless millennia ago. It will give depth and meaning to the discussions of this conclave. The wisdom gives us how to make the lives of our future generations even brighter, while being embedded deeply with our heritage of the past.

Before I conclude, I would like to briefly share with you our political achievements and the road ahead.

Recent political transformation in Nepal has been a monumental achievement. Equally successful has been our unique peace process. It was a process invented, led, owned, managed and steered by us. With courageous steps and bold decisions at various critical points of time, we have been able to fundamentally conclude the peace process. In achieving this landmark success, we have set an example that armed conflict can be resolved and supremacy of ballot over bullet can be established through dialogue, understanding, mutual respect,

compromise and accommodation even in a diverse society like ours. Even though one-size-fits-all approach cannot work in addressing country-specific problem, I believe, our success story can serve as a good example for emulation everywhere.

We also take immense pride to share with you the accomplishment of the historic task of writing a new constitution by the elected representatives of the people. Our goal is to realise comprehensive democracy that empowers individual in all spheres of national life. It entails social justice at its core. With the inclusion of universally accepted rights and freedoms of people, I feel honoured to share with you that we have one of the best constitutions in the world. It is worth-mentioning here that the constitution has made the Nepali people truly sovereign for the first time in our history. I strongly believe that we will not have to fight for political rights anymore. This marks the dawn of a new era for the people of Nepal.

I am acutely aware of the fact that these solid achievements of the Nepali people will not be sustainable if concomitant progress is not achieved in socio-economic spheres. Informed by this reality, my government has accorded top priority to rapid but sustainable economic development. Our agenda for socio-economic transformation is guided by the motto 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali'.

The people of Nepal have exhibited higher degree of resilience to remain united. They are determined in pursuing political, economic and social objectives in a peaceful and harmonious manner even in the face of devastating earthquakes that hit the country in April and May 2015. Our reconstruction drive

is gaining momentum. We are confident that we will be able to complete the task of reconstruction within a short period of time now.

The successful conclusion of elections to all three tiers of federal setup with record turnout of voters last year have effectively ended the protracted political transition in Nepal. It has ushered the country to a new phase of political stability. My government enjoys robust mandate of the people with three-fourths support of the parliament. My party alone enjoys two-thirds majority. The people of Nepal have voted for stability and economic transformation. As the Prime Minister, I am proud to dedicate myself to the great service of the nation and the people.

Political stability has an important bearing on policy stability. All confusion and uncertainty surrounding policy domains have come to an end with our clear vision and forward-looking approach. This will positively impact on our efforts towards socio-economic development.

On foreign policy, we have made major achievements in our neighbourhood policy. We conduct a balanced, objective and independent diplomacy. Our objective has been to strengthen our friendly and cooperative ties with our neighbours based on the principles of equality, mutual respect and benefit. Our relations with major powers of the world have been further strengthened and our engagements in regional and multilateral affairs have been more visible and productive.

These are some of the remarkable achievements of Nepali people. These gains have not come without heavy price. But,

today, we are a confident nation with a strong sense of unity in diversity and imbued with a profound patriotic feeling that nothing could be superior than the vital interests of the country.

I sincerely believe that our friends and well-wishers have an innate desire to see a peaceful, stable, democratic and prosperous Nepal. We need your goodwill, understanding and support as we move ahead for the realisation of this goal.

The perfect blend of nature and culture makes Nepal an attractive destination for tourists around the world. It is the land one would not miss in his or her lifetime not only because we have beautiful mountains, lakes and rich flora and fauna but also because cheerful smiles of Nepali people touches the core of your heart with their unmatched hospitality.

We believe that our friends and well-wishers want to come and visit us to see the progress Nepal has made in political system and the lives of people in the last two decades. I hope, you will find a convenient time to visit us again because visiting Nepal once is not enough.

I sincerely hope that the deliberations in this Summit that has brought together the statespersons, policy-makers, entrepreneurs, academics and experts from across continents, will be held in the high spirit of 'live and let live.' I thank you for your valuable participation in this important event. I wish all success of the Summit.

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Time tested Bandung Principles: A response to the challenges of contemporary world*

Sixty-four years ago, the leaders from Asia and Africa assembled in the Indonesian town of Bandung. They assembled for a specific purpose and that was the need of the hour. The need of the time was to define the

* Statement at the 18th Summit of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Baku, Azerbaijan, 25-26 October 2019.

basic rules and norms to govern relations among nations in a friendly manner. Accordingly, they developed a new set of principles, also known as Bandung principles. The principles were:

- about respecting and observing in good faith the principles of the UN Charter,
- about supporting national independence,
- about upholding of sovereign equality, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs, and

- about settlement of all disputes through peaceful means.

These principles are so sacrosanct and have timeless value that if we fail to observe them, the world order will turn into anarchy.

And, this is certainly not the objective of humanity. The objective is to respect them, which make the world a peaceful, safer, stable and prosperous place for all.

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which was built on the Bandung Principles, was conceived as a decisive response to unjust and unfair world, a dehumanising world where the basic essentials of human being, the freedoms, were denied and brutally suppressed. It was conceived to defend the fundamental rights of the peoples and the nations in the South.

The establishment of the NAM was a thoughtful decision of the countries in the South to practice an independent foreign policy based on objective analysis of the worldview, stay away from biased judgement in an international environment that was characterised by intense east-west rivalry known as the Cold War.

In doing so, the countries in the South wanted to preserve their autonomy in decision-making, which is the soul of sovereignty. The Bandung principles are eloquently manifested in the objectives of the NAM, which form the fundamentals of our foreign policy as enshrined in our constitution.

Our foreign policy is guided, among others, by the five principles of peaceful co-existence. We take immense pride in saying that the principles which are better known as *Panchasheela,* are derived from the teachings of Buddha, the immortal son of Nepal. They make a perfect sync with the essence of Nepal's foreign policy principle that believes in 'Amity with all, enmity with none'.

Nepal's experience presents a testimony of how peace, democracy, development and human rights are closely interlinked. Human rights can find true meaning only in a condition of comprehensive democracy. One would ask what is the essence of comprehensive democracy? I would say it is the holistic empowerment of individuals. And, I stand by it because it is only through such empowerment that one can enjoy freedom from poverty, have access to equal opportunity, enjoy right to life, security and dignity.

I would say the political rights alone are not sufficient to empower individuals in the true sense of the term. They remain useless if a person remains hungry and homeless, because such situation threatens their most fundamental right, which is the right to life.

Being cognisant of the fact, we in Nepal have crafted a social security system to cover the entire cycle of human life so that no one dies due to a lack of food and shelter. Beyond the borders, comprehensive democracy must be practiced at the global level too.

So, how do we promote this?

We promote this by ensuring sovereign equality, non-use of threat or force, non-interference in internal affairs, respect and dignity of all nations, non-exploitation, and fair opportunities for all countries to grow and develop.

Comprehensive democracy demands a new world order that is democratic, inclusive, just and fair. Unless and until we achieve it, the NAM will continue to be relevant for us. The NAM is synonymous with peace, security, justice and development. It has time-tested value and appeal.

Mother earth is common to all of us. She has bestowed on us enough resources for the fulfilment of human needs in a rational way. We cannot live in a situation where excessive greed and intolerable destitution stand in two opposite extremes. Excessive greed is the primary reason for environmental catastrophe and the social conflict.

We must therefore ensure:

- prosperity for all so that no one is left behind as the SDGs have underlined; and
- protection of mother earth so that the needs of the future generations are not compromised.

How do we achieve this?

We achieve this by ensuring global justice in such a manner that all states enjoy their rights and fulfil their obligations in a balanced manner. However, in judicious utilisation of natural resources, there should not be any restriction on the sovereign choice of the people.

Climate change is a growing threat to humanity and it has assumed crisis proportion. Being acutely aware of this fact, the Government of Nepal has decided to convene the first episode of *'Sagarmatha Sambad' on* the theme of 'Mountains, Climate Change and the Future of Humanity' in Kathmandu on 2-4 April 2020.

In the interval of every three years, we meet to make the assessment of the Movement. In every Summit, we take decisions and define a new course of action. Our collective wisdom finds space in a comprehensive declaration that we adopt at the end of our gathering.

However, we need to seriously ponder:

- Have we ever developed the system to ensure that the decisions we make are implemented in good faith?

- Have we ever tried to reach broad consensus that the political message of the Movement needs to be translated into action on the ground?
- Have we ever analysed the deep-rooted conflicts and differences among ourselves, and tried to resolve them in the spirit of solidarity?

The time has come to seriously reflect on how we could collectively make the Movement more dynamic and effective.

Here are a few suggestions that I would like to submit for the consideration of the Summit:

- We want to see a NAM that is internally cohesive, united, strong and externally influential so that entrenched global inequalities are uprooted once and for all.
- We want to see a NAM that fosters goodwill, understanding and cooperation so that division and discord do not surface to undermine the unity of the Movement.
- We want to see a NAM that helps leverage the strength and capability of the South so that all developing nations build collective strengths to address development challenges to achieve shared prosperity.
- We want to see a NAM that takes up burning global issues in a systematic manner and devises concrete solutions to address them.

- We want to see a NAM that contributes to strengthening multilateralism with the United Nations at its centre.

I believe that the consideration of these suggestions will make a difference in the way our Movement functions in making the NAM truly a force to respond adequately to the contemporary challenges, and to advance development journey for collective prosperity.

As a founding member of NAM, Nepal stands firmly to shoulder its responsibilities from the forefront.

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Buddhism is antithesis to silo mentality*

I have brought warm greetings to you all from the land of Buddha and Sagarmatha, and from sisters and brothers of Nepal. I want to chorus with you *Bhavatu Sabba Mangalam* (May All be Blessed to Auspiciousness)!

* Address to the UN Day of Vesak, Ha Nam, Vietnam, 12 May 2019.

Nepal is a land of wonderful people. The only thing they cherish is friendship with all and enmity with none. The only thing they wish is peace, not only at their home, but also in the entire world, and the universe.

This fits well into this grand ceremony the objective of which is to foster understanding and harmony in a world that is marred by conflicts, tensions, uncertainties and contradictions. We believe in universal fraternity and harmony to be the guiding norms to govern relationships between states and their peoples.

Truly, this is an unforgettable opportunity for me and my country to represent in this august UN Vesak Day celebration. It is happening in the country with which we share a strong political relationship and equally strong cultural ties that connect our peoples together. Thank you, Prime Minister Phuc, for the kind invitation, warm welcome and generous hospitality.

No words would capture the essence and importance of the Day. Some 2,643 years ago, at full moon night of the Day, the immortal son of the world, whom we reverently call Buddha, was descended to this world. Some 35 years later the same day, he achieved enlightenment. At the age of 80, he assimilated in the eternal peace. Such is the solemnity of the Day.

I come from the blessed land where Buddha was born. It was a little hamlet in the southern plains of Nepal, where the seed of Buddhism was sown, and its early sapling was nurtured. Siddhartha Gautam gave up his title of crown prince, his palace, his lovely wife, a cute and innocent son. He did so, might be because, he had already got something with him, and he was willing to get more. Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha, is, therefore, not only the land of Buddha, but also the fountain of Buddhism. Today, this place is the centre of attraction for pilgrims, scholars, researchers and those who are in the quest for the ultimate truth and salvation.

Lumbini is more than this. It was an integral part of Shakya *Ganarajya* (Shakya Republic) with its Capital in Kapilvastu. It was an advanced city by all standards of the period. Organised in the principle of republican system of governance, it was a flourishing republic with a kingship elected by the people.

It thus was governed under the able leadership of Shakyas. The recent excavation establishes the Shakya *Ganarajya* as the centre of cultural and architectural significance. It was in this very land, the famous philosopher Kapil invented the '*Sangkhya darshan*', known as the philosophy of numbers.

As Buddhism spread to the rest of Asia and the world, transferred alongside was the vast collection of knowledge and wisdom, ideas about life and livelihood, messages about social harmony and universal fraternity.

Today, the shared asset of Buddhism connects countries in Asia and beyond, including Nepal and Vietnam. Many of our people follow Buddhism as their core faith and the rest of them respect it as a pool of enlightened ideas and source of inspiration. I am impressed by the great efforts of the people and Government of Vietnam towards preserving and promoting the treasure of Buddhism. I deem this conference as a landmark in the continuum of the same admirable endeavour.

Buddhism has served as the fountain of humanity for generations. It has been a belief system focused on the quest for betterment of human beings, society and the world.

Like other belief systems, Buddhism too, talks about the distinction between the worldly and the eternal, the transient and the endless. Yet, the unique appeal of Buddhism lies in its care of life and nature. One does not have to wait for the next life or another world to find happiness. Ultimate joy can be attained by everyone, any time, in this very world, in this very life. For this, we should just discard the hatred, self-

interest and violence, and should fill ourselves with the spirit of compassion, fraternity and benevolence.

Buddhism thus seeks to empower people. Buddhism is rediscovery of humanity; disciplining, organising and transforming of oneself, and, by setting example, transforming the rest of the society. Its ultimate aim is to attain harmonious organisation of society and world order: the world order that is based on justice, universal fraternity, peaceful co-existence, and human dignity.

In recognition of Buddhism's contribution to world peace and harmony, the United Nations, whose very Charter is based on the Buddhist values of cooperation and co-existence, recognised, in the year 1999, 'the Day of Vesak'. The recognition is a matter of pride for us.

And, this is why Buddhism is relevant when it comes to the question of larger global leadership today. In fact, Buddha's entire life is the testimony of 'lead by example'. No second thought, but, we can say that Buddha was a great visionary leader, who inspired people to shun vices and embrace virtues. He was able to reach the people and communities with love and compassion and lead them on the path of patience and perseverance amidst adversities of all kinds.

Buddha set an example that modesty and humility are the true traits of leadership. He said no to aggression and ego. He passed on to the succeeding leadership the cognizance of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. Right view, Right intention, Right action, Right effort, Right speech are as

much the fundamental qualities of today's leadership as they were in the past.

Leadership is about having right vision of destination for society and guiding people on the right path. But it is certainly not about being swayed by popular whims and momentary delusions. It is about right intention to bring positive results and serving for larger public good, but not for the self-gratification. It is about creating harmony in society, promoting fraternity and treating everyone with respect and dignity.

Generosity and moral integrity are on top of all attributes of leadership that we can draw from Buddha's teachings. Speaking to his principal disciple Ananda, Buddha made a point that leadership is self-making, self-driving and self-motivating process.

'Live and let live' is the core tenet of Buddhism that immensely contributed to the wider Asian values of caring, sharing and pursuing larger societal good. These noble traits are antithesis to silo mentality and divisive mindset that are increasingly finding space, particularly in today's political spectrum in several parts of the world.

Today, society is getting more individualistic. Consumerism has overshadowed the human values of auspiciousness and countries are becoming more inward-looking. Rhetoric of exclusion is gaining more traction than the message of inclusion. Short-term transactions are being prioritised at the cost of long-term peace, stability and harmony in the world.

Global geopolitics is getting fluid and full of uncertainties. The order that was created and the institutions that were built as *modus operandi* for countries and communities to work together are losing their hold. Existing multilateral system is under attack. Sense of shared responsibilities is dissipating.

True that we live in a world that is more prosperous and wealthier than ever today. Yet, one fifth of its humanity still lives under abject poverty, deprived of even the most basic needs. But in contrast, the world's military expenditure is getting higher every year.

The idea of economic justice is sounding more alien to us. The objective to realise the Sustainable Development Goals is facing challenge in receiving adequate international support.

Environmental degradation goes unchecked and the very sustainability of the world is under threat, thus posing the very question of existentiality. Paris Agreement on climate change survives amidst an uncertain fate. Terrorism continues to threaten peace and order in societies.

Amidst such disruptions, the core Asian values of universal fraternity, "*Basudhaiba kutumbakam*" (the world is one family), peaceful co-existence and sense of sharing become all the more relevant for today's leadership. The faithful observance of *Panchasheel* serves as an important guide to foster understanding and harmony.

The notion of balance and Middle Path gains even greater significance. It is the notion that demands us to shun excesses,

accommodate diversities, and find ground for compromises. It is a path that helps world avoid conflicts and chaos.

In our quest for peace, stability and sustainable future, pathway shown by Buddha always remains pertinent. Buddha's messages emphasise balance and equilibrium between human and nature, between material and spiritual, between the day-to-day affairs and the perpetual.

Buddhism is strong against the three vices, namely ignorance or delusion (*Moha*), greed (*Raga*) and hatred (*Dvesha*), which are, in one way or other, the main causes of the crises the world is facing today. Strong linkage between Buddhism and nature needs no emphasis. Everything we understand by Buddhism was systematised and formulated under a Bodhi tree, which symbolises the nexus between Buddhism and nature. Buddhism is about eschewing excessive desires, including desire for material possession.

As it is often said, famines do not occur due to lack of food; it occurs when there is no justice in distribution. It occurs owing to the culture of amassing more than what we need. Kindness and compassion are the main virtues to make human beings happy. When the culture of giving, sharing and helping others is predominant, society becomes blissful. In genuine philanthropy, givers and receivers are happy together.

Happy individuals are the key constituents of a happy society. Happiness depends both on the external nature and the inner self. Buddhism has answer to both. One of the treasure-troves Buddhism offers for happiness is the art of *Dhyana* (meditation), which is getting increasingly popular.

The *Dhyana* is the state of concentration of mind which brings mental peace, thus making our physical being healthy. It ultimately contributes to the foundation of peaceful society.

In this conversation about transformation towards peaceful and sustainable society, I feel inspired to share with you some thoughts on the kind of historic transformation Nepal and Nepali society have been able to achieve in recent past.

The home-grown peace process that we accomplished is a rare case and hence a topic of interest for study and research worldwide. Our journey of transformation from bullet to ballot is exemplary. It is a testimony of how peace prevails eventually. We have not only ended the ten-year long armed conflict but also brought the conflicting parties to peaceful political process.

An inclusive democratic constitution has been promulgated by an inclusive body of directly elected people's representative. It has replicated the egalitarian *Sangha* way of Buddhism. Through the constitution, people's agendas have been institutionalised and a country that once suffered the brunt of conflict and violence is now marching proudly, and with high optimism, on the path of peace, stability and prosperity. 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali' has been our national aspiration. Such transformation has been possible in the land of Buddha, the land of Peace!

Buddha, Buddhism and Lumbini are inseparable. Buddhism cannot be disassociated from Buddha. It also cannot be disassociated from Lumbini. To understand Buddha, it is important to understand Lumbini. Therefore, visiting Lumbini

once is like having a lifetime experience for those who follow Buddhism and those who admire its grandeur. The birthplace of Buddha welcomes you with boundless affection.

The Government of Nepal wish to host United Nations Vesak Day programme in Lumbini. We are also planning to organise an international conference on Buddhism next year. I take this opportunity to extend you all a cordial invitation to visit to Nepal.

To ease your travel, we are accomplishing the construction works of the Gautam Buddha International Airport soon. We are bringing it into operation in no time, which as a result, will ease your travel to the land of Buddha.

Development of Lumbini is in our priority. We have a plan to develop it as an International Peace City, and a revered place for all humanity, for all Buddhists across the world, and for those who have interest and belief in the principles laid by Buddha.

Finally, I wish to thank the organisers for inviting me to speak on such a solemn occasion and on such a pertinent theme. I am grateful to you all for your presence and patience.

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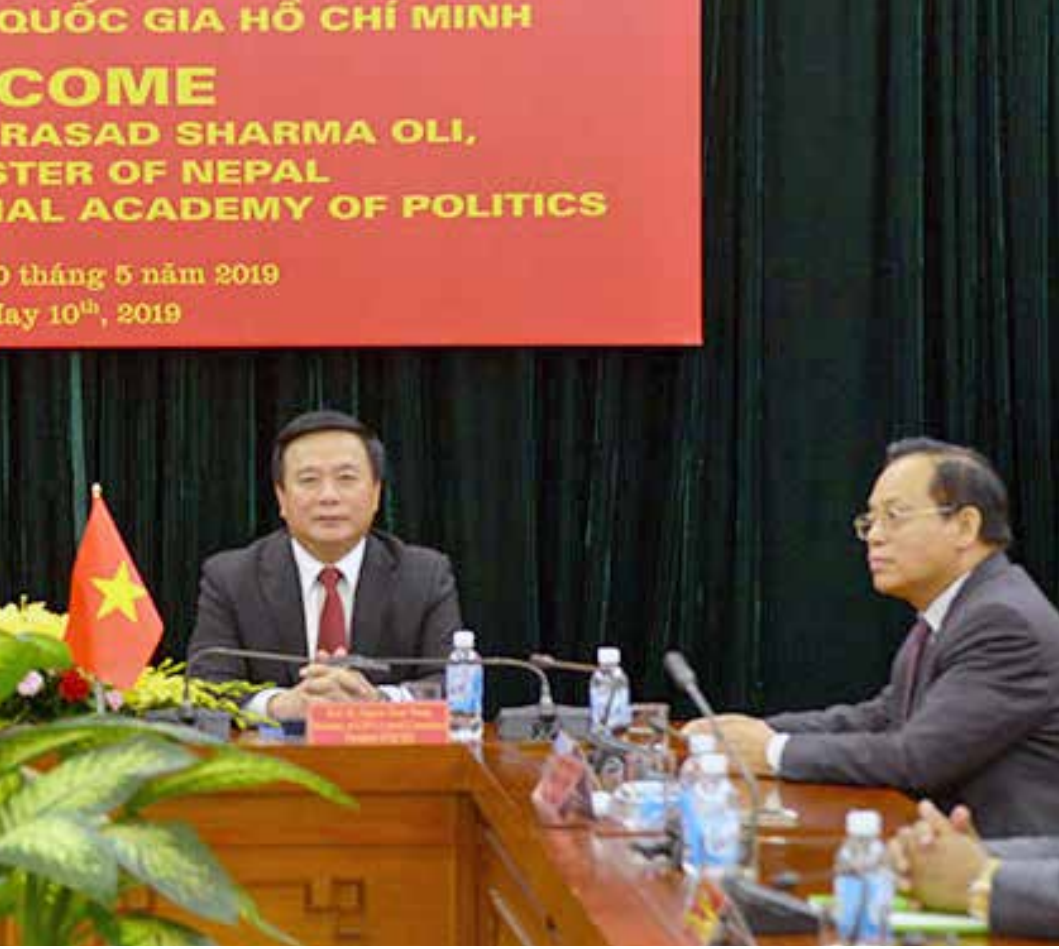
Ho Chi Minh: The beacon of inspiration*

My dream to visit this prestigious academy has come true today. This academy, established as a special tribute to a great socialist leader of the world and a national leader of freedom, Comrade Ho Chi Minh, occupies a special place

* Speech delivered at the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Political Science, Hanoi, Vietnam, 10 May 2019.



in the socialist and national independence movement.Let me begin with these questions: Why does the world so profoundly admire Ho Chi Minh? What were his attributes that made him a towering personality and an iconic figure? What lessons can we learn from his life and his contributions to people's life? Only answering these questions, we may not get a fuller understanding of the circumstances that gave a birth to this hero. A deeper reflection on these points is imperative and then it would surely tell us the most important aspects of his brilliant career.Uncle Ho, as he was also popularly called, was an extraordinary leader who changed the course of history, made his country and the people proud, and gave the socialist

movement in the world a new direction and dynamism.He sets an example of how a visionary leader can transform his country fighting several adversities. He becomes a constant and boundless source of inspiration for millions of people around the world who are fighting for rights, freedom and dignity.

He epitomises the national strengths and courage. He is an example of how a popular leader receives unconditional, unqualified and spontaneous support of the people, and mobilises the mass to defeat the mighty army on earth. He is a lesson to the world to learn how to set an extraordinary example of performance in the war against foreign interference and domination.He was a man of principle and dignity on which he never compromised. He never deviated from his path of freedom and justice even when he received imminent threat to his life.

Unlike a few revolutionaries, Uncle Ho on no account sought to work for power and position. Subscribing to his contributions to the world, especially in leading socialist and nationalist movements, I would say that he was not an individual, but an institution that embodies and defines the true meaning of socialism and transformation. That is why his footprints are the most visible and popularly followed. He is a highly respected and deeply admired leader of the world even in my country. Several Nepali poems, essays and lyrics have been dedicated and devoted to him in reverence of this great son of earth. The Vietnamese revolution and the movements for national liberation are spearheaded by the Communist Party in Vietnam under the able guidance of Ho Chi Minh. They all have been a source of great inspiration for Nepal's socialist,

democratic and patriotic movements. Though Nepal was never colonised, Nepalis have fought against foreign imperialist power to preserve our sovereignty and independence. This has helped foster solidarity and camaraderie between the people of our two countries.That is why we spontaneously and wholeheartedly bespeak the fellow brothers and sisters of this land in their fight for independence, emancipation and national unity.

To me, Uncle Ho is the beacon of inspiration. His vision and thoughts constantly inspired me to fight for democracy and people's rights irrespective of where I was, whether inside the jail or in a solitary confinement as a political prisoner or in the street as an active political campaigner.

In the past forty-five years since unification, Vietnam has achieved national reconciliation, and remarkable progress in all domains. Being a country to share similar cultural traditions and values, we have great admiration and appreciation for Vietnam's forward march. Vietnam's contemporary history has a lot for us to learn. It says how to rebuild a war-torn nation from a scratch. We can learn from it to overcome the post-earthquake rebuilding and reconstruction challenges. Vietnam's ingenious application of Marxism in its unique national circumstances has continued to inspire the people of Nepal. It has persuaded us to explore the most suitable and durable solutions to the multiple challenges that we are facing in our country today. Because of the creative application of Marxism, socialist movements in Nepal and Vietnam have been instrumental in abolishing the feudal institutions of monarchy. Both of the countries have undergone fundamental political transformation over the years and have set ambitious

trajectories for economic growth and development. Learning from each other's experiences can be beneficial to both. My current visit to Vietnam is an opportunity to acquire experiential knowledge about Vietnam's recent developments and socio-economic transformation. I look forward to receiving your informed perspectives. Like in Vietnam, we have always sought to apply and adapt Marxist ideas in an innovative way in Nepal. Mindful of the local context, we are in the pursuit of building socialism under the leadership of the Nepal Communist Party with the progressive application of Marxism. In fact, the pursuit of socialism is one of our key milestones because it remains our important constitutional goal.In its one hundred years of history, the world socialist movement has undergone various practices and experiments, ups and downs, and successes and setbacks. In the midst of such ebb and flow, the rise and success of the communist party in Nepal amply shows that the socialist movement is relevant forever for people's emancipation. Experiences of Nepal and Vietnam have proved it. Nepal's experience shows that revolutionary changes are possible by peaceful means. Recent success has a message to the world that socialist movement may have suffered setbacks and upheavals, but it will always come back with even greater steam and power for the liberation of the people. A few instances of failures and setbacks should not lead us to believe that socialism is irrelevant and obsolete. We strongly believe that socialism provides a correct answer to current world problems. It is the future of humanity. As the global capitalist finance is facing severe challenges, and as the neoliberalism is in endless crisis, relevance of socialism has become more pronounced. However, we must bear in mind that the socialism in the 21st century must incorporate new dynamism. It should cope with the changed context

and adjust to the local realities. That is why we should acknowledge the diverse paths and models. We should respect the independent choice of model in a particular country. Principle should be for the cause of practice. Practices should not be confined to irrelevant dogmas.The source of our innovative practice of Marxism and the socialist cause goes back to the end of the twentieth century. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the international socialist movement was facing a serious setback. But just around that time, Nepali people's leader Madan Bhandari introduced the People's Multiparty Democracy as the principle of Nepal's revolutionaries. With this, he re-oriented the country's democratic movement for political rights and freedoms to a new direction. Under his leadership and guidance, we embraced a pluralist political structure within the ambit of the Marxist philosophy. People's Multiparty Democracy successfully guided us in the changed context in those tumultuous years. We adopted the ideas of political supremacy through competition and multi-party contestation, and the guarantee of fundamental rights and freedoms under a constitutional framework.Sometimes, the values of a pluralist polity and constitutional democracy that we practiced are confused with a capitalist system. This is not the case in Nepal. The values of competition and democracy of the people are the achievements of the political struggles waged by Nepali people for a long period of time. The very first slogan put forward by the Communist Party of Nepal in its inception was 'Guarantee the Civilian Rights.' The Communist Party pioneered the democratic movement in Nepal.We believe that we have made creative application of Marxism in Nepal that serves the unique conditions of our country. The communist party must win the hearts and minds of the people, and always serve the people as their faithful

agents. The traits of Ho Chi Minh are extremely important in this context.The communist movement of Nepal was born under the influence and through the legacy of various streams of people's movements and struggles. In early days, our political struggle emerged as a nationalist movement for the unification of the country. Later, it took the form of a struggle against British imperialist aggression for the preservation of sovereignty and territorial integrity. The movement sought social reforms and took the shape of 'humanist' struggles against various forms of discrimination in society. After the establishment of Nepal Communist Party, our movement acquired a revolutionary character and socialist orientation. As a result, the despotic Rana Regime was overthrown, and we entered into a modern democratic era. Our democratic experiment was, however, short-lived.In the changed context, our struggle was directed against autocratic monarchy and all forms of feudalism. We relentlessly pursued our political objective of establishing people's power and supremacy. We did not take a rest until we made a decisive and final assault on the monarchy, and established a federal democratic republican order a decade ago. Nepal has also invented a unique way of resolving the internal conflict. We pursued an entirely homegrown, nationally owned and led peace process to resolve conflict, and paved the way for peaceful pursuit of political objectives. Though we do not intend to prescribe our peace model, I do believe that this could be an important lesson for the countries and people yearning for peace in troubled regions and geography.I am glad to say that we have achieved our political objectives under the leadership of Nepal Communist Party and are working together with other democratic forces in the country.However, the achievement was not easily and smooth. We confronted significant

resistance and constraints within and outside the country. We even witnessed various ups and downs, unity and divisions in the communist movement. In the course of political struggle, many of our compatriots made ultimate sacrifice and many others suffered loss of one kind or the other. Only the last month, we celebrated the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party. The unification of two largest communist parties - Communist Party of Nepal (UML) and Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), last year, gave a distinct sense of unity and togetherness in celebrating this important commemorative event.

The modern and progressive features of a democratic, inclusive and humanistic polity have been fully reflected and encapsulated in our constitution we promulgated in 2015 through an elected constituent assembly. The people of Nepal exercised their sovereign rights in constitution making process. This has fulfilled their long-cherished goal of writing a constitution of the people, by the people and for the people. The left forces in the country led and safeguarded the constitution-making process.Nepal's new constitution guarantees all the necessary structural frameworks and makes mandatory the State's policies to create a progressive, equitable, inclusive, forward-looking and socialism-oriented system.A notable achievement is that one-third of seats in the Federal Parliament, and the provincial assemblies is guaranteed for women. The constitution mandates that a woman must fill the positions of either President or Vice-President of the country and Speaker or Deputy Speaker of the parliament. At the local level, women are guaranteed 40% representation.Our constitution contains key provisions of a welfare state to fulfil the rights of every segment of society. In

childhood, State provides nutrition and education. In young age, it provides the opportunities for jobs. In old age, the Government provides social security. Thus, the Government provides care for the people in their entire life.Nepali people provided us resounding mandate through free, fair and impartial elections held in 2017. In addition to the Federal Parliament, our party has won similar level of majority in six out of seven provincial parliaments. On the whole, the party has won over 53% of popular votes.

Such a popular mandate given to us by the people mirrors a deep trust of the people in our policies and ability to run the government for political stability and economic prosperity. And, after all, the credit for such an overwhelming success of the communist party goes to the creative application of Marxism in Nepal in the form of People's Multiparty Democracy.We championed the cause of democracy and political rights. We befriended the people, shared their joys and sorrows, and lent our unflagging support to their aspirations for a better life. We stood at the forefront of our patriotic movement. And, we had full respect for the cultural traditions, beliefs and practices of the people.

Unity in diversity is our strength. Today, we have embarked on another journey of nation building, a journey for social progress and economic prosperity. We are determined to eliminate poverty, inequality and backwardness. Our immediate goal is to graduate from LDC status. We want to become a middle-income country by 2030 and achieve the SDGs by the same timeline. A 25-year development vision is being crafted for the country. We seek national rejuvenation and economic transformation in Nepal with socialism

showing our path as the leading light. 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali' remains our national aspiration. We will focus on developing national leadership and encouraging innovative and indigenous solutions to our development challenges. We will also seek greater collaboration, co-operation and partnership with the outside world in support of our development endeavours.Nepal is a veritable heaven on earth. The birthplace of Buddha, it is a land of profound and timeless spiritual wisdom. It is a land of enormous and emerging economic opportunities. Therefore, I hope that the economic, social and people-to-people exchanges between Nepal and Vietnam will continue to expand and deepen in the future. Nepal offers a unique combination of natural beauty and cultural diversity to make it a tourist paradise. We would also like to invite greater Vietnamese investments in Nepal. I am fully confident that growing interactions and exchanges will elevate Nepal-Vietnam relations to new heights and benefit the peoples of our two countries. Working through collaboration and co-operation in areas of mutual interest, I am sure that the future of Nepal-Vietnam relations is very bright and promising.It has truly been a matter of great honour and privilege for me to address this august gathering of scholars, faculties and students at this premier academy today. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics for this opportunity. The Academy has left a deep impression on me.

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Remain open to new ideas and thoughts*

I am happy to share my views, together with His Excellency Song Tao, Leader of the Communist Party of China and Chief of International Department, in this important gathering today. I am happy to note that the gathering is going to deliberate on the thoughts and

* Address to the seminar jointly organised by Communist Party of China and Nepal Communist Party in Kathmandu, Nepal, 23 September 2019.

ideology adopted by the ruling parties of two countries China – The Communist Party of China, and Nepal - The Nepal Communist Party. On this occasion, I would like to extend my congratulations to Mr Tao and the people of China on the 70th National Day of China, which the country is celebrating after a week. I also express my best wishes for the early fulfilment of the socialist dream of China, and the realisation of the commitment made by His Excellency the President Comrade Xi Jinping to lift the citizens of the rural areas of China above the poverty line by 2020.

The commencement of high-level dialogue between our two parties on ideological question and thoughts has made me extremely happy and filled me with encouragement. To me, it is very natural and pertinent to exchange experiences on the dream of prosperity that we share together and the increased closeness between our two parties. It is instinctive to share between us the thoughts we carry and the positive outcomes we have made out of its creative application. Equally pertinent is to discuss the challenges we have been facing.

As neighbours, China and Nepal are close friends from ancient times. We are connected with high mountains and Himalayan Rivers. The nature on both sides of our borders has been telling us that our relations are as pristine as nature. The Himalayas standing at our borders indicate that our relations are as high as Himalayas. And, the incessantly flowing Himalayan Rivers between Nepal and China illustrate that Nepal-China relationship is as pure and unceasing as the flowing Himalayan Rivers.

Our friendship is open, independent and unwavering. We respect each other's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. We take care of each other's interests and sensitivities. We honour national pride. And, with all these, our friendship has taken a very high elevation beyond the exchange of interests, based on respect, support and cooperation.

Our two countries enjoy problem-free relations. We have been advancing our friendship in the spirit of mutual benefit and cooperation. Any issues that may arise, as we move forward, will be addressed through mutual consultation.

We are always clear and committed towards one-China policy. Nepal will not let its soil to be used against its friendly country, China. We remain firm in the conviction that any intervention in the internal affairs of any country, no matter in whatsoever pretext, is unacceptable. This holds true in the case of China too. We have no doubt that there should be no external interference in the internal affairs of China.

External provocations to damage peace and order, to generate problems in China's stability, and create disturbance in social harmony or stifle the course of development—in whatsoever context or pretext—cannot be justified.

At times, countries display arrogance unexpectedly while they grow stronger. They sometimes demonstrate unusual behaviours to others too. But China presents a new paradigm to the world's political history by not involving in any such untoward activities, even though China has its own status as a powerful country in the world. Displaying such behaviour, China has substantiated the difference and pre-eminence of the Chinese political system over other political systems. This behaviour also corroborates China's faith in a just world order, peace, equality, co-existence and the future-oriented cooperative initiations. This is further clarified by the concept: 'Towards a Future of Shared Prosperity', propagated by Party General Secretary Comrade Xi Jinping in the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC). The concept is further communicated to the world through China's Belt and Road Initiative.

By leading the revolution and, on top of that, fulfilling the long-cherished dream of the people to realise prosperity,

the CPC has created its proud history. On development and good-governance, the progress and determination of China are awe-inspiring. The Party leadership has proved wrong the propaganda of bourgeois forces that communist parties can lead revolutions but not development.

However, the CPC has traversed a century-long journey marked by ups and downs to arrive to this height. Had it not been the leadership of the Communist Party of China, it would not have been possible to lead the 28 years-long arduous phase of revolution and make the unprecedented achievement in the transformation of Chinese society within seven decades of the establishment of Peoples' Republic of China.

At a time when the CPC was leading the revolution, there existed no similar context or a country with revolution worth emulating. Whatever policies were taken at that time, they all were on the basis of CPC's own experience and capability. That imperative, together with the creativity of the then Chinese leadership, gave a birth to the 'Mao Zedong Thought'. The Thought did not only become a guiding principle of the Chinese revolution, but it also became an inspiration for people's movement in many countries.

The Chinese experience has remained par excellence in the creative application of Marxism, its protection and promotion. I remember, Chinese friends often highlight the three major ideological milestones while describing the important stages of the history of the CPC:

- first, the adoption of 'Mao Zedong Thought' by the Seventh National Congress, which paved a way for the creative and noble application of Marxism in China;
- second, overcoming the chaos in the aftermath of the sad demise of Comrade Mao Zedong, the policy of 'Opening up and modernisation' propounded by Deng Xiaoping that ushered in the new era of development in China; and
- third, Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Xi Jinping Thought for the New Era.

Undoubtedly, credit goes to the Party's General Secretary and His Excellency President Mr. Xi Jinping for all the progress and achievements made by China in recent times. His able and dynamic leadership and the series of his seasoned, timely and dynamic thoughts on international order has taken shape of a distinct school of thought. The CPC has given this thought the name and recognition of 'Xi Jinping Thought'.

China has amazed the world by setting multiple standards while registering remarkable achievements in a number of areas of socio-economic development. Now, there is no doubt for majority of people that the Chinese path for progress and development is going to set the path of progress and development for the twenty first century. We believe that the Chinese development model is going to be sustainable and successful. There may appear a few difficulties while taking the path to success, but the emerging challenges can be handled effectively in this model. Because this model stands on its own foundation, it has grown up on its own wisdom,

toil and strivings, and it embraces the broad horizon. This model and the development course that it adopts for a new era is not like the feigned development and grandeur, erected by capturing the resources, and exploiting the sweat of the people during colonial period.

China is now world's

- second largest economy.
- largest country producing industrial goods.
- largest country in terms of foreign exchange reserves.
- largest country exporting merchandises goods.
- second largest country for foreign direct investment (FDI).
- leading country for financing of development, and
- major country contributing to the world's economic growth and prosperity.

Nepal wishes to forge development partnership with China. It is our common conclusion that we can have mutually beneficial cooperation by basing our relations on the spirit of mutual interdependence. As a close friend and next-door neighbour, Nepali people are very happy to see the speedy socio-economic and technological development and all-round progress achieved by China.

Nepal has registered significant political changes and achievements in recent years. Nepal has finally been able to promulgate a progressive and democratic constitution after going through a long period of conflict and instability.

Three days ago, we celebrated our National Day in a grand manner with the same spirit and fervour that you are going to celebrate your National Day in China next week. The Day made Nepali people truly sovereign by institutionalising the political gains achieved through the seven-decade long continuous struggles. We have designated the Constitution Day as our National Day because it was the day when we promulgated our constitution written by the Constituent Assembly.

We have our own but similar experiences and turns of historical course of creative ideological evolution. The Jhapa uprising of 1970s ushered in a new course towards reorganisation and revitalisation of the then Nepal's communist movement, which otherwise was divided and fragmented into numerous groups and factions. The rise of the General Secretary of then Communist Party of Nepal – Unified Marxist and Leninist, and people's leader Comrade Madan Bhandari and the new creative ideology 'People's Multi-party Democracy' propounded by him –- helped guide the communist movement in Nepal to move ahead by clearing doubts and despair that was engulfing the movement in the 1990s.

The Communist Party of Nepal was founded in the same year the People's Republic of China was established. The historical task of unifying numerous factions of communist parties in Nepal and form a strong Nepal Communist Party was completed one and half years ago. That unification process was completed finally after the historical unification between the two leading streams of the original Nepal Communist Party – the then CPN UML and then CPN (Maoist Centre). The Maoist Centre was also formed in 1970s.

Comparing our experiences with those of China, we have a few different characteristics. We have localised Marxism by shaping it in a way to enable it to address our own unique and special needs and challenges and moulded it accordingly.

We have embraced a competitive multiparty governance system with defining features including constitutional supremacy, periodic elections, human rights, separation of power, check and balance of power and independent judiciary. It is our firm conviction that any party that is not in constant touch with people cannot bear the socio-economic progress, nor can they contribute to the historical transformation. Only with the general mass of people continuously on their side, and with people's constant support for them, the political parties can and are able to undertake social transformation and ensure good governance.

After the unification between the CPN UML and CPN (Maoist Center), we have adopted People's Democracy as the guiding principle of the Nepal Communist Party. The word 'People' captures the class-essence of our democracy whereas competitive multiparty system is the form of our governance system.

We have followed this creative experiment in order to appropriately address the specificity of the Nepali society which is based on the diverse socio-cultural foundation. We respect diversity and pluralism. We are equally committed to the key essentials emphasised by the Marxism.

The role of the Community Party remains unique and outstanding like that of a torchbearer diffusing light. The

Party has led revolutions and steered socio-economic transformations in many countries. Hence, the role of the Community Party is indispensable for prosperity and good governance. We believe that such role can be accomplished through competitive system.

Nevertheless, the Communist Party must be disciplined and unified. Anarchy, factionalism and disintegration cannot be proven right or accepted under any pretence or appellation. No matter how best ideology the party embraces, such tendencies destroy those noble ideals.

I had got the opportunity to address the Central Party School of the Communist Party of China in Beijing during my State Visit to China last year. On that occasion, I had mentioned some of the fundamental principles we have followed. The principles are:

- We have made appropriate arrangements in order not to allow our key revolutionary spirits and ideals wither away. We are aware of the threat that the success achieved in party politics may generate the dense of complacency among the party cadres who may be induced to deviate from the noble objectives of the Party. As Comrade Mao stated, 'Those comrades who are not defeated by formidable enemies can easily succumb under the spell of extravagance, inactivity, corrupt conduct and self-praise'. I am confident that the socialist frameworks of both Nepal and China have full understanding of this facet.
- We are conscious of the fact that our movement can be distracted through the narrative of capitalism-

guided social progress and the capitalist and bourgeois culture. What we have seen is that even though the neoliberalism makes the higher level of society prosperous and transforms the class of some of the individuals; ultimately the capitalism cannot establish a society with just, egalitarian and people-centric development. The real progress that people can experience is possible only in socialism.

- In order to retain allegiance of the line of party cadres to the fundamental principle, ideals and vision, it is necessary to keep them continuously trained through orientation and guidance. Our focus should be centred on young generation who have abundant strength, energy and creative power. However, due to the aggressively intensifying influence of global capitalism, the propensity among youth groups towards individualism, consumerism and deviation from social responsibility is on the rise. Therefore, we need to pay special attention to fill the gap between the generation which has long experience and is mature in revolution and the energetic young generation.
- Marxism should be defended, promoted and creatively used. We must always remain open to new ideas and thoughts. This is how innovation and creativity are developed.

China has presented its own paradigm of socialism. We have adopted our own model of transformation and development consistent with our own context and international situation.

There is no particular ideological formula for the political parties to follow. Marxism becomes successful only when every country applies it in accordance with its own indigenous situation. Imitation is after all an imitation, no matter how beautiful it may look. We should not do so. Imitation does not sustain longer. We cannot attain success by copying others.

Therefore, instead of 'trimming the feet to fit the shoes', our two parties, CPC and NCP, are creatively devoted to the application and development of Marxism by analysing credibly the circumstances based on the ground realities of our respective countries.

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Democratic deficit characterises the present world*

It is indeed a rare and distinct honour to speak from this podium to such an august gathering. It is a special privilege for me to join the many renowned and influential world figures that this hall has hosted over the years and extend my best wishes to you all.

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* Address to the Oxford Union on Peace, Democracy and Development, London, United Kingdom, 10 June 2019.

Contribution of the Oxford University to the world of education for centuries is matchless. Its contribution is known as the distinguished service to humanity through generation and dissemination of knowledge.

Oxford is much more than a physical place for teaching and learning. It is an epitome of human pursuit of knowledge right from the medieval times. It is a centre of knowledge and research where learning is nobler and superior. I equally admire the contributions of the Oxford Union to generate knowledge by promoting free exchange of ideas and debate.

As a person who spent over five decades of his life in struggles for democratic rights and faced severe punishment of fourteen years of imprisonment including four years of solitary confinement, I know how important it is to have access to education and freedom of speech for the people and society to grow, develop and prosper.

Today, I talk about the broader topic of Peace, Democracy and Development. Speaking on the theme in the land that developed *Magna Carta*, the first charter of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the mother of all such instruments, is equally pleasing.

First, I will dwell on the general linkages between peace, democracy and development in the context of current world realities. Then, I will share some insights into Nepal's journey of political struggles, and quest for democracy and development.

The world today is characterised by both optimism and anguish; by achievements and setbacks; and by prospects and problems. Notwithstanding the prosperity the world has achieved, it is not yet entirely free from poverty, inequality, conflict, climate change, and terrorism, among others. Amidst these challenges, the tendencies of populism, protectionism and inward-looking thinking have become more pronounced.

Growing tussle between and among the world's largest economies has raised doubt over the future of multilateral trading system and overshadowed the prospect for global development. The fourth industrial revolution along with 'disruptive technologies' has led the world towards greater

prosperity. However, its benefits are not judiciously shared. Inequality persists. The existence of poverty is against the values of human civilisation and our conscience.

This is where lie the roots of problems. And, no one is spared from these problems as they transcend boundaries and borders of a society, nation and region.

Peace, democracy and development are intrinsically link to each other. Democracy and development are contingent upon peace. Peace cannot be achieved and sustained in the absence of development. And, it is only the democratic system that paves the way for lasting peace and development.

Understanding the complex relationship between peace, democracy and development would warrant an in-depth knowledge of root causes of conflict. Peace is much more than the absence of war. It is an idea, a condition, a culture and a way of society and nation. As an idea, it is a vision aimed at greater good of society. Values such as harmony, tolerance, coexistence and unity are essential catalysts for peace.

As a condition, it is the desired state of political, social and economic realities. It is about enjoyment of all rights by individuals without any discrimination and securing equal access to economic resources.

As a culture and a way of society and nation, peace must be understood in casual relationship with democracy and development. Peaceful environment enables societies and nations to achieve progress and prosperity.

Like creativity and innovation, the roots of conflict and violence are also inherent in human minds. These roots are nurtured by ignorance, greed and intolerance. So, the foundation of peace must be built in human minds themselves.

As a staunch fighter for democracy throughout my life, I believe the alternative to democracy is 'more democracy'. This corresponds to the 'comprehensive democracy'. Comprehensive democracy embraces democratic rights including at the political, economic, social, cultural and technological levels to empower people.

At the political level, what we need is a fine balance between freedom and responsibility. Democracy is about civic rights. It is also about civilised way of behaviour.

At the economic level, it is about empowering people with means, resources and choices. It is about ending poverty, inequality and backwardness. At the social and cultural levels, democracy must address the problems related to power dynamics and promote a sense of belongingness, inclusivity and justice.

At the technological level, new means of disruptive technologies must be used for the sake of empowering people. After all, it was not technologies that created democracy; it was democracy that created technologies.

Let me also touch upon the need of comprehensive democracy at the international level.

No matter what the name suggests, the world order is far from being representative. Democratic deficit characterises the world order. On economic front too, systemic inequality still persists. Though globalisation has not benefitted all equally, its very foundation is being challenged by its own proponents.

Comprehensive democracy demands a world order that is democratic, inclusive, just, fair and seeks a balance between enjoyment of rights and fulfilment of obligations in good faith. Its foundation is the principle of sovereign equality. And, democracies cannot sustain within the borders of nations, if the broader global ecosystem is undemocratic.

The realisation of SDGs by all will help translate the vision of comprehensive democracy into practice. To me, the notion of comprehensive democracy finds its eloquent expression in the SDGs' underlying philosophy of 'leaving no one behind'.

There are certain universally accepted democratic values and norms that all must adhere to. In essence, democracy must embrace equal rights, equal opportunities, equal protection of security and equal respect as its key pillars. This is the core of comprehensive democracy.

We confront the most difficult task ahead: how to ensure the security of humankind and the planet, and hand over the habitable planet to future generations. The growing phenomenon of climate change poses a serious existential threat to humanity. It jeopardises the health of both humankind and planet. So, we must rise above the parochial national interest to galvanise our efforts for the survival of humanity.

It is unfortunate that the countries like Nepal which emit negligibly and contribute substantially to the maintenance of global ecological order are ironically bearing the brunt of disproportionate impact of climate change. This is simply unacceptable.

Our Himalayas and forests contribute to the recharging system of the earth and also keep the environment clean and cool. This is an extraordinary contribution. This must be recognised. Climate justice should be upheld as an essential component of comprehensive democracy at the global level.

Since I am talking about peace, democracy and development, I wish to speak about how Nepal attained the present state of peace and stability. I particularly focus on our peace process.

Our journey to peace and political stability has been full of struggles, movements and sacrifices. Some of them have been truly transformative of historic proportions. Major milestones were the political transformations of 1951, 1990 and 2006.

The autocratic Rana Regime that perpetuated the family rule was overthrown with the strength of people's movement in 1951. This paved the way to democratic in Nepal.

The absolute monarchy was brought to the constitutional ambit through a sustained political movement in 1990. This established constitutional supremacy and limited the King's power to constitutional head of the state. The institution of hereditary monarchy, based on the principle of 'supremacy by birth', was finally abolished, two years after the successful People's Movement in 2006.

In the intervening period, we witnessed a decade-long armed conflict that began in 1996 with a huge cost of the peace-loving Nepali people. However, its contribution to Nepal's political movement for establishing people's sovereignty and rights has been significant.

Our peace process began with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord in 2006 that formally ended the armed conflict. The period between 2008 and 2015 was marked by intense debate, consultations, accommodation and compromises on the nature, scope and contents of the new constitution. This was essential to address multiple problems that Nepali society faced due to its diverse nature.

After years of hard work, the constitution was promulgated by an inclusive Constituent Assembly in September 2015. We accomplished this historic responsibility in a peaceful way, keeping the vital national interest uppermost.

In all these transformative developments and movements, the Nepal Communist Party played a decisive role. The promulgation of the constitution marked the conclusion of peace process and institutionalised the democratic gains made by the people. Political pluralism, periodic elections, inclusion and proportional representation, fundamental freedoms and human rights, rule of law, independence of judiciary, separation of powers and checks and balances, and people's sovereignty are the major features of our constitution.

The constitution guarantees 33% representation of women in the Federal Parliament and Provincial Assemblies. It reserves 40% representation of women at the Local Level. Today,

their overall representation in the elected bodies has reached 41%. Minorities and disadvantaged communities are also guaranteed with their proportional representation.

The historic elections held in 2017 have elected a strong and stable government with a robust mandate to Nepal Communist Party. This has effectively ended the cycle of political uncertainty and frequent change of governments.

With federal system in place, one federal, 7 provincial, and 753 local governments are functioning now. Nepal has ushered in an era of peace, stability and prosperity. Democracy has been consolidated and it has reached the grassroots level.

Nepal's experience with peace making and peace building has been an eminently endogenous process, with many salient features that are unique to our special circumstances. It could present a unique case study of conflict resolution and peace building.

With political issues settled, our fight is directed against poverty, underdevelopment, inequality, illiteracy and backwardness. Our vision is guided by the long-term aspiration of 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali'. Prosperity alone cannot ensure happiness, as it is contingent upon a wide range of material and spiritual factors. So, we aim to achieve both prosperity and happiness for lasting peace and stability.

We aim to become a middle-income country and realise the SDGs by 2030. We have crafted a long-term vision for development and periodic plans to guide our economic journey. Social justice remains at the core of our polity. Unity in

diversity is our strength. We have established the foundation of a non-discriminatory, inclusive and participatory democracy to bring everyone onboard for socio-economic transformation. Our demographic dividend and huge national resources offer enormous possibilities for development.

Our model of development aims at ensuring basic services including food security, shelter and clothing, education, and health and security for all. Our priority is not only about building and sustaining a political system but also about achieving overall social transformation. *Sarwajan Hitaya Sarwajan Sukhaya* (welfare and happiness for all) is at the heart of our efforts.

Today's world has witnessed the popular disappointment with democracy. It seems that democracy has been facing a crisis of confidence. It may be because democracy has failed to promote equality, justice, employment, freedom, and deliver tangible outcomes to bring about the changes in the living standards of people. Democracy has tended at times to become a formality and rhetoric, not substantive and people-cantered.

But, the question is whether it is the problem of the very essence of democracy as such or the dilemma has been created by us through our commissions or through our omissions. The understanding of democracy has often been limited, with an outlook emanating from the binary boxes. Unfortunately, democracy has been compartmentalised in the pigeonholes.

Look around. The challengers of democracy today are in the both sides of political spectrum. The assaults are coming from

the extremist elements in the Left as well as the Right. The dichotomy of the Left and the Right fails to work here.

Prescriptive approach developed on the basis of binary opposites, which is not mindful of the local context, does no justice to democracy itself. We must admit that there is no single formula of democracy and no fixed model of development. The political system of a particular country may inherit its historical background and socio-cultural features, thus making the system unique. We should accept and respect the local reality.

In the context of Nepal, the democratic values and pluralism are inherent in our own culture. They are born out of our own conscience and conviction. We have been practicing them as Nepali way of life.

All democratic efforts must keep people at the centre. Democracy must serve them and make them happy. Democracy must help common people explore and develop their own potentials.

Democratic government must be responsible and accountable to the people. It should be transparent. The most important task of the democratic government is to ensure the basic rights of the people so that 'no one is left hungry and no one dies of hunger'. Right to life is the most important of all human rights.

People themselves are the custodians of peace. They are the defenders of democracy and champions of human rights. Therefore, democracy and its 'bidirectional' outcomes - peace

and development - must aim at serving the people. It is the people who must lead the opinions in democracy. People must not be misled. Leaders must listen to them. They should refrain themselves from catering to the populist impulse of the electorate.

The defence of democracy should indeed be built in the minds of people – in their values, in their way of life. Culture of enlightened discourse rather than an irresponsible anarchy of mob are the ultimate guard of democracy.

To conclude, peace and democracy are never the 'things' done. They are always in the process of 'becoming'. We must believe in them and work at them. Such work may be gradual and quiet, but it should be sustainable. Sustainable efforts are those, which take into account the local realities, and keep people at the centre with a view to empowering them.

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III

TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Nepal is ready for business; therefore, we invite foreign investments to Nepal. We have development-oriented and business friendly government. We have taken reform measures to develop consistent and stable policies. We have environment to make investment in the country. Our sole focus is to promote economic growth at a fastest pace.

There should not be any confusion about the course we have been taking for development. Our vision is clear. Our commitment is unwavering. Our action is pragmatic. The primary task of this government is to bring about economic transformation and deliver prosperity. For this, we need to identify, explore and tap human and nature's potentials. This can be a challenge but not an impossible task because we carry a rich legacy of genetic

memory from our highly innovative and learned ancestors.

We have stable system and institutions. We have sound and clear policies. We have young people, qualified and skilled human resources available at reasonable cost locally. What we need is a combination of domestic and foreign investment mainly in the areas of roads, hydropower, medicinal herbs, hospitality industry and financial markets, tourism, information technology, mines and minerals, manufacturing industry, and agriculture. Given Nepal's topography and climatic setting, we can develop organic farming system with products of high export potentials. Investment in any sector is profitable. Business looks for secure opportunities and assured profit. Nepal offers both.

Nepal: A virgin land for investment*

I am truly pleased to attend this Conclave on a pertinent theme of Unleashing Nepal's Potential. It has brought together entrepreneurs and businesspersons from Nepal and abroad at a time when Kathmandu's charming weather is at its best after the snowfall

* Address to the International Investment Conclave, Kathmandu, 17 February 2019.

in surrounding hills a couple of days ago. No event other than this could be so timely and relevant in the face of our preparation to host the Investment Summit 2019 next month. I am confident that this Conclave will provide a useful platform to share innovative ideas and views on harnessing Nepal's development potentials.

Past few days have been quite momentous in our efforts to give development agenda a distinct priority. Earlier I had addressed the Entrepreneurship Summit hosted by CNI and shared my thoughts on engaging our youths in productive activities through the development of start-ups. I also

inaugurated Nepal Ship Office the other day in order to take the concrete steps towards operating our own ships in Nepal's river. I launched People's Hydropower Programme a few days back with the aim of mobilising scattered small capital among the people and enhancing our overall capacity to generate energy to propel our development activities. The government will continue making further headways in development sector as it enters the second year of its tenure.

Today, I would like to share with you our development potentials, the investment opportunities in the country and our commitment to ensuring good governance. There should not be any confusion about our future course of development. Our vision is clear. Our commitment is steadfast. And, our action is result-oriented. The primary task of this government is to accelerate the pace of development.

To me, development is an outcome derived from harnessing the potentials inherent in nature and human beings. Both nature and human beings have infinite potentials. Developing human capacity through quality education and training is essential to identify, explore and tap nature's potentials. This could be a challenge but not an impossible task because we carry a rich legacy of genetic memory from our highly innovative and learned ancestors.

Innovation and creative ingenuity are in our blood. Our young generation stands as our hope for future. We must create an environment that encourages innovation and creativity to thrive and lead our development course.

Nepal has all the attributes for the development. We have resources. We have stable system and institutions. We have sound and clear policies. We have young people. We have a favourable external environment. We have a single agenda: development; and, only development.

This government stands for this and remains whole-heartedly committed to change the economic face of this country; elevate its stature and enhance its dignity. Nepali people are courageous, honest, hardworking and diligent. They deserve a dignified space in the world. Our history is glorious. Our civilisation is rich. Our scope of knowledge is wide.

There is nothing that stands on the path of our development, except poverty, malnutrition and backwardness. We have the capacity and we must utilise the capacity to defeat these social evils.

There is no doubt that Nepal is ready to take-off on its journey to greater prosperity. This is our unshakable commitment. We have to catch up with the rest of the world. We have no luxury to move slow, nor have we any excuse to make. We have both natural and human resources to develop our country. That's why my government has underlined the importance of prosperity agenda. The vision of 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali' is what underpins the government's actions and guides its policies.

We believe that modernisation of agriculture, generation and transmission of hydropower, development of infrastructure, tourism and manufacturing industries, ICT, health and

education have tremendous potentials to transform our economy from a least developed to prosperous.

What we need is the combination of domestic and foreign investment. We are making substantial efforts to mobilise domestic resources. We want an enhanced level of foreign investment to complement our domestic resources. This way we will meet our development needs and you will contribute to our development efforts while securing good profit for your investment.

Our major pursuit was democracy and political freedoms in the past seven decades or so. Because we spent more time for it, we could not devote adequate attention to the task of economic development. But, today, the picture is different. We have achieved long-aspired political stability and resolved our political issues in a democratic manner.

We are working towards social progress and economic prosperity now so that the long-cherished dreams of the Nepali people will come to fruition. In attaining the objectives of economic prosperity within a short span of time, the major priority of the government is to achieve socio-economic transformation of the country through optimal utilisation of domestic resources and by attracting foreign investment and technologies. For opening up new vistas of development, we welcome foreign investments and technology with open arms.

We embrace foreign investment not only because it builds and upgrades industries and drives competition and innovation, but also because it helps the country to connect with the rest of the world. When it comes to investment, Nepal is the land

of immense possibilities. It is a virgin land as far as investment is concerned. Investment in any sector is profitable. Business looks for secure opportunities and also assured profit. Nepal offers both.

A cursory look at the business profile of some multinationals in Nepal tells us an inspiring story. Some of them, for example Dabur Nepal, Surya Nepal, Asian Paints, were established with limited capital injection. Today, they have acquired substantial capital as they grew and made good profit. This is a reality and it substantiates with what I have been telling you that investment in Nepal is highly profitable.

Business opportunities in Nepal are backed by unique strategic and locational advantages, being proximate to two of the world's largest markets and fastest growing economies, China and India. If both of our neighbours can make impressive progress in multiple spheres, why cannot we do the same? Nepal cannot escape from the heat of development in the neighbourhood. Development is inevitable in Nepal. We are well-connected with both of our neighbours. Our intention is to move from the situation of land-locked to a land that connects, that links, and that bridges.

I feel our interests and those of the investors converge. We want speedy course of development through enhanced investment and they want opportunities to invest and secure good return. This convergence should lead us to work together to create a win-win situation.

You might not have seen the wide and quality highways and public roads in Nepal. Think of investing in the construction

of private highways and roads. We are ready to welcome you. There are many areas such as cable car, railways, and metros to invest. Investment in these areas can harvest wealth.

There are boundless opportunities in Nepal. What we need is money and technology. We aim to create five hundred thousand jobs every year. This is possible only if we invest in productive sectors and speed up development works. In order to achieve this, we work on a two-pronged strategy: first, we focus on the development of entrepreneurship and empower individuals with skills and; second, we give top priority to job creation. We believe, this helps expand economic opportunities for our working age population.

Employment generation and job creation is not possible without the development of science and technology and its proper application. Investment in health and education is important to develop qualified human resources which could, in turn, drive the process of development in science and technology. New technologies, particularly ICTs and Artificial Intelligence, are changing the way we think, connect and work. In future, human beings are likely to be more intricately linked to a variety of technologies and changing our landscapes unrecognisably.

I want the people of our country to be ready for such change, and to make sure that new technologies and new patterns of evolution that we are experiencing work to our advantage. We are mindful that in an age of technological advancement, there is greater risk of lagging behind unless we catch up the world with required speed.

What is our strength in this context then?

Our variegated topography, abundant natural resources and incredible bio-diversity are our strength. They give rise to vast untapped potentials in hydropower, agriculture, as well as research and marketing of aromatic and medicinal plants. The natural beauty and rich cultural heritage create huge opportunities for tourism. This keeps us in a really strong position.

Apart from our natural resources and fertile land, our demography is one of the most precious resources that we possess. We are an ancient country with a young population, and the youth of our nation are in a position to bring positive change that can alter the social and economic landscape of our country.

Our youth will spearhead the socio-economic transformation by taking the lead in adapting new technologies in agriculture, industry and service sectors of the economy. We are equally mindful that our demographic composition is in a flux with rapid depopulation in some parts of the country. In many areas, people are beginning to leave their ancestral homes and lands in search of better opportunities in employment, education and health services. Vast tracts of lands are left barren in many rural areas while the urban centres are struggling to cope with the newly-arrived people with little or no skills, education or financial resources. This trend of shifting population has posed before us two-pronged challenges: the challenge of sustainable urbanisation on the one hand while that of keeping our villages vibrant on the other.

Therefore, we are focused on building, expanding and developing urban infrastructure to absorb the people who have moved out from the rural to urban centres. In the rural areas, our focus is on providing basic public goods, mechanising farming, improving livelihoods and expanding physical connectivity.

Let me also share with you about the investment opportunities and good governance in Nepal.

If you are waiting for the most appropriate occasion for making an investment in Nepal, now is the time. After a protracted phase of political transition, Nepal today enjoys a peaceful, democratic and stable political order. Our commitment is not devoid of action. We have already enacted some business-friendly policies and laws. Some others are in the process

of finalisation. The government has put in place a robust regulatory framework and promulgated enabling policies in a range of specific sectors of the economy.

We are actively pursuing administrative reforms and strengthening of institutions. One-stop-centre for services will be provided to the investors. The macroeconomic condition of our economy is relatively stable, and conducive to long-term investments and economic growth.

The labour laws are flexible and supportive of healthy industrial relations as well as of economic growth and efficiency. Special Economic Zones are being set up at several locations, where investors can take the benefit of further incentives and regulatory flexibility.

The energy supply situation has improved significantly. Road, railway and aviation infrastructure are under rapid expansion. We allow foreign investors 100% ownership of a company in almost all sectors, with the facility of repatriating capital and profits to the investor's home country. There is no obstacle in repatriating capital.

The treatment to foreign investors is at par with domestic entrepreneurs, along with the guarantee of non-nationalisation of industries. There are several bilateral treaty arrangements for the promotion and protection of investment and for the avoidance of double taxation.

Our government is committed to providing required infrastructure to encourage investors to invest in productive sectors so that the industries do not face any infrastructure bottlenecks after they start operation. If you feel that there is still room to improve in order to bolster your investment decision, do let us know. We are always open to constructive advice and committed to bringing any positive ideas into operation. In order to facilitate the dialogue with business community, we have already established a business advisory council.

It is only good governance and the rule of law that ensures state policies are executed as per their true intent and purpose. We are committed to fighting corruption at all levels and providing good governance; and ensuring the rule of law across the entire spectrum of governance structures in the country.

The government is deploying its resources and concentrating its undivided attention on institutionalising the system of governance. It will help deliver the public goods that the state

must provide and regulate the market as a fair, and impartial regulator. We are committed to eliminate cartel and syndicate once and for all and ensure free and fair competition in every economic sector.

We have made substantial progress in governance sector over the past year. A smooth and successful transfer of power among 761 governments at different levels is not a small achievement. A bigger challenge is to ensure efficient and transparent systems of governance that we develop now and will remain in practice for generations to come.

As a vehicle for translating the wishes of the people into concrete outcomes, such system of governance should be of top quality. It must be able to deliver services to the people in the realisation of their full potentials and build a progressive society with equitable opportunities for all.

Why I have put so much emphasis on the establishment of business enterprises of transformative nature is because we have seen the contribution of leading industries around the world that have changed the development landscapes of those countries. Just as Nokia is identified with Finland; Samsung, LG and Hyundai with Republic of Korea; Toyota with Japan; Facebook, Twitter and Microsoft and other big companies with the USA; Ali Baba with China; and Infosys with India, we need an established company that will be identified with Nepal: an emerging Nepal; a prosperous Nepal.

I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to all those who are involved in the noble task of nation-building.

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Development is possible in this generation*

Welcome to the land of Buddha and Sagarmatha, the land that makes Nepali people proud of their glorious history and civilisation; the land where you will be fascinated by its majestic mountains as well as unparalleled natural

* Keynote address to the Nepal Investment Summit 2019, Kathmandu, 29 March 2019.

wonders; and by its incredible cultural richness. Welcome to the land of friendly and hospitable people where guests are treated as God. It is the land where immense opportunities are waiting for your investment to uplift the living standard of 30 million honest and hardworking people.

Here is a government that is stable and fully committed to protecting your investment with assured profit. I am sure all this will inspire you to make Nepal a second home, a place of your constant interest, and a hub of your business. Nepal offers many more things. Let's jointly explore and share.

A year ago, while I was addressing the fellow citizens from the lap of Rara of Karnali Province on the happy occasion of Nepali New Year 2075, I emphasised that Nepal could prosper, and it must. That was an opportunity for me to outline my vision for the development of the country. I had expressed optimism that we would be able to steer the development course of this country. I had also underlined the need of partnership with our friends and well-wishers to speed up our development process.

Today, I am overwhelmed to see you here attending this very important event with a wholehearted response to our call. I deeply appreciate your valuable participation in it.

This Summit has brought us together for a genuine cause. The cause is to consolidate friendship and foster partnership for our mutual benefit. Through this partnership, Nepal will get desired development outcomes with your substantial investment and you will get a good return.

I am happy to share with you that my vision for development has found space in over 75 viable projects in different sectors. They will be presented to you during the course of this Summit. I am confident that you will return home with fond memories of Nepal and with an attractive investment package as an important takeaway of the Summit.

With the promulgation of democratic and progressive constitution in 2015, and successful elections of all elected bodies of three tires of the federal setup, the protracted political transition has been effectively ended in Nepal. It has

fostered a sense of high optimism in Nepali people. It is the optimism

- that the long-cherished dream of socio-economic transformation can now become a reality.
- that the country's development is possible in this generation, and
- that 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali' is not a far-fetched fantasy but a vision to make a reality. People have cherished the way a stable and democratically elected government with its strong willpower and capacity has been steering the development process.

Our constitution is flexible to accommodate the genuine aspirations of Nepali people. It is my strong conviction and, in line with this, we have been able to bring a force to the constitutional fold, which was hitherto out of the constitutional framework.

There is no place for violence in Nepal. Any attempt to disrupt law and order will be firmly and resolutely dealt with as per law. We have a history of success in bringing about political changes, but a history of failure in the institutionalisation of the changes. It is not the case now. Things have changed. We have institutionalised the achievements and stability is taking roots.

Political stability is absolutely assured now. It is a key precondition to country's economic growth. It is not only political stability that Nepal is ensured with, but also with policy consistency. Legal, institutional and procedural

reforms have geared up under my leadership. They were long overdue.

Thus, the past one-year has remained as the base year and the year of policy and legal reform. We have drafted many new laws to translate the provisions of the new constitution into legal and institutional framework. The new frameworks have also created conducive environment for foreign direct investment, among others.

Political transformation alone cannot be enough and sustainable without economic transformation. If we could successfully steer country's historic political transformation, there is no reason why we cannot do the same in economic realm. My conviction is 'yes, we can!' We can do it. The central task before us is to undertake rapid economic transformation.

Our immediate goal is to graduate Nepal from the Least Developed Country status. Our medium-term goal is to become a middle-income country and achieve Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. To realise this, we need to attain a double-digit growth over the next years. A tentative estimation by the National Planning Commission is that the country would require an investment of over NPR 97.77 trillion (about USD 88.18 billion) over the next five years. Domestic resources alone would not be sufficient to meet this requirement. This is where we would like to invite you to come and assist us in meeting huge investment needs.

Our economic policy and its orientations are explicitly spelled out in the constitution. They are premised on the realisation that growth and prosperity is possible only when partnership

between and development of public, private and cooperative sectors is possible.

We are mindful that investment requires transparent and responsive governance and rule of law. With elected representatives at federal, province and local levels, governance attributes in the country are improving. There is already a healthy competition among the provinces and local governments on incentivising investment and getting more of it.

I have said time and again that there is absolutely zero tolerance on corruption. I am resolutely firm on it. I am convinced that good governance is essential for economic development and prosperity.

We are committed to promote free and fair competition among private sector stakeholders. You have already witnessed our firm stand against cartel and syndicate. We have made substantial progress in improving investment climate in the country in the past few months. A sound regulatory framework has been established with the enactment of two key legislations: Foreign Investment and Technology Transfer Act; and Public-Private Partnership and Investment Act.

The Public Private Partnership and Investment Act provides one stop service for all foreign investments of over NPR 6.00 billion or a hydropower project over 200 MW capacity. The new Foreign Investment and Technology Transfer Act, 2019, ensures national treatment for all foreign investments. An automatic route system has been introduced to keep the

foreign direct investment processes simple and predictable. Repatriation is guaranteed on the earning or equity.

We have recently implemented a universal, contribution-based social security scheme. It will have a transformative impact on the country's socio-economic landscape. The scheme covers medicare facilities, safe motherhood, accidental and old-age security of workers. It does not only buttress the foundation of a welfare society but also ensures better and healthier industrial relations, hence, contributes to conducive environment for investors.

Our reform drive has gone well beyond this regulatory framework. Strengthening institutions, building capacity, streamlining and simplifying the processes and procedures have also been the hallmarks of our reform initiatives. Statutory provisions pertaining to land acquisition, company registration, environmental assessment and infrastructure development have been relaxed and simplified.

We have already started online registration and payment system. It will soon be upgraded to full automation system. We will actively pursue bilateral investment protection agreement with friendly countries. It will further ensure protection for foreign investment. We will also pursue negotiations on avoidance of double taxation with interested countries to provide further incentives.

The next reform cycle would involve policies and comprehensive legislations in the field of intellectual property rights commensurate with our rights and obligation under various multilateral instruments. Nepal is one of the most

flexible countries when it comes to economic policy and welcoming foreign investment. All sectors, barring a narrow box of sensitive areas, are open for foreign investment. We allow 100% investment in almost all areas.

We offer an attractive incentive package in terms of corporate taxation, import duties, and export facilitation. Tax rates are predictable and tax holidays are guaranteed as per the law for those industries that meet the established criteria.

We have huge demographic dividend with about 57% of population representing the working age group. The labour cost is competitive and low. There is a good pool of English-speaking population specially amongst the youngsters.

We have developed policies and programmes to enable our youth to be imbued with multi-skills. Qualified and skilled human resources available at reasonable cost locally will make your investment less costly. We have maintained sound macroeconomic indicators to make investment risk free. An independent judiciary has been a mainstay of our legal system. It is capable of adjudicating industrial and investment related disputes on a fast-track basis.

The other key area of priority is infrastructure.

Building infrastructure is the government's priority and our commitment is well reflected in the progress we are making in the sector of vital infrastructure. In terms of infrastructure, we are far better than before. Electricity supply has been guaranteed for industries almost round the clock and the country will soon witness power surplus. Road connections

within the country and cross-border connectivity have improved substantially. The strategic Kathmandu-Terai Fast Track that was just a dream a few years back is now becoming a reality.

Our Special Economic Zones have both infrastructure and other amenities to set up industries. One such SEZ is already in operation while several others have been planned and being developed in different parts of the country. The Special Economic Zone Authority Act has also been revised recently to make the conditions of investment and operation of industries in the special economic zones more promising.

Since Nepal has established a federal system of governance, our aim is to undertake a balanced development approach so that all the provinces get fair opportunities for the development of their industrial base with foreign investment.

Guided by this spirit, we have decided to establish at least one industrial estate in each province. We intend to establish one industrial village in each local level with a view to promoting small and medium-size enterprises.

Investors know better than others about the importance of location. Nepal's strategic location between the world's two largest markets with increasing purchasing power, China and India, serves as a compelling incentive for investment. Nepal enjoys access to both markets on preferential terms.

We have duty free arrangements for most of our products including primary and industrial goods with India. China has granted a significant number of our tariff lines duty free access

to its market. Beyond neighbourhood, export from Nepal is entitled to various kinds of duty free. Preferential schemes are put in operation by both developed and developing country's trade partners for the group of least developed countries.

Size of our domestic market is also expanding along with the growth of middleclass population and people's purchasing power. The connectivity disadvantage Nepal has had is gradually dissipating because of our efforts for connectivity diversification as well as support from our friendly neighbours. Road, railways, waterways, airways and transmission ways are covered within the framework of multidimensional connectivity network with both the neighbours.

Also, port facilities have improved. Nepal has started to utilise Vizag port in India for its trade and transit for two years now. Availability of a modern alternative port has helped reduce hassles at crowded Kolkata/Haldia port. Digital Tracking and Transshipment Systems both introduced recently has eased the transportation process. A new transit route through the use of inland waterways is under progress. This will not only provide us an alternative transit route, but also connect landlocked Nepal to the sea through the waterways.

Transit procedures are being simplified through the use of modern technology and this will surely reduce the cost of business. We have signed Transport Transit Agreement with our northern neighbour, China, and a Protocol to the Agreement will be signed soon. This will enable Nepal also to use Chinese territory and port facilities for its international trade and transit.

When it comes to investment, hydropower could be a prime choice. There are other potential areas which include agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, infrastructure, information technologies, mines and minerals to name a few.

Our target is to generate 3000MW hydropower in three years, 5000MW in five years and 15000MW in ten years. While domestic consumption will gradually increase with our rapid industrialisation drive, the prospect of regional electricity market is also coming to fruition with a positive initiative recently taken by India.

We are also working on the infrastructure foundation of cross-border transmission lines. A robust master plan for such transmission line requirement is already with us. This will guide our future course of action. The recently concluded Memorandum of Understanding on BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection has opened up the possibility for cross-border power trade in BIMSTEC region.

Nepal and Bangladesh have also signed the MoU on Power Trade. These developments make Nepal's hydropower more and more investment-worthy. Converting water into wealth is, therefore, a not-to-be missed opportunity.

Tourism is another important sector for investment. Nepal has matchless natural beauty and incredible cultural treasures. Natural and cultural diversity make Nepal a tourist paradise round the year. We are celebrating the year 2020 as Visit Nepal Year. Our intention is to attract more than two million tourists. We seek investment for upgrading tourism infrastructure, including hotels and resorts.

Agriculture has huge potentials for development. We have to move from subsistence level agriculture to a commercial one by its modernisation, and it demands a huge investment. We want to enhance productivity of agriculture but reduce people's dependence on it. Given Nepal's topography and climatic setting, we can develop organic farming system with products of high export potentials.

My government is not only a stable government with two-thirds majority in the parliament. It is also a government with a clear vision and objective for the development of this country. Devising economic policy, the government is not moving alone. We have taken private sector on board as an indispensable partner in our journey for economic transformation. I am happy to share with you that development agenda and foreign investment enjoy national consensus in Nepal. All political forces in the parliament stand together to invite and encourage foreign investment.

My message to you all is that Nepal is ready for business and investment. We welcome your investment. Feel secure and seize the moment. Your investment will be protected, and your profit will be guaranteed.

We do not want any further delay in our journey towards prosperity. Speedy and comprehensive development is the only option and call of the hour for us. Please join hands in our drive to make Nepal prosperous and the Nepali people happy. We highly value your support and solidarity.

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Success requires a clear vision*

It is a great pleasure to be amongst the captains of industry and business here in Phnom Penh, the beautiful capital city of Cambodia. I have brought with me a strong business delegation to take part in this important event. I am on an official visit to

* Address to the Nepal-Cambodia Business Forum, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 14 May 2019.

Cambodia, the first-ever visit by the Prime Minister of Nepal.

Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen and I met three times in less than a year. We had the privilege of welcoming him to Kathmandu on his official visit to Nepal in late November last year. Prior to that we had a meeting in New York on the side-lines of the 73rd UN General Assembly in September the same year. This shows our growing engagement and deeper interaction between our two countries.

Thank you, dear Prime Minister, for your kind invitation to visit the country of lovely and brave people. I have been touched by the overpouring of warmth, love and affection. You have been a generous host.

I am grateful to you, Mr. Prime Minister, for your kind presence in this meeting. This has profoundly inspired and will continue to inspire our business community to work together in realising huge potentials for development that exist between our two countries.

Mr. Prime Minister, this also demonstrates your strong commitment to promote economic cooperation between the two countries. I am committed to forging strong partnership with you in advancing our economic ties for the mutual benefit of our peoples.

I am convinced that Nepal can learn a lot from Cambodia's rapid economic development and its continuous journey to prosperity. This is more so in the context of the history of conflict in our countries and our resilience and determination to rebuild our nations.

Cambodia has transformed a lot, since my last visit five years ago, under the dynamic and visionary leadership of Prime Minister Hun Sen. Success does not come automatically. It requires a clear vision, strong commitment, determined efforts and right mix of policies, institutions and resources. And, you have successfully demonstrated this.

Nepal stands at a historical juncture. We have resolved political issues and we are now single-mindedly focused on

socio-economic transformation. Today, country's international standing depends on economic development and prosperity. Economic relations increasingly dominate the substance of inter-state engagements.

"Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali" is our national aspiration. A long-term development vision, a vision for 25 years, is being crafted to meet this aspiration. We have a target of graduating the country from LDC status at an early date, of becoming a middle-income country and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Meeting these targets would require huge investments in infrastructures, human resources and financial sector. Our domestic resources alone are not sufficient to meet these targets. We, therefore, need support, cooperation and solidarity of the friendly countries like Cambodia.

It is with this objective in mind that I have come to this friendly country. We want to advance the process of economic engagement on both government-to-government, and business-to-business tracks.

I would like to make a special appeal to the business community of the two countries to jointly explore business opportunities in Nepal. Yesterday, our two countries signed two important instruments with the aim of enhancing economic and trade partnership between us. We must take full advantage of the opportunities provided by these vital instruments. We welcome foreign investment in Nepal to complement our efforts.

In this context, I would underline the following points for consideration of the Government and private sector of Cambodia:

First, policy stability. With the formation of strong government with over two-thirds majority in the parliament, political stability has been achieved in Nepal. The phase of political uncertainty and instability that characterised our past has now been over. Stable government means stability and consistency in policy. This is a fundamental prerequisite for foreign investment. We have met this fundamental criterion.

Second, strong and sound regulatory framework. We have undertaken a substantial reform to make Nepal an attractive destination for investment. Foreign Investment and Technology Transfer Act has been thoroughly revised to make it consistent with the requirements of the changed context. It provides substantial protection measures for investors. Similarly, we have enacted Public-Private Partnership and Investment Act to forge synergetic partnership with private sector to mobilise much needed investment in crucial sectors, including infrastructure development. Our reform process will continue, and the next cycle of reform will involve issues related to intellectual property rights, among others.

Third, simplification of processes and procedures. We have simplified and streamlined the procedures to facilitate the investors. One stop service centre will come into operation from tomorrow. This will bring all relevant agencies in one place to facilitate the proposals for investment in a time-bound manner. Simplified and liberal visa rules apply to the investors and their dependents. Laws and rules pertaining to land

acquisition, company registration, environment assessment and infrastructure development have been simplified and relaxed.

Fourth, market availability and access. Nepal is situated between the two largest economies of the world, India and China. Nepal enjoys preferential market access to both countries. We have given added emphasis to build strong connectivity network with both the neighbours and focused works are underway in respect of railways, roadways and inland waterways construction. Enhanced cross-border connectivity will greatly facilitate trade, tourism and investment. Our domestic market is also expanding with increased purchasing power of the people. Nepal is an active member of two regional organisations, SAARC and BIMSTEC where LDCs like Nepal has certain advantages in terms of regional market access. Beyond this, Nepal, by virtue of its status as an LDC, enjoys preferential access to EU and other developed countries.

Nepal also aims to increase participation in Global Value Chains (GVCs) which will bring capital and new technologies to home. Our major constraint emanates from limited production capacity. However, market access is not a problem.

Fifth, Nepal's incentives are striking. There is no dearth of natural and human resources. We are rich in both. As many as 57% of working age population is a huge demographic dividend. We are endowed with natural resources and cultural treasures. Our water is a precious resource. It has the potential to change the development landscape of Nepal and other countries in the region.

For investors, Nepal is a virgin land. Investment anywhere and everywhere is full of potentials with assured rate of return. There are opportunities for investment in other sectors such as agriculture, mineral resources, medicinal herbs, hospitality industry and financial markets.

Large number of English speaking and digitally connected youths is our important assets. This makes ICT sector another area for profitable investment. Labour cost is low and competitive. We have flexible labour policy. A contribution-based social security scheme supplemented by some universal social protection schemes is being implemented. It has ended the possibility of labour strikes and frequent industrial disputes. We have introduced low tax regimes and created conducive fiscal environment. Our tax regime is transparent, predictable and investor friendly.

Recently, we successfully organised the Investment Summit. The Summit saw the participation of investors from more than 40 countries and witnessed the investors' pledge to finance 18 mega projects. It has set a tone. Now it is incumbent upon us to work seriously and get realised the promises and pledges made during the Summit. We have initiated the follow up process by establishing a credible mechanism.

We invite you to invest in the development of industrial park and in garment processing in the special economic zone. Government is providing support in building road and transmission line connectivity. We provide tax rebate for the industries established within SEZ and underdeveloped regions.

Lumbini is the birthplace of Siddhartha Gautam and the fountain of Buddhism. Cambodia is predominantly a Buddhist country. This is a strong link between our two countries among other several connecting factors.

We would like to welcome more sisters and brothers to Lumbini from Cambodia. To facilitate your travel, we are going to operationalise an international airport in Bhairahawa, 22 kilometres east of Lumbini, beginning the end of this year. We are talking in a positive way to establish direct air connection between our two countries. This will greatly facilitate the travel of Buddhist pilgrims and other visitors to Lumbini.

The Government of Nepal will soon start consultation with relevant authorities to host International Day of Vesak in Lumbini. I request Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen to support our bid and encourage citizens of this country to visit Nepal. I thank the Prime Minister for accepting my invitation to visit Nepal and go to Lumbini. We are firmly committed to the development of Lumbini to make it a city of world peace, harmony and understanding.

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We are moving ahead to develop our regional cooperation and trade

[South Asia shares 21% of the world's population, but its share in intra-regional trade accounts for less than 5% of their overall trade. A panel discussion on Strategic Outlook on South Asia was organised during the World Economic Forum, 22-23 January 2019, to deliberate on what can South Asia do to build a regional economic architecture as the region is integrated least economically. Prime Minister **K P Sharma Oli** shared the panel with Chief Executive of Afghanistan

Abdullah Abdullah, former governor of India's Central Reserve Bank **Prof Raghuram G. Rajan** and President and CEO of Telenor Group, Norway, **Sigve Brekke**, and put his perspectives. Following is the edited version of the same. The discussion was moderated by **Mari Elka Pangestu**, Professor of International Economics, University of Indonesia.]

Pangestu: How do you see the development in Nepal? You are laying out some structural reform programmes. How is it going? What are the main challenges and how do you see the role of regional cooperation in the development of Nepal? May be, you can also reflect on not just the economic issues

obviously but there is also the security challenges and the conflicts or tensions between countries that are preventing more progressive development of SAARC or SAFTA. And, given that Nepal is the chair of SAARC, you might want to reflect on what you plan to do ahead?

Prime Minister: Thank you, Madam Bangestu. Nepal has entered a new phase. We are a new democratic federal state. Nepal is developing and changing very fast, politically and economically. It is taking its friendly relations with its neighbours and the regional organisations to a new height. Nepal has promulgated a new democratic constitution and through it established federal democratic republican system. In line with the constitution, we have to make some laws. Now we have completed the structural changes as per the constitution.

Our entire focus now is the economic development, and delivery of good governance. Our development motto is 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali', and to materialise this national desire, we are concentrating ourselves on it. We are introducing new policies and bringing about reforms in all economic, political and social sectors. We are introducing social justice, promoting equality, and investing in the empowerment of women and bringing the backward sections of society to the mainstream. Also, we are doing our best to strengthen our role and increase our presence in the regional and international forums and platforms. We are optimistic about it.

On the question of regional cooperation and regional development, yes, South Asia is a region of learned people with great civilisation. We have genetic memories of learned ancestors. We have excellent diversity in the region. It has the top of the world, the Mount Everest, and also the Bay of Bangal and Indian Ocean. Within this diversity, we have very fertile land and young population. We can develop the region utilising the demographic dividend and available natural resources.

We have to think about the development of our regional cooperation, regional trade, and for that, we have to create such environment where we can enjoy equality, justice and win-win situation. In the case of Nepal, we are inviting investment and technology to Nepal. We are trying to develop our trade and investment relationship with other ASEAN countries too. Last year, we organised the Fourth Summit of BIMSTEC in Kathmandu. It means we are not only connected to SAARC countries. We are gradually strengthening our ties

with Thailand and Myanmar from where we can bring trade and connectivity. For this, we are opening up ways and roads. We are initiating land-links and waterways. This way we are moving ahead to develop our regional cooperation and trade.

Pangestu: Thank you very much. It is not just about South Asia, but also the possibility of South Asia with East Asia, that's I think a very good point. You have young population, but education is a big challenge.

Prime Minister: My country, Nepal, is in a weaker position economically until now. Because of political system and instability, Nepal was left behind. But there is political stability now. Our policies are stable. We have clear vision and stable government.

We are giving importance to not only the public sector but also the private sector in our efforts to develop the country.

As well as public and private sectors, we are encouraging cooperative sectors too to create job opportunities for the young people. We are strengthening formal education for children and providing vocational skills training to the youths and other people. Because working population is more than 60% in our country, it is very important to create jobs for them. A large number of young population is outside the country for a job. We want to bring them back home and utilise their skills they have learnt in the development of the country.

We are working to bring foreign invest in our country. We are doing our level best to attract and invite investment from outside mainly to the productive sectors and the sectors which create job opportunities. We are gradually increasing our growth rate. We want to usher Nepal to the level of fastest growing country. It will happen because we have possibilities - we have young population, we have resources and we have developed connectivity with China too.

Agreements with China is now being implemented. We can connect to the sea thorough both the Chinese and Indian territories now. We are opening waterways in near future. We will be linked through rails with India and China. We will be connected through information technology also. With all these, we will create jobs for youths and provide trainings for them.

We are not only paying attention to economic development. We are equally aware of environmental issues. We are contributing a lot to sustain environment because we have mountains. We have 45% forest. A total of 15 % land covered with snow is with us. The mountains have significant meaning on the question

of climate change. In total, about 60% of our land – 45% forest and 15% ice – is contributing to control rising global warming. It is a significant contribution. In this way, we are aware of our development issues, and trade and investment priorities comprehensively. We are concentrating all our efforts as per the interest of the people. We are committed to improve the lives of the people. We are leading our development endeavours in a balanced, conscious, responsible manner.

Pangestu: Thank you Prime Minister. I think the emphasis on sustainable development should never be forgotten. Now we have only seven minutes for this discussion. I am just going to pose one question to you all. You know, whenever we talk about South Asia cooperation, we tend to get pessimistic because it is just too challenging. But I think Professor Rajan provided a way forward. Let's take small steps whether it is sub-regional cooperation between borders for infrastructure of the liberalisation of air services between Indian and Afghanistan, and Indian and Sri Lanka. These are small steps but have had a huge impact. If each one of you can think of a quick win that's practical, that's doable that will have an impact, what would it be? Just thinking what would be a quick win if you like? ASEAN will only progress when Indonesia, the largest country, decides to take a leadership role and has an open policy. So is India in a position in South Asia to do that.

Prime Minister: As the country of South Asia, we are trying our best to develop political understanding between the neighbouring countries. We are also trying our best to develop connectivity between the countries. We are discussing about tariffs and none tariffs. We can bring favourable situation

among us. We have to develop understanding and remove misunderstanding. We must build trust and remove mistrust among us. We need to develop our regional trade as we talk about. Nepal cannot wait for a long time. We have to develop fast on all fronts. We are doing things well with China, India, Bangladesh and other countries in the region. We are making new policies to achieve our development goal. We are determined to control corruption. We are agile to provide service to the people. As the Chair of SAARC, we will lead to hold SAARC summit in near future and take relationship between the countries in the region to a newer height.

Pangestu: Thank you Prime Minister.

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Nepal is ready for business*

My sincere thanks to the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Maritime Gateway for hosting this first ever Nepal-India Logistics Summit in Kathmandu in association with Nepal Freight Forwarders Association.

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* Inaugural address at the First Nepal-India Logistics Summit organised by Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) and Maritime Gateway, 28 July 2019, Kathmandu.

I am delighted to speak a few words on this important theme of Transforming Logistics Landscape. The theme of the summit bears great relevance in the context that Nepal and India have a significant volume of trade, investment, tourism and people-to-people movement. For this, smooth and quality logistics and easy transit facilities are quintessential. It is the smart logistics that plays a crucial role in making trade and transit arrangements easy, hassle-free and cost effective.

Nepal and India share age-old multifaceted ties. Our relations are taking new heights, especially in the changed political and economic milieu. Our two countries are not only immediate

neighbours but also close friends. As two independent and sovereign countries, Nepal and India are bound to interact and engage more and more, both at the level of government and people, based on sovereign equality, mutual trust, respect and cooperation. In short, we are good neighbours, and we should continue to be good neighbours.

India is Nepal's largest trade partner in terms of export and import. However, Nepal's trade deficit with India is very high. Import and export data of the last fiscal year show that Nepal exports goods worth of NPR 48.45 billion to India whereas the country imports goods worth of NPR 863.20 billion from India. This is a deficit of NPR 814.75 billion for Nepal annually. Such a scenario of trade between the two close neighbours does not depict an ideal trade relationship. We need to rectify this as early as possible.

Trade is an engine of growth. A country cannot develop and prosper without it. Thus, trade remains at the core of country's external engagement. While market access of Nepali products to India remains a crucial issue, we have to think in the larger perspective of enhancing Nepal's overall production capacity. This cannot be done without investment. We invite Indian and other investors to take advantage of Nepal's liberal and attractive investment regime. We allow investment in almost all sectors with a very short negative list.

However, investment does not come automatically. Cognizant of this fact, the Government of Nepal has taken a number of policy, legal, institutional and administrative measures to improve the investment climate in the country. The enactment of a comprehensive Foreign Investment and Technology

Transfer Act, the Public Private Partnership, and Investment Act and the establishment of One Stop Service Centre are some of the far-reaching initiatives taken by the government to attract investment.

These developments have started to show positive outcome. The Investment Summit earlier in March witnessed a record number of interested investors looking for business opportunities in Nepal. Nonetheless, we are not confined to these initiatives alone. Our reform process will continue with even greater zeal and speed. We will be enacting soon Industrial Enterprises Act and Intellectual Property Rights Act to further improve investment climate in the country. We will also intensify negotiations on the agreement on the avoidance of double taxation with interested countries and on concluding bilateral investment treaty.

The most important thing is policy stability and consistency that has come with political stability and a stable government. Uncertainty and confusions that characterised our business environment in the past have now been replaced with certainty and clarity. We have development-oriented and business-friendly government whose sole motto is to promote faster economic growth and achieve prosperity for the people by taking the private sector on board.

Economic transformation is our topmost agenda. 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali' is our national aspiration and we believe that this is achievable within a reasonable period of time. In the development journey, our immediate goal is to graduate from LDC status by 2022, and the medium-term

goal is to achieve the status of middle-income country also meeting the SDGs by 2030.

Despite various odds, we have been able to achieve over 7% economic growth in the country last year. Inflation rate is under control and macro-economic fundamentals remain sound. Industrial relations have improved with labour market flexibility and the implementation of social security. Huge demographic dividend and abundant natural resources offer promising environment for rapid and sustainable development of Nepal.

What does it mean for us?

This means that Nepal is ready for business and the country welcomes the participation of business community with investment. This also means that Nepal stands as one of the most attractive lands for investment. I appeal to you all to seize the opportunity and invest in Nepal.

Investment is not confined to a handful of areas. Opportunities are vast and attractive. Hydropower, agriculture, tourism, information technology, manufacturing, mines and minerals, physical infrastructure and social sectors are some areas where investment is highly profitable.

When we talk about logistics available in our two countries, what I find is that the existing transport infrastructure, communication links, trade facilitation measures, transit routes and facilities, and customs clearance procedures are in need of improvement if they are to reach the global standards.

Some improvements have been made already. But that is not enough. Much more is to be done.

Needless to say, how critical it is for a landlocked country like Nepal to be connected with neighbourhoods, and with the region and the world. Despite improvements made over the years, Nepal is still bearing the brunt of high logistic cost in the transit and transport of goods including export and import.

Nepal cannot afford this. Only way to reduce this high cost is to upgrade and streamline the means of connectivity, both hard connectivity of infrastructure, and soft connectivity in terms of administrative procedures.

Connectivity remains a topmost agenda in our bilateral cooperation framework. You may recall, when I met Prime Minister Modiji in April 2018 in New Delhi, we inaugurated the crucial Integrated Check Post at Birgunj and witnessed the ground-breaking ceremony of the Motihari-Amlekhgunj cross-border petroleum pipeline. The pipeline is going to be operationalised soon.

In the same meeting, we also agreed to take new initiatives namely connecting Kathmandu with the border city of Raxaul through railway lines; and developing inland waterways through rivers from Nepal to India. We have witnessed progress on these crucial components of connectivity. Preliminary study on railway connection has been done. The next step would be to prepare a DPR. Other ongoing railway projects in terai are nearing completion and some of them are ready for operation.

I am happy that my vision for inland waterways is being translated into reality. There exists an organic linkage between the mighty Himalayas and the vast oceans in ecological terms. By promoting waterways, we would be building economic and commercial linkages between them. The whole idea is to greatly facilitate the movement of goods, services and people, and promote overall connectivity.

A Shipping Office has already been established in Nepal. Technical experts from Nepal and India have been studying other details for making waterways operational in the rivers of Nepal and India at the earliest possible time. It will be a game changer in our transport transit system. It will not only reduce cost of transit transport but also diversify transit transport options. It will benefit both the countries. This is the kind of innovation and dynamism we want to inject into our cooperative partnership.

Since we are discussing the ways to improve logistics conditions, let me share with you the following observations:

Road connection between Nepal and India is much better today as compared to the situation some years back. Thanks to the massive infrastructure drive in India in the past few years, roads in northern Indian states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are being upgraded. We have also widened the roads on our side too. As a result, it has cut short the travel time of cargo trucks.

However, severe bottlenecks still exist when it comes to the quality of roads connecting north India's national/state highways to key points at Nepal-India border. Cargo trucks still queue for hours and creep on these poor stretches.

Gorakhpur-Sunauli road stretch is far better today so is Lucknow-Nepalgunj stretch. We will have to work soon on a new road connection of Nepal's far-west province with nearby Indian national highways as we will build a four-lane motorable bridge over Mahakali river linking it with East-West highway.

Bilateral motor vehicle agreement of 2014 is in operation now. It has potential to facilitate movement of people across the border without troubles. However, we should have a reciprocal arrangement of granting permission at border points.

In view of the changing dynamics of trade and transit, we have initiated a review of both transit treaty and railway service agreement. Further simplification of transit process will bring positive impact on economic growth and development in Nepal.

To ease the connectivity further, there are some key issues requiring thoughtful consideration of the Government of India. These include transhipment of consignment up to land ports in Nepal; full implementation of electronic cargo tracking system; diversification of railway points in Nepal; operationalisation of soon-to-start Nepal railway for transit transport; and access to new ports in India. We have requested the Government of India to provide Dhamra, Orrisa and Mundra, Gujrat ports. We are hopeful that these will be realised soon. Nepal is ready to take the needful action on its part.

On infrastructure, it will be ideal to have dedicated freight corridor between ports of India and land ports of Nepal. There must be dedicated and uninterrupted rail and road corridors. On administrative aspect, it would be easier for traders if the operation hours of customs on both sides are extended.

Going beyond the bilateral arrangements, we must think how we can tap the sub-regional and regional potentials for enhancing connectivity. Bangladesh Government has permitted Nepal to use the facilities at Mongla Port since September 1997, following the opening of Kakarbhitta-Phulbari-Banglabundh transit route. It has also permitted additional rail corridor to Nepal via Rohanpur-Singhabad for transit. However, these transit facilities are yet to be operationalised with and through Bangladesh for Nepal's international trade.

I am of the view that trilateral transit arrangements involving Nepal, India and Bangladesh will change the logistics landscape of our sub-region. We can explore the possibilities of utilising inland waterways in this sub-region going beyond the road and rail networks.

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) framework also offers an opportunity to improve connectivity and logistics arrangements. Pending works should be expedited to advance meaningful cooperation under this framework.

Both SAARC and BIMSTEC have important connectivity agenda under their respective regional cooperation frameworks. Realising regional potentials of connectivity will help transform regional development landscape. Deeper

integration in core areas including connectivity must receive our priority.

While physical connectivity in terms of road, railways and water ways is always important, we must also think of enhancing connectivity through cross-border electricity and air connectivity to promote trade and investment.

The bilateral Power Trade Agreement of 2014 was a milestone. It paved the way for independent developers and traders to have access to market to trade electricity in the vast Indian market. The Government of India has taken important steps for the operationalisation of the agreement including through the issuance of Revised Guidelines on cross border trade of power and procedures of business.

Our desire has been that unhindered power trade be made possible at least among the BBIN Countries. Transmission infrastructure is the highway for electricity trade. The crucial 400 KV Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur cross-border transmission line is in operation now. It has enabled the supply of electricity unhindered. Several smaller radial mode cross border transmission lines are also in operation. Joint Technical Team has done the mapping of need of cross border transmission lines in seven different cross border points in view of the hydel projects that are in pipeline in Nepal. The new Butwal-Gorakhpur cross border transmission line is our immediate priority.

The energy banking system has already been in operation. Nepal has already started to supply wet season surplus electricity to India. Air connectivity plays an important role in

promoting trade, investment, tourism and people-to-people contacts.

Kathmandu is connected with India's five major cities. As we are adding two regional international airports and upgrading the existing ones. In view of the increased travel and tourism between our two countries, there is scope for more air linkages between the major cities of Nepal and India. Nepal has requested the Government of India for four additional air entry routes to ease air traffic congestions. We are hopeful that this will be realised soon.

Our logistics sector faces numerous challenges. Ensuring international standards is a big task. How to expand connectivity through roads and railways and improve quality is a question. As it requires lots of work in legal and infrastructural sides, it also incurs a considerable purse of financial costs.

Adaptation to a new technology for automation and digitisation is another work deemed essential. If we want to improve the logistics for efficient trade and transit, we have to go ahead with it without further delay.

At a time when we are having a logistics summit here, it is appropriate that we come up with a realistic plan as to how the logistics could be improved to the best level possible. I have some suggestions to make:

Works related to upgrading roads and railways infrastructure must be accorded high priority because connectivity is the lifeline of business, trade, investment and peoples' movement.

Reform in customs and administrative procedures is a must in order to facilitate smooth and fast movement of cargo. Hassles at ports and border points, and in between them, need to be totally eliminated.

Bilateral treaties on trade and transit should be timely revised to accommodate required changes in this sector. Laws of both countries also need to be adjusted to allow improvement in the logistics.

Delivery of cargo from ships at Kolkata and other Ports directly to Nepal-bound trucks can phenomenally help reduce congestion in the port, cost of transportation and saving of time.

Use of modern technology for automation and digitisation is equally important. It will make trade, transit, connectivity, and movement of people smooth, less costly and time-saving.

Both countries should establish efficient testing facilities along with smart certification services close to their borders to ensure that their export products are qualitative and hygienic.

There is a need to connect new markets with products of global preferences in order to maximise benefits, availing the improved logistics.

Trade must be balanced between the two countries with a win-win situation.

I am confident that we can move forward with dedicated efforts in these areas. Both the public and private sectors of the two countries must work hand-in-hand for this purpose.

It is an opportune time in the history of both Nepal and India that the two countries have strong governments, and both remain committed to widening and deepening cooperation in multiple areas of mutual benefit. Economic growth rates are in upward trends; development and prosperity have become national agenda; and development drives are delivering results in both countries. We need to fully tap this opportunity for mutual benefit. I hope this summit will come up with important outcomes for enhancing our logistics sector, thereby, making trade, transit and connectivity between Nepal and India smooth, efficient and effective.

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IV

WORK AND LABOUR

Every change comes with new opportunities and challenges. This provides us with a prospect to define our destiny. But our destiny must be at our command, not at the command of technology. We must keep human beings at the centre of all our activities and make investment in building their capability, promoting entrepreneurship and creating decent jobs for them. Equally important is to ensure gender equality, strengthen social protection, respect social dialogue, and guarantee rights at work.

Nepal is practicing a unique example of promoting workers' rights and interests in a spirit of solidarity and harmonious labour relations. Our constitution embodies social justice, right against exploitation, right to trade union and collective bargaining, among others. We have protected workers' rights through contribution-based social security in their active age. Our key priority now is to create jobs at home and employ our youths so that they do not go abroad for employment. Our national aspiration of

‘Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali’ keeps the workers at the core of it. It underpins the agenda of working class for decent work, wage and workplace. For prosperity, we need skilled labour. This helps foster affluence, which eventually leads to happiness of the workers too.

Work place and working class are very important in the society where reforms are necessary. However, the working class feel disoriented by the speed and nature of digitisation change which is outpacing their skills. They are living the experience of falling wages and facing growing risks at work. A credible response is required to their concerns and it must be our pressing imperative. Secure and sustainable jobs need to be created with a special emphasis on rural development, infrastructure development, green economy and the care economy. Together, we can achieve the just transition for workers in the rapidly changing, globalised and digitalised workplaces.

Our destiny must be at our command*

We are gathered here at a historic occasion today

- to mark the centenary of an organisation that pioneered in writing the most ambitious social contract in the history of humankind,

* Speech delivered at the Centenary Session of ILO, Geneva, 10 June 2019.

- the vision and aspiration for a just, humane and equitable world, and to lay an equally enduring foundation for the future.

This centenary celebration of the International Labour Organisation is a celebration of the rights of the toiling masses to realise social justice through social dialogue.

I extend warm congratulations to ILO fraternity on this historic occasion. I feel deeply honoured to be part of this momentous event. I have brought greetings and best wishes from the land of Sagarmatha, the Mount Everest, and Lumbini, the

birthplace of Buddha, and the fountain of Buddhism, for the success of this conference.

The ILO's Constitution was framed in the ashes of the first world war. It reflected the collective desire and commitment of humanity to peace through social dialogue. The Constitution was a testimony that production relations can be transformed through dialogue.

The core principles that the ILO advanced include equal pay for equal value of work, freedom of association, working hours, adequate wage for living, balance between work and life, and social protection. These principles are unique contributions to human civilisation. These are not ordinary achievements. The ILO is a trendsetter of the future.

I would like to mention here two landmark initiatives led by the ILO in the last decade of the twentieth century. They are Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in 1998, and the Decent Work Agenda in 1999.

The report 'Work for a Brighter Future' of the Global Commission on the Future of Work provides a sound basis for our deliberation. I believe the report will set a discourse for another quarter of a century.

Development of technology, shifting demography, migration and change in the organisation of work are creating new paths to prosperity. Meanwhile, they are also disrupting the existing work arrangements. Technology has replaced traditional jobs, transformed the way we work, and created more innovative workplaces. Artificial intelligence, automation, robotics,

internet, 3D printing and block-chain are bringing profound changes in the way we imagine the work. The gig economy is providing millions an alternative to work remotely.

However, every change comes with new opportunities and challenges. This provides us with an opportunity to define our destiny which remains at the human command, but not at the command of technology. The change is an opportunity for us to handover a liveable planet to our posterity and create a win-win situation through demographic dividend to supplement where human capital is in short supply.

In managing the changes, we must keep human at the centre of all our activities. Investing in people's capabilities, promoting entrepreneurship and creating decent jobs are critical to cope with the changes. Equally critical is to ensure gender equality, strengthen social protection, respect social dialogue, and guarantee rights at work.

As the climate change demands more green jobs, climate actions will be most effective if they begin at the World of Work. Green jobs would be the stepping-stones towards green economy. Adequate wages and time sovereignty go hand in hand. That is the sign of prosperity and wellbeing of all workers.

Labour is not a commodity. ILO has a role to play that this core principle of Philadelphia Declaration is upheld all time. Persistent unemployment of youth breeds political instability and engenders poverty. We must end this situation.

Nepal is endowed with vast natural resources and rich demographic dividend. This makes the future of the world of work highly promising in Nepal. We have adopted firm legal and policy reforms to address the dynamic international labour environment. We have domesticated the provisions of the fundamental ILO instruments to which we are a party.

Our laws do not discriminate workers on the basis of their status - regular or irregular, outsourced or contractual and those coming from organised or informal sector.

We redefined the notion of lifelong job by social protection to all workers irrespective of their nature of job; ensured fair balance between flexibility and social security; and legally ended the dichotomy of formal vs. informal sector. This way

we have successfully concluded the process of formalising the informal sector.

Nepal's democratic constitution is founded on the ideals of equality, non-discrimination, and social justice. Democracy without economic right and social justice remains incomplete. Our conception of democracy goes beyond the formalities such as formation of political party, take part in electoral process or enjoy freedom of expressions.

Ours is a comprehensive democracy that empowers individual in all political, economic, social and cultural dimensions. Our constitution embodies social justice, right against exploitation, right to work, remuneration and social security and right to trade union and collective bargaining.

The rights to education, health care, food, housing, culture and language are guaranteed as fundamental rights of the people. We have enacted a number of legislations to enforce the fundamental rights, including those related to the world of work.

The entire life of an individual is covered by social security system. State provides universal social security to its citizens in their childhood and old age. Workers are protected through contribution-based social security in their active age. This provision is incorporated in the Social Security Act.

We launched an ambitious and comprehensive social security scheme to the working people starting November last year. This largest ever social security undertaking in Nepal is being implemented through contribution from both the workers and the employers, and it covers benefits such as unemployment, maternity, sickness, old age, accident, dependent family members, and disability.

Nepal has been providing old age pension to the senior citizens, and monthly allowances to single women and those from the most marginalised section of our society for 25 years now. There has been a gradual increment in the amount of the pension and coverage of this critical cash hand-out.

This year, we launched another employment-based social security scheme under the Prime Minister Employment Programme. This flagship programme aims to create jobs, guarantee employment to every working age citizen, provide allowances in case of unemployment, promote innovation

and entrepreneurship, and support skilling, re-skilling and up-skilling.

To change the production relations, we have introduced new sets of labour laws that safeguard dignity of work, guarantee equal pay for the equal value of work, and ensure flexibility in the world of work. The Trade Union Act protects collective rights of our workers in line with ILO Conventions 87 and 98.

Inclusion remains a basic tenet of our polity. Special measures are in place to ensure inclusion of all sections of our society in the state organs. One-third representation of women is guaranteed in the Federal Parliament and Provincial Assemblies. This was successfully realised in the elections that took place in 2017. The elections resulted in over 41% women's representation to the elected bodies.

Enterprises are the drivers of modern economy that provide jobs and implement ILO standards. Our actions should support them to grow, create more jobs, and sustain economy. By jobs we mean the development of entrepreneurship, enterprises, MSMEs, start-ups and self-employment.

Decent jobs for our youths and social security to all are key to address the job deficit. Migrant workers are often vulnerable to high recruitment costs, contract substitution, unsafe and unsecured working conditions, and non-compliance of terms of employment.

Nepal, being a country of origin and destination, considers that the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) adopted in December last year provides a

framework for cooperation. Our role in the ILO Governing Body and UN Human Rights Council is informed by the basic premises of GCM to make labour migration safe, orderly and beneficial to all.

We have created institutional framework for social dialogue at the federal, provincial, local and enterprise levels. Nepal practices a unique example of unity in diversity of trade unions through a common platform of Joint Trade Union Coordination Centre. This distinct forum of workers represents all working people in Nepal to engage in social dialogue and promotes their interest in a spirit of solidarity and harmonious labour relations.

Presence of tripartite forum at the centre has resulted in improved labour relations that have brought down the labour disputes almost to naught. Employer's compliance is ensured through labour audit that provides an opportunity for reflection, self-assessment and improvement. Labour inspection and inspection of occupational safety and health are the integral part of labour audit. The world of work in Nepal has voluntarily evolved a social contract to implement rights related issue and engage in collective agreements to safeguard the interests.

Nepal's own democratic struggles have drawn significant inspiration from the work of ILO. Many of our trade union leaders are the torchbearers of resistance against autocracy and pioneer of the democratic movements. I myself have fought for equality and social justice for our people for over five decades of my public life.

The government under my leadership is focused on realising the national aspiration of 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali.' For prosperity, we need skilled labour. This helps foster prosperity, which eventually leads to happiness. In this context, we want to define it as – 'skilled workers, prosperous Nepal, happy Nepali' to underpin our agenda for decent work, wage and workplace.

We intend to end all forms of deprivation and exploitation, ensure equitable development and establish a socialism-oriented state as envisioned by our constitution. We aim to end the worst form of child labour by 2022 and all forms of child labour by 2025. We are committed to meet SDGs before 2030, including the SDG 8 composite in all its dimensions. With this objective in mind, Nepal joined the Alliance 8.7 as a Pathfinder country.

Hundred years on, the preambular words of the ILO's Constitution continue to resonate in this assembly hall calling for reaffirmation to social justice and lasting peace. We must meet these 'moral-minimum' and move forward to address more pressing issues of our time.

Today is the time to uphold ILO's founding ideals and demonstrate that they continue to be relevant in furthering the value of human worth, equality, social justice and sustainable future. Let's deliberate on how ILO can secure its own future and that of its tripartite constituents. I am confident that the outcome document of this Centenary event adequately reflects on that important aspect of the organisation.

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Development must promote justice and wellbeing*

I welcome you all on behalf of the Government and the people of Nepal as well as on my own to this conference. I wish you a pleasant stay on this land of Sagarmatha (Everest) and Buddha. I am happy to be with you this evening. My presence in this conference reflects our

* Address at the Inauguration of Fifth UNI APRO Regional Conference, Kathmandu, 20 November 2019.

profound commitment to and solidarity with the agenda of the working class.

I would like to congratulate the Union Network International, Asia Pacific Regional Organisation (UNI APRO) for convening the Asia Pacific Regional Conference in Kathmandu. I thank you for choosing Kathmandu as the venue for this regional conference.

I feel delighted to find that the objectives and aspirations of the UNI Global Unions are close to the values that we share. I am happy to share that we are endeavouring to institutionalise

the values in Nepal. I am equally happy to learn that the Women's and Youth's Conference of UNI APRO held in the past two days was successful.

Asia is rising. I believe, the rise is mainly due to its dividend in youthful population, who mainly belong to the working class that shoulder the capacity to take us and our region to the unprecedented level of global economy.

The momentum of Asia's growth at this juncture, therefore, relies on a vision, which can grasp the opportunity of transition in the digitalised era for our workers. It is a happy coincidence for me to address this gathering. I had attended and addressed the fellow global leaders, a few months ago, this year, during the centenary celebration of the ILO in Geneva. My deliberation was mainly focused on the importance of world of future work.

In celebrating the centenary, we discussed how social justice and decent work can be fostered around the world. An important element we all agreed upon was that shift for a just transition is possible with the power of strong unions, their abilities to organise and push for higher goals towards a human-cantered well-being.

Leaders' statements and action plans in multilateral and regional bodies also confirm the significance of decent work for crisis recovery and sustainable development. The efforts of UNI APRO family, since the dawn of this century, to stand collectively for equal pay for equal value of work, freedom of association, working hours, adequate wage for living, balance

between work and life, and social protection are valuable contributions to the world community.

I must congratulate UNI APRO for constantly championing these fundamental tenets of the world of work. I have long emphasised that prosperity and happiness entail development policy based on equity and justice. These two pillars, equity and justice, can stand unflinching when the context of change is wisely taken into account.

This is the time for change being driven by technological innovation, digitalisation, artificial intelligence, automation and climate change. We are in an era of multidimensional transition. The transition that is

- brought about by technological advancement.
- propelled by demographic shift and migration.
- contributed by change in the organisation of work and so on.

Technological revolution should be a tool of increased productivity, efficiency in service delivery and provider of better working place. It should be a vehicle for the elimination of poverty, hunger, unemployment and social insecurities.

As we stand at the epicentre of the fourth industrial revolution, the world of work faces increasing pace of migration. The challenging dichotomy between the employment-seeking young population of the struggling economies and demands of the ageing industrial countries need to strike a right balance. For this, it is a high time that the formal and informal sectors

of political governance be more pro-workers across the Asia-Pacific countries.

Working class people feel disoriented by the speed and nature of digitisation change outpacing their skills. They are living the experience of falling wages and facing growing risks at work. Despite their longer hours of work, when rewards plummet, it is natural to cause in them genuine anxieties over the injustice of increasing inequalities. Persistent unemployment of youth breeds political instability and engenders poverty. For these reasons, credible responses to their concerns is our pressing imperative. Sustainable jobs for the future need to be created with a special emphasis on the rural development, infrastructure development, green economy and the care economy.

To this end, we should urge that investments should be channelled worldwide to build capacities of people, bolster gender equality, create happier societies so that each worker can navigate successfully in conditions of transitions for human security. Given the challenges of the status of our region on the investment front, we need to be innovative to come up with novel advances to finance for development. Asian strengths of the approach of unity in diversity can step up to this regard.

Nepal's own trajectory for the guarantee of the fundamental rights of workers is built upon unshakeable foundations. Trade unions and professional organisations have a great role to play in promoting the observance of minimum labour standards in the age of disruptive transformation. In the absence of due attention to this, forced transition will incur

massive social costs in the forms of job loss, unemployment, poverty, political upheavals and social instability.

Our development effort must encompass all dimensions of human wellbeing. It should ensure sustainability of the planet, promote justice and welfare. It should not leave anyone behind in the process. For us, this represents true spirit of comprehensive democracy that we are endeavouring to practice in Nepal. Our idea of comprehensive democracy goes much beyond formal political process of party building, participation in electoral process, and enjoyment of the freedom of expression.

It is about holistic empowerment of individuals in all dimensions including political, economic, social and cultural breadth. Democracy without economic right and social justice remains incomplete. It is also about ensuring justice and opportunities for all to enable them enjoy prosperity in their own life time. Human rights cannot find true meaning in absence of freedom from poverty, access to equal opportunity, right to life, security and dignity. They remain useless if a person remains hungry and homeless, which threatens their most fundamental right: the right to life.

Being cognizant of the fact, we in Nepal have crafted social security system to cover the entire cycle of human life. This is to ensure that no one dies due to the lack of basic necessities such as food, clothing, medicine and shelter.

Our constitution embodies, among other things, social justice, right against exploitation, rights to work, remuneration and social security. It also guarantees the right to form trade

union and engage in collective bargaining. The rights to education, health care, food, housing, culture and language are guaranteed as fundamental rights of our people.

Inclusion remains at the heart of our polity. Special measures of inclusion are in place to ensure that all sections of our society have participation in, voice for and contribution to all state organs. Talking about the rights of the workers, I would like to state that we have adopted necessary legal and policy reforms to address the dynamic international labour environment. The reforms comply with fundamental ILO instruments to which we are a party.

We recognise labour not as a commodity but as a human element that requires constant nurture and care. Our laws do not discriminate workers on the basis of their status. The laws treat them equally whether their status is regular or irregular, outsourced or contractual, and if they belong to organised or informal sector. We have expanded social protection to all workers irrespective of their nature of job. We have ensured fair balance between flexibility and social security, and legally ended the dichotomy of formal versus informal sector.

We have a comprehensive social security scheme to the working people. This largest ever social security undertaking is being implemented with contribution from both the workers and employers. It covers benefits including unemployment allowance, sickness, maternity protection, medicare, old age allowance, accident insurance, benefits for dependent family members, and disability allowance.

Nepal has been providing old age pension to the senior citizens for over two decades. This is now expanded to single women and people from the marginalised section of society in the form of monthly allowances. The Prime Minister Employment Programme which has come to implementation since the last fiscal year aims at creating jobs, guaranteeing employment to every working age citizen, providing allowances in case of unemployment, promoting innovation and entrepreneurship, and supporting skilling, re-skilling and up-skilling of those in the job market.

Nepali trade unions have established and practiced a unique example of unity in diversity. I feel proud to mention here that many of our trade union leaders were the torchbearers for democratic struggles and people's rights in Nepal. It is on the basis of this legacy of our history I can firmly say that the soil of Nepal is fertile to bear fruits in great proportions for UNI APRO's Asia-Pacific Regional Conference.

As one of the major labour-sending countries and the country of destination, our important priorities are welfare, safety and protection of migrant workers from exploitation. At the same time, we promote enterprises, prioritise job creation and stimulate economic growth and development. We have created an investment-friendly environment to attract investment in productive sectors to create decent jobs.

My government is focused on delivering the development dividends of the political achievement. This is being taken up with focused implementation of high yielding projects in hydropower, infrastructure development, tourism, education and agro-forestry sectors. This represents a part of broader

goal of realising national aspiration of 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali'.

Let this conference be a valuable opportunity for sharing of our strengths, opportunities, and experiences among us. Let the three forthcoming days become pathfinders for us to overcome obstacles. I wish a fresh revitalisation of partnership among us to tread the road ahead. Together we can achieve the just transition for workers in the rapidly changing, globalised and digitalised workplaces. I call upon all individuals present in the Conference to redouble their efforts towards this goal. I wish a successful culmination of the meeting.

[A question-answer session was organised with Prime Minister **K P Sharma Oli** as part of the UNI APRO Conference. Enthused by the historical change and progress that Nepal has made in the political, economic, social and cultural sectors, some personalities in the Conference asked the Prime Minister some questions in the plenary to get more out of his presence in the event. The session was moderated by **Dr Sharan KC**. Following are the excerpts of the session with the Prime Minister.]

Mr. Stuart Appelbaum, President of UNI Global Commerce Sector: Mr. Prime Minister, it is fantastic to see that the economic growth of Nepal is above 6%. This is a big boost for the country. However, one of the important issues which come

with this growth is distribution. What is your ambition for equality and how do you think the government can address the gap between the rich and the poor?

Prime Minister: Thank you very much for your question. About thirteen years ago, we brought tremendous changes in political, economic, social and cultural sectors in Nepal. Politically we have won very important changes. Now, we are federal democratic republic. Within this new system, there are so many things for us and the Nepali people. Before the change, there was autocratic monarchy. We deposed it and now we are republicans. There was constitution imposed on us by others or written by a handful of people. But now we have the constitution written by 601 members of the historically elected Constituent Assembly. The Assembly was represented by all sectors and sections of our society. I feel, there are two things to make clear on the question raised.

One, our national aspiration. We have taken the resolve of 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali'. By this, we mean that we do not measure prosperity of the people only within the per capita income or GDP. We measure it in the overall wellbeing and betterment of the people's lives. Our major focus is to uplift the life and social status of the people who are workers, peasants and belong to the marginalised section of the society.

Second, we are committed to the comprehensive democracy. By this we mean that we are not only working for political democracy, not only for political freedoms or rights, but also for the entire social life of the people. In comprehensive democracy, no one will be left behind. The women, the marginalised sections of society, those who are oppressed,

and all others will be brought to mainstream. Comprehensive democracy aims to develop a well-managed, well-governed and prosperous society with social justice and equality for all. To put these principles into practice, we have formulated our policies and programmes accordingly. When we say that our policies and programmes are oriented towards socialism that means it is prosperity with social justice and equality for all. So, what we have achieved in this very short period of time in the field of social justice and quality, empowerment of women, mobilisation of youth, taking care of the children, and in the sector of environment and sustainability, is a lot. It was not impossible for us. We are aiming to upgrade Nepal from LDC status to the developed country within next two-three years and meet the target of sustainable development goals by 2030. This is also not impossible for us. As said earlier, we are not going to measure our economy, development and prosperity in the frame of GDP or per capita income. We want to measure the progress on the basis of happiness of entire population.

Mr. Akihiro Kaneko, Vice President, UNI APRO: Nepal's labour law reform and industrial relations are a model for others. How can the Nepal government continue its momentum for labour law reform which maintains the balance such that workers' rights are maintained, and business is not dominant but genuine interests are protected?

Prime Minister: First, I would like to thank you for realising and recognising our reforms. Thank you for your optimistic view and trust that you extended to us through your question. I want to make two things clear here and I think everything will be clear after that.

One, the reform of labour laws. It is done to provide better security, better opportunity, better life, better salary, and every other thing that makes the workers' life and working condition better. We have reformed our laws, but I would like to make it clear that it was not done unilaterally by the government alone. It was done in the participation of the workers, the employers and the government. All these three concerning parties are involved in reforming the laws. It was done in consensus with all.

Second, the reform was possible without struggle, but through dialogue, and collective bargaining. Even in the future, we will follow this method. We are confident that we can succeed. We are committed to make reform in favour of workers. It does not mean that we work against others. The reforms are not against the government. The reforms are not against the employers. They are not against the workers as well. So, workers, government and employers, all the three parties agree, and they are happy with the reforms. This is really notable, and it can be a takeaway for others. Good experiences can be taken and learned from Nepal. Work place and working class are very important parts of our society where reforms are necessary. Reforms are needed. So, I would like to assure you all the audience that Nepal has done something unique, and Nepal will be doing something distinct in the future too.

Mr. Minao Noda, President, UNI APRO: Nepali migrant workers sent home US$ 7 billion in the last fiscal year. Does the government have a strategic plan to stop migrant workers being charged excessive fees from recruitment agencies, and support initiatives to protect the rights of Nepali workers

abroad? What steps can the government take to ensure that migrant workers are not exploited?

Prime Minister: Thank you very much, Mr. President. I go directly to the question. We have reached an agreement with some governments of countries, which are providing job opportunities for our working class people. We will reach in adequate agreements with other governments too to protect the rights of the migrant workers – the rights that include security, work place, salary and all others meant for the working class. Recently we have reached such agreement with Japan. We are trying to empower or enable our workers to be skilled. We are providing them language training, and vocational training as per the works they are going to do in the country of destination. The training package also covers the systems, customs, culture etc that the workers must know in that country.

We are carefully watching the things and we are talking with respective governments as well. Now we are directly reaching in an agreement between the governments. We are doing G2G agreement for the safety and security of the migrant workers. This has reduced the risk of providing unnecessary benefit to the companies. Next thing is, we do not want to send our people outside the country. Because we are not being able to create appropriate and attractive job opportunities in the country, our youths are going to different countries for job. But we will change this situation in few years. We want to create appropriate and attractive job opportunities in our country so that our youths can reap benefit and contribute to build the country. We want to bring investment and technology, not the remittance, from other countries.

However, we are compelled to send them out and bring remittance at the moment because of the dearth of jobs. We are grateful to the countries that are providing job opportunities to our people and providing adequate salary and working environment to them

We are job providers too. People are coming to Nepal from different countries and they are getting jobs here. But our priority is to create more and productive jobs for our own youths. We are aware of it, are working carefully to bring about positive changes to this end.

Mr. Moses Lekuta, Vice President of UNI Africa: Namaste *Sammananiya* Prime Minister. It is an honour and privilege for me to engage with you Honourable Prime Minister to ask you a question. Nepal introduced a new constitution through Constituent Assembly and is able not only to establish peace after decade long insurgency but also to end political transition. My country South Africa also had gone through a similar process. How is your government making stronger foundation for democracy that serves people's interest?

Prime Minister: Unfortunately, and by mistake, we were in conflict for a decade, from 1996 to 2006. Nepal is the country of Buddha who has beaconed the world as the symbol of peace. United Nation celebrates his birthday as Veshak Day. The message he gave to the world some 2600 years ago are relevant and effective even today. Magnets, if they are taken away, cannot work. Sounds cannot be listened from far away. Light cannot be seen if it is far away. Even the lovers, if they are departed in the time of loving to each other cannot sustain their love affairs. It will be weakened and finished. It means

gravitation loses its capacity with distance. But the teachings of Buddha are more vivid, fresher, more valid and more effective even after 2600 years.

We are from the country of Buddha. But as I said in the beginning, dragging our country in violence was unfortunate. We are working with other fellow countries and fellow peace keepers, in different parts of the world, to end violence and bring peace. Our security forces are working as peace keeping force in different countries in the world. But our indulgence in violent conflict in our own country was unfortunate. We realised that. We learnt from our mistakes and losses. We remembered our history. We learnt from the international experiences as well. So, we started peace process through dialogue and with serious and genuine commitments. The peace process concluded with very good results. We were flexible and trustworthy with each other in our dealings. We did not deceive one another. If somebody acts in a deceitful manner, talks will fail. If there is no trust among us, we cannot restore peace. And we didn't give opportunity to increase misunderstanding between the conflicting parties. So, it was fortunate finally that we are able to conclude peace process and bring back the peace that we missed so dearly for some years.

With the success in peace process, we have been able to bring about changes in the political system, make the people sovereign. That sovereignty of the people is paramount. We have been able to institutionalise it through the constitution promulgated in 2015. In our constitution, there are 31 Articles dedicated to the fundamental rights of the people. So, the constitution is good. There is no discrimination. It guarantees

equality. Its aim is to provide prosperity, social justice and equality for all.

The peace which we have achieved through peaceful dialogue is institutionalised now. We have created very strong foundation for the sustainability of peace. And, we have set a bright future for all Nepalis. These are the secrets I think that people are optimistic. They remember their glorious past. They recall it, they calculate and enjoy their present achievements. Also, they have reason to be optimistic about their future, safety of the earth, climate, and ecosystem. The have the feeling that we can achieve prosperity. We can achieve social justice. We can achieve peace. And we can achieve happy life. People have started believing in this.

Ms. Christy Hoffman, General Secretary, UNI Global Union: Your government is making good progress in ensuring gender equality and overall social progress. In a developing country like Nepal, it is not easy to achieve these progresses. What are further strategies to make these developments sustainable?

Prime Minister: First, I say that we are a new democracy. We have a short history of democracy. The Head of the State of our country is a woman. Of the total members of the federal parliaments, 33% are women. Entire representation of women in all parliaments in the country is 41%. Girls enrolment in schools is equal to boys. Drop-out ratio of girl students is decreasing. We are empowering girls from the very beginning, from the childhood level. We encourage them to get enrolled to school and we are careful to retain them at schools, so they do not drop out.

We have secured 33% seats for women even in employment opportunities and jobs. We have given importance to the women and girls education. The basic things for girls and women are education, skill, empowerment, and access to property. Now women are getting jobs. They are getting salary. They are independent and free. Before we took special legal measures, they were uneducated, they were not getting salary. Even if they had money, it would count in the names of their husbands or father or male members of the family. So, women were treated as dependants on men.

But now you can see women here. They can say 'Dear friend, I am independent. I am educated. I can earn. I do not need to depend on somebody.' This is the situation now and it is an important thing. So, when I talk about comprehensive democracy, that cannot be fulfilled without empowerment, education, socialisation of women and girls as they represent half of the population of the country. If half of the population is not educated and empowered, how can a society move forward. Therefore, we are careful about it. We are concentrating our efforts to educate, empower, socialise and increase participation of women in policy making and having access to property. It is not just to show the data and figures to the international communities or forums, but to improve our society. Our policies are comprehensive. Our democracy is comprehensive. Yes, we have just started, but our orientation is correct. We are moving forward being mindful of this.

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Preparedness is fundamental to reduce the loss of disaster*

I am happy to be in this gathering of disaster management experts and stakeholders. I thank the organisers for choosing Kathmandu as the venue of this regional meeting.

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* Remarks at the 14th Regional Consultative Committee Meeting of Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC), Kathmandu, 3 December 2018.

The theme of today's deliberation is important for us because Nepal has remained a disaster-prone country owing to its uniquely steep geography and fragility of mountain ecosystem.

Human civilisation has confronted severe challenges to arrive to this stage. Among the challenges stand out the natural disasters and pandemic diseases as the most frequent phenomena. To add in the list, earthquake and volcano, flash floods, typhoons and land-slides, forest fires and cold wave, lightning and hailstorms, outburst of glacial lakes and

epidemic and endemic have seriously endangered the human civilisation.

The human being has crossed the ice age and fit itself into the system of survival of the fittest. In every stage, where there is a challenge, human being has faced it skilfully. The development of science and technology has made easy in the prediction of some disasters. But combination of disaster related risks has increased our vulnerability. It has endangered our lives and livelihoods, damaged infrastructures and weakened our development efforts.

The human casualties, environmental loss and economic impacts of such incidents have been significantly high over the years. Climate change and its multi-dimensional impact has further compounded the risks and vulnerability. We are situated on an active tectonic movement area that increases risk of earthquakes. The devastating earthquakes of 2015 and their deadly impacts remain afresh in the memory of our people. However, with the resilience and collective actions of government, community people, civil society and non-governmental partners, we were able to rescue the affected people, provide them with relief supports and embark on the path of reconstruction for building-back-better. Support of our friends from international community, including governments and non-governments, remained immensely valuable in all those efforts.

Learning from the lessons and the past experiences, the Government of Nepal has made sincere efforts in the post-earthquake reconstruction. It has made a good investment

in building resilient communities to face the potential future risks.

We have devised different coping mechanisms, created institutions and built their capacity. We have strengthened and streamlined legal and policy frameworks for building resilience and preparedness, reduce disaster risks and manage impacts.

In 2017, Nepal enacted a comprehensive Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act. Subsequently, it formulated National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy and Strategic Action Plan for 2018-2030 through a highly participatory process. With a longer-term vision of disaster risk reduction and preparedness in mind, the Government of Nepal is fully committed to the implementation of the national action plan and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and its four priorities and seven targets.

Reducing the disaster risks has been integrated in our national and local level plans. It forms an integral strategy of achieving sustainable development goals.

Vulnerability of human lives is profound in every major natural blow. However, calamities and disasters are not induced by the nature alone. We have seen and experienced around the world that many calamities are induced by unsustainable human actions. Human-induced disasters can be prevented through collective efforts. We can also reduce the impact of the natural disasters and make people better prepared to cope with the unforeseen eventualities.

Every major disaster adds miseries and sufferings to the lives, properties, and livelihood of the people. Every major disaster teaches invaluable lesson too on how to survive such crises and help innovate ways and means to be resilient. This probably is the secret of survival of human civilisation. After every major calamity, human societies have emerged better prepared and more resilient.

It is where comes the importance of social innovation for making communities more aware, resilient and better prepared. Natural disasters are unpredictable, and they know no borders. Preparedness alone can reduce the vulnerability and prevent the loss of lives and properties.

Information is critically important in disasters that can save lives. Technology can support us for making informed decision based on science and research rather than intuition. Given the specificity of Nepal and our typical geography, we need to remain prepared for a variety of disasters, instil awareness among people, and utilise tools of preparedness. Such tools include early warning system, emergency response and relief, and arrangements of critical logistics.

In our own experience, geologists and experts had vaguely warned us about the possibility of major disaster in the Himalayan region. Yet the earthquake of 2015 struck us when we were not fully prepared. Adequate preventive measures could minimise the death toll and prevent damage and destruction.

However, the Government of Nepal was quick to respond, within hours, utilising its available resources and institutions.

As we continue to the post-earthquake reconstruction and rebuilding process, our efforts have received needed momentum in the past several months. We intend to complete the reconstruction process as soon as possible and ameliorate the suffering of the people at the earliest. We are serious to learn from the past, preserve institutional memory and utilise that memory for the benefit of the posterity.

We are fully aware that sustained local, national, regional and international efforts with adequate resources are essential to realise those international commitment as outlined in the Sendai framework. I am confident that your deliberations in this programme will come up with a useful sharing of experience and enrich the disaster risk management discourse for the practical benefit of the people in need.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADPC	Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BBIN	Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal
BIMSTEC	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation
CNI	Confederation of Nepalese Industries
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPN	Communist Party of Nepal
CTEVT	Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training
DPR	Detailed Project Report
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FNCCI	Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
GVC	Global Value Chain
ILO	International Labour Organisation
KDG	Key Drivers of Growth
LDC	Least Developed Countries
MSMEs	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
SAARC	South Asia Association for Reginal Cooperation
SAFTA	South Asian Free Trade Area
SATIS	SAARC Agreement on Trade in Service
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
UML	Unified Marxist and Leninist
UN	United Nations
UNI APRO	Union Network International, Asia Pacific Regional Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPF	Universal Peace Federation

VISION TO ACTION

'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali' is possible in our lifetime. It is a journey we have chosen. It is a path we have taken. It is a destination we have set. Roads ahead may be murky.
But we are well-equipped for this.
We tap into our talents.
We maximise the use of our natural resources and allow them to blossom. We nurture our creativity.
We build on our potential and make it the source of our joy.
Together we can make it.

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