



NEPAL

(AS DELIVERED)

STATEMENT BY H.E. MR DURGA P BHATTARAI, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NEPAL TO THE UNITED NATIONS AT
THE EIGHTH SESSION OF THE UNGA OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SDG'S ON THE THEME: '*PROMOTING EQUALITY,
INCLUDING SOCIAL EQUITY, GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT*'
(NEW YORK, 06 FEBRUARY 2014)

Mr. Co-Chair,

I associate my statement with the statements made by Bolivia and Benin on behalf of the G-77 and China, and the LDCs, respectively.

We appreciate the Technical Support Teams for their excellent issue briefs and also thank the guest speakers and panelists for sharing with us their invaluable knowledge and insights on the important topics.

Mr. Co-chair,

The inequality within many of our nations today mirrors the inequality among our nations, which is even deeper and wider, both in magnitude and in proportions. This naturally prompts us to call on the international community to correct the inequality at the global level, and also help the developing countries bridge the gap within themselves. In any case, the attempt to correct inequality should be approached in a holistic manner- both within and among nations, bringing with the most needy and structurally least capable ones to the sharp focus.

Nepal strongly believes that promoting equality amongst all and eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and girls are critical to achieving social equity, gender equality and women's empowerment- which are so fundamental for sustainable development. Accordingly, the Government of Nepal is fully committed to promoting gender equality and ensuring full and equal enjoyment of human rights by women and girls. Nepal attaches great importance to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly, and upholds the view that women cannot but be characterized as active agents of change in all societies, and should be brought to the all-round development mainstream as such.

Nepal also believes that the lack of progress in the MDGs for women and girls should not be repeated in the post-2015 development era. Therefore, achieving gender equality, women's rights and empowerment must be made a major goal, with commitments across social, cultural, economic, civil and political rights. Emphasis should be placed on ensuring equal rights of women and girls to education, health, social protection, economic opportunities, right to justice, role in making decisions affecting their life-public and private, and on fostering shared rights and responsibilities with men and boys. Likewise, the elimination of violence against women and girls should be an important target in every goal on achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in the post 2015 development agenda, and any such goal must also have an approach to benefit from the positive role of men along the process.

Mr. Co-Chair,

It is with this conviction that, against all odds of post-conflict transition, the Government of Nepal has remained steadfast in its efforts to ensure protection and promotion of equality amongst its citizens, and has indeed made significant progress across social, economic and political spectra in the last few years. The Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2007, guarantees the right to equality for all and ensures social justice for

women and girls as well as other disadvantaged groups and backward communities, to achieve social equity among all.

The Constitution also requires, with regards to election of the Constituent Assembly, that political parties field women candidates to at least one third of the total seats they contest for, first-past-the-post and proportional-representation combined. As a result, the erstwhile 601-member Constituent Assembly did have its 33% members from among women - the highest ever in the region. This fact availed women leaders and also their respective women constituencies a direct access to social, economic and political decision making and opportunities, and set an example for future.

Mr. Co-Chair

Nepal has also enacted various laws to ensure gender equality and prohibit violence and discrimination against women, such as those criminalizing human trafficking and transportation, and sexual and domestic violence, and seeking to ensure gender equality [*Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act, 2007; Domestic Violence (Offence and Punishment) Act, 2009; and Act to Amend Some Nepal Acts to maintain gender equality (2002). For effective implementation of this fundamental right, legal provisions are in place to bring the perpetrators of sexual violence to book.*] With a view to ensuring their access to productive resources for empowerment, women have been entitled to parental property, and to positive discrimination measures for education and employment. Special reservations, services and facilities have also been provisioned for the most marginalized and vulnerable communities, including women who are migrants, differently-abled or victims of conflict. Nepal's efforts at equal empowerment of people for eradication of poverty and generation of employment are guided by the rights-based approach to development, as enshrined in the Interim Constitution.

Apart from legislation, the Government of Nepal is also implementing specific programmes meant for protection of human rights, women's empowerment and minimizing gender inequality, such as the National Strategy and Action Plan on the Elimination of Gender-Based Violence and Gender Empowerment, 2012/13 - 2016/17. A five-year National Action Plan on the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1830 is also under implementation, making Nepal the first country in South Asia to implement these resolutions through defined action plans. Also the ongoing 13th periodic plan of Nepal has set specific programmes for women development. For the last few years, the Government has also been providing Gender Responsive Budget, which is substantially increasing every year for women-empowerment related programmes. In FY 2013/14, the budget on Gender Responsive sectors amounted to about 21.75 percent of the Country's total annual budget.

Mr. Co-Chair

The Government of Nepal believes that enhancing women's economic empowerment, by ensuring women's rights to own land and property, inheritance, equal pay for equal work, and safe and decent employment and, most importantly, engagement of men and boys are central to sustainable development. Our national strategic plan emphasizes on mobilizing men and boys to break the silence on violence against women and foster equality.

Nepal has also created a strong compliance ensuring mechanism through various national institutions to safeguard human rights. The National Human Rights Commission is an independent Constitutional Body and the highest institution working for the promotion and protection of human rights in the country. In addition, National Women Commission, National Dalit Commission and National

Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities work for the protection and promotion of human rights of the targeted communities. Several focused promotional and reformation activities are being carried out for the protection and promotion of rights of people including those from backward communities, indigenous nationalities, *dalits* (downtrodden), senior citizens, women and children and differently-abled persons. These all efforts are aimed at creating greater social justice and promoting social equity. The Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers (OPMCM) directly coordinates and monitors all human-rights related issues and progress across government ministries. A separate high level mechanism established at the OPMCM to curb sexual violence against women has been instrumental in this regard.

Following the implementation of a number of action plans aimed at promoting social and gender equity, Nepal's overall human rights situation has continued to record improvement in recent years. The strenuous efforts made by civil society actively involved in the field of human rights, women's empowerment and social equity have played a positive and catalytic role in further supporting the Government of Nepal in the process. Nepal is determined to build on these gains of long years of struggle and to embrace policies and programmes that accelerate the progress of women and disadvantaged groups.

The Government of Nepal has a firm view that promotion of equality, including social equity and gender equality, and empowerment of women should be accorded high importance. Nepal increasingly realizes that these equalities may be better realized with an approach combining human rights and development. In any case, it is vital that we create an atmosphere where developmental as well as human rights efforts are fully integrated down to the grassroots level by enhancing the capacity of all government agencies and institutions working in these fields. For this, the right to development along with civil, political and economic rights, should be accorded due priority in the post-2015 development agenda.

Mr. Co-Chair

In conclusion, despite all odds of being a landlocked, least developed and a prohibitively high cost mountainous economy emerging from conflict, Nepal is doing all it can towards achieving social equity, gender equality and women's empowerment, to make sustainable development a reality. Along the way, Nepal has developed confidence that much more can be done with international experience and support. We believe some of the lessons we learned the hard way may be useful elsewhere as well. We are committed to working together for common benefit ahead, and look up to the international community for support where we alone can do little. The related SDGs should be able to meet these aspirations and expectations in the post-2015 development framework.

Thank you.