

Statement by Rt. Hon. Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (RIO+20 Conference), Rio de Janeiro, 20 June 2012

Madam Chair,  
Excellencies Presidents  
Excellencies Prime Ministers  
Mr. Secretary General of the United Nations  
Distinguished Heads of the Delegation,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to extend the warmest greetings and best wishes on behalf of the Government and the people of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, the land of Mt. Everest and the birthplace of the Gautam Buddha, to the Government and the people of Brazil for making this generational summit on sustainable development a success. Let me also express my gratitude to Her Excellency Madame Dilma Rousseff, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, for the warm welcome and generous hospitality accorded to me and my delegation ever since we arrived in this beautiful and historic city of Rio as well as for the exemplary leadership in steering this Conference.

Madame Chair,

Twenty years after the historic Earth Summit, we are meeting here in this beautiful city, to take stock of progress that we have made and the challenges that remain to be addressed in realizing the vital goals of sustainable development. This is an opportunity to all of us for a true reflection of our past actions and commitments for future.

The world we live in today is more unjust compared to the one we have inherited. Contrary to the much-hyped belief, the profusion in knowledge, revolution in science and technology and mobility in ideas and global capital, though often termed as characteristic features of modern world, have not made significant contributions to making our planet safer and more just than before. Our capacities to produce goods and services have increased many folds accumulating unprecedented wealth, but more than one-third of the world population is pushed under abject poverty. The process of rapid globalization of finances and unsustainable consumption of resources has made few people further rich at the cost of the rest, marking greatest ever inequality among human beings in history.

Millions of people are homeless and living in miserable conditions of dehumanizing poverty and hunger. Millions of youth suffer from unemployment and under-employment. Women constituting half of the population are still treated as second class citizens. Aboriginal people and oppressed nationalities are still crying for equality and justice. Hence, we have to make a fair assessment of the impacts of globalization and look at the root causes of underdevelopment. Underdevelopment is not an original sin. It is a legacy created and left behind by past unjust relations between nations. It is marked by uneven and unequal access to productive resources that includes natural as well as man-made. A world that is characterized by entrenched inequalities and discrimination, one that continues to defy the universal values of justice, equality and humanity is not sustainable, and it must unequivocally be changed. In this context, the global economic tenets need to be realigned to rectify the contemporary economic woes. The foundation of sustainable development should be our common understanding that all peoples and nations are equal and have the same rights and dignity.

Madame Chair,

Against this backdrop, I speak on behalf of the least developed countries (LDCs). All our countries face severe structural constraints and multiple vulnerabilities, with a multitude of development problems. Our development challenges have become more pronounced and complex, but our ability to address them remains

greatly constrained. The LDCs continue to remain most off-track in the achievement of the MDGs that we collectively defined as a basic minimum for humanity. The resources committed to be available for achieving those goals fall much short of the commitments. While they continue to grapple with traditional development challenges, their vulnerabilities have been accentuated in the wake of multiple and mutually reinforcing global crises and the disproportionate impacts of climate change that threatens to push many more people in these vulnerable countries to the brink of extreme poverty. Those who contribute the least to the greenhouse gas are bearing the brunt of it disproportionately.

When the international community effectively complements our national efforts, through renewed and strengthened global partnership, we are confident that we will be able to contribute to the cause of peace, prosperity and sustainable development for the entire world. In this context, let me underscore the importance of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPOA) for the LDCs for the decade 2011-2020. We call for a full, effective and speedy implementation of the IPOA and its effective integration into global framework and post-2015 development agenda.

We must acknowledge that persistent poverty, unsustainable consumption and production patterns and climate change impacts are today's overriding concerns for all of humanity and for the Mother Earth. The question before us now is how to pursue an economic growth and development that ensures the progress and well being of all the people on this planet in an equitable, sustainable and just manner.

When talking about sustainability of the way we live today we must remember the well known saying that "there is sufficient means to meet all our needs but not enough to fulfill our greed".

LDCs are naturally a key stakeholder of the Conference. Our concerns and aspirations in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication should get a due priority. More than any other countries, we face the challenges of sustainable development disproportionately. We need to express our

commitments based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and our respective capabilities. Those countries which are fortunate enough to have more resources, technological capability and stronger capacity must be at the forefront, assume greater responsibility and take the lead in this process. Equity and inclusive global progress demand that commitment.

Madame Chair,

We should integrate and address the economic social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in a comprehensive and holistic manner. Water, energy food security and agriculture, and natural resource management are of critical importance to us. We need to see measurable progress in these areas. The social dimension should pay attention to develop social and human capital including the MDGs by 2015. The environmental dimension should address our vulnerabilities and build resilience in the face of increasing impact of climate change and other disasters such as desertification, sea level rise, melting of glaciers and coastal flooding. People in the LDCs are much closer to the natural environment as they depend directly and extensively upon them for their sustenance.

We emphasize that the outcome of the Rio+20 Conference should provide for additional, and predictable financial resources to support the sustainable development efforts of LDCs, together with sincere fulfillment of all commitments including on ODA, debt, trade, investment and technology and capacity building as contained in the IPOA. While we appreciate the generous support and cooperation received from our development partners and others, a coherent and enhanced level of support for the LDCs will go a long way towards achieving their sustainable development and graduation from the current LDC status.

We view the green economy as new development opportunities. The green economy should promote green jobs and enhance our capacity without constraining policy space to pursue a development path in accordance with our own national priorities. Similarly, the institutional framework for sustainable development necessitates reform in the relevant entities within the United Nations system that strongly support LDCs' sustainable development agenda.

Madame Chair,

Let me now briefly touch upon the context of sustainable development in my country Nepal.

After the completion of the ongoing protracted political transition in Nepal, we plan to embark upon a rapid and sustainable economic development of the country. Inclusive and equitable economic development, poverty eradication, sustainable management of natural resources and environmental protection are our overriding priorities. Despite our daunting economic and geographic challenges as a least developed and land locked country and limited technical and institutional capacities, we have initiated national framework of actions for sustainable development with a multi-stakeholder approach. We have created a policy framework, plan of action, institutional set-up, monitoring and evaluation arrangements and high-level coordination mechanism at the central level. As part of our national initiatives, we have launched Sustainable Community Development and Community Forestry Programs, rural energy program as well as inclusive governance. Likewise, we are giving due priority to hydropower development and sustainable tourism in Nepal as part of our green growth strategy.

Madame Chair,

With many mountain peaks including eight of the world's highest mountains and rich bio-cultural heritage, Nepal is a place with perfect blending of nature and culture. But for the past few years, Nepal has been on the frontline of climate change effects and ranked by some studies as the world's fourth most climate-vulnerable country. The glacial lake outbursts and recurrent floods are major threats to lives, livelihoods, and infrastructure. As the fate of the billions of people is dependent on mountain ecosystems for water, clean energy, food security, biodiversity and culture, we call for making a global political commitment at Rio to promote sustainable mountain agenda and strengthen institutional and funding mechanisms, and international support and cooperation.

It is for these reasons that nepal has launched the mountain initiative to promote mountain agenda at the global level.

As I stand here on the podium, I see both the challenges and opportunities staring at our face. Never before, our activities have been as integrated as they are today. Our fate is in our hands. Business as usual is not an option. We must chart a new groundbreaking path for all of us here and now. We have limited window of opportunity for course correction. We must act and act now collectively.

Let this conference unite us all for saving the Mother Earth and eradicating poverty everywhere. Let us make them mutually reinforcing.

Let Rio+20 be a historic conference to initiate a new development paradigm for us all.

Let the conference come up with a bold vision and strong framework of action supported by strong means of implementation. Let us not allow this opportunity to slip away because of our short term outlooks and interests.

Let the conference radiate a ray of hope and instil confidence in the lives of the millions of poor, women and oppressed nationalities around the world that it will make a difference in their lives and their children's lives.

Let all of us march to the goal of prosperity, equality and sustainable development together.

Thank you.