

Outline of Remarks by His Excellency Durga P. Bhattarai, Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations, at the 9th session of the UNGA Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals on 4 March 2014, New York

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Mr. Co-Chair,

My Delegation associates itself with the statements made by the distinguished Permanent Representatives of Bolivia and Benin on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and LDCs respectively.

I wish to add a few remarks in my national capacity.

Before that, let me compliment you, the Co-Chairs, for the kind of product you have been able to come up with after the eight sessions of stock-taking exercise.

We know we have quite some way to go but what you have given us in the form of focus areas document has fully assured us of your sincerity and ability to lead the WG to deliver on its mandate, with a balanced, cautious, yet encompassing method of work.

We specially appreciate the manner in which poverty eradication has been taken up. We have always maintained that poverty eradication should be the overarching goal in the whole SDGs exercise and should build upon the foundation laid by MDGs, with expedited fulfillment of the remaining MDGs business. We have also maintained that the special needs of the countries like LDCs, LLDCs which have limited human, institutional and technological capacity in light of graduation target of half of the LDCs by 2020 should be taken into consideration. Further, integration of the Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs into SDGs process is vital where enhancing productive capacity is the first priority area.

We are happy that your approach has embraced that and several other concerns towards creating necessary conditions for sustainable development.

On the whole, my delegation welcomes the document as an excellent checklist- although not exhaustive at this stage, and a good basis for us to move on to the next level of exercise where we need to start working on a specific negotiating document. I wish to assure you of my Delegation's full support in your efforts to that end.

We listened closely to other delegations' comments so far and wish to add a few of our own, with the belief that incorporating them while you revise the present work would make the document more complete. Some of such points, which could be elaborated further, include the following:

1. Focus area 2: Food security and nutrition. During deliberations on this point, emphasis was placed on the '**sustainable agriculture**'. In the document, however, it has been reduced to 'sustainable farm practices' in another specific context. It has to be raised to the originally level of emphasis on 'sustainable agriculture'.
2. Focus area 5: Gender equality and women's empowerment. My delegation and several others had highlighted the importance of making use of the positive roles **men and boys** could play in the process. This element is entirely missing in the document. We believe leaving it out would be a mistake especially when we aim at sustainable development and empowerment of women and girls.
3. Focus area 6: Water and sanitation. The document has included a number of areas for which to ensure access to safe drinking water and sanitation systems. As it seems, **prisons** will be missing from the list, among others, if any, of a congregate nature. I just wonder whether we wish to leave that out deliberately. I mention this to highlight a point that is worth considering here. When something is missing in the document after so long an exercise, it only means that it is deliberate. So, making the document more complete may be important before we start negotiations, together with sufficient justifications if something is to be left out.

4. Focus area 8: Economic growth. Under this, I think **responsible public financing** was also emphasized as one of the key enabling factors, and needs to be mentioned as such. Similarly, **energy** (focus area 7) must be added in the list of its inter-linkages.

My delegation emphasizes that the economic dimension of the SDGs should focus mainly on addressing **productive capacity, infrastructure development, technology transfer, renewable energy, trade and transit facilitation, private sector development and economic and financial shocks**. This is related to other focus areas as well.

5. Focus area 10: Infrastructure. We should not shy away from giving an explicit priority to addressing the special needs and requirements of the **LLDCs**. The landlockedness gives rise to **prohibitively high-cost economy**, such as in case of Nepal, and poses **structural hindrance** to sustainable development, thus requiring a sustainable solution. It should be addressed accordingly.
6. Focus area 13: Sustainable cities and human settlements. Among other matters, a strong need to focus on **protection of cultural heritage cities** was emphasized, together with the issue of **technology transfer** and implementing the **IPOA technology bank**, and elements relating to **disaster risk reduction**- which are all missing. These need to be reflected well.
7. Focus area 15: Climate. We need to recognize the **organic linkage** between the melting of Himalayas and rise of sea level and to include **disaster risk reduction**, which is missing.
8. Focus area 17: Ecosystems and biodiversity. **Mountains** are conspicuous by their absence in the list. We see that the **mountain ecosystems** deserve to figure explicitly and prominently given their importance, including as the vast reservoirs of fresh water.
9. Focus area 18: Means of Implementation. Means of implementation should be assured for each of the sustainable development goals that may be agreed. In this connection, the importance of reforming the global financial institutions, meeting ODA targets especially for LDCs, and forging new and enhanced global partnership cannot be overemphasized.

Mr. Co-chair,

I conclude with one vital point without addressing which our effort remains flawed. During earlier sessions, we talked about disaster risk reduction, and resilience. When we examine post-disaster or post-conflict recovery processes around the world, we find ourselves appalled by the kind and magnitude of **mental trauma** and the **voids in the lives of survivors** that very often outweigh material deprivations caused by those disasters- natural or man-made. The consequent **tragic impacts that haunt the young and old for the rest of their lives** are hard to be healed except with spiritual approach to the trauma. Spirituality is part of all **cultures**. While it is important on its own right, it also complements other efforts to recover. But where is it to be mentioned in our document: education, resilience, or elsewhere?

My Delegation believes that the SDGs should not be too rigid in the name of universality and should not be too fragmented in the name of differentiation. We have to be cautious and balanced while framing the goals, targets and indicators, and should strike a good balance between universality and differentiation.

In this connection, I hope we are not being so obsessed with compartmentalizing our problems that we go to the extent of leaving out the very essential glue - culture - which not only binds all aspects of human life but also holds promises to finding solutions thereof. I just wished to float this concern for the consideration of the Working Group.

I thank you, Mr. Co-Chair.