Mr. Chairman,
Honorable Ministers, Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

At the outset, I would like to join the previous speakers in expressing my sincere appreciation to the Government of Kazakhstan for organizing this important meeting in co-operation with UN-OHRLLS in this historical beautiful city of Almaty. I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your assumption of chairmanship of the meeting. My delegation is confident on your able, wise and dynamic leadership. Let me assure you of full co-operation from my delegation to achieve the noble objective of this august meeting.

The theme of this meeting "Unlocking the Trade Potential of LLDCs" is timely and important for all of us to look forward for the upcoming Comprehensive Ten-Year Review Conference on the Almaty Programme of Action in 2014. I also thank the High Representative Mr. Acharya, who happens to be my compatriot, and his team in UN-HRLLS for their constant efforts to bring forward the agenda of landlocked developing countries.

Mr. Chairman,

We, as a group of world's 31 landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), would like to urge the international community to create a level playing field in the international trading system. Efforts of these countries towards economic and social development are
predicated, among others, upon their robust policies and strategies to overcome constraints on increasing their international trade. The trade of these countries accounts for just 1% of total world trade which demonstrates their continued marginalization in the mainstream of world trade regime.

The geographically disadvantageous position of landlocked developing countries, in terms of remoteness and lack of territorial access to sea, limited transport transit infrastructure both in the LLDCs and the transit countries, weak export bases and cumbersome transit procedures renders our exports high cost and adds additional burden on our competitiveness. Furthermore, socio-economic developments of landlocked countries have faced constraints and challenges in view of several bottlenecks in transport, transit and connectivity within and outside.

Mr. Chairman,

I would, now, like to share my views on the status of the implementation of the Almaty Program of Action. Ten years down the road, since its adoption in the same City of Almaty, the Program of Action has helped us gain experiences and lessons from its implementation. However, new challenges have emerged from fast changing global economic scenario, including economic downturn and financial crisis, food and energy crises and crisis of climate change. We are much concerned about these new phenomena that would further exacerbate difficulties of landlocked developing countries. The difficulty and vulnerability of the LLDCs get even more complicated by both internal structural constraints and external shocks. Several unprecedented incidents as climate change, financial crisis, food and energy crises, and volatility in fuel price have posed additional challenges to accelerate our development efforts. This situation calls for the global partnership, cooperation and collaboration to overcome the challenges that we are facing today. Special needs of landlocked developing countries, therefore, are required to be addressed more vigorously, particularly through a new platform for effective international partnership in the comprehensive review of the Almaty Program of Action in 2014. This may require deeper consultations at national, regional and international levels to identify the country specific problems and challenges in the new global context besides the review of the progress of the implementation of
Mr. Chairman,

As a landlocked country with mainly mountainous terrain, roads and aviation are only major modes of transportation in Nepal. Negligible railways, poor and inadequate road infrastructure, high transportation costs accounted for transit and operating vehicles are our setbacks. Our nearest port, which is not even a part of the main sea lanes of the world, is over a thousand kilometer away from the border. Moreover, Nepalese exporters find difficulties to compete in global markets due to weak standardization and conformity assessment infrastructure, lack of an accreditation system and sufficient testing facilities.

All such constraints impose high transaction costs and delays on Nepalese exporters to compete in international markets. Major export items have undergone sharp declines, while imports have been rising sharply, increasing trade deficit and posing difficulties to the socio-economic development process.

Mr. Chairman,

While implementing the Almaty Program of Action, especially after Nepal's accession to WTO, Nepal has initiated a number of trade facilitation measures, including establishment of dry ports for international trade; harmonization of working days and hours in border customs offices; reduction of number of documents in import and export; simplification of trade and customs procedures; initiatives for rationalizing fees and charges; application of ASYCUDA World with the Brokers Module, Selectivity System and Post Clearance Audit. Additionally, the Single Window System and Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) are in the process of being introduced to further modernize the Customs administration.

The new Trade Policy (2009) and Nepal's Trade Integration Strategy (NTIS) 2010 recognize the effective role of trade in transforming the traditional agrarian economy into modern economy. NTIS 2010 underlines to strengthen national capacity to benefit from trade related technical assistance and aid for trade, and promote currently 19 priority export potential product development activities.
Mr. Chairman,

Nepal appreciates initiatives taken by the United Nations and development partners to deal with the constraints faced by landlocked developing countries. This has provided an opportunity for both LLDCs and the international community to galvanize solidarity and partnership for effective participation of LLDCs in the international trading system.

In this context, I, therefore, believe that the international community and development partners should further extend their support and cooperation to address the special needs and concerns of LLDCs and provide increased, targeted, predictable and sustainable financial and technical support along with the fulfillment of all the past commitments relating to Official Development Assistance. In case of Nepal, we feel urgent need of foreign direct investment in the most potential areas like development of infrastructure and hydropower.

Mr. Chairman,

The Almaty program of Action is an effective tool to cope with the challenges of the LLDCs through the establishment of the global framework of action for developing efficient transit transport system along the transit corridors for removing physical and non-physical barriers in their trade. We emphasize the full implementation of the Almaty Program of Action and assessment of the post-Almaty specific needs of LLDCs.

Last but not least, we urge the international community to develop a concrete program of action with adequate resources for implementing the Almaty Program of Action and reiterate our commitment to undertaking actions at national level in this regard. We also believe that all the meetings scheduled for deliberations from now on would come up with concrete recommendations for a post-Almaty discourse on transit transport cooperation recognizing the real needs of LLDCs.

Thank you.