

Statement by Hon. Prakash Man Singh, Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the Nepalese Delegation, at the Second UN Conference on the Landlocked Developing Countries, Vienna, 3 November 2014

Mr. President

Honourable Heads of States and Governments

Honourable Ministers

Mr. Under Secretary General

Distinguished Delegates

I would like to extend to you all the warmest greetings from the people and the Government of Nepal. I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election as the President of this conference and assure you of my delegation's full support in the discharge of your responsibilities.

I would also like to commend His Excellency Mr. Michael Sata, late President of Zambia for his dynamic leadership as the Chair of Landlocked Developing Countries Group. We would like to express our deep condolences to the people and the Government of Zambia on his sad demise.

My delegation expresses its deep appreciation to His Excellency Ban Ki Moon for the dynamic and active role he has played in advancing the LLDC agenda initiated in Almaty. My thanks are also due to Under Secretary General His Excellency Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya for efficiently undertaking the preparatory process of the conference as well as advocating the cause of the LLDCs.

Mr. President,

The new millennium has marked a new dawn in the history of the LLDCs. And the Almaty Programme of Action (APoA) has been the cornerstone of all the UN initiatives and contributions. The Almaty Conference has been significant not only for its dedication to address the special needs of LLDCs under a set of priorities but also for designing a framework of global partnership involving the transit countries as well as development partners, and envisaging the role of the private sector. It has significantly contributed towards setting the tone for the

development of the LLDCs by creating generally favourable understanding of their constraints and highlighting their special needs in the international agenda. Similarly, growing support of the multilateral development institutions and the development partners for the trade, transit and transport facilitation activities have also been encouraging in the aftermath of the APOA.

Today, as we are gathered here to review the APOA, we realize that the issues of the LLDCs, in general, have been well identified, the needs have been precisely articulated, and the broader prospects of enhanced partnership have been appropriately highlighted. The Almaty priorities in terms of transit issues, infrastructure, trade facilitation and international support still constitute the core of our national endeavours and international collaboration.

Following the Almaty Conference, Nepal has been integrating the APOA in national policies and programs with due consideration of the priority areas. Trade sector has been given strategic importance. The ongoing development plan also accords top priority to the development of infrastructure and connectivity in the country. Many of our initiatives have also been supported by our transit neighbouring countries as well as development partners. We would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their kind cooperation and understanding of our endeavours.

Over the last decade, Nepal has undergone historic transformations in the country. We have emerged from the decade-long internal conflict, and are currently in the process of drafting a new democratic constitution. We attach great importance to the development agenda, and believe that our huge potentials in the development of hydropower and promotion of tourism would serve as a catalyst for our economic transformation and help us attain the target for our graduation from the LDC status by 2022.

The spirit of APOA is also being taken up at the regional level in South Asia. Nepal is hosting the 18th Summit of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in about three weeks. Deeper regional integration in the region constitutes a significant agenda in the SAARC, which consists of both

LLDCs and transit countries. There is a general consensus among the member countries that the promotion of freer trade and investment, and development of infrastructure and connectivity would contribute towards sustainable development and prosperity of the region.

While supporting any sub-regional and regional approaches to transit transport cooperation, Nepal also emphasizes the proper implementation of the agreements on Asian Highway Network and Trans-Asian Railways Network as well as the Asia-Pacific Agreement on Dry Ports in view of their significance for smooth and efficient connectivity.

We attach greater significance to this conference as it undertakes to review the implementation of the program of action adopted in Almaty. Its outcome will go a long way in improving the living standard and wellbeing of about 440 million people in the LLDCs. Most of them are among the most vulnerable and the poorest of all having per capita GDP of less than 1000 dollars.

Remoteness and lack of direct access to sea has enhanced the cost of trade, investment as well as overall development in the LLDCs. Critical issues in the areas of our transit transport infrastructure and facilities, trade facilitation, export base, productive capacity, competitiveness, vulnerabilities, etc. still remain to be resolved. Despite institutional, structural and procedural reforms to promote and facilitate trade and WTO membership, our export trade has not grown. The LLDCs are simply not able to come out of it on their own.

Against this backdrop, we find the theme of the Conference “partnerships for harnessing the full development potentials of LLDCs” quite pertinent. We wholeheartedly support all initiatives towards broadening and deepening the comprehensive partnerships needed to address the special concerns of the LLDCs and help them realize their full development potentials. We acknowledge our unprecedentedly greater needs for partnerships for ideas, technology, resources, trade, investment and sustainable development. We are quite optimistic. The principle of justice and common prosperity as expressed in the UN Charter has always nurtured optimism in the LLDCs. We would like to urge you all to express

your commitments to promote such partnerships and make this conference a historic event.

Mr. President,

Trading capacity has proved to be an engine of growth and development. Our ability to trade is affected by the constraints of our landlockedness as well as limited productive capacity. The constraints, if allowed to persist and cumulate, will continue to marginalize us at the cost of our overall progress and prosperity. We cannot change our landlockedness, but we can significantly change our ability to trade. We therefore intend to change it with global partnership and support.

We sincerely appreciate the spirit shown in the draft of new program of action as reflected in the identification of new priorities such as structural transformation, emerging new issues, regional integration, development of energy and ICT infrastructure, etc. The setting of goals and targets also seem to correspond with the course of inclusive and sustainable development. The challenge before us is to come out with an effective means of their implementation.

We have noted with appreciation the involvement of the private sector in the preparatory process of this conference. In view of the practical significance of their inputs and participation in most of the issues under the priority areas, we would like to express our support for further collaboration with them.

Notwithstanding the similarity of geographical constraints, the LLDCs may differ from each other in terms of their problems and prospects. There is a need for more research into region-specific and country-specific problems and prospects of the LLDCs. Appropriate initiatives and support mechanism may be based on their respective advantages and potentials.

Necessary funding and support mechanisms including new partnerships, modalities as well as fresh and renewed commitments need to be developed for the effective implementation of the new program of actions to be undertaken at all levels.

Mr. President,

It is not fair to talk about the LLDCs like Nepal only in terms of their specific development challenges. We also have some strengths and potentials, and have also been assuming cooperative role in the global response to global challenges. Our natural endowment and geographic features as well as cultural heritage add a very beautiful dimension to the diversity of the world. It should also merit the attention of the world to our concerns and need for development.

It is also against this background that Nepal would like to request the international community including all the stakeholders to contribute significantly in the formulation of a more elaborate, comprehensive, and result-oriented programme of action to help the LLDCs promote necessary partnerships to harness their potentials, and provide opportunities to progress and prosper. There is also a need for the incorporation of the priorities and concerns of the LLDCs in the post-2015 development agenda.

Mr. President,

The APOA was adopted more than a decade ago to address the special development needs and challenges faced by the LLDCs. Today we emphasize that we need to keep the momentum generated by its implementation. We reiterate that our special needs call for special measures for support. We need continued special support of the UN and international agencies, we need special understanding of the transit countries, we need special attention of our development partners, and special involvement of the private sector. Given the seriousness and commitment of all gathered here, I am confident that the Vienna Programme of Action will be a special document for the prosperous evolution of the LLDCs in the days to come.

Thank you very much.