Statement by Permanent Representative of Nepal to the UN H.E. Mr. Amrit Bahadur Rai, leader of Nepali delegation, at the Comprehensive High-Level Mid Term Review of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs

(New York, 5-6 December 2019)

Please check against delivery.

Mr. President
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates

At the outset, I would like to express my deep appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this Review Conference.

I would also like to commend the work done by the Permanent Representatives of Austria and Bhutan as co-facilitators of the inter-governmental negotiations for the political declaration. I thank the USG Ms. Utoikamanu and her team for the preparations of the midterm review.

I appreciate the leadership role played by Paraguay as the chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs).

I align my statement with the statements of G77 and of the Group of LLDCs delivered by the State of Palestine and Paraguay respectively this morning.

Mr. President,

It was five years ago that we agreed in Vienna a set of priorities and corresponding program of actions to be undertaken by the LLDCs, transit countries and their development partners.

The Vienna Programme of Action was not only critical for LLDCs’ development but was also a solid commitment of international community including transit countries and development partners to support LLDCs development endeavor.

We all have made our efforts in realizing VPOA commitments. Despite some progress we have made, they fall short of our commitment. Now is the time to accelerate our actions.

The overarching challenge of eradicating poverty looms large. The average economic growth is not encouraging for many LLDCs. The infrastructure gap is huge. The commodity dependence has rendered LLDCs exposed to the erratic fluctuations in international markets. Most of the LLDCs incur large trade deficits.
The share of LLDCs on global trade remains insignificant. In terms of the growth of the export volume, LLDCs have performed lower than the LDCs average since 2014. Also, the opportunities brought by the technological revolution have not been materialized for the LLDCs. Due to their remoteness from intercontinental cables and lack of ICT infrastructures, there has not been enough progress on e-commerce.

LLDCs further grapple with the adverse impacts of climate change and disasters. Geographical constraints hinder the effective response in the situation of disaster and the reconstruction in the aftermath.

Mr. President

Amidst such scenario, an apprehension looms large – with the slow implementation of VPOA, LLDCs may lag significantly behind in achieving Sustainable Development Goals as well. Such a situation will be an unfortunate assault on the very ambition of ‘leaving no one behind’.

Nepal believes that the best support to LLDCs would be to ensure the full, timely and effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPOA). For this, the national efforts need to be complemented by adequate international support measures in all pillars including ODA, investments, trade and technology transfer.

LLDCs require an enhanced level of foreign direct investment for infrastructure development. Cooperation from transit countries, support of development partners and partnership of proactive private sector can critically enhance the productive capacity of LLDCs.

In implementing VPOA, full synergy and coherence should be maintained with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda for Financing for Development, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

LLDCs which are also LDCs face even more challenges. They are the neediest and deserve commensurate support measures to enable their participation in the global market on an equal footing.

Mr. President,

While all the six priority areas of VPOA are crucial for Nepal, our focus is on bridging the huge infrastructure gap that further augments the cost of geographical remoteness. We also realize the need for structural transformation, and therefore we have adopted development plans with medium term as well as long-term transformative vision.

The Government of Nepal has put all its efforts towards accelerated economic development guided by the overarching national aspiration of ‘Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali’. We
aspire to be a nation that is economically prosperous, environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive.

As compared to the task in front of us, our resources are limited. Here comes the importance of enhanced level of external support. No doubt, internal resources both public as well as private must be utilized in productive sectors.

Our focus is on developing physical infrastructures within the country and enhancing cross-border connectivity and transit arrangements with our neighbours — which are also emerging as global economic powerhouse.

We have signed important agreements with our neighbours on multimodal connectivity. Similarly, important projects are underway on (railways), roads, highway tunnels, international airports and inland waterways.

Nepal also considers the regional organizations such as SAARC and BIMSTEC as important platforms for multidimensional regional connectivity and increase intraregional trade.

Through these steps, Nepal is aiming for meaningful participation in global and regional value chains, and to fully transform itself from a 'land-locked' to a 'land-linked' country.

The need for constant support for the cause of the LLDCs was never greater.

While we remain committed to mobilizing the domestic resources to the extent possible, the narrow resources base and economic bottlenecks compel us to seek a meaningful global partnership to mobilize required resources for development financing.

I conclude, Mr. President, by highlighting that landlocked developing countries cannot and should not be locked in the vicious circle of underdevelopment. For this, we need to move forward with stronger partnership.

Nepal is committed to building meaningful partnership at all levels.

Thank you very much.