

Statement on behalf of the Least Developed Countries by H.E. Ambassador Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, Permanent Representative of Nepal, at the Opening Session of the Eighteenth Session of Commission on Sustainable Development (New York, 3 March 2010)

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Represent of the Republic of Yemen on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

At the outset, let me congratulate you on your election to the Chair of the 18th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation in discharging your important responsibility. I also congratulate the new members of the Bureau on their elections.

I thank the Secretary General and his team for the preparation of various reports for our substantive discussions during the current Session.

We highly appreciate the constructive momentum generated by this year's Session of Commission of Sustainable Development which will be devoted to interactive thematic discussions on five themes (Transport, Chemicals, Waste Management, Mining, and 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns) as well as on inter-linkages, cross-cutting issues and means of implementation.

We believe that the enhanced understanding of priority concerns of these thematic issues will also contribute to the upcoming high-level Plenary on the Millennium Development Goals, Review of the Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, and the high-level event on Bio-diversity.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me touch on the thematic issues before our consideration.

Transport and mobility are indispensable prerequisites for sustainable development. The unavailability of proper transport infrastructures and transport services along with appropriate technology and manpower has largely contributed to negatively affect the development efforts in the Least Developed Countries. The LDCs and many of the Small Island Developing States often experience transport and trading cost disadvantages caused by comparatively small maritime and other transport services. Similarly, the other mountainous and landlocked countries including them face particular challenges in development of transport infrastructures and their effective participation in international trade.

The prospects for economic development in the LDCs are constrained by high transport costs. The difficulty in building rail, road infrastructures, bridges, tunnels and paved roads have further undermined transportation in these countries. The situation of inadequate transport infrastructures and lack of access to affordable transport services, particularly in rural and remote areas, have perpetuated

poverty and thus posed an obstacle to our progress towards the achievement of MDGs. Physical isolation and lack of market integration is a strong contributor to poverty and marginalization of rural communities where small-scale and subsistence farmers, women and children are particularly affected. With the support of development partners, in some cases, we have seen some patterns of transportation infrastructure created with the use of maximum of local manpower, materials and least disturbance to the local environment. But they are a few and far between because of the long period research, higher cost and the need for appropriate technology. Similarly, Most of the urban areas also lack adequate planning and public transport services under the pressure of disorganised urbanisation and have caused economic losses and growing health hazards due to high consumption of fuels, congestion and air pollution. An affordable yet quality public transport system is urgently needed to such areas. Therefore, the availability of sufficient funding and technical assistance is a must to address the critical transport requirements especially in the LDCs.

Mr. Chairman,

There is no doubt that a sound management of chemicals as mentioned in the Johannesburg Plan of Action on Chemicals is critical for sustainable development, and strengthened efforts are desirable for this at both the national and international levels. However, as reported by the secretary-General, the progress in this regard is not sufficient, with implications for the health and welfare of millions of people. The paucity of financial resources and capacity to handle such materials along with the lack of adequate information of potential health and environmental risks associated with them has resulted in the improper management of chemicals in developing countries, particularly in LDCs. The majority of the people in these countries are, therefore, vulnerable to adverse effects of toxic chemicals as they work in agricultural sectors and even lack the basic knowledge of properly handling them.

We believe that the regular exchanges of information on chemical safety and the potential hazardous chemicals in products as well as the strengthening of cooperative action on the issues such as biotechnology, e-waste and others can enhance the management of such chemicals in a sustainable manner. Transfer of technology and technical cooperation along with adequate financial support can enable to appropriately manage such chemicals. Therefore, there is a strong need to make a concerted effort for reducing the risks of toxic chemicals in their entire life cycle with cooperation and support of the international community.

Mr. Chairman,

The ever increasing amount and diversification of waste caused by economic growth, urbanization, industrialization, and unsustainable production and consumption patterns has adversely affected the human life along with the overall economy, environment and natural resources. Ultimately, this has resulted in land, water and air pollutions undermining our progress towards the achievement of MDGs. We should also stress here that there is a growing unsustainable pattern of creating waste in the consumption habits, which we must change at the global level too.

As mentioned in Agenda 21, sustainable development involves the effective management of solid waste, hazardous waste and sewage. Particular management challenges have been posed when hazardous waste is intermixed with other waste. The management of waste requires not only collection and disposal but also the waste minimization, recycling and energy generation. In this context, the particular attention should be accorded to the management of hazardous wastes. An effective and environment oriented waste management requires immediate attention from national and local governments. As such management is costly and beyond the reach of the poor communities and poor countries as LDCs, these countries lack some technological options. They, therefore, need investment in capacity development, along with other financial and technical supports.

The developing countries have been confronting the continuing and worsening effects of the e-waste. In this context, it is imperative to effective implementation of the Basel Convention (on the Control of Trans-boundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal).

Mr. Chairman,

Minerals are fundamental resources and Mining industries are crucial to the developing countries. Mining, minerals and metals are equally critical for the economic and social development of many countries, including LDCs. Mining activities have in a number of cases generated few or limited benefits to producing countries in terms of economic growth and poverty reduction. On the other hand, the process of mining itself has generated adverse social and environmental impacts on communities living next to extraction sites and sometimes at the country level. International cooperation is a must to deal with these problems.

Mr. Chairman,

It was stated at the Johannesburg in 2002 that, "Poverty eradication, changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are overarching objectives of, and essential requirements for, sustainable development." We must be mindful of the inter-linkages among all these issues.

There is no doubt that all countries need to produce the goods and services necessary to satisfy the fundamental needs of their populations, but the special attention should be given to the countries facing numerous challenges and struggling to achieve the MDGs. Growth and poverty reduction cannot be undermined as it relates to the physical survival and wellbeing of the people. It is crucial that we address these issues within the limits of our already stressed natural systems as meeting the MDGs requires production and consumption of more goods and services to meet our basic needs.

Mr. Chairman,

As we are at the five-year mark since the adoption of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI), we look forward to a fruitful session during SIDS Day next week.

Today, at a time when we are in a process to review the implementation on some of the thematic issues of sustainable development, the developing countries, particularly the LDCs, face a number of problems and challenges in their efforts towards sustainable development. The multiple challenges of global economic and financial crisis, food crisis, energy crisis and the adverse impact of climate change resulting in global warming and rise of sea levels, ozone layer depletion, many plants and animals being at the risk of extinction, forests being receding, acute level of hunger and poverty, and increase in pollution-borne diseases have caused an immense impact on the efforts of these countries towards sustainable development. These multiple crises have eroded the potentials of achieving the goals and commitments of 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, and have posed a serious challenge in the LDCs in all three fronts of sustainable development.

Economic sustainability of development in the least developed countries can only be achieved with increased level of support for their economic growth and sustainable economic development. This requires sincere implementation of the agreed commitments made in the international conferences and the Brussels program of action, by meeting the pledged commitment of 0.15 to 0.20% GNP as official development assistance.

In view of the special needs of the LDCs, the developed countries must take concrete steps to increasing financial assistance, reducing and canceling debt, curbing trade barriers, opening their markets, transferring technology and building capacity in these countries in order to realize the agenda of sustainable development at the global level in an inclusive manner.

In addressing the sustainable development issues, we should not adopt a piecemeal approach. Rather, there is a strong need for a coherent and concerted approach to addressing the issues of the sustainable development in a holistic manner, particularly in the least developed countries. We hope the UN system and multilateral financial institutions will adopt such approach to sustainable development taking into account the special needs of the vulnerable countries. A genuine global partnership is required to strengthen the main pillars of sustainable development including economic, environmental and social sustainability in the LDCs- a partnership in which the national ownership of development is matched with commensurate international support. We hope we will share best practices in these issues in the days ahead as well.

Thank you.