



Annual Report 2019-20

**EMBASSY OF NEPAL IN SWITZERLAND
PERMANENT MISSION OF NEPAL TO THE UNITED
NATIONS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS AND WORLD TRADE
ORGANIZATION IN GENEVA**

18 AUGUST 2020

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REVIEW OF MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS

HUMAN RIGHTS, REFUGEE, ENVIRONMENT, AND DISARMAMENT AFFAIRS

Engagements with human rights council

1. Overview

Since January 2018, Nepal has been serving in the capacity of a member of the Human Rights Council for the term of 2018-20. In the Council and beyond, Nepal has consistently maintained an independent outlook on human rights agenda. Its principled position on thematic issues as well as country-specific situations and relevant resolutions pertaining to human rights is firmly guided by the principle of universality, objectivity, non-selectivity, non-politicization, transparency, constructive dialogue and cooperation. In line with this principle, Nepal has underscored the importance of inclusive development, democratic governance, and effective participation of all stakeholders in public affairs.

In order to give continuity to its active role and important contributions to the Council, Nepal is seeking re-election to its membership for the second term of 2021-23. Nepal has also presented candidature of Ms. Bandana Rana for re-election to the CEDAW Committee for the second term of 2021-2024. Both the elections are taking place in New York this year.

During the reporting period, Nepal continued to play a constructive role in the work of the Council. It further made contributions towards strengthening dialogue and cooperation among member states and the civil society for the promotion and protection of human rights for all. The Mission in Geneva also accelerated its efforts towards garnering support for Nepal's candidature to the HRC and CEDAW Committee.

Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali led the Nepali delegation the 43rd session of Human Rights Council in Geneva and addressed its high-level segment on 25 February 2020. In his statement, the Foreign Minister mentioned that the world is commemorating the year 2020 as the year of 100 years of Multilateralism; 75th Anniversary of the United Nations; and 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The Foreign Minister noted that these landmark events have reminded the international community's determination to maintaining world peace, protecting human rights and fundamental freedom, and embracing socio-economic progress by fulfilling the aspiration of leaving no one behind and realizing the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. The Foreign Minister also stated that Nepal presented a unique case of homegrown and successful peace process and expressed commitment of the Government of Nepal to concluding Nepal's transitional justice process in an equally unique way.

Nepal also served as the Regional Coordinator of the Asia and the Pacific Group (APG) in the Human Rights Council for 2019. The Mission coordinated and facilitated in conducting dialogue and reaching consensus among the regional group members for nomination of candidates from the Asia and the Pacific Group to represent in the relevant committees of the Council.

Nepal remained actively engaged with the work of the Human Rights Council and UN human rights bodies and mechanisms. During the reporting period, the Mission participated in the 42nd session of the Council in September 2019, 43rd session of the Council in February/March 2020, and the 44th session in June/July 2020. The Mission also actively participated in the 34th session of the UPR Working Group in November 2019 and 35th session of the UPR Working Group in January 2020. The Mission is also following up with the Ministry in the context of preparation for the review of Nepal's UPR by 37th session of the UPR Working Group in January 2021.

The Mission maintained close rapport with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Secretariat of the Human Rights Council. Nepal has been regularly responding to communications from special procedures.

In its deliberations and interactions at the Council, the Mission placed emphasis on the importance of consensual adoption of resolutions on thematic issues and consultation and

cooperation of the country concerned on adoption of country-specific resolutions. Nepal joined as cosponsor of a number of thematic resolutions and joint statements.

The Mission continued to focus on the human rights and the implementation of 2030 agenda, climate change impacts, rights of the child, women, persons with disabilities, older persons as well as migrants among others. On all these matters, the Mission has been highlighting human rights impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and also closely following the response of the international community.

2. Current Members of the Human Rights Council

The Human Rights Council is composed of 47 members elected by the UN General Assembly to serve for a term of three years. Based on equitable geographical distribution, African States have 13 seats; Asia-Pacific States have 13 seats; Latin American and Caribbean States have 8 seats; Western European and other States have 7 seats; and Eastern European States have 6 seats in the Council. One third of the members are elected every year. The members can seek re-election once for a consecutive term. There are 13 seats for the Asia Pacific States.

Nepal is currently serving for the term of 2018-2020 and is in the fray for re-election for the term of 2021-2023. The term of four members from the Asia Pacific Group, namely Afghanistan, Nepal, Pakistan and Qatar, is ending in December 2020. During the upcoming elections in October 2020, five countries, namely China, Nepal, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Uzbekistan are contending the elections for the four seats of the Asia Pacific States. It may be recalled that the General Assembly in October 2019 elected 14 members, namely Armenia, Brazil, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Libya, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Namibia, Netherlands, Poland, Republic of Korea, Sudan and Venezuela. Simple majority of 97 votes is required to be elected by the General Assembly at elections even if there would be clean slates.

The members of the Human Rights Council for the year 2020 are: Afghanistan, Angola, Australia, Chile, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Qatar, Senegal, Slovakia, Spain, Ukraine, Argentina, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Czechia, Denmark, Eritrea, Fiji, India, Italy, Philippines, Somalia, Togo, Uruguay, Armenia, Brazil, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Libya, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Namibia, Netherlands, Poland, Republic of Korea, Sudan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

3. The Human Rights Council Bureau for 2020

The Human Rights Council in its organisational session held at Palais des Nations, Geneva, on 6 December 2019. The Council adopted the President's Statement (PRST) on "Enhancing the efficiency of the Human Rights Council, including by addressing financial and time constraints" and also elected the President and other members of the Human Rights Council Bureau for the year 2020.

The composition of the Bureau for 2020 is as below:

- Ms. Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Austria (Western European and Other Group) – President
- Mr. Nasir Ahmad Andisha, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Afghanistan (Asia Pacific Group) – Vice-President
- Mr. Juraj Podhorsky, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Slovakia (Eastern European Group) – Vice-President
- Ms. Socorro Flores Liera, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Mexico (Latin American and Caribbean Group) – Vice-President
- Mr. Yackoley Kokou Johnson, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Togo (African Group) – Vice-President and Rapporteur

4. Efficiency process of the Human Rights Council

The Human Rights Council in its organisational session on 6 December 2019 adopted the President's Statement (PRST) on 'Enhancing the efficiency of the Human Rights Council, including by addressing financial and time constraints'. The PRST decided to continue discussions on time and financial constraints of HRC in relation to UPR and decided to conduct general debates during the March and September sessions only and annual interactive dialogue on the annual report of the High Commissioner of Human Rights to be held in June session. Likewise, all interactive dialogues will be individual and will follow the existing modalities with 90 seconds speaking time limits for all stakeholders. Printing and distribution of documents has been reduced by encouraging the use of digital platforms.

5. Consultative Group of the Human Rights Council (1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021)

The Consultative Group of the Human Rights Council is composed of five Ambassadors nominated by each of the five regional groups. The Consultative Group is involved in the selection process of the Independent United Nations experts of the Human Rights Council. Currently the Consultative Group comprises Mr. Ahmad Makaila of Chad (African Group), Mr. Jiang Duan of China (Asia Pacific Group), Ms. Sabina Stadler Repnik of Slovenia (Eastern European Group), Ms. Erika Gabriela Martinez Lievano of Mexico (Latin American and Caribbean) and Mr. Carlos Dominguez Diaz of Spain (Western European and other states).

6. Composition of the Working Group on Situations

The Working Group on Situations (WGS) is comprised of five members appointed by the regional groups from among the States members of the Council for the period of one year (mandate renewable once). It meets twice a year for a period of five working days in order to examine the communications transferred to it by the Working Group on Communications, including the replies of States thereon, as well as the situations which the Council is already seized of under the complaint procedure. The Working Group on Situations, on the basis of the information and recommendations provided by the Working Group on Communications, presents the Council a report on consistent patterns of gross and reliably attested violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms and makes recommendations to the Council on the course of action to take.

The membership for the Working Group in 2020 is as follows: Mr. Zbigniew Check (Poland), Mr. Come D. Georges Awoumou (Cameroon), Mr. Bonanza Perwira Taihitu (Indonesia), Ms. Maria Alejandra Costa Prieto (Uruguay) and Mr. Hans-Peter Jugel (Germany).

7. Composition of the Working Group on Communications

The Working Group on Communications (WGC) is designated by the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee from among its members for a period of three years (mandate renewable once). It consists of five independent and highly qualified experts and is geographically representative of the five regional groups. The Working Group meets twice a year for a period of five working days to assess admissibility and merits of a communication, including whether the communication alone or in combination with other communications, appears to reveal a consistent pattern of gross and reliably attested violations of human rights and fundamental

freedoms. All admissible communications and recommendations thereon are transmitted to the Working Group on Situations.

The membership for the Working Group in 2020 is as follows: Mr. Ion Diaconu (Romania), Mr. Ludovic Hennebel (Belgium), Ms. Mona Omar (Egypt), Ms. Elizabeth Salmon (Peru) and Mr. Changrok Soh (Republic of Korea).

8. Composition of the HRC Advisory Committee

Pursuant to Council resolution 5/1 paragraphs 65 to 84, the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee has been established to function as a think-tank for the Council and work at its direction. The Committee held its first meeting in August 2008. It meets twice a year, for one week in February immediately before the March session of the Council and for one week in August.

The Committee is composed of 18 independent experts from different professional backgrounds representing the various regions of the world (5 from African States; 5 from Asian States; 2 from Eastern European States; 3 from Latin American and Caribbean States, and 3 from Western European and other States).

Currently the Committee composed up of following experts: Mr. Alsheddi Ibrahim Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia), Mr. Bennani Mohamad (Morocco), Mr. Bouzid Lazhari (Algeria), Mr. Bruni Alessio (Italy), Ms. Costas Trascasas Milena (Spain), Mr. Diaconu Ion Romania, Mr. Hennebel Ludovic (Belgium), Mr. Kolesnikov Iurii Alexandrovich (Russia), Mr. Lindgren Alves Jose Augusto (Brazil), Mr. Liu Xinsheng (China), Mr. Malhotra Ajai (India), Ms. Nakai Itsuko (Japan), Ms. Omar Mona (Egypt), Mr. Palummo Javier (Uruguay), Ms. Salmon Elizabeth (Peru), Mr. Seetulsingh Dheerujlall (Mauritius), Mr. Soh Changrok (Republic of Korea), Mr. Thiam Cheikh Tidiane (Senegal).

9. The 42nd Session of the Human Rights Council

The 42nd session of the Human Rights Council (HRC42) was held in Palais des Nations, Geneva from 9-27 September 2019. During the session, the High Commissioner for Human Rights presented her update on the human rights situation around the world particularly focusing on the impact of climate change on the enjoyment of human rights. Nepal actively participated in the Council's deliberations. Nepal appreciated the focus on climate change

impacts and highlighted that global warming has posed serious threat to mountain ecosystem. We stressed upon the fact that LDCs such as Nepal has contributed least to climate change but are facing disproportionate impacts, and emphasised on the need for the development of climate resilient infrastructure. We also expressed firm commitment to implementing rights of all citizens, including women, children, and persons with disabilities.

Taking part in general debates and interactive dialogues, the Nepali delegation highlighted Nepal's national resolve of 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali' which was linked with our national plan of graduating from LDC status and developing into a middle income country by 2030. We underlined the importance of international cooperation and means of implementation for the achievement of sustainable development goals. We also welcomed continued international efforts towards implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024).

The 42nd session of the Human Rights Council also adopted the outcomes of the Universal Periodic Review of 14 States, namely Bhutan, Equatorial Guinea, Albania, Dominica, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Cote d' Ivoire, Brunei Darussalam, Portugal, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Qatar, Nicaragua and Norway.

The 42nd session adopted 37 resolutions covering thematic issues and country-specific human rights situations and also elected seven members to the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee. One of the important resolutions adopted by the 42nd session of the Council was on the question of death penalty. Nepal made a statement in support of the resolution in explanation of vote before the vote. We stated that right to life is sacred and inviolable, and a basis for all human rights; that the Constitution of Nepal guarantees that every person shall have the right to live with dignity; and that no law shall be made providing for the death penalty to anyone.

Nepal also joined as cosponsor of the following resolutions during the session:

- The human rights of older persons (adopted by consensus)
- The right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (adopted by consensus)
- Marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (adopted by consensus)

- World Programme for Human Rights Education: adoption of the plan of action for the fourth phase (adopted by consensus)
- The Right to Development (adopted by vote with 27 to 13, with 7 abstentions)

10. The 43rd Session of the Human Rights Council

The 43rd session of the Human Rights Council was held in Palais des Nations, Geneva from 24 February-13 March and 15 June-23 June 2020. This year, the Council's annual high-level panel discussion on human rights mainstreaming was focused on theme of 'Thirty years of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: challenges and opportunities.

The President of the Human Rights Council Ms. Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger opened the 43rd session on 24 February. The opening session was addressed by the President of the General Assembly Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr. António Guterres, Head of the Foreign Department of Switzerland Mr. Ignazio Cassis, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms. Michelle Bachelet.

In this address, the UN Secretary General stated that the Human Right Council was 'the fulcrum for international dialogue and cooperation to advance all human rights. The UN Secretary General launched a blueprint of call to action for human rights and outlined seven key areas for action: human rights at the core of sustainable development, the importance of human rights in times of crisis, gender equality and equal rights for women, public participation and civic space, the rights of future generations, collective action, and new frontiers of human rights.

The High Commissioner said that although threats to human rights, development and peace were on the rise, so were the practicable solutions to these issues. Those included multilateral agreements, while others stemmed from international human rights law and the work of the Human Rights Council. Today's turbulent political landscape required usable policy tools with a proven track record of success, such as measures that increased access to education, healthcare and universal social protection.

The opening session was followed by address from high dignitaries who included Heads of State or Government as well as Ministers from over 100 countries and delegations from all

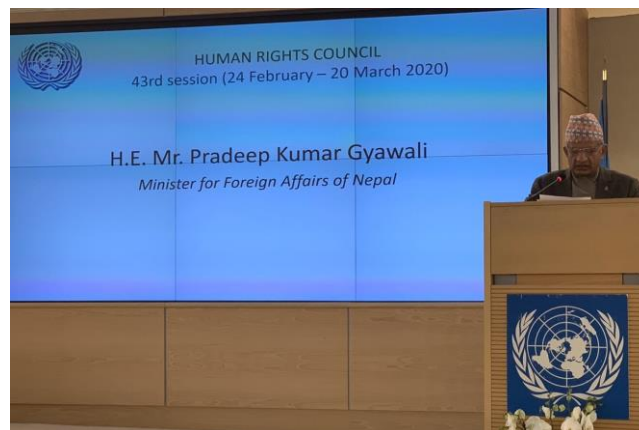
members of the United Nations. Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali addressed the High-level Segment of the 43rd session of the Council on 25 February.

The Nepali delegation to the 43rd session of Human Rights Council was led by Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali. Members of the delegation included Ambassador Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mr. Bharat Raj Paudyal and officials from the Mission of Nepal in Geneva.

11. Visit of the Minister for Foreign Affairs to Geneva to attend the 43rd Session of the Human Rights Council

Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali visited Geneva, Switzerland from 23-27 February 2020. The Foreign Minister led the Nepali delegation to the High-level Segment of the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council in Palais des Nations, held from 24-26 February 2020.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs addressed the High-level Segment of the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council on 25 February 2020.



The Foreign Minister addresses the high-level segment of the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council, Palais des Nations, Room XX, 25 February 2020, Geneva

In his statement, the Foreign Minister mentioned that the world is commemorating the year 2020 as the year of 100 years of multilateralism; 75th anniversary of the United Nations; and 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which all remind us of our determination to maintaining world peace, protecting human rights and fundamental freedom, and embracing socio-economic progress.

The Foreign Minister highlighted that the Constitution of Nepal is founded on universally recognized human rights and such other principles as inclusive multiparty democratic polity, pluralism, the rule of law, and representative and accountable government. He also apprised the international community of Nepal's constitutional and legal provisions of independent judiciary, press freedom, religious freedom and measures of inclusion of different sections of society to political and public life, among others. He also mentioned about the commitments and progress made by Nepal for the rights of child and the rights of persons with disabilities as well as the progress made by Nepal towards gender equality and women empowerment.

Noting that Nepal presented a unique case of homegrown and successful peace process, he expressed commitment to concluding the transitional justice process in an equally unique way. Mr. Gyawali called upon the joint efforts in national, regional and international level for the protection of rights of migrant workers and combating trafficking of persons. He informed the international community about Nepal's initiation of a multi-stakeholder global dialogue forum - Sagarmatha Sambaad, that was planned to be hosted in Kathmandu in April 2020.

12. Engagements of the Foreign Minister on the side-lines of the 43rd Session of the Human Rights Council:

Meeting with Foreign Minister of Latvia

On 24 February, the Minister for Foreign Affairs held bilateral meetings with Mr. Edgars Rinkēvičs, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia and exchanged views on multilateral issues as well as on enhancing bilateral relations. Foreign Minister Mr. Gyawali requested for Latvia's support for Nepal's candidature and the Latvian side received it positively and informed that Latvia was also seeking support for its candidature to UN Security Council for the term 2026-27.

Meeting with Foreign Minister of Ireland

On the same day, 24 February, the Minister for Foreign Affairs had a meeting with Mr. Simon Coveney, Deputy Prime Minister (Tánaiste) and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland. Matters of bilateral interests including the exchange of experiences and commitments on the promotion and protection of human rights and strengthening cooperation in multilateral

forums were discussed in the meeting. The Irish side recalled support extended to Nepal during the elections to the Human Rights Council for the 2018-2020.

Interaction with the Nepali community

On 24 February, the Foreign Minister had interactions with members of Non-Resident Nepali Association in Switzerland as well as with professionals and Nepali community representatives during the dinner reception hosted at the Ambassador's Residence in honour of the Foreign Minister.

Interaction with the diplomatic community

On 25 February, the Foreign Minister had interactions with the diplomatic community in Geneva at a reception hosted by the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Nepal in Geneva. Addressing the attending members of the diplomatic community, the Foreign Minister appraised of Nepal's engagements in the works of Human Rights Council and requested for their valuable support to Nepal's candidature for the re-election as member of the Human Rights Council for the term of 2021-2023. The Foreign Minister also introduced Ms. Bandana Rana, Nepal's candidate for member of the CEDAW Committee for her re-election for the second term of 2021-2024 and sought for their valuable support.

Meeting with the EU Special Representative

On 25 February, the Foreign Minister held bilateral meeting with EU Special Representative for Human Rights (EUSR) Mr. Eamon Gilmore. Matters pertaining to further strengthening cooperation in bilateral and multilateral fronts between Nepal and EU were discussed during the meeting. The Foreign Minister also sought EU members' support for Nepal's candidature to Human Rights Council for the term 2021-2023.

Meeting with the High Commissioner

On 26 February, Foreign Minister Mr. Gyawali met with United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms. Michelle Bachelet at the margin of the ongoing 43rd session of the Human Rights Council at Palais des Nations. The Foreign Minister welcomed the active role of the High Commissioner in the universal promotion and protection of all human rights. He appreciated the High Commissioner's focus on the impacts of climate change and human rights

and appraised her of Nepal's emphasis on global dialogue and joint action in ensuring the achievement of sustainable development goals. He shared with the High Commissioner that Nepal would host a global dialogue – Sagarmatha Sambaad in Kathmandu with the theme of 'Climate Change, Mountains and the Future of Humanity' in its first episode.

The High Commissioner appreciated Nepal's contribution as a member of the Human Rights Council to the promotion and protection of human rights and noted the progress made by Nepal in the field of human rights. She also underlined the importance of sustaining peace, promoting freedom of press and the role of civil society, and consulting victims in the transitional justice process of Nepal.

The Foreign Minister also updated the High Commissioner on the continuing progress in transitional justice process through the work of Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons (CIEDP) and informed her of the recent appointments of members to the TRC and CIEDP. He reiterated Nepal's firm commitment to concluding the process in accordance with the Comprehensive Peace Accord, directive of the Supreme Court, relevant international commitments, concerns of the victims, and the ground realities. Global concerns of climate change, health, sustainable development as well as Nepal's progress in reconstruction efforts in the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake also figured during the meeting. The Foreign Minister renewed his invitation to the High Commissioner for a visit to Nepal at a mutually convenient time.



The Foreign Minister meeting the High Commissioner, Palais des Nations, 26 February 2020

Other engagements of the Foreign Minister

During his visit in Geneva, the Foreign Minister also undertook site-visits to some prospective houses for the purchase of Ambassador's residence in Geneva and obtained briefing and relevant information on the location, offers and purchasing procedures. The Government of Nepal has already announced its plan to purchase property for Ambassador's residence and chancery in Geneva on a priority basis. The Foreign Minister also visited the Mission premises; received briefing on the overall activities of the Mission; and outlined directions for further enhancing bilateral and multilateral efforts in projecting Nepal's image. Upon completion of the visit, the Foreign Minister returned to Kathmandu on 27 February 2020.

13. Suspension of the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council

The 43rd session of the Human Rights Council that commenced on 24 February was scheduled to conclude on 20 March 2020 but had to be suspended on 13 March 2020 due to the extraordinary situation of the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and observing the subsequent response measures announced by the Swiss Government and the guidelines issued by the World Health Organisation.

Before suspending the session, the Council decided to extend all mandates and also mandated activities that would otherwise expire until it considers them when the 43rd session is resumed. The meeting also appointed the 19 mandate holders as proposed by the President of the Council upon recommendation of the consultative group. The mandates included members to the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; members to the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development; and special procedure mandate holders on foreign debt; older persons; adequate housing; slavery; extreme poverty; food; indigenous peoples; sale and sexual exploitation of children; human rights defenders; unilateral coercive measures; Somalia; and Myanmar.

14. Resumption and conclusion of the 43rd Session of the Human Rights Council

The 43rd session of the Human Rights Council was resumed on 15 June and was concluded on 23 June 2020. The Council met for its final week under the extraordinary measures of safety and social distancing under the arrangement of one delegation one delegate in the meeting hall with seating in two meters of physical distance and all delegates wearing masks all the time

while in the meeting. During its 43rd session, the Council adopted President's Statement (PRST) on Human rights implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and held an urgent debate on current racially inspired human rights violations. The Council in its 43rd session adopted 40 resolutions (26 thematic and 14 country-specific).

15. PRST on human rights implications of the COVID-19 pandemic

On 29 May 2020, the Human Rights Council adopted President's Statement (PRST) on 'Human rights implications of the COVID-19 pandemic' through silence procedure. The PRST has expressed deep concern at the human rights implications of the COVID-19 and called upon States to ensure that all human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled while combating the pandemic and that their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic are in full compliance with their human rights obligations and commitments and has asked the High Commissioner for oral updates and comprehensive report.

16. Urgent debate on current racially inspired human rights violations

During the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council, an urgent debate was held from 17-18 June 2020 on current racially inspired human rights violations, systemic racism, police brutality and violence against peaceful protests. The urgent debate was held at the request of the African Group.

Participating in the urgent debate on 17 June, Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai extended Nepal's support to the African Group initiative for holding the urgent debate and expressed that Nepal is concerned at the rise in negative stereotyping and racial harassment. He also mentioned that Nepal played an active role at the UN Special Committee against Apartheid as a member for four years since its inception and later as its vice-chair for twenty-five years until the Committee's termination in 1994. He also underlined that engaging in dialogue and addressing specific needs of the marginalized community is crucial to promote social integration and justice and ensure equality and non-discrimination.

It may be noted that 'Black Lives Matter' campaign generated echoes against racism in various parts of the world in response to the death of George Floyd in Minnesota in USA on 25 May thus drawing the attention of the Human Rights Council to listen to the request of the African

Group. Special Rapporteur on racism Ms. Tendayi Achiume as well as Mr. Philonise Floyd, brother of George Floyd, had also addressed the Human Rights Council virtually.

Following the urgent debate, the Council adopted by consensus a resolution entitled “The promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and of people of African descent against excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers”.

17. Deliberations by Nepal during the 43rd Human Rights Council

During the 43rd session, Nepal continued to take active part in the discussion. The High Commissioner Ms. Bachelet presented the overall human rights situation across the globe focusing on various countries. In her statement, the High Commissioner also touched upon Nepal’s transitional justice process and urged Nepali authorities to build trust in these processes by genuinely consulting a wide range of stakeholders including victim groups and the larger civil society.

Taking part in the general debate, Nepal underscored that Nepal’s rights-based Constitution guarantees human rights and fundamental freedoms and envisions an egalitarian society. Nepal celebrates social and cultural diversity and promotes tolerance and harmony as a living characteristic of Nepali State. We reiterated that Nepal remains committed to effectively take forward the transitional justice process through two independent commissions: Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons.

During the general debate on the promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai reiterated that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent, interrelated and mutually reinforcing. He highlighted that Nepal’s 15th five-year plan under implementation has incorporated SDGs and devised a roadmap for the country towards LDC graduation by 2022 and transitioning to a middle-income country by 2030.

Likewise, delivering statement at the high-level panel discussion on 30th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Mr. Bharat Raj Paudyal, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reiterated Nepal’s commitment to the promotion and protection of rights of

every child through the effective implementation of constitutional and legal provisions as well as policy, programme and institutional interventions with the participation of all stakeholders, including the children.

The Council also held a high-level panel discussion commemorating the 25th Anniversary of Beijing Conference. Ms. Bandana Rana, Vice-Chair of the CEDAW Committee, was one of the panelists. She spoke on the importance of accelerating the implementation of the Beijing commitments for ensuring gender equality. The Council also held an Annual interactive debate on rights of persons with disabilities focusing the Article 8 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on raising awareness.

Similarly, the Council also held debate on the midterm review of the International Decade for People of African Descent (commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination). Nepal delivered statement during the panel discussion. We welcomed the international efforts towards implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024) and the setting up of a Permanent Forum on People of African Descent. We also expressed the belief that the Forum can be an important platform to build on the intersectionality and interconnectedness of human rights, equality and discrimination in all its forms and manifestations. We further reaffirmed our commitment to eliminating all forms of racial discrimination embracing the principles of equality, non-discrimination and inclusion as enshrined in the constitution.

The Nepali delegation maintained Nepal's principled position on thematic and country specific resolutions presented to the Council while taking action on the draft resolutions, most of them were adopted by consensus and without a vote.

On 22 June, following actions on all resolutions under item 3, Ambassador Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai made a general comment expressing happiness at the consensual adoption of resolutions, including those related to the 2030 agenda, rights of persons with disabilities, child, migrants, among others. He appreciated the leadership of the President and the bureau for successfully steering the session during the extraordinary and challenging situation of COVID-19 crisis.

Nepal co-sponsored the following thematic resolutions during the session:

1. Human rights of migrants: mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants (adopted by consensus)
2. The right to food (adopted by consensus)
3. Awareness-raising on the rights of persons with disabilities, and habilitation and rehabilitation (adopted by consensus)
4. Promotion and protection of human rights and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development (adopted by consensus)
5. Mental health and human rights (adopted by consensus)
6. Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material (adopted by consensus)
7. Right to work (adopted by consensus)
8. The negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights (main sponsor: NAM) (adopted by 25 votes in favour, 16 against and 6 abstained)

18. The 44th Session of the Human Rights Council (HRC44)

The 44th regular session of the Human Rights Council (HRC44) was held in Palais des Nations, Geneva from 30 June-17 July 2020. In view of the situation surrounding COVID-19 pandemic, the Council met under the extraordinary safety and security measures with seating arrangement of one delegate per-delegation in the meeting hall keeping two meters in physical distance while all delegates wearing masks all the time during the meeting.

The HRC44 held interactive dialogues with the High Commissioner and special procedure mandate holders and held five panel discussions. No general debates took place during this session as per the decision taken in the President's Statement (PRST OS/X/1) adopted during the organisational session held on 6 December 2019 as part of the Council's efficiency process in the context of financial and time constraints.

The Council held two high-level panel discussions. The first one centred on promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of climate change. The second one focused on the impacts, opportunities and challenges of new and emerging digital technologies with regard to the promotion and protection of human rights.

The Council also held an annual thematic panel discussion on technical cooperation and capacity-building that centred on the theme ‘upholding the human rights of prisoners, including women prisoners and offenders: enhancing technical cooperation and capacity-building in the implementation of the Nelson Mandela Rules and the Bangkok Rules.’ The annual meeting on the rights of the child focused on realizing the rights of the child through a healthy environment, and the annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women was comprised of two panel discussions, namely on ‘accountability for women and girls in humanitarian settings’, and on ‘COVID-19 and women's rights.’

The session adopted 23 resolutions among which 7 were adopted through voting while 16 resolutions were adopted through consensus.

On 30 June, the High Commissioner updated the Council on the human rights situation around the world highlighting the human rights implications of COVID-19 pandemic. The High Commissioner paid particular attention to the socio-economic condition of vulnerable groups, particularly women and girls, children, persons with disabilities and older persons and urged governments to ensure adoption and implementation of containment measures that respected human rights obligations.

On 8 July, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms. Nada Al-Nashif had made her opening remarks during the panel discussion on the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of climate change. In her remarks, she had highlighted Nepal’s community resilience as an inspiring example of human rights-based approach to climate action. She mentioned: “In Nepal, a project on disaster risk management implemented by NGO Humanity and Inclusion included local organisations of persons with disabilities in decision-making, raised awareness in the communities, and conducted vulnerability and capacity assessments. The local Disaster Management Committees used these findings to shape action plans for preparedness and mitigation measures. As a result, communities became more resilient, and persons with disabilities were empowered.”

Taking part in the interactive dialogue with the High Commissioner, Ambassador Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai appreciated the High Commissioner’s update on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on human rights. Nepal also apprised the Council of Nepal’s COVID-19 Health Sector Emergency Response Plan and the National Relief Programme to address the impact of

the pandemic and called for the international cooperation and solidarity to strengthen the battle against the pandemic.

The 44th session of the Council was held in an extraordinary situation surrounding COVID-19, yet it concluded successfully adopting important outcomes. As the world is grappling with the pandemic and the discussions on it in various parts of the world were limited virtually, it is astounding to note that the 44th session was able to gather the state representatives of the world to discuss in-person, the implications of COVID-19 pandemic in the enjoyment of human rights across the globe. Almost all the thematic reports of the mandate holders that were submitted to the Council for the interactive dialogues covered COVID-19 dimensions and its impacts on the enjoyment of human rights.

Nepal actively participated in the 44th session and delivered over 20 statements and joined as co-sponsor of 12 resolutions. During the 44th session, Nepal demonstrated its strong commitment to human rights agenda by cosponsoring resolutions on the elimination of discrimination against women and girls, human trafficking, independence of judiciary, among others, based on its national policies. We also supported resolution relating to human rights protection in peaceful protest and freedom of assembly.

On 17 July 2020, following actions on all resolutions under item 3, Ambassador Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai made a general comment and welcomed the adoption of various resolutions that were of high significance in the universal promotion and protection of human rights including the right to development. These resolutions included elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls; on climate change and human rights as well as on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members, among others. The Ambassador also stated that as this year is being celebrated as the 75th anniversary of the UN, our faith in the effectiveness of multilateralism with the United Nations at the centre remains unflinching across all the pillars of the UN Charter. He also appreciated the President and the bureau for the leadership in successfully steering the 44th session of Council in such a challenging time of the COVID pandemic and concluded that our cooperation and consensus in the Council has reiterated our common commitment to work for ensuring the enjoyment of all human rights by all.

Nepal cosponsored the following resolutions in HRC44:

1. Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls. (adopted by consensus)
2. Human rights and climate change. (adopted by consensus)
3. The right to education (adopted by consensus)
4. Elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members. (adopted by consensus)
5. Enhancement of international cooperation in the field of human rights. (main sponsor: NAM) (adopted by 30 votes in favour, 15 against and 2 abstained)
6. Trafficking in persons, especially women and children: strengthening human rights through enhanced protection, support and empowerment of victims of trafficking, especially women and children. (adopted by consensus)
7. Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities. (adopted by consensus)
8. Contribution of respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms to achieving the purposes and upholding the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. (adopted by 41 votes in favour to 0 against and 6 abstentions)
9. The central role of the State in responding to pandemics and other health emergencies, and the socioeconomic consequences thereof in advancing sustainable development and the realization of all human rights. (adopted by consensus)
10. Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers (adopted by consensus)
11. Independence and impartiality of the judiciary, jurors and assessors, and the independence of lawyers. (adopted by consensus)
12. Extreme poverty and human rights. (adopted by consensus)

19. The 34th Session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group

The 34th session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group was held from 4-15 November 2019. The session reviewed human rights records of 14 states, namely Italy, El Salvador, Gambia, Bolivia, Fiji, San Marino, Kazakhstan, Angola, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Madagascar, Iraq, Slovenia, Egypt and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Nepal actively participated in the 34th session, delivered its statement and presented recommendations to all the 14 States under review. In its statement, Nepal focused on the status

of independent national human rights institutions, gender equality, child rights, domestic and gender violence, discrimination, and measures for environmental protection, among others and it offered recommendations to the States under review for their consideration. Nepal served as troika member along with Austria and Eritrea for the review of Madagascar. The UPR outcome of the thirty-fourth session was adopted at the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council that took place in February/March 2020.

20. The 35th Session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group

The 35th session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group was held from 20-31 January 2020. During the two-week session, human rights records of 14 States, namely Kyrgyzstan, Kiribati, Guinea, Lao PDR, Spain, Lesotho, Kenya, Armenia, Guinea-Bissau, Sweden, Grenada, Turkey, Guyana and Kuwait were examined. Nepal actively participated in the 35th session of the UPR Working Group. Nepal delivered its statement and presented its recommendations to all the 14 States under review. As in earlier sessions Nepal in its statement focused on the status of independent national human rights institutions, gender equality, child rights, domestic and gender violence, discrimination, and measures for environmental protection, among others, and it made relevant recommendations to the States under review for their consideration. Nepal served as troika member together with Venezuela and Poland during the UPR review of Armenia.

The outcomes of the 35th session were scheduled to be adopted in the 44th session of Human Rights Council during June/July 2020. However due to the outbreak of COVID-19 and Council's measures to truncate the Programme of Work of the 44th session, it just adopted UPR outcomes of Kuwait and Spain while UPR outcomes of the remaining 12 states are postponed to 45th session of the Human Rights Council to be held in September 2020.

21. The 36th Session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Human Rights Council Bureau decided to postpone the 36th session of the UPR Working Group that was scheduled to be held from 4-15 May 2020 to the date envisaged for the 37th session of the UPR Working Group from 2-13 November 2020. Nepal is selected as troika member along with Somalia and Chile for the UPR review of Panama.

22. Nepal's UPR at the 37th Session of UPR Working Group in January 2021

The 37th session of the UPR Working Group will be held from 18-29 January 2021. The third cycle of Universal Periodic Review of Nepal is scheduled to take place in Palais des Nations, Geneva on 20 January 2021. The UPR Working Group will undertake the review of Nepal, Australia, Austria, Georgia, Lebanon, Mauritania, Micronesia (Federated States of), Myanmar, Nauru, Oman, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Sao Tome and Principe during its 37th session. The troika member for the 37th session will be selected during the organisational meeting, which is scheduled to take place in December 2020. In regard to its UPR, Nepal should submit its national report by 12 October 2020.

Meanwhile, the civil society members have been submitting their reports to the UN-OHCHR to be compiled as stakeholders' report on Nepal. Most of the issues they have incorporated in their reports that could also possibly be raised during the UPR session are transitional justice process, traditional cultural practices considered harmful to girls, consent of the indigenous people in development activities, treatment to religious minorities particularly of Christianity faith, and persistence of caste-based discrimination, among others. In view of the uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, it is also likely that the 37th session of the UPR Working Group may be conducted on hybrid format of in-person and virtual participation through video-links.

23. Second intersessional meeting on human rights and the 2030 Agenda

The Human Rights Council held its second intersessional meeting for dialogue and cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Geneva on 3 December 2019. The theme of the meeting was 'Decade for Action and Delivery on the SDGs'. UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms. Kate Gilmore and Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General on Reforms Mr. Jens Wandel made opening remarks. During interactive sessions, speakers on the panel spoke of the need for 'leaving no one behind' by promoting and protecting human rights to truly accelerate the realization of the SDGs. They stated that principles of empowerment, inclusion and equality should be adhered to, and adequate space has to be ensured for civil society, business and the youth in order to strengthen SDG delivery and implementation at the country level.

Nepal made a statement at the second intersessional meeting and emphasised that LDCs such as Nepal, in complementing their national efforts, need to be supported by enabling international environment and enhanced international support measures including in the areas of development finance, trade and investment, technology transfer and capacity building to be able to deliver on our commitments to human rights and transformative vision of 2030 agenda. It may be recalled that the Human Rights Council in its resolution 37/24 entitled ‘Promotion and protection of human rights and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ had decided to hold two intersessional meetings on the human rights and the 2030 Agenda with the view to providing inputs to the 2019 and 2020 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Nepal had joined as a co-sponsor of this resolution in March 2018. The first international meeting took place on 16 January 2019 on the theme of ‘empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality’.

24. Human Rights Council Retreat 2019

President of the Human Rights Council for 2019 Mr. Coly Seck organised an informal gathering of member states of the Council in Dakar, Senegal on 21-22 October 2019. Global and pressing human rights issues of environment and climate change; inequalities and corporate social responsibility; mass migration; and digital age were discussed during the retreat. Human Rights Council members, High Commissioner, representatives from relevant UN agencies, as well as members of civil society attended meeting and took part in assessing the work of the Council and offered views for possible ways forward

In the opening session of the Retreat, Council’s President Coly Seck, High Commissioner Ms. Michelle Bachelet and Foreign Minister of Senegal Amadou Ba underlined the importance of open and frank discussions on the four themes and urged the Retreat participants to come up with substantive ideas and suggestions in a way to make the work of the Council effective.

On all four panel discussions, emphasis was placed on the need for strengthening existing mechanisms rather than creating new ones without further burdening reporting obligations to member states and with avoiding duplication of work; for development partners’ support to developing countries, especially countries in special situation, in terms of resource and technology transfer, knowledge, skills and capacity building as well as sharing of good practices and experiences in fulfilling their SDG targets; for invigorating multistakeholders’ consultation, coordination and collaboration; for exploring possibility of robust inclusive and

democratic global governance; and for creating a level playing field for all stakeholders with a sense of responsibility and accountability from the perspective of the enjoyment of human rights by all.

Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai attended the Retreat. In his capacity as the regional coordinator of the Asia-Pacific Group of the Council, he appreciated the President for organizing the Retreat in the African continent for the first time and commended the transparent and consultative approach of the President in the efficient conduct of the business of the Council in the year 2019.

On the discussion of environment, climate change and human rights, he highlighted the Council's focus on catalyzing the role of development partners in line with recent developments in the work of the human rights treaty bodies. In this regard, the work of the Committee of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights would be important as it has determined that a failure to mobilize maximum available resources in an effort to do so could constitute a breach of their obligations.

On mass migration and human rights, the Ambassador underscored the need for addressing key drivers as well as root causes of migration such as conflict, poverty, environmental shocks, climate change, and unequal resource distribution, among others. He suggested that the Council will need to work as a bridge-builder among stakeholders and agencies; and national reporting on migration should be made a regular feature of UPR.

On human rights in the face of growing inequalities and corporate social responsibility, Ambassador Bhattarai laid emphasis on the fact that the working group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises should give due consideration to the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He further stressed that the work of treaty bodies, particularly that of Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights remains significant in linking trade and investment issues with SDGs for the realization of human rights.

The Ambassador also urged the Council members to organize future panel discussions focusing on LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS in order to discuss and address their myriad of development challenges. He suggested that sharing of success stories in international cooperation in regard

to technology transfer, financing, and capacity building in countries in special situation should be the prime focus of Council's further work.

On the human rights in digital age, the Ambassador stressed the need for global Internet governance for promoting innovation and beneficial uses of digital technologies with particular support to LDCs in the context of SDGs and also the need for the Council to address the issue of their misuse including privacy, data protection and hate speech.

There has been a practice of hosting Human Rights Council Retreat by the Council's President in the capital of his or her home country. Council's President for 2020, Ambassador Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger of Austria, was planning to organize the Retreat in Vienna in May 2020 but it has to be postponed for the later date this year due to the outbreak of COVID-19.

Engagements with HRC subsidiary bodies

25. The Social Forum

The Social Forum convened by the Human Rights Council was held from 1-2 October 2019. The Forum is a unique space for open and interactive dialogue between all stakeholders on a specific theme chosen each year. The Forum's focus was on the theme 'the promotion and protection of the rights of children and youth through education'.

The background context of this Forum was related to the 30th anniversary year of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and at a time that youth has become a priority for the United Nations. It was also aligned with International Youth Day 2019.

Nepal participated in the Forum and delivered its statement highlighting that the Constitution of Nepal 2015 and the legislative ambit have guaranteed right of access to basic education. We presented an example such as the President Education Improvement Fund, which is established for the enhancement of community education. We also shared that Nepal's primary school enrolment has reached 97.2% and various programmes are launched to prevent dropouts at higher levels.

We recalled that while celebrating the 30 years of the Convention on the Rights of Child, Nepal became one of the 30 countries that made a national pledge for taking concrete action for the future of the child that included promoting the rights of children with disabilities to inclusive

education. We stressed on the importance of international cooperation for enhancing institutional capacities, retaining trained human resources, financing gaps including in the areas of research and development, affordability of infrastructure and new technologies for quality, equity and efficiency in education.

26. Eighth Session of the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights

The eighth session of the annual UN Forum on Business and Human Rights (BHR) was held in Palais des Nations, Geneva from 25-27 November 2019. The Forum was established by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011 with the aim of implementing UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights for promoting dialogue and cooperation on issues linked to business and human rights in order to identify, adopt and promote good and responsible business practices.

The theme of the 2019 Forum was ‘Time to act: Governments as catalysts for business respect for human rights’. Around 2400 delegates participated in the Forum that included 31% from private sector.

During the opening session the Secretary General of UN in his video message highlighted the importance of UN Guiding principles (UNGPs) on Business and Human Rights in creating a just, peaceful and sustainable future for all. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms. Michele Bachelet in her statement stressed the need for pushing the three pillars of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights – ‘Protect, Respect, and Remedy’ – from paper to practice. She also urged States to pass or uphold legislation that meets international human rights and labour standards.

Joint Secretary Mr. Koshal Chandra Subedi from Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers of Nepal participated in the panel discussion entitled Regional Dialogue: lesson learned, challenges, innovation-Asia, Part I Progress on Stay Action: National Action Plans and beyond. In his presentation, Mr. Subedi shared the panel, the initiatives taken by the Government of Nepal on promoting UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights including by conducting awareness programmes to right holders and duty bearers in all the 7 provinces of the country. He mentioned that a separate activity on business and human rights has been included in the draft 5th National Human Rights Action Plan, which is due to be adopted by the Government of Nepal soon.

It can be assessed that the dimension of business and human rights is broadening, and the subject is increasingly garnering the attention of stakeholders. The Ninth Forum on Business and Human Rights will be held virtually from 16 to 18 November 2020 in view of the ongoing challenges posed by the COVID 19 pandemic. The central theme of the 2020 Forum has been set as the prevention of business-related human rights abuses.

Likewise, the 2nd UN South Asia Forum on Business and Human Rights, scheduled from 18-20 March 2020 in Kathmandu was also postponed for the same reason. The new date is yet to be announced.

27. Twelfth Session of the Forum on Minority Issues

The twelfth session of the Forum on Minority Issues was held from 28-29 November 2019 with the theme of ‘Education, Language and the Human Rights of Minorities’. The recommendations of the twelfth session to be presented at the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council in March 2020. This forum is a unique mechanism of all the mechanisms of the Human Rights Council with the civil society getting the prominent space. The forum tends to get politically charged and often becomes chaotic, as the members from civil society tend to make political statements with no relevance to the agenda of the meeting.

Unlike last year, there were no civil society representatives from Nepal. This year’s forum was highly charged on the issue of Crimea between Russia and Ukraine. Likewise, the Kurdistan issue also featured prominently.

28. Nepal’s participation in Global Consultation with the National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and Other Stakeholders on business and human rights

In line with the Human Rights Council’s requests, a two-day global consultation was held on the role of NHRIs in facilitating access to remedy for business-related human rights abuses. Held from 10-11 October 2019, the Working Group on Business and Human Rights organised the consultation in coordination with the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The Chairperson of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Nepal, Mr. Anup Raj Sharma participated in one of the panel discussions on the topic: Remedies offered by NHRIs to affected individuals and communities: Typology and efficacy.

The aim of this consultation was mainly to share examples of how NHRIs facilitate, both directly and indirectly, and access to remedy for business-related human rights abuses. In this panel, Mr. Sharma shared mostly about the preventive roles that NHRC of Nepal has successfully played by raising alerts, undertaking investigative studies and drawing attention of government to take actions against human rights violations by certain business activities.

Overall, the discussions by various Human Rights Commissioners, States, UN representatives and CSOs centred on the idea that while judicial mechanisms are at the core of ensuring access to remedy for any violation related to human rights, NHRIs as a key State-based non-judicial grievance mechanism have an essential role in complementing and supplementing judicial mechanisms.

Engagements with the UN-OHCHR and treaty bodies

29. Virtual Informal Conversation with UN Human Rights Commissioner

The virtual informal conversation of the UN Human Rights Council with the UN Human Rights Commissioner Ms. Michelle Bachelet was held on 9 April 2020 to exchange views on the outbreak of the COVID-19 and its implications on human rights around the world. The President of the Human Rights Council Ms. Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger opened the informal conversation. The UN High Commissioner Ms. Bachelet in her statement underscored that the COVID-19 pandemic has posed far-reaching threat to human rights and stressed on the collective international action to combat it effectively. Ms. Bachelet stressed that no one must be left behind in the efforts to support those most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, she highlighted on 7 action points as response to the crisis as follows:

1. All national efforts should seek to mitigate the impact of the epidemic on women and vulnerable groups.
2. Extensive measures must be taken in every country to absorb economic and social shocks of this epidemic, and to minimize expansion of inequalities.
3. Protection of health-workers and their adequate remuneration should be a paramount concern.

4. Actions to combat physical and verbal attack to certain people, group, migrants, and ethnic minorities, among others.
5. Need for the involvement of national human rights institutions, civil society activists and human rights defenders in every stage of such epidemic.
6. Need for urgent lifting of sectoral sanctions including any obstacle to medical efforts to ensure access to vital supplies.
7. Ongoing and planned efforts of the Human Rights Council with COVID-related human rights concerns.

During the meeting, Ambassador Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai delivered a statement underscoring the critical need for compassion and cooperation, understanding and solidarity at all levels to weather out the current global crisis of COVID-19. He also underlined the importance of sharing good practices of national response measures, providing support to developing and least developed countries in terms of critical medical supplies and strengthening public health infrastructure and health services. The Ambassador emphasised the necessity for protecting the rights of migrant workers including by providing equal access to public health, and social protection measures, among others, at this difficult and challenging situation.

30. Virtual Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Ambassadorial Meeting with the High Commissioner

A virtual meeting at NAM ambassadorial level in the presence of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights took place in Geneva under the chairmanship of the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to UN in Geneva on 10 June. In the meeting, Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai appreciated NAM Chair for playing a proactive role in galvanising efforts for uniting against the COVID crisis. The virtual summit meeting of NAM Contact Group on 4th of May provided an important platform in bringing together leaders from NAM members. Ambassador Bhattarai also welcomed the efforts and initiatives undertaken by the OHCHR in the fight against the pandemic for human rights protection and he also underscored the importance of promoting equitable geographical representation of staffing in OHCHR.

31. Appointment of Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights

Ms. Nada Al-Nashif was appointed United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights on 6 December 2019, assuming the position on 10 February 2020. From 2015-2020, Ms. Al-Nashif served as Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences at UNESCO in Paris. She is from Jordan and has a 30-year experience of working in the UN system.

32. UN Human Rights policy paper released by UN Secretary General

The UN Secretary General has released a report entitled ‘COVID-19 and Human Rights - we are all in this together’ on 23 April. The report has stressed the importance of putting the human rights at the centre while responding to the crisis. In his recent Call to Action for human rights, he has placed human rights in the heart of all actions and this paper has translated this call. He has also highlighted key human rights messages in this report.

33. Presentation of UN Human Rights Report 2019

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms. Michelle Bachelet presented virtually on 5 June 2020 the UN Human Rights Report 2019. The report covers a range of works carried out by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). During her opening statement, while highlighting briefly about her activities in various countries, she referred to Nepal as: “In Nepal, we conducted ESCR risk analysis and provided recommendations to the Regional Monthly Review (RMR) process, which is at the heart of the Secretary-General’s prevention strategy”.

Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai delivered a statement during the programme and expressed gratitude for her leadership and assured of the full support while also encouraging the OHCHR to continue its efforts for ensuring better coherence and generating synergies throughout the UN system and country teams in coordination with all relevant stakeholders and national authorities.

34. 2020 Treaty Body Review process

The General Assembly resolution 68/268 on ‘Strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system’ adopted on 9 April 2014 has decided to consider the state of the human rights treaty body system no later than six years. Accordingly, General Assembly has been reviewing the human rights treaty body system in 2020. Virtual

meetings are being held in New York while also accommodating Geneva based diplomats. Permanent Representatives of Switzerland and Morocco to the United Nations in New York are in the role of cofacilitators for this process. The first virtual meeting of this process was held on 2 June in which the High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms. Michelle Bachelet also participated. Informal consultation process is taking place both in Geneva and New York.

Currently, the consultations are held in New York. The Permanent Mission of Nepal in New York has been actively participating in this process. Both our Missions in Geneva and New York are in close coordination for providing necessary inputs on treaty body related matters so as to contribute to discussions on issues such as the backlog of treaty bodies reports, multiple reporting burden, diverging interpretation of same issues by different treaty bodies, late reporting and non-reporting, application of simplified reporting procedure, greater use of technology, geographical and gender balance in election of competent expert members to treaty bodies, and capacity building support to LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDs for fulfilling reporting obligations.

In the context of informal consultation for the 2020 treaty review process both in New York and in Geneva, Nepal has been underscoring the importance of assistance and cooperation for strengthening National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow up (NMRF) and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) through transfer of innovative technology and support of database management. The equitable geographical representation and gender balancing measures need to be ensured during the selection of treaty body experts while also taking into account the expertise on the subject matter of the concerned treaty bodies. Academic platforms, think tanks, and civil society organisations are important partners in promoting cooperation and constructive engagement with the human rights bodies. Constructive role of the civil society would be effective to improve dialogue and interaction with the preparation, monitoring and follow-up of treaty body recommendations. Simplified Reporting Procedure (SRP) also helps in simplifying and reducing the reporting burden of states by specifying issues to be included in the treaty body reports prior to the preparation and submission of reports as envisaged by the General Assembly Resolution 68/268. Simplified reporting procedure could be offered as option for report to all the Convention Committees; and in addition to the National Report on UPR and the Common Core Document, single Unified State Party Report for both the Covenant Committees (ICCPR and ICESCR) and single Unified State Party Report for all other

Convention Committees could be considered for maintaining efficiency in reporting and quality of reports.

During the virtual meeting, UN High Commissioner Ms. Bachelet in her statement underscored that the review process should be transparent and inclusive taking into account the recommendations of other key stakeholders including the treaty bodies themselves, UN agencies, national human rights institutions and civil society; and there is a need of including expertise from both Geneva and New York. She also emphasised that the treaty body strengthening should be advanced within the present normative framework. She further said that some of the steps taken themselves by treaty bodies are expanding simplified reporting procedures, holding regional dialogues, introduction of a predictable review cycle as done by Human Rights Committee and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Committee. She also underscored the need for using of better digital tools to strengthen the accessibility of treaty bodies and the open, transparent, merit-based process for the election of treaty body candidates as well as the need of sufficient and regular budget resources and adequate staffing.

Consultations on the review of Treaty Bodies also took place in New York on 27 July and the next round of consultation are being planned to take place in Geneva on 28 August with the participation of states, civil societies and other stakeholders. It may be noted that the Government of Nepal has recently decided to submit the combined second, third and fourth periodic report of Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) through Simplified Reporting Procedures, and the same has already been conveyed to the Committee.

35. Pledges by Nepal celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of Child 1989

The Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 was the first treaty to recognize children as rights-holders. Every State in the world, with the exception of the United States, has ratified the Convention, making it the most universally accepted human rights instrument in history. Each year, 20 November, the day the Convention was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989, is celebrated as World Children's Day.

Various events were held in UN Office in Geneva from 18-20 November 2019 to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, Director General of UN Office addressed the opening plenary session. The

speakers in the opening highlighted that with the adoption of the Convention 30 years ago, remarkable improvements have been made in the lives of children; however, daunting challenges of discrimination, violence, child labor and so on continue to persist in the world.

Besides the plenary session, several working group meetings were also conducted focusing on issues of child protection, justice for children, and interlinkages between children's rights and women's rights. There was a high-level session with the participation of Ms. Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. On the CRC thirtieth anniversary Ms. Bachelet pledged to strive for protecting and promoting indivisible and inalienable rights of every child, in every circumstance and in every state.

The session included the pledges sharing ceremony by the 10 states, two from each geographical region, that were among the earliest two states to send pledges for children's rights to the Committee on Rights of Child. Nepal was one of the first two states from Asia-Pacific region to send its pledges. Our proactiveness to make concrete pledges manifests our firm commitment to the protection and promotion of child rights.

Nepal was among the first countries submitting and presenting its pledge at the high-level session representing respective regional group. Other countries presenting the pledge were South Africa, Croatia, Armenia, Ecuador and Turkey had presented their pledges.

Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai shared Nepal's pledges for the children's rights at the high-level session. Nepal pledged to achieve the following:

- Ensure birth registration of all children under age 5 by 2023/24.
- Ensure care and protection of double orphan by 2023/24.
- Provide care to street children in large cities and also conduct 'street children free city' campaign by 2023/24.
- Provide compulsory basic education to all children while ensuring rights of children with disabilities to inclusive education by 2024/25.
- Eradicate child labour by implementing National Master Plan on Child Labor 2018-2028.
- End child marriage by 2030 through the implementation of National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage 2016.

36. Election of Committee Members of Convention Against Torture (CAT)

A meeting of States parties of Convention Against Torture (CAT) took place in Geneva on 3 October 2019 to elect members to replace five members of CAT Committee, whose term was expired on 31 December 2019. The Mission took part in voting. Out of 12 candidates vying for membership in the Committee, the candidates of Mexico, Latvia, France, Turkey and Moldova got elected.

37. Fifth Session of Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group (OEIGWG) on Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises with Respect to Human Rights

The open-ended intergovernmental working group (OEIGWG) held its fifth session from 14-18 October 2019 continuing its work within HRC as a process towards a binding treaty. Ahead of the fifth session, the Permanent Mission of Ecuador, on behalf of the chairperson of the OEIGWG, released a revised draft legally binding instrument on business activities and human rights. The revised draft served as the basis for direct substantive intergovernmental negotiations during the fifth session of the OEIGWG. Over 50 coalitions of networks of civil societies also participated in the session actively calling for states to engage in the process and finalize the legal instrument.

United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Kate Gilmore opened the session stating that a future treaty can help ensure effective prevention, protection and remedy for those subjected to business-related human rights abuses, just as it can help to open up more sustainable, equitable and inclusive development.

States taking part in the discussions expressed the view that business-related human rights abuses impact different groups of people and rights-holders differently, and some even disproportionately. In this context, it was mostly opined by states that business and human rights treaty, if not a cure, could be part of the solution to cover the problems associated with business and human rights.

[Nepal's coordinating role and election campaign](#)

38. Asia Pacific Group Regional Coordinator in HRC 2019

Nepal assumed the Coordinator of the Asia Pacific Group in the Human Rights Council for the year 2019. As Regional Coordinator, the Mission convened a number of meetings of the member states of Asia Pacific Group to discuss human rights issues and priorities of the Council as well as of the UPR working group. We organised interactive meetings with the High Commissioner, Special Rapporteurs, as well as briefing by member states. We facilitated and coordinated for communication with the Secretariat of the Human Rights Council in connection with nominating regional group representative for the group of Asia Pacific States to relevant bodies and committees of the Human Rights Council, specifically the Human Rights Council Bureau, Human Rights Council Advisory Committee, Working Group on Situations, Consultative Group of the Human Rights Council, and other expert working groups.

Nepal assumed the role of Regional Coordinator for the year 2019 taking over from Myanmar based on alphabetical order. The role was as important opportunity for Nepal to remain engaged and active in the work of the Council where Nepal is serving for the first term of 2018-2020 and seeking re-election for second term of 2021-2023. The constructive role played by Nepal in the capacity of Regional Coordinator to forge solidarity and reach consensus within the group has been well appreciated by member states of the group. Upon completion of Nepal's tenure in December 2019, the Sultanate of Oman has assumed the role of the Regional Coordinator of the Group of Asia Pacific States for the year 2020.

39. Updates on Human Rights Council election campaign

Nepal has presented its candidature for re-election to the Human Rights council for the term 2021-23. The Missions in Geneva and New York have been actively engaged and working in coordinated fashion for the re-election of Nepal. We have been enhancing lobbying efforts at Ambassador's level as well as DPR and expert levels. We have been also taking up campaign for CEDAW candidature in parallel. The progress of contacts and conversations with PRs/DPRs/Experts has been regularly shared with the Ministry and Mission in New York. Further, the Mission has been following up on the letter from the Foreign Minister to his counterparts as well. The Mission appreciates continued support and guidance from the Ministry.

It may also be noted that the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) and Amnesty International (AI) have jointly invited Permanent Representatives of Human Rights Council candidate countries for the term 2021-2023 to participate in a Pledging Event with the civil

society on 14 September 2020 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva. During the event, the candidate countries are provided with the opportunity to present their accomplishments, commitments, pledges and visions for the membership of the Human Rights Council and articulate strategies for their role in the Council, and they will also take questions during the informal interactive dialogue with the civil society members. Besides, the issue of UPR implementation and upcoming review of Nepal's UPR in January 2021 would also be important in the context of the interaction with the civil society. The details on this event along with the indicative list of issues likely to be raised during this event have already been shared with the Ministry.

40. CEDAW election updates

The Mission has been working in close coordination with the Permanent Mission of Nepal in New York regarding the candidature of Ms. Bandana Rana for re-election to the CEDAW Committee for the term 2021-24. We have recently shared a YouTube video link, which provides a brief presentation on work, experience, achievement and vision of Ms. Rana, and also a flyer with all the permanent Missions in Geneva.

[Refugee and humanitarian affairs](#)

41. 70th Session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (UNHCR)

The seventieth session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme was held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva from 7-11 October 2019. The EXCOM was represented by 102 Executive Committee UN member states, 58 UN member states as observers, State of Palestine, European Union, intergovernmental organisations, UN agencies, funds and programmes, and non-governmental organisations, among others. Nepal is an observer state to the Committee.

The seventieth session had focused on internal displacement and UNHCR campaign of ending statelessness. In their statements in general debates, the states were encouraged to include good practices and commitments to end statelessness by 2024.

After the adoption of Agenda, the session was followed by remarks from UN Deputy Secretary General Ms. Amina J. Mohammed. In her statement, she underlined relation between

addressing forced displacement and statelessness being linked to 2030 Agenda by enabling marginalized populations to contribute to, and benefit from, inclusion in sustainable social and economic development processes.

In his opening statement, the UNHCR High Commissioner Filippo Grandi presented the plight of refugees. He highlighted that the forced human displacement has still been the issue of global concern since last seven decades. He also touched upon the #IBelong Campaign that was launched in 2014 and determined to bring statelessness to an end within 2024 and continue efforts for the transformation of UNHCR launched in 2016 to make the organisation agile and effective. He expressed optimism on Global Compact of Refugees and called to utilise the opportunity of Global Refugee Forum for promoting international cooperation.

Nepal delivered its statement in the general debate on 9 October. In our statement we called for comprehensive global partnership, understanding and cooperation to address refugees' plight. Though not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, Nepal provided shelter to thousands of Bhutanese refugees. Nepal expressed concerns over growing shortfall of humanitarian budgets to meet increasing humanitarian needs for refugees and also underlined that hosting refugee is an additional burden to developing countries, particularly LDCs. Nepal appreciated the sustained support by the core group of countries in the third country resettlement of the Bhutanese refugees and called for permanent solution for return to their homes in dignity and honour.

Commenting on Nepal's statement Mr. Grandi expressed his support for Nepal's call for a solution to longstanding Bhutanese refugee problem that needs to be found.

42. First Global Forum on Refugee

The first Global Forum on Refugee was convened in Geneva from 17-18 December 2019. As envisioned by the Global Compact on Refugees as a common platform of states, refugees, host countries and countries of origin, countries of resettlement, as well as humanitarian agencies and stakeholders, the Global Forum on Refugees is held every four year to deliberate on practical steps towards international burden and responsibility sharing. UN High Commissioner Refugees and the Government of Switzerland convened the Forum. UN Secretary General addressed the Forum together with the High Commissioner, Swiss Federal Councilor and leaders of other five co-convenor countries, namely Ethiopia, Turkey, Pakistan,

Ethiopia, Costa Rica and Germany. Countries, agencies and individuals speaking at the Forum submitted their pledges to take action for better inclusion of refugees with socio-economic and educational empowerment. Solidarity with the refugees through increased private sector contribution, addressing root causes of discrimination and displacement and respect and protection of the rights and humanitarian needs of refugees including by tackling climate change impacts were highlighted during national statements and high-level panel discussions.

In his statement, Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai mentioned about Nepal's support to the Bhutanese refugees on humanitarian ground over the last three decades and expressed gratitude to core group of countries for their generosity in offering resettlement option. Ambassador Bhattarai urged the Government of Bhutan to express readiness to repatriate the remaining refugees in safety, with dignity and honour as they have not preferred the third country resettlement option and are desperate to return to their homeland in Bhutan. Text of the statement as delivered has already been shared with the Ministry for kind information.

43. Appointment of New UNHCR Representative to Nepal

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees Mr. Filippo Grandi appointed Ms. Carolin Spannuth-Verma, a German citizen as a new UNHCR Representative to Nepal, which has already been accepted by the Government of Nepal. Ms. Verma has been serving in Nepal as Country Representative a.i. since September 2019.

44. Thirty-third International Conference of Red Cross and Red Crescent

The thirty-third International Conference of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) was held in Geneva from 9-12 December. The opening plenary session was addressed by Federal Counsellor and Foreign Minister of Switzerland Mr. Ignazio Cassis.

The Conference had two separate delegations, each from Government side and National Societies. Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai led the Nepali delegation from the Government side while the National Society delegation was led by Mr. Sanjeev Thapa, President of Nepal Red Cross Society.

The three-day conference gathered 2300 participants, 168 State representatives, 187 National Societies and 75 observers. Likewise, 120 pledges were submitted at the conference and 8 resolutions were adopted by acclamation. The key issues on the agenda included trust in

humanitarian action, mental health, climate change, pandemic preparedness, data protection and migration. The slogan of the thirty-third International conference was ‘Act today, shape tomorrow’.

The conference held election for the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent that act as trustee of the International Conference for the period of four years and also adopted 8 resolutions.

45. Mr. Jagan Chapagain appointed as IFRC Secretary General

On 3 December, the Extra Ordinary Meeting of the Governing Board of IFRC selected Mr. Jagannath Chapagain, a Nepali national, to the post of Secretary General of IFRC, who began four-year mandate from 1st of February 2020. He was working with IFRC as Chief of Staff and Under Secretary General for Programmes and Operations since July 2015. He is also one of the few Nepali Nationals reaching the high post of the globally recognized international humanitarian organisation comprising 190 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies as well as 13.7 million volunteers around the world. Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai congratulated Mr. Chapagain for the appointment and offered him best wishes for his new leadership role.

Environment and disarmament affairs

46. Third meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury (COP 3)

The third meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 3) to the Minamata Convention on Mercury (COP3) took place in Geneva from 26-29 November 2019. Mr. Tulsi Narayan Maharjan from the Ministry of Forests and Environment participated in the Conference. It is understood that Nepal is undertaking internal consultations within Ministries for initiating the process of ratifying the Convention.

In this edition of COP, importantly, Parties to the Minamata Convention renewed their commitment to phasing out the use of products that contain mercury by 2020 and to promote alternatives. Delegates from 113 member countries decided that parties would advance a

framework to monitor the effectiveness of the Convention for strengthening its implementation.

Countries are grappling with challenges posed by mercury hazard in industrial sectors, which in some parts of world are rampant in magnanimous quantities. However, in Nepal, our use and emission scoped by international standards is considered to be negligible. Nonetheless, on few sideline meetings, a couple of NGOs from Nepal presented that mercury exposure in metal artwork and sculpture-related industries are widely used particularly in SMEs. It was pointed that its products intended for export have been posing threats to the health of workers and environmental aspects of Nepal. In view of our tourism-related business source of revenue, the concerned ministry's attention may be needed to address this issue.

47. Secretary General of World Meteorological Organization

Mr. Petteri Taalas has been the Secretary-General of WMO since 1 January 2016. He was appointed by the World Meteorological Congress in 2015 for a first four-year term. He has been reappointed for the second four-year term (January 2020-December 2023).

48. The 2019 Meeting of the State Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)

The 2019 Meeting of State Parties (MSP) to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) was held in Geneva from 3-6 December 2019. Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai led the Nepali delegation to the 2019 MSP that comprised of the officials from the Ministry and the Mission in Geneva. Delivering statement at the MSP on 3 December, Ambassador Bhattarai underscored the importance of enhanced international cooperation in sharing new technologies and successes achieved in the field of life sciences and biotechnologies with a view to preventing various diseases and sufferings, ending hunger and malnutrition, increasing agricultural production and productivity, and thereby ultimately promoting peace and prosperity in the world.

HEALTH, LABOUR AND MIGRATION, TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

HEALTH

Engagements with the World Health Organization (WHO)

Overview

Nepal has made an impressive progress in the health sector. Life expectancy has been steadily increasing and Nepal's progress in reducing maternal and child deaths has been lauded internationally. Nepal has reduced prevalence of HIV and TB and is on track to become malaria-free country by 2025. Likewise, Nepal has made a significant achievement in the elimination of trachoma in 2018 and in rubella control two years ahead of the regional target.

Nepal emphasised on ensuring Universal Health Coverage in the achievement of health-related Sustainable Development Goals with the pledge of 'leaving no one behind'. Nepal has underscored the needs of mainstreaming health agenda, strengthening primary health care, reducing the cost of drugs, minimizing the burden of non-communicable diseases for LDCs and preparing the ground for equitable access to quality health care through Universal Health Coverage through effective global partnerships for positive health outcomes.

The Constitution of Nepal guarantees every citizen with the right to free basic health services, emergency health services, and equal access to health services. This provides an enviable opportunity to re-organize national health systems in line with the principles of universal health coverage.

Nepal has forged collaborative partnership with World Health Organization (WHO). As per the Nepal-WHO Country Strategic Cooperation 2018-2022, there are four strategic priorities for WHO collaboration in Nepal: (i) Advancing universal health coverage in a federalised governance structure (ii) Effective delivery of priority public health programmes (iii) Enhancing health security and disaster preparedness and response (iv) Multisectoral engagement and partnership for improved health outcomes.

In this context, Nepal has been actively participating in milestone and other high-level health events and reflected its views on global partnership for desired health outcomes.

The President of Nepal Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari sent a video message to the Global Vaccine Summit held in London on 4 June 2020. In her statement, while appreciating the contribution made by the GAVI in the health sector particularly towards achieving health-related SDGs, the President stressed the need for ensuring equitable access of vaccine to all. She also highlighted Nepal's achievement through immunisation programme, and expressed solidarity to all global initiatives for shared happiness and wellbeing.

Similarly, during the 73rd World Health Assembly, first-ever a virtual [de minimis](#), held in Geneva from 18-19 May 2020, Mr. Bhanu Bhakta Dhakal, Minister for Health and Population as the leader of the Nepali delegation delivered the national statement through pre-recorded video. While appreciating the efforts on COVID-19 response from World Health Organization and other national and international stakeholders, Mr. Dhakal emphasised the need for unified efforts by the member states for universal health security.

Mr. Dhakal was also supposed to participate in the 5th Global Ministerial Summit on Patient Safety to be held in Montreux, Switzerland from 27-28 February 2020; however, it was postponed in the face of COVID-19 pandemic.

Likewise, the Mission also played an active role for facilitation and coordination of Nepal's high-level participation in the following high-level events:

[Global Vaccine Summit](#)

The Global Vaccine Summit was held in London on 4 June 2020, which was hosted by the United Kingdom in association with the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI). World leaders pledged an additional US\$ 8.8 billion for Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, far exceeding the target of US\$ 7.4 billion. Addressing the Summit, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said- "Together we rise to fulfil the greatest shared endeavour of our lifetime – the triumph of humanity over disease, now and for the generations that follow."

The President Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari sent a video message to the Summit. In her statement, while appreciating the contribution made by the GAVI in the health sector particularly towards achieving health-related SDGs, she stressed the need for ensuring equitable access of vaccine to all. She also highlighted Nepal's achievement through immunisation programme, and expressed solidarity to all global initiatives for shared happiness and wellbeing.



Message delivered by Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari, President of Nepal at the Global Vaccine Summit

The pledges were made at the Summit. Representatives from 62 countries, including 42 Heads of State and Government, joined leaders from global health organisations, the private sector, vaccine manufacturers and civil society organisations to support the Vaccine Alliance's work protecting almost half the world's children against deadly, preventable infectious diseases.

The funding will help immunise 300 million more children in the world's poorest countries against diseases like measles, polio and diphtheria by the end of 2025. It will also support health systems to withstand the impact of coronavirus and maintain the infrastructure necessary to roll out a future COVID-19 vaccine on a global scale. The world's biggest vaccine manufacturers has committed to continue supplying the billions of doses needed for increasing vaccine coverage across Africa and Asia. The Vaccine Alliance is one of the world's largest and most successful public-private partnerships.

73rd World Health Assembly

The 73rd World Health Assembly (WHA73) took place from 18-19 May 2020 which was the first-ever a virtual **de minimis**. Ms. **Keva Bain**, Permanent Representative of Bahamas to the UN and other International Organizations was elected as the President of WHA73 from amongst the Permanent Representatives of member governments to the WHO. World leaders including Mr. Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, Mr. Emanuel Macron, President of France, Mr. Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea, Ms. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany had addressed the Assembly. President **Xi Jinping** pledged that China would make its COVID-19 vaccine development and contribute to ensuring vaccine

accessibility and affordability in developing countries, and provide 2 billion USD over two years to help with COVID-19 response, especially in developing countries, among others. In his address, President Xi had defended his country's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, saying it acted openly and responsibly in sharing information with the international community.

Mr. Bhanu Bhakta Dhakal, Minister for Health and Population led Nepali delegation to the Assembly and delivered the national statement through pre-recorded video. In the statement, he mentioned that diseases such as COVID-19 have no boundaries, hence it is our collective responsibility to fully secure health rights of people across the globe. He also added that Nepal has been responding to the COVID-19 outbreak with high-level political commitment and mobilising multisectoral mechanisms.

While appreciating the efforts on COVID-19 response from the World Health Organization and other national and international stakeholders, Mr. Dhakal emphasised the need for unified efforts by the member states for universal health security.



Health Minister Mr. Bhanu Bhakta Dhakal addressing the virtual 73rd WHA

The 73rd WHA adopted a landmark resolution to bring the world together to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. The resolution, co-sponsored by more than 130 countries, was adopted by consensus. It has called for the intensification of efforts to control the pandemic, and for equitable access to and fair distribution of all essential health technologies and products to combat the virus. It has also called for an independent and comprehensive evaluation of the global response, including, but not limited to, WHO performance.

Ten members of the Executive Board were elected from Botswana, Colombia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, India, Madagascar, Oman, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, and the United

Kingdom. Indian Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan became the chairman of the WHO Executive Board.

SUN Movement Global Gathering in Nepal

Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement Global Gathering took place in Kathmandu, Nepal from 4-7 November 2019. The Global Gathering brought together high-profile leaders from 73 countries with over 1,200 participants. The theme of the 2019 SUN Movement Global Gathering was ‘Nourishing People and Planet Together’.

The SUN Global Gathering (SUNGG) is the flagship event of the SUN Movement. It is an important moment, where the Movement takes stock of progress and challenges, whilst reflecting on the implementation of global nutrition initiatives. Previously, the SUN Movement Global Gatherings were held in New York (2013), Rome (2014), Milan (2015), and in Abidjan (2017).

The 2019 SUN Global Gathering issued the Kathmandu Declaration. The Declaration is non-binding and is an expression of the SUN Movement’s commitment to ending malnutrition in all its forms.

Universal Health Coverage in Least Developed Countries: A time for Accelerated Action- A High-Level Side Event

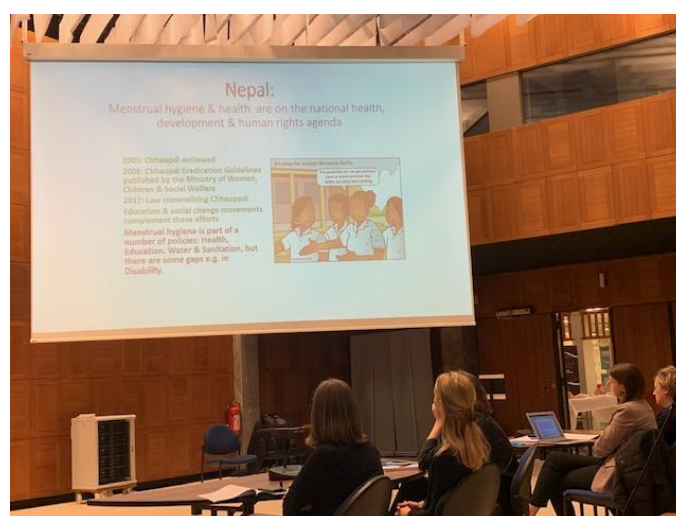
A high-level side event on the sidelines of High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) was organised on 23 September 2020 by the Permanent Mission of Nepal in New York in co-sponsorship with Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Malawi. While delivering the opening statement, Mr. Upendra Yadav, then DPM and Minister for Health and Population of Nepal underlined the collective understanding, commitment and collaboration in achieving UHC in Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The panelist discussed the underlying barriers that LDCs face in accelerating UHC.

Both the events were pivotal in showcasing Nepal’s visibility and strong commitment to yield health outcome.

Moreover, Nepal’s achievement in menstrual hygiene and health was highlighted amid a programme for the launch of a new Journal of Adolescent Health Supplement in Geneva on 4

February 2020 which was organised by WHO, UNFPA and other agencies in association with the Permanent Mission of Sweden. The Supplement was focused on ‘Adolescent sexual reproductive health & rights: Progress since the ICPD & prospects for the next 25 years’. The Journal has shed light on Nepal’s effort in making menstrual health part of a number of policies: Health, Education, Water & Sanitation and also in enacting law criminalising ‘Chhaupadi’. The Mission attended the launch programme.

During the programme, an excellent presentation was made to highlight the exemplary achievements of Nepal for putting menstrual hygiene & health on the national health, development and human rights agenda. Nepal has taken meaningful action to address menstruation as a fundamental aspect of public health and SRHR (sexual and reproductive health and rights). It has enacted laws to address ongoing menstrual stigma and restrictions (e.g. Chhaupadi) that adversely impact girls and women’s health. Besides Nepal, achievements of other countries namely Uruguay, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Kenya and Burkina Faso were also presented.



Presentation on Nepal’s achievement in menstrual hygiene & health in Geneva

Similarly, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the WHO is very much willing to extend support to Nepal’s health sector. During the meeting with visiting Nepali leaders, he assured to send technical team, and endorse and give catalytic funding. He is aware of health problems facing Nepal. It is important to capitalize his goodwill and spirit of extended cooperation towards Nepal.

Nepal's partnership with Global Fund and GAVI

The Global Fund works with partners around the world to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, and strengthen health systems. Based on the Global Fund Board's decision in November 2019 on the funding availability for the 2020-2022 period, Nepal has been allocated US\$ 51,639,112 for HIV, tuberculosis, malaria and building resilient and sustainable systems for health (RSSH). The allocation amount for all countries was determined according to a methodology approved by the Global Fund Board, primarily based on disease burden and income level. Nepal is classified as a low-income country in this regard.

Recently, Nepal has been enlisted as one of 92 countries eligible for COVAX facility. COVAX is the vaccines pillar of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator.

The Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator

The ACT Accelerator is a groundbreaking global collaboration to accelerate the development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines. COVAX is co-led by GAVI, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and the WHO. Its aim is to accelerate the development and manufacture of COVID-19 vaccines, and to guarantee fair and equitable access for every country in the world.

Coalition for a universal health protection architecture

In May 2020, Switzerland prepared a concept note proposing to establish a Coalition for the universal health protection architecture and invited Nepal to join the coalition with a view to undertaking necessary WHO reforms and address health pandemics in future. Initially, the idea of forming coalition of small countries Switzerland, Botswana, Nepal, Oman, Nauru and Peru representing each WHO region was mooted. However, only four countries Switzerland, Botswana, Nepal and Oman so far joined this coalition.

The Coalition was launched on 23 June 2020 and a Joint Declaration on the launch was issued the same day. Nepal could not join the ministerial meeting. Nonetheless, the invitation to Nepal by the Swiss government for joining the coalition may be seen as recognition of Nepal's role and achievement in health sector.

146th Session of WHO Executive Board:

The 146th session of the Executive Board took place at WHO headquarters in Geneva from 3-8 February 2020. At the meeting, members agreed on the agenda and resolutions to be considered at the 73rd World Health Assembly. Topics under discussion during the session included WHO's response in severe, large-scale emergencies; research and development for diseases with epidemic potential; antimicrobial resistance; poliomyelitis; principles for global consensus on the donation and management of blood, blood components and medical products of human origin; and promoting the health of migrants.

All the agenda were categorized in four pillars namely (i) Pillar 1: One billion more people benefitting from Universal Health Coverage (ii) Pillar 2: One billion more people better protected from health emergencies (iii) Pillar 3: One billion more people enjoying better health and wellbeing, and (iv) Pillar 4: More effective and efficient WHO providing support to countries.

The Board adopted 10 resolutions and 29 decisions. In the extensive discussion of the report by the Director-General, numerous constructive and positive comments were made. The Board noted the report of the regional committees. The Board discussed and noted the two reports on primary health care, namely a draft operational framework, as requested in resolution WHA72.2 (2019), and a review by the Evaluation Office of the 40 years for implementing primary health care at country level.

In a decision, the Board emphasised the importance of strengthening health systems as the basis for delivery of primary health care services and requested the Director-General to finalise the draft operational framework for submission to the Seventy-third World Health Assembly. The Board deliberated and noted the report on universal health coverage: moving together to build a healthier world, Member States were supportive of the works being done and provided guidance.

Following the extensive discussions, two reports on the political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the UN General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases were noted. The reports presented a menu of policy options and cost-effective interventions as well as the findings of the consultative process on implementation of the global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol and the way forward. The Board also adopted a

decision on accelerating action to reduce the harmful use of alcohol, requesting the Director-General, *inter alia*, to develop an action plan (2022–2030) for effective implementation of the global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol as a public health priority as well as to prepare a technical report on the harmful use of alcohol related to cross-border alcohol marketing, advertising and promotional activities.

Likewise, the report on the global vaccine action plan was considered and noted. The Board further adopted two decisions. In the first one on meningitis prevention and control, it requested the Director-General to finalise the development of a draft global strategy to defeat meningitis by 2030, for submission to the Seventy-third World Health Assembly. Similarly, in the second one on strengthening global immunisation efforts to leave no one behind, it requested the Director-General to finalise an immunisation vision and strategy (“Immunisation Agenda 2030”), also to be considered by the Seventy-third World Health Assembly.

Having considered and noted the report on accelerating the elimination of cervical cancer as a global public health problem, the Board recommended that the Seventy-third World Health Assembly adopt the global strategy and its associated goals and targets for the period 2020–2030. The Board thoroughly discussed and noted the report of the Independent Oversight and Advisory Committee for the WHO Health Emergencies Programme and the report on WHO’s work in health emergencies, including the two public health emergencies of international concern: the outbreak of Ebola virus disease in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the outbreak of COVID-19. An epidemiological update on the latter outbreak was provided to the Board.

The Board recommended that the Seventy-third World Health Assembly adopt a resolution on strengthening preparedness for health emergencies: implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005). In its consideration of influenza preparedness, the Board noted the relevant report as well as the release of the WHO Global influenza strategy 2019–2030. It recommended that the Seventy-third World Health Assembly adopt a decision with several requests made to the Director General. These included providing support to Member States that wanted to develop or update national influenza preparedness plans and promoting instruments such as the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework and international surveillance systems. The Board noted the interim report on the public health implications of implementation of the Nagoya Protocol. The Board welcomed the proposal for a Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020–2030 and recommended that the Seventy-third World Health Assembly endorse it. That

endorsement should be transmitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the consideration of the proposal by the United Nations General Assembly.

Moreover, the Board reappointed Dr Matshidiso Moeti as Regional Director for Africa; it also appointed Dr Hans Kluge as Regional Director for Europe, expressing its profound gratitude and appreciation to Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab for her invaluable and long-standing contribution to the works of the WHO in the European Region's 31st Meeting of the Programme,

Budget and Administration Committee (PBAC) of WHO Executive Board:

The thirty-first meeting of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee was held in Geneva from 29-31 January 2020 under the chairmanship of Mr Björn Kümmel (Germany). Agenda included human resources, report of International Civil Service Commission, Amendments to the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules, Programme Budget 2020-21, engagement with non-state actors, and proposed work plan for 2020-21, among others. During the meeting, the Director-General presented an update on the response to the outbreak of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) infection in China. He informed the Committee that he reconvened the Emergency Committee on the novel coronavirus under the International Health Regulations (2005) to advise on whether the outbreak constituted a public health emergency of international concern. The Director-General underlined that the outbreak illustrated why stronger health systems were necessary, and that was why the WHO accorded great importance to transformation including the results framework.

The Committee was fully committed to the aims of WHO transformation and appreciated the efforts made by the Organisation to move from a cycle of repeated reform to a sustainable programme of continuous improvement. The Committee recommended that the Executive Board should request a full update on transformation with reforms mapped to timelines to be provided to the Seventy-fourth Assembly. On 30 January, the Director-General announced his decision to declare the outbreak a public health emergency of international concern.

LABOUR AND MIGRATION

Engagements with International Labour Organization (ILO)

ILO Global Summit on COVID-19 and the World of Work 2020

The International Labour Organization organised the first-ever largest virtual summit of participating all three social partners i.e. Governments, Worker Representatives and Employer Representatives as well as heads of international organisation including the Secretary General of United Nations Mr. Antonio Guterres. The Summit was held in two parts--first one was held at regional level from 1-3 July and the second one was at global level from 7-9 July.

The Director General of the ILO Mr. Guy Ryder welcomed the commitment and determination of world leaders to build a better world of work as a core element of recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. Speaking at the closing of the Global Summit on COVID-19 and the world of work, the Director General said that it was difficult to overstate the level of common purpose, of determination, to overcome the crisis; to be built forward to something better; from this everything else became possible.

The Prime Minister Mr. K. P. Sharma Oli delivered the recorded statement at the Global Leaders' Day of the ILO World of Work Summit on 8 July. In his statement, the Prime Minister touched upon the protection of the most vulnerable, including the migrant workers and those in informal sectors, and provision of adequate social security and health care is key to minimise the impact of COVID-19. Stating the world economy has suffered a lot due to global decline in investment, trade and disruption in travel industry, which has thrown millions of workers and enterprise vulnerable, Prime Minister Mr. Oli said that the impact is unevenly high in the LDCs and low-income countries. While concurring to the human-centred agenda of decent work, he called for robust global response to the pandemic with the United Nations and its specialized agencies like ILO at the centre. Highlighting that the migrant workers are losing hopes and returning home in the midst of pandemic without protection of job and income, Prime Minister Oli said that this situation could have been avoided and norms of the WHO should have been observed in the process. "Humanity is tested in the time of crisis; our conscience should guide us to uphold justice and fairness even in the time of extreme difficulty" said the Prime Minister. International solidarity at this hour could prevent the job loss, return of migrant workers and reversal in the progress of SDGs and resulting rise of poverty, he added.



Prime Minister Mr. K. P. Sharma Oli delivering video address at the Global Leaders' Day of the ILO World of Work Summit

The Prime Minister underlined the efforts made by the Government of Nepal for the prevention of the spread and mitigation of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic. He highlighted the immediate and medium-term measures taken to the protection of workers in the formal and informal sectors and creation of sustainable employment opportunities. He expressed commitment to partnership and social dialogue at the national level and called for greater solidarity to address the situation globally.

The UN Secretary General said, “this global summit is an opportunity for governments, workers’ and employers’ representatives to shape winning responses. Recovery from the crisis “is not a choice between health or jobs and the economy. We already have a strong foundation for action and solutions, the ILO Centenary Declaration as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and SDG Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth. Together we can emerge from this crisis stronger, with decent jobs and a brighter, more equal and greener future for all,” the Secretary-General added.

The first part of the Summit, held from 1-2 July, consisted of a series of virtual regional events covering Africa, the Americas, the Arab States, Asia- Pacific and Europe and Central Asia. Representatives of governments, employers, workers, and regional organisations discussed the huge impact of the pandemic on their economies, labour markets and societies, and different national responses. The conclusions of these regional events fed into the discussions at the Global Summit of 7-9 July. The last day of the Global Summit, ILO Constituents’ Day, provided ministers, leaders of workers and employers from the ILO member states a forum to share views on how the ILO Centenary Declaration can guide action to support recovery from

the pandemic and build a better world of work. The Minister for Labour, Employment and Social Security of Nepal participated in the regional summit as a speaker.

ILO and COVID-19

Last year at the 108th session, the year of marking centenary, International Labour Organization successfully concluded with centenary declaration along with the adoption of report of the global commission on the future of work. The ILO has been giving impetus to realise the visionary report on the world of work for a brighter future, which has emphasised human-centric approach for preserving the value of being humans from impact of disrupting technology on jobs. In line with both centenary declaration and the report, the most important decision of 337th Governing Body was the approval of the programme of work and results framework for 2020-21 which includes eight policy outcomes and special emphasis on overarching strategies on research, statistics and capacity development. Also, an important decision was made on the follow up of two important aspects of the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work. Firstly, the GB approved a procedural roadmap to consider proposals for the inclusion of safe and healthy working conditions in the ILO's framework of fundamental principles and rights at work. The second one was the appointment of a working group to examine measures to democratize ILO governance by ensuring a fair representation of all regions and establishing the principles of equality among member states, as called for in the Declaration. Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic immediately after the conclusion of the 337th GB, no substantive meeting and discussion was held. The annual gathering and the highest decision-making body of the ILO, International Labour Conference (ILC) of this year was also postponed along with other major global and regional-level meetings. The ILO has been regularly providing both policy inputs and updates on impacts of COVID-19 in labour markets. Its latest (fifth) version is available in the ILO website. The major meetings and highlights during the annual reporting period are mentioned below:

337th Governing Body Session of the International Labour Organization

The 337th session of the International Labour Organization was held in Geneva from 28 October-7 November 2019. Nepali delegation was led by Mr. Binod K.C., Secretary of Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security along with the Ambassador and other officials from the Permanent Mission. The Governing Body session was chaired by the

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Lesotho and the two vice chairs, one from Employer and one from Workers.



Mr. Binod K.C., Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Nepal at the 337th Governing Body Session of ILO, Geneva, Switzerland, October/November 2019

The Director General addressed at the opening of the Governing Body (GB). As this was the first Governing Body meeting after the centenary declaration in last June, he stressed to the important responsibility before this governing body was to approve the proposed biennium programme of work and results framework for 2020-21 which was in line with the eight outcomes of the centenary declaration. The Director General also highlighted the longstanding ratification of the 1986 Amendment to the ILO Constitution, on which the regular progress report was presented to the Governing Body session.

The most important decision of the Governing Body was the approval of the programme of work and results framework for 2020-21 which includes eight policy outcomes and special emphasis on overarching strategies on research, statistics and capacity development. Also, important decision was made on the follow up to two important aspects of the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work. Firstly, the GB approved a procedural roadmap to consider proposals for the inclusion of safe and healthy working conditions in the ILO framework of fundamental principles and rights at work. The second one was the appointment of a working group to examine measures to democratize ILO governance by ensuring a fair representation of all regions and establishing the principles of equality among member states, as called for in

the Declaration. The Governing Body decided the representation of four new cases of Bangladesh, Indonesia, Chile and Brazil was receivable.

Nepal's Participation in ILO GB:

Nepal actively participated in the 337th session of the ILO Governing Body meeting. The Nepali delegation delivered three statements on different agenda items, namely on composition and structure of the ILO staff: Action Plan for improving the diversity of the ILO workforce, mid-term report on the implementation of the ILO program of action on decent work in global supply chains and mid-term review of the Bali Declaration. On the composition and structure of the ILO staff, we stressed that the more geographically representative ILO only could better deliver to the mandate of the organisation in the spirit of multilateralism, as it has been moving into its second centenary era. We also called the office to address or take appropriate measures to ensure representation of unrepresented and underrepresented countries.

Nepal appreciated the mid-term report on the implementation of the ILO programme of action on decent work in global supply chains. Nepal is one of the beneficiary countries and stressed on the further effective implementation of the project in the remaining time line of the project. Nepal's full support and readiness was expressed to engage for the final report discussion on Governing Body meeting in 2022. The project has targeted garment (hand-woven woollen garments/knit-ware and traditional Dhaka cloth weaving) and metal work (traditional metal statue and gold and silver jewellery) based supply chains and has so far directly benefitted over 2200 (mainly women) beneficiaries across the supply chains from home workers to microenterprise owners. It targets home-based workers, and other informal economy workers.

The Secretary of Labour, Employment and Social Security in his statement highlighted the major reforms taken and progress made by the Government of Nepal since the adoption of the Bali Declaration in 2016 based on 13 priorities areas of the declaration through legal, institutional reforms as well as through the launching of the various flagship programme. He mentioned about a number of initiatives taken in Nepal specifically the introduction of labour audit system, the implementation of prime minister employment programme with the coverage of eight types of social security schemes and the decent work country programme 2018-2022, among others.

Global Social Protection Week

The International Labour Organization organised Global Social Protection Week from 25-28 November 2019. The programme was divided into two parts, namely high-level segment and technical segment. The high-level segment was held from 25-26 November. On 25 November, key actors representing governments, workers, employers, international organisations and international financial institutions, as well as civil society organisations and academia discussed the catalytic role of social protection for achieving Agenda 2030, the current state of affairs and remaining gaps in protection, and how partners have joined forces and developed a common strategy to achieve SDG 1.3.

On 26 November, the ILO Social Protection Department launched a landmark publication on the financing gaps to achieve SDG 1.3, followed by a discussion on how to create fiscal space, and a call upon countries and partners to share their commitments to achieve SDG 1.3.

The opening at high-level segment was addressed by Ms. Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations through video link; Ms. Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; and Mr. Guy Ryder, Director General of ILO and followed by panel discussion on “Social Protection, A Global Priority and an investment with high returns”. The panellists were Mr. Guy Ryder, Director General of ILO; Mrs. Nunzia Catalfo, Minister of Labour and social policies of Italy; Mr. Ghada Waly, Minister of Social Solidarity of Egypt; Mrs. Saira Ruuth, State Secretary of Social Affairs and Health of Finland; Mr. Boitumelo Moloi, Deputy Minister of Employment and Labour of South Africa; Mrs. Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation; and Mr. Roberto Suarez Santos, Secretary General of the International Organization of Employers.

The second-high level panel discussions were on “Still 55 per cent without social protection”, “A common strategy to achieve SDGs on social protection; “Achieving SDGs requires increased investments”, “Financing social protection: Creating fiscal space at the national level and providing support at the international level.

The technical segment provided the opportunity to continue and deepen the discussions of the high-level conference. 18 sessions organised in six streams over the course of two days from 27-28 November 2019 brought together experts to discuss the development and enhancement

of social protection systems, which are adequate, sustainable and adapted to developments in the world of work.

Ambassador Mr. Bhattarai attended the opening of the Global Social Protection Week. It was very rich and timely discussion on global pressing issue of social protection whereas as 55 per cent of the world population are out of social protection calling for strong international collaboration and partnership at all levels as highlighted in the opening of the Social protection week. Mr. Ramesh Badal, Vice president for Foreign Affairs from the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT) also participated from Nepal in the programme and he was one of the panellists on break out session “2.b Extending social protection to migrant workers”.

Engagements with International Office for Migration (IOM)

110th Session of the IOM Council

The 110th session of the IOM Council was held from 26-29 November 2019. Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai led the Nepali delegation to the Council session and delivered national statement.



Ambassador Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai delivering national statement at 110th IOM council session, Geneva, Switzerland, 28 November 2019

In his statement, Ambassador highlighted, among others, the bilateral Nepal-IOM relations, the IOM contribution on the resettlement of the Bhutanese Refugees in eight core countries and the recent rescue of 43 Nepali migrants from Libya. He also touched upon the Nepal's great attachment to the issue of migration as country of 4.5 million Nepali labour migrants and their contribution in the national economy. Global migration flow and policy discourse, national reform and initiation for managed migration were also featured in the statement. Nepal expressed concern on 15 per cent reduction of 2020 operational budget at a time when expanded role and activities of the IOM demanded more financial resources.

Migration discourse at Geneva Level:

After the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) in December 2018, migration agenda has gained momentum in international debate and discourse, which was previously considered as bilateral issue. GCM has given IOM the central role to coordinate and act as secretariat in regard to the implementation of GCM, and also the role of the secretariat of United Nations Network on Migration. The IOM received the status of United Nations related agency in 2016 and was also given the additional responsibility related to the implementation of the GCM. The IOM has been in limelight of the global policy discourse on migration.

For expanding of the role and responsibilities, the Director General of the IOM proposed the post of one additional deputy director general as part of IOM reform on senior management team. He held series of discussion with member states on his proposal. All the member states agreed for the reform of senior management team; however, no consensus emerged in the reporting period on the modality of the selection process of the deputy director general. The 110th session of the IOM council decided to establish working group to make recommendations in this regard. The chair of the Working Group held five rounds of meetings, and the modalities of selection process of deputy director general were not agreed. Negotiation is still going on in this matter.

Besides, labour migration is an important aspect of our foreign policy. More than four million Nepali nationals are working abroad. Protection of their basic rights, safety and security remain topmost priority. Nepal has been chairing the Colombo Process since 2017 and played very visible role during the whole negotiation process of the GCM. Handing over of the leadership

of the Colombo Process to Afghanistan has been delayed due to COVID-19. The Mission is coordinating with IOM secretariat for early handover.

14th Ambassadorial Meeting of Colombo Process:

As the Chair in Office of the Geneva-based Colombo Process (CP) member states Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai called the 14th Colombo Process Ambassadorial-level Meeting on 30 September 2019. Except Cambodia, all the member states attended the meeting. It was the first meeting of the Ambassador in relation to the Colombo Process in which he openly shared his views and called the member states for their creative views for future endeavors of the Colombo Process as it was one of the most vibrant regional consultative process. The Meeting was also addressed by the Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Mr. Antonio Vitorino. The Director General highlighted the vibrant and active role played by the Colombo Process in the past and re-appealed for keeping the same spirit in particular to the implementation of the GCM as the CP has limited objective of contractual labour migration. He assured full support of the IOM in order to enhance the effective and efficient work of the CP. While recalling his completion of one year in office, he said that regional consultative is a unique, state-driven process and should not be the talk shop. It should deliver and find common ground in the spirit of the multilateralism. He also shared the thoughts on the ongoing activities and development of the UN Network on Migration as the IOM works as the secretariat of the Network.



Ambassador Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai chairing the 14th Ambassadorial-level meeting of the Colombo Process, Geneva, Switzerland, 30 September 2019

As the Chair of the Colombo Process, Nepal updated the member states on the Bangkok Consultation on the Colombo Process Engagement in Global Frameworks related to Migration: Towards Effective Implementation, follow Up and Review, which was held in Bangkok from 22-23 May 2019.

The Sarath Dash, Chief of the IOM Mission at Colombo was also connected virtually in which he shared the consultation's objectives and its focus. As the chair Nepal also shared the summaries of the meeting. All members attentively listened to the updates and appreciated the chair for providing the update of the meeting.

The coordinator of the UN Network on Migration Mr. Jonathan Prentice also gave some updates on the activities carried out by the Network. As it was created in January 2019, he informed that the secretariat is in the IOM and a small office is set up in New York. He had also shared about the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF), which is the collective commitment of members to put national implementation at local, national, regional and global level. There are two complement processes in terms of global versus regional and national one.

[Meeting with New Chief of Mission for Nepal's IOM Office](#)

Mrs. Lorena Lando, newly appointed chief of IOM office in Kathmandu met with Ambassador Bhattarai on 8 August 2019. She shared her experiences of working in the migration field. She had already served in Sri-Lanka and Afghanistan in the past. While congratulating, Ambassador wished her all success for her new mission in Nepal. She also touched upon the Nepal-IOM collaboration as Nepal formally became member in 2006 and added that Nepal has intense level of engagements with the IOM, especially the settlement of the Bhutanese refugees, and in labour migration fields. She said that she would feel comfortable, as the government authorities in Nepal are more supportive and accessible. She replaced Mr. Paul Norton on 30th August 2019. She had been working as the Chief of Mission in Tunisia since 2010. Mrs. Wen Li, Advisor to the Director General of International Organization of Migration and Mrs. Nicoletta Giordano, Head of the International Partnership Division (IPD) of IOM was also present in the meeting.

TRADE, DEVELOPMENT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Engagements with United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD):

The year 2019-20 remained very productive and visible for Nepal through its active engagements in various meetings of the UNCTAD. Nepal was elected as a Vice President of the Trade and Development Board of UNCTAD in June 2019. The term of the Vice President ended on 2 July 2020 upon the election of new members of the Trade and Development Board for 2020-2021.

Nepal chaired the 3rd session of the Intergovernmental Group of Expert on Financing for Development (IGE FfD), which took place from 4-6 November 2019. Similarly, Ms. Yam Kumari Khatriwada, Secretary of the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies was invited to the 11th session of the Commission on Investment, Enterprises and Development as one of the key speakers at the opening plenary of the High Level IIA (International Investment Agreement) Conference held on 13 November 2019. The one-day conference was organised in parallel with the meeting of the Commission. She addressed the opening plenary of the conference followed by a breakout session. There were altogether eight breakout sessions on different topics related to investment regimes. Mr. Dinesh Bhattarai, Joint Secretary from the same Ministry, was a speaker on the breakout session on Developing Countries: Asia.

The follow up mission from the UNCTAD visited Nepal in connection with Investment Policy Review of Nepal, which was carried out by the UNCTAD. The follow up mission consulted with various stakeholders in Nepal and prepared a very comprehensive report.

The fifteenth quadrennial conference (UNCTAD XV) was supposed to be held in Barbados from 18-23 October 2020 but has been postponed due to the COVID-19 and the host country has proposed the new date for the conference in the last week of April 2021. The Mission has been actively engaging in drafting position paper of the G-77 and China on the outcome document of the conference.

3rd Session of the Intergovernmental Group of Expert on Financing for Development (IGE FfD)

The third session of the Intergovernmental Expert (IGE) on Financing for Development (FfD) took place in Geneva from 4-6 November 2019. Ambassador Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai was elected as the chair and Mr. Pedro Luis Pedroso Cuesta, Permanent Representative of Cuba as the vice-chair cum rapporteur of the third session respectively.



Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai, Ambassador/Permanent Representative presiding the 3rd Session of the Intergovernmental Group of Expert on Financing for Development (IGE FfD), Geneva, Switzerland, 4-6 November 2019

The opening of the session was addressed by the President of the Trade and Development Board Mr. Michael Gaffey, Ambassador/ Permanent Representative of Ireland, highlighting the importance of the work of the IGE to make effective synergy between the intergovernmental machinery of the UNCTAD and the follow-up process on financing for development in the United Nations system.

While chairing the session Ambassador Mr. Bhattarai also delivered the opening statement on behalf of the Foreign Minister Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali. He chaired all the five sessions of the panel discussions during the three-day meeting. The five themes of the panel discussions were: (1) International development cooperation and financing for development- the current landscape and future challenges; (2) Official development assistance- reform needs and policy options; (3) Blended Finance- taming expectations with standards; (4) Environmental

protection and climate change mitigation- challenges for international development cooperation; and (5) South-South cooperation and development finance.

As the chair, Ambassador Bhattarai drafted policy recommendations based on the discussions of above five sessions and vice chair cum rapport facilitated the negotiation on the outcome of the panel discussions. The meeting was concluded with the adoption of the agreed policy recommendations.

11th Session of the Commission on Investment, Enterprises and Development

The 11th session of the Commission on investment, enterprises and development of the UNCTAD was held in Geneva from 11-15 November 2019. The Nepali delegation was led by Mrs. Yam Kumari Khatiwada, Secretary of Industry, Commerce and comprising Supply, Mr. Dinesh Bhattarai, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supply, Mr. Tirtha Raj Wagle, Charge' d'Affaires of the Permanent Mission and other officials from the Ministry of Finance and from the Mission.

An ambassadorial roundtable was held on 11 November 2019 and 31 Geneva-based permanent representatives from both developed and developing countries took part in the roundtable discussion. Permanent representatives shared their domestic provisions and underscored the importance of the roundtable at multilateral level for global discourse and contribution on the SDGs through dialogue and shared best practices. The CEO of Nestle was also in the ambassadorial roundtable and shared about the importance of the private sector especially for timely achievement of the SDGs. The ambassadorial roundtable was followed by distribution of sustainable investment awards. This year, investment promotion agencies and special economic zone authorities from China, South Africa and Sri Lanka won the awards for their excellence in promoting sustainable investment in special economic zones.

Investment Policy Review (IPR) of Armenia and Chad was released on 12 November 2019. The head of the Nepali delegation made comments on the IPR of Chad, shared Nepal's experiences, and highlighted importance of IPR findings for appropriate domestication in the national context. She also stated that this kind of a policy review from an intergovernmental multilateral organisation would be useful both for investors and the government. All would be benefitted from sharing experiences in this rapidly changing global phenomenon specially in the age of industry 4.0 where frontier technology brought landscape change in the pattern of

global FDI flow, she said. She also thanked the UNCTAD for the draft report of the follow up of the implementation of Nepal's IPR. The follow-up mission visited Nepal in May 2019 and shared its preliminary report to the Government of Nepal for feedback and comments. She also highlighted the importance of the follow up of the implementation of the report after certain duration of the IPR for the policy updates in line with global change context.



Mrs. Yam Kumari Khatiwada, Secretary of the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supply at opening plenary of High Level IIA Conference, Geneva, Switzerland, 13 November 2019

Ms. Khatiwada was invited to speak at the plenary of the High Level IIA (International Investment Agreement) Conference on 13 November 2019. One-day conference was organised in parallel with the commission meeting. She addressed the opening plenary of the conference followed by a breakout session. There were altogether eight breakout sessions on different topics related to investment regimes. Mr. Dinesh Bhattarai was a speaker on breakout session on Developing Countries: Asia. Nepali delegation highlighted the reformed initiatives undertaken by the Government of Nepal including the operationalisation of single window service, progress made on model bilateral investment agreement, policy stability due to the stable and strong government, hosting of successful second investment summit, among others. Nepali delegation also strongly raised the concern over investment disputes settlement mechanism and stressed on the need to maintain sovereign right of the state and make national tribunal verdict final to shun small and vulnerable countries from suffering severely in this regard.

The 11th session was concluded with the adoption of the report of the commission including 24 agreed policy recommendations. The session was chaired by Mr. Alfredo Suescum, Permanent Representative of Panama to the World Trade Organization.

12th UNCTAD Debt Management Conference

The 12th series of the UNCTAD Debt Management Conference was held in Geneva from 18-20 November 2019. More than 450 participants attended the conference. Dr. Yubaraj Khatiwada, Finance Minister of Nepal was previously invited as the keynote speaker. Due to Dr Khatiwada's inability TO ATTEND attend the conference, the Finance Minister of Namibia Mr. Carl-Hermann Schlettwein was later invited to deliver his keynote speech at the conference. The three-day conference was followed by a meeting of the Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS) Programme Advisory Group, held from 21-22 November 2019, for those countries using the DMFAS software in one of their institutions.

In his keynote speech, Mr. Schlettwein highlighted, among others, that the growing global debt burden and its associated fragility comes at an unfortunate time for developing countries, with global economic growth subdued, trade wars, climate emergencies and threats to multilateralism all contributing to uncertainty, the aspirational demands of the 2030 SDGs could appear unattainable. He underlined that the conference would provide an opportunity to share experiences and learn from lessons of others. From his perspective, and to answer the implicit question in the conference theme "Making debt work for development", discussions are needed to be underpinned by the examination of the policies and actions countries undertake to make responsible use of debt, be it external or domestic, so that indebtedness could be associated with transformational and sustainable development, rather than being wasteful.

The conference addressed current trends in the unfolding developing country debt crisis; recent debt transparency initiatives; policies to support long-term debt sustainability; the role of debt and disaster relief; and the role of the international community in strengthening debt management. There were nine panel discussions on separate nine different topics related to debt management.

A side event was also organized on 19th November on Debt-DQA (Data Quality Assessment) presentation. The UNCTAD and the Commonwealth Secretariat developed a framework, the

Debt Data Quality assessment (Debt-DQA) to validate debt database and assess the quality of data recorded in their respective debt management software: DMFA and Commonwealth Meridian. The event launched Debt-DQA and presented its components and measurement techniques.

Most of the delegations in the meeting were technically well-versed senior decision-makers in the area of debt management and public finance represented from Ministry of Finance or central bank of the member states and multilateral financial institutions and regional financial institutions as well as academia. Nepal could get benefit from the UNCTAD's DMFAS technical assistance as Bangladesh and Pakistan.

The conference provided a regular biennial forum for sharing experiences and exchanging views on current developments in debt and on debt management issues in the broader macroeconomic management context.

Science and Technology for Development (CSTD)

Nepal is the member of the Economic and Social Council body – Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) for the period of 2019-2022. Nepal has been actively participating in CSTD intersessional panel discussion and its annual session. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 23rd annual session was held by virtual form with truncated format.

Prior to the session, an intersessional panel discussion of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) 2019-2020 was held in Geneva from 7-8 November 2019. Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai, Mr. Surendra Subedi, Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and other officials from the Mission also participated in the two-day panel discussion. The discussion was based on two priority themes, namely “Harnessing rapid technological change for inclusive and sustainable development” and “Exploring space technologies for sustainable development and the benefits of international research collaboration in this context”, for consideration at its twenty-third session. The themes were decided at the 22nd annual session of CSTD in May 2019.

The intersessional panel discussion is somehow preparatory meeting for the annual session and usually held in the CSTD chair country if the chair wishes; if not, in Geneva. Currently the chair is Mr. Kekgonne Edinton Baipoledi from Botswana. Last year the chair was from Austria

and the intersessional panel discussion was held in Vienna. The Commission has forty-three Member States elected by Economic and Social Council for a four-year term and Nepal is the member of the Commission since January 2019.

Engagements with World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

Overview on Intellectual Property:

The year 2019-2020 has become milestone to our engagement with WIPO and its mechanism. Nepal, for the first time, got elected to its one of the most important committee- Programme and Budget Committee (PBC) for the period of two years from 2019-2021. Nepal was the member of Coordination Committee on various occasions, however, it is the first time the country is serving as a member in PBC. Similarly, WIPO has accepted our request to extend support of two technical assistants to Nepal during the past year- i) Resources and Management Diagnostic for Nepal IP Office and ii) updating of IPAS software at Department of Industries of Nepal. Moreover, WIPO has been funding the officials participating in WIPO committee meetings regularly.

This year, WIPO elected new Director General, Mr. Daren Tang, a Singaporean national. His nomination was put forward by Coordination Committee and was endorsed by the Extraordinary session of WIPO Assemblies. He will officially assume his duty from 1 October 2020.

59th Assemblies of the Member States of the World Intellectual Property Organization:

The Fifty-Ninth Assemblies of the Member States of the World Intellectual Property Organization was held in Geneva from 30 September-9 October 2019. Ambassador Mr. Bhattarai led the Nepali delegation to the 59th Assemblies of the Member States of the WIPO and delivered a national statement on the agenda item general debate on 1 October 2019. The Permanent Representative/ Ambassador of Viet Nam chaired the 59th General Assemblies.



Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai, Ambassador/Permanent Representative at the general debate of 59th Session of the WIPO Assemblies, Geneva, Switzerland, 01 October 2019

While addressing the 59th General Assemblies, the Director General highlighted the state of intellectual property worldwide and the Organization's work in the course of the past twelve months since last Assemblies. He said that the worldwide interest in intellectual property (IP) has continued to increase as intangible assets and intellectual property has become ever more important components of the world economy. He added that technology continues its relentless progress at a constantly increasing pace; the rising interest in, and use of, IP globally has translated into heightened demand for the services of the organization in all areas, whether the state-of-the-art global IP systems that the organization administers for obtaining intellectual protection for IP, or the capacity-building and other development programs and services offered by the organization. The Director General also presented Report of the Director General to the 2019 WIPO Assemblies. The report contains all activities including developmental activities, human resources, Institutional as well as finance and revenue among others.

Nepal urged member states for the early resolution of the issue on Broadcasting Organization Treaty and Design Law treaty (DLT) and was also requested to sort out the issue of External Offices (OEs) in line with the 2015 GA guiding principles. It underlined the needs for orienting WIPO programme priorities and budget allocations towards reaching development outcomes. For countries such as Nepal having rich in genetic resources as well as traditional knowledge and cultural heritage, innovative ways for their beneficial utilization are critical for achieving SDGs, poverty reduction, employment generation and human wellbeing.

Major decisions on the important substantive issues:

- Design Law Treaty (DLT): No consensus was reached on Design Law Treaty although the chair appointed Permanent Representative of the Mexico to generate consensus among member states. Three informal consultations were held to sort out the dispute on two issues, namely technical assistance to developing countries and disclosures of TK, TCKEs and GI provisions in the proposed Design Law Treaty.
- Opening of New WIPO External Offices: the WIPO General Assembly decided to recall the decision of the 2015 WIPO General Assembly on External Offices and the Guiding Principles regarding WIPO External Offices; conduct an evaluation during 2021 of the entire networks of WIPO External Offices. The Terms of Reference of such an evaluation would be decided by the Program and Budget Committee during its 31st session in 2020; pending the results of the evaluation during 2021, defer the consideration of the current 10 applications of Member States for the 2018-2019 biennium to host new WIPO External Offices; and consider opening up to 4 new WIPO External Offices, including in Colombia, from the current 10 applications in the biennium 2022-2023.

Second Annual WIPO Intellectual Property Judges Forum

The second annual WIPO Intellectual Property Judges Forum was held in Geneva from 13-15 November 2019. One hundred twenty-eight judges from 74 countries including from Nepal participated in the Forum. Mrs. Shanta Sedhain Sapkota, Judge at High Court and Mrs. Shanti Singh Thapa, Judge at Special Court attended with the funding support from the WIPO. While addressing the Forum, the Director General Mr. Francis Gurry said that the speed of technological change is outpacing legislatures' ability to create appropriate rules to minimize commercial tensions, entrusting the courts an increasingly important role for adjudicating intellectual property (IP)-related disputes. He also said that technological change is happening at such a rapid pace that rule-making deliberative bodies, like national legislatures, are struggling to keep up.

WIPO Legal Counsel Frits Bontekoe presented two new initiatives responding to judges' requests for WIPO facilitation to access judicial decisions from other jurisdictions: expansion of the free on-line WIPO Lex database to include judicial decisions on IP; and a new published series containing landmark IP judgments that illustrates judicial approaches to IP. The first volume entitled, 'WIPO Collection of Leading Judgments on Intellectual Property,' and

published in collaboration with the Supreme People's Court of China, was launched at the Forum.

The forum provided a global platform for judges to share expertise on the most pressing IP questions raised by accelerating innovation and the cross-border use of IP. The Forum, held annually, seeks to address this challenge: national judiciaries are often tasked with resolving novel IP questions presented by technological and societal changes that move faster than the evolution of legislation and public policy. The forum provided an opportunity for judges to share their views on how they are confronting and addressing these challenges; how they assess highly technical and economically sensitive subject matter or capture the globalised and digitized realities of IP exploitation; and how they adapt court administration structures to handle the increases in the volume and cost of IP litigation.

Nepal elected as a member of the PBC of the WIPO

Nepal was elected as the member of the Programme and Budget Committee (PBC) of World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) for the period of October 2019-October 2021 by the 59th Series of Meetings at the General Assembly of the Member states of WIPO that was held from 30 September-9 October 2019. This is the first time Nepal being a member of the PBC Ever since becoming a member of the WIPO in 1997.

The Programme and Budget Committee of the WIPO consists of 53 members, 9 seats of which were allocated for Asia Pacific Group. Nepal along with Indonesia, Pakistan and Viet Nam were elected for the full term of 2 years while 10 other member states (Republic of Korea, Singapore, Philippines, India, Oman, Iran, Thailand, Malaysia, Bangladesh, UAE) were elected for the period of 1 year to be shared among them alternatively.

New Director General of the WIPO

The 27th WIPO Coordination Committee met in extraordinary session on 4 March 2020 in order to nominate a candidate to the post of the Director General of the WIPO. Six candidates were in the fray for the post. Following two rounds of voting, conducted by secret ballot, the Coordination Committee nominated Mr. Daren Tang from Singapore for the appointment in the post of the Director General by the WIPO General Assembly, the Paris Union Assembly, and the Berne Union Assembly. The WIPO General Assembly, the Paris Union Assembly, and

the Berne Union Assembly held its extraordinary session from 7-8 May 2020 and formally appointed Mr. Tang as the next Director General.

The term of office of the current Director General of WIPO will expire on 30 September 2020 and the new Director General will assume office from the beginning of October 2020 for a six-year term. Prior to this appointment, Mr. Tang was the chief executive of Intellectual Property Office of Singapore (IPOS). In a second and final round of voting by the 83 members of WIPO's Coordination Committee, Tang secured 55 versus 28 for Chinese candidate.

WTO AND TRADE RELATED MATTERS

Overview

The World Trade Organization (WTO) provides a forum for negotiating trade rules, legal and institutional framework for the implementation and monitoring of these agreements, as well as for settling disputes arising from their interpretation and application. It has helped to create a strong and prosperous international trading system, thereby contributing to global economic growth.

However, the WTO continued to witness deadlock in the reporting period due to growing tensions between ruling and rising economic powers. Dispute settlement mechanism remained stalled. The COVID-19 with its diverse impacts on the socio-economic development of WTO members further added challenges to its functioning. The WTO law has a provision of balancing rights and obligations of members while taking any trade policy instruments; and accordingly members have taken needful measures to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2019 World Trade Report revealed that world merchandise trade value terms declined by 3.0 per cent in 2019 compared with 10.2 per cent increase in 2018. World trade in commercial services increased by 2.1 per cent in 2019, slowing substantially from its 8.4 per cent rise in 2018. In response to demographic changes and impact of digital technologies, trade in services has expanded faster than trade in goods between 2005 and 2017, at 5.4 per cent per year on average. Services value-added accounts for almost half of the value of international goods and services trade.

The COVID-19 pandemic shattered the world economy and consequently the world trade. Some members undertook trade restrictive measures, even for the export of essential supplies. International trade faced an unprecedented uncertainty amid the pandemic situation and its ensued economic fallout was immense. The global economy witnessed its worst downturn since the 1930s. A recent report of the WTO documented that the volume of the merchandise trade in the second quarter of the year 2020 has been estimated to fall by 18.5 per cent as compared to that of the previous year.

WTO members realised that safeguarding public health or reviving economic activity was possible only through collective action to respond effectively to the COVID crisis. The WTO remained active over the year even in the period of the pandemic and carried out its functions to a great extent.

In the context of the pandemic, e-commerce received top priority in international trade. The enforcement of social distancing, lockdowns, and other measures in response to the COVID-19 led consumers to go for online shopping, social media use, internet telephony and teleconferencing, and streaming of videos and films. Several e-commerce-related challenges emerged or further amplified. The pandemic highlighted the critical need for bridging the digital divide, both within and across countries.

In the mean time, the Director General of the WTO Mr Roberto Azevedo announced to step down on 31 August 2020, one year earlier than his tenure and the process of appointment of new Director General commenced. Additionally, the 12th ministerial conference of the WTO, which was supposed to be held in June 2020, was postponed due to the pandemic and now has been rescheduled for June 2021.

The Mission remained active and fully engaged with the WTO activities in the reporting period. Major activities related to WTO and trade have been briefly highlighted in this report.

General Council and Trade Negotiation Committee

The General Council met seven times (five were regular meetings held in July, October and December of 2019 and March and May of 2020; and two special meetings were held in May and July of 2020) during the reporting period. The General Council meetings discussed various aspects of the multilateral trading system and took some decisions. Its meeting held in December 2019 decided:

- To reinvigorate the work under the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce, based on the existing mandate which would include structured discussions in early 2020 based on all trade-related topics of interest brought forward by Members, including LDCs, including on scope, definition and impact of the moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions. Similarly, it also agreed to maintain the current practice of not

imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions until the 12th Ministerial Conference.

- To take note of the work done by the Council for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights pursuant to the Ministerial Conference decision of 18 December 2017 on "TRIPS Non-Violation and Situation Complaints" (WT/L/1033), and direct it to continue its examination of the scope and modalities for complaints of the types provided for under subparagraphs 1(b) and 1(c) of Article XXIII of GATT 1994 and make recommendations to the 12th Ministerial Conference. It is agreed that, in the meantime, Members will not initiate such complaints under the TRIPS Agreement.

Similarly, Trade Negotiation Committee (TNC) met six times, in July, October and December of 2019 and March, April and May of 2020. During the TNC meetings, chairs of various negotiation groups shared updates and members presented their perspectives in ongoing trade issues. Nepal delivered statements in all TNC meetings focusing, in particular, on the following aspects:

- A strong commitment to fair, inclusive, and rules-based multilateral trading system and stress on the need of strengthening the fundamental principles and objectives of Marrakesh Agreement, and emphasise our shared responsibility to safeguard multilateralism for the interest of all WTO members.
- Functional dispute settlement mechanism to uphold the rules-based order and stress on launching of selection process of judges of appellate body for immediate resolution on this issue.
- Importance of the WTO reforms in a transparent, participatory, bottom up and member-driven approach to address global challenges including increased inequality, properly incorporate emerging issues and opportunities of global trade, and support to weaker economies to integrate meaningfully into, and benefit from, the global trading system. Reform outcome not to be burdensome to LDCs and weaker economies rather facilitate their development process.
- Development dimension to remain in top priority of negotiating agenda with a clear road map on mainstreaming development dimension in the multilateral trading system and special and differential treatment in support of achieving the SDGs especially for the LDCs.

- Necessity to ensure just and equitable share of benefit to all members, particularly LDCs and within them the landlocked LDCs including support measures for them in the ongoing negotiation on fisheries subsidies.
- Need of a comprehensive study on the impact of moratorium of customs duty on electronic transmission.
- High importance of Aid for Trade and Enhanced Integrated Framework, duty-free, quota-free market access, technological support and flexibilities in implementation, among others, not only to enable LDCs to graduate from the LDC status but also to ensure graduation more inclusive and sustainable in terms of meeting SDGs by 2030 and fulfilling development agenda beyond 2030.

Preparation for the Twelfth Ministerial Conference (MC12)

WTO members sought to advance trade negotiations in the run up to the twelfth ministerial conference, originally scheduled for June 2020 in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan. Fisheries subsidies and agriculture were the most active areas of negotiation. Members worked intensively to conclude negotiation for an agreement on fisheries subsidies on eliminating subsidies to illegal, unregulated, unreported (IUU) fishing and prohibiting certain subsidies that would contribute to overfishing and overcapacity, giving due consideration to special and differential treatment for developing countries. A consolidated text was drafted based on submissions from various members and groups of members including the outcomes of various rounds of discussions in this matter. The draft text was shared with members for their feedback and comments. Prohibiting fisheries subsidies that contribute to overfishing is a key component of Sustainable Development Goal 14.

Similarly, members continued discussions on a range of issues in agriculture with an aim of identifying potential meaningful outcomes for MC12. Members have diverse views on the provisions of the existing WTO laws related to agriculture subsidies and domestic supports. Some members have stressed on reducing current subsidies based on existing level, but others have stressed on the need of level playing field while reducing agriculture subsidies. Given the diverse views of members in this regard, concluding the negotiation will be a challenge.

Dispute Settlement Impasse

Proper functioning of the WTO's dispute settlement system remains a key concern of the WTO members. Dispute settlement activity therefore remained high on agenda in the reporting period. As of December 2019, the appellate body was reduced to one member and, as a result, could not hear new appeals since then. Dispute settlement body met fourteen times over the period and discussed various reports of panel and appellate body regarding trade disputes. The appellate body became dysfunctional since 10 December 2019 after the WTO members could not appoint its judges. Currently, the dispute settlement body is relying on panel report and no mechanism exists to review the panel report as provisioned in the WTO law.

The General Council appointed Ambassador David Walker (New Zealand) as a facilitator for finding a solution on improving the functioning of the appellate body. However, there was no consensus on the resulting set of proposals. The Director General also launched high-level consultations to find a way forward on maintaining a two-step review process for the settlement of trade disputes.

An initiative was taken to launch the appointment process at the earliest possible and so far 121 members supported the initiative including Nepal. Furthermore, a separate initiative of multi-party interim arrangement for appealing trade disputes through WTO was led by the European Union with the support of China and some other members in order to facilitate the dispute settlement process among the members supporting this initiative. However, the implementation modality and financial aspects of the initiative remained to be clear. One WTO member repeatedly stressed on systemic reforms in the functioning of the dispute settlement mechanism and objecting to the exercise of arbitrary power by the appellate body, which, in its view, was not the spirit of the dispute settlement understanding of the WTO. Members are still in consultation to resolve the issue at the earliest possible.

Existing WTO rules are still applied to underpin world trade. Members continue to comply these rules so as to resolve trade conflicts in regular WTO bodies, through consultations, via disputes panels and through other means as envisaged in WTO agreements.

Supporting Developing Countries and Building Trade Capacity

The WTO assists developing countries in gaining a better understanding of the multilateral trading system and ensuring the WTO rulebook work for them. For this purpose, it organised face-to-face training courses regularly until March 2020 but postponed thereafter due to the pandemic. However, its online courses continued in an enriched format as per its members' need. As requested by the WTO Secretariat, Nepal provided its list of priority for trainings and capacity building in the trade sector.

The Committee on Trade and Development continued discussions on e-commerce and on duty-free and quota-free (DFQF) market access for least-developed countries (LDCs), and considered a report by the WTO Secretariat on the implementation of special and differential treatment provisions for developing countries in WTO agreements and decisions. Such provisions ranged from increasing trade opportunities for developing countries and LDCs to granting longer transition periods for the implementation of WTO agreements and providing technical assistance. LDCs called upon WTO members for making continued progress in the implementation of ministerial decisions on DFQF market access, preferential rules of origin and the LDC services waiver so as to further facilitate LDCs' market access.

WTO Reform Agenda

The context of global trading rules framed in the 1980s has changed. Unfair and outdated rules may not serve the current global trade regime. WTO reform has, therefore, remained a priority for its members. The reform process aims at making WTO more effective and more responsive to members' needs. A key goal of the reform is to ensure that the WTO is properly equipped to contribute to the economic recovery of all members in a just and equitable manner.

During the reporting period, several members and groups of members put forward ideas, papers, and initiatives for reform. LDC group also submitted its proposal on WTO reforms in November 2019. Discussions fell into three broad areas: how to strengthen the work of the WTO regular bodies and committees and the areas such as notifications and transparency; how to revitalize the dispute settlement system and address the impasse in appointments to the appellate body; and how to make negotiating work effective so as to keep delivering new agreements with real economic impact.

Status of developing countries (self-declaring provision); blanket approach vs case-by-case approach in special and differential treatment provisions; plurilateral vs multilateral outcomes, and Doha vs non-Doha issues, among others, top the WTO reform agenda under its negotiating pillar. Similarly, under functional dispute settlement mechanism, systemic reforms in dispute settlement mechanism, and misuse of arbitrary rights by appellate body were issues that featured in negotiating dispute settlement mechanism. Finally, effective notification, and strengthened role of the WTO Secretariat were the issues that came up prominently under the transparency and notification aspect.

To make further progress in these areas will have to take into account the evolving health and economic situation in the aftermath of the pandemic. This may also need to consider at the same time the emerging trends such as e-commerce by provisioning sufficient special and differential provision to bridge huge digital gap among advanced, developing and least developed countries. Rebuilding trust and delivering results through the WTO in changing global context where emerging economies are taking the sizeable space in global trade has become an urgent agenda while negotiating WTO reforms.

Implementation of Agreements and Work of Thematic Committees

Work in the WTO councils and committees continued to focus on the effective implementation of WTO agreements and decisions with such issues as transparency and fulfilment of members' notification requirements.

The WTO has various thematic committees and teams to smoothly carry out sectoral tasks towards ensuring predictable, transparent, and rule-based international trading system. During the reporting period, Councils for Trade in Goods, Trade in Services, and Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights met three times, two times and four times respectively and discussed major aspects of multilateral trading systems in trade in goods, services, and intellectual properties. Furthermore, the subsidiary bodies of these councils also met and held extensive discussions. However, because of the pandemic, the regular task of the WTO bodies remained interrupted. Since June 2020, the functioning of the WTO system started through a virtual mode at the beginning and later through a mixed modality of both virtual and in-person. Nepal participated in all meetings and made needful interventions.

WTO reports revealed that members seemed to be much focused on trade facilitation despite some trade restrictive measures being adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, between mid-October 2019 and mid-May 2020, WTO members implemented 363 new trade and trade-related measures, 198 of them trade-facilitating and 165 trade-restrictive. Most of them, 256 (about 71 per cent) were linked to the pandemic.

In early May, some members began to phase out export constraints while targeting products such as surgical masks, gloves, medicine, and disinfectant. A further evidence of roll-backing of trade and trade-related measures taken in the early stages of the pandemic was also witnessed. For instance, around 28 per cent of the COVID-specific trade-restrictive measures implemented by WTO members and observers was repealed by mid-May 2020.

Concerns Raised on Nepal's Import Ban of Energy Drinks at the WTO

At the meeting of the Committee on Market Access held on 8 June, Thailand and the United States raised their concerns on Nepal's import ban of energy drinks. Thailand sought information from Nepal regarding the measures especially in terms of the objective of banning the importation of energy drinks and its compliance with the WTO commitments, and also of whether Nepal's import ban was based on any scientific evidence concerning the effects of energy drinks. In its response, Nepal provided detailed information and justification with facts and figures, and clarified that the objective of the measure was not to restrict trade but to regulate and facilitate Nepal's international trade and safeguard the country from the severe challenge of trade imbalance and the balance of payment. In view of this difficulty, the Government of Nepal assessed causes of the trade imbalance and accordingly took measures of import and export regulation while focusing on trade regulation, on an MFN basis, to be applied to all WTO members equally in accordance with the WTO laws. Nepal also stressed that the measures undertaken were in compliance with the provisions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora; in the context of the impact of the pandemic; and in consultation with all relevant agencies, the Government is further assessing potential health implications of energy drinks and some other non-essential products imported in large scale in recent years. Nepal referred the same statement while responding to the same concern by Thailand again in the SPS Committee held in June 2020.

Transparency through Trade Policy Review and Notification

Transparency is an important aspect of the multilateral trading system. It has been supported through periodic trade policy review of members and their regular notifications. The Trade Policy Review Body met eight times during the reporting period and conducted trade policy review of Japan, Australia, the European Union, Republic of North Macedonia, Costa Rica, Suriname, Peru, and Lao PDR.

Engagements of LDC Group

Least developed country members have unique economic and trade situation and, therefore, have high expectations from the multilateral trading system in terms of enhancing their production and productive capacity, market access and preferential treatment. However, implementation of existing support measures and global commitments dedicated to LDCs remained not much encouraging even in the reporting period. For instance, Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries 2011-2020 targeted to double LDCs' share in global export but progress was still a way below the target and the COVID-19 further devastated progress in LDC exports. Mainly due to supply-side constraints and non-tariff barriers, most LDCs could not benefit much from the global trade regime.

Against this background, LDC group at the WTO system remained active over the year and mainly focused on concluding fisheries subsidies with a concrete provision of special and differential treatment for them and to extend such treatment to graduating LDCs for certain period as well, and implementation of ministerial decisions dedicated to LDCs including duty-free, quota-free market access, service waiver, preferential rules of origin and others. The group submitted a proposal for WTO reforms in November 2019 and also presented another proposal during the pandemic with an aim to ensuring smooth access to medical and basic food products to LDCs. Nepal remained active in and fully engaged with all LDC proposals and made needful interventions.

Enhanced Integrated Framework at the WTO

The Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) is the only multilateral partnership dedicated to support least developed countries (LDCs) in ensuring trade as an engine for growth, and achieving sustainable development and poverty reduction. Nepal as a beneficiary country has

become active in EIF-related activities. Nepal unanimously elected as the chair of the EIF Board for the year 2019-2021 and became the first Asian LDC to assume the role. Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai chaired three meetings of the EIF Board (November and December of 2019 and June of 2020) during the reporting period and also presented EIF progress report to the EIF Steering Committee.



Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai chairing the EIF Board meeting held in Bhutan

The EIF Board meeting held in December 2019 decided to extend time of EIF interventions until 30 June 2023, followed by an operational closure by 30 June 2024 and a fiduciary closure by 31 December 2024. Nepal spoke in the EIF Steering Committee meeting and underlined the need for enhanced intervention in the context of achieving SDGs by 2030 and post-COVID recovery.

Nepal as a beneficiary country has already implemented a Tier 1 (ongoing as repackaging-extended) and 3 Tier 2 Projects (implementation completed in ginger, chyangra pashmina and MAPs) with support of the EIF mechanism. A Tier 2 project proposal of Nepal entitled ‘Nepal’s Increased Sustainable Tea Exports’ has been submitted to the EIF Board on 16 July 2020 and has recently been approved for concluding MoU with the concerned agency of the Government of Nepal.

[Sharing of Information on Trade Measures Undertaken during COVID-19](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic caused an unprecedented disruption to the global economy and world trade, as production and consumption scaled back across the globe. The WTO Secretariat created a dedicated page on its website for providing up-to-date trade-related information including relevant notifications by WTO members, and the impact of the virus on exports and imports as well as on WTO activities.

The WTO also conducted immediate research and published reports on various aspects of implications of the COVID-19. These study reports were themed on the economic impact of COVID-19 on women in vulnerable sectors and economies; trade in medical goods in the context of tackling COVID-19; export prohibitions and restrictions; the treatment of medical products in regional trade agreements; e-commerce, trade and the COVID-19 pandemic; trade in services in the context of COVID-19; helping MSMEs navigate the COVID-19 crisis; and the COVID-19 pandemic and trade-related developments in LDCs, among others.

Several members adopted trade restrictive measures during the COVID-19 with a view to ensuring smooth supply of medical and basic food products considering their domestic health and security situation. The WTO kept informed its members by compiling all information gathered from both official notification and other sources regarding such measures and sharing it through its website.

Furthermore, high-level meetings were held with a focus on transparency of all such measures and abolishing trade restrictive measures at the earliest possible and make these measures only temporary ones. Similarly, members and groups of members submitted twenty-two proposals for smooth flow of international trade including medical and basic food products. LDC group also presented a proposal on securing LDCs emergency access to essential medical and food products to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Nepal contributed to developing the LDC proposal and persuaded its members to incorporate basic food products in the proposal.

Members also extended domestic supports to safeguard their economy. The WTO members were apprised of those supports through notification and sharing them during the meetings. Most of these measures appeared to be of a temporary nature. These included grants, monetary, fiscal, and financial measures, measures targeting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), loans, credit guarantees and stimulus packages. Several measures were one-off grants while others included disbursements staggered over a few months and up to three years. Some of these measures formed part of larger emergency rescue programmes worth several trillion US dollars.

[Arrangement for Joint Statement Initiatives](#)

In parallel with multilateral negotiations, groups of WTO members advanced substantial steps in terms of joint statement initiatives aiming to write new rules for e-commerce, facilitating

investment for development, domestic regulation of trade in services, and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. The initiatives, which remain open to the entire membership, drew interest from a growing number of members. Members also received updates on the initiative on trade and women's economic empowerment. Members can determine as to how and when to take these negotiating processes forward in light of the emerging public health and economic situation.

Discussions and negotiations on these initiatives were expedited over the year even during the pandemic. Draft consolidated texts were developed based on the discussions and submissions made by members. While observing the membership joining these initiatives, 84 members took part in the initiative on e-commerce, 98 members on investment facilitation for development, 59 members on service domestic regulation, and 88 members on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). Nepal is yet to become part of these initiatives but is closely following the discussions and negotiations to a great length.

A range of diverse views among WTO members was witnessed on these initiatives. Some members especially developing and LDCs argued for concluding the Doha Development Round first and then taking necessary initiatives in new and emerging issues. Others especially developed and OECD members contended for concluding needful negotiations on new and emerging issues, as the old DDA became no more relevant in the changed context. Most of the LDCs are yet to be a part of these initiatives.

In this context, Nepal is making an assessment of these initiatives and will take an appropriate decision in the right time. It appears that some initiatives especially e-commerce and investment facilitation are expeditiously negotiated and expected to achieve a concrete decision in the upcoming ministerial conference to be held in Nur-Sultan in 2021.

Twelfth Ministerial Conference (MC12) of the WTO

The twelfth ministerial conference which was scheduled to take place in the Kazakh capital Nur-Sultan from 8-11 June 2020 has been postponed due to the COVID-19. However, WTO members welcomed Kazakhstan's renewed offer to host the conference (MC12) in June 2021 subject to the constant evaluation and review of conditions of the evolving pandemic situation closer upto the conference date.

Appointment of New Director General of the WTO

At the meeting of heads of delegation on 14 May 2020, the Director General of the WTO Mr Roberto Azevedo announced to step down from 31 August 2020, one year earlier than his tenure. The General Council commenced the process of appointment of new Director General on 8 June and called for nominations of candidates by 8 July 2020.

By the deadline, eight candidates submitted their nomination. From 15-17 July 2020, all candidates met with WTO members at a special General Council meeting, at which they presented their views and also responded to the questions raised by WTO members. Nepal got the opportunity to pose questions to the candidates of Mexico and Kenya.

The second phase of the appointment process will commence on 7 September 2020 where first round of consultations will take place between 7 and 16 September 2020. This will be followed by two more rounds, during which the number of candidates will be reduced from eight to five and down to two for the final round. Members will be asked to provide a maximum of four preferences in the first round; and a maximum of two preferences in the second round. Members will be informed about the result of each round once completed. The new Director General is likely to be appointed by November 2020.

Support from the International Trade Center (ITC) and the CUTS-International

ITC is an implementing entity of trade and value chain development parts of the trade and investment programme being supported by the EU. ITC stands out as an important institution for Nepal's trade sector development, especially in export promotion, market intelligence and strategy formulation.

In the pandemic situation, ITC's 15-Point Action Plan for Recovery and Resilience was launched on 20 May 2020 in response to the unprecedented economic challenges the pandemic is posing to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in developing countries. The action plan contains guidance on how to ensure that MSMEs are at the forefront of generating resilience, inclusiveness, sustainability and growth in a future new normal. The action plan is divided into three groups of five recommendations for each stakeholder group: businesses, governments, and business support institutions.

In the reporting period, CUTS International in Geneva organised discussions and interactions, mainly in ongoing negotiations on joint statement initiatives under the WTO system. E-commerce, investment facilitation, domestic service regulation, and micro, small and medium sized enterprises were the main areas where the CUTS International held regular discussions over the period. Nepal is a beneficiary country of the TAF2+ project supported by the UK government, under which a national-level research on e-commerce is being carried out.

Preparation of Technical Inputs on LDC Graduation and Tariff Renegotiation

As per the directives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies, the Mission prepared two assessment reports in the areas of LDC graduation and tariffs renegotiation.

The first assessment report on Nepal's LDC graduation focused on current status, possible impacts of and preparation needed for Nepal's graduation from the LDC status. The report highlighted LDC-specific international support measures, and analysed current situation of Nepal, mainly Nepal's status, potential gains and losses from the graduation. It underlined that the decision towards graduation needs to be reviewed in the context of the implications of the COVID-19 on the economy. The report recommended some actions for graduation and possible role of MoFA in this regard.

The second assessment report on the possibility of Nepal's tariff renegotiation under the Article XXVIII of the GATT presented a comparative chart of bound and applied tariffs of some WTO members having similar in level of development but different in tariffs as well as similar in tariffs but different in the level of development. While assessing possible options for renegotiation, it was recommended that Nepal need to reduce tariffs (in 58 tariff lines where applied tariff is higher than bound rate) to comply with bound rates or take initiative for tariff renegotiation in some areas if tariff reduction is not possible. The assessment report briefly enlisted existing provisions and necessary procedures for tariff renegotiation including under different modalities; and its recommendations included 11-point activities to be undertaken for tariff renegotiation.

REVIEW OF BILATERAL AFFAIRS

BILATERAL RELATIONS, ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS AND CONSULAR SERVICES

NEPAL – SWITZERLAND RELATIONS

Overview of bilateral engagements

The reporting period remained important in enhancing Nepal-Swiss bilateral relations. Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai attended the New Year's reception organised by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) in Bern on 15 January 2020 for the diplomatic community to meet with the new President of the Swiss Confederation Ms. Simonetta Sommaruga. During the reception, the Ambassador conveyed the congratulations and best wishes from the President Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari and the Prime Minister Mr. K P Sharma Oli to the Swiss President on her assumption of Presidency of the Swiss Confederation for the year 2020 and also conveyed New Year greetings.

Similarly, Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai had a courtesy meeting with Mr. Ignazio Cassis, Federal Councillor and Head of Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) in Bern on 11 February 2020. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest were discussed in a very warm and cordial atmosphere. The Ambassador emphasized the importance of exchange of high-level visits and requested for Swiss support to Nepal's re-election to the Human Rights Council for the term 2021-2023 and also for Swiss support to Nepal's candidate Ms. Bandana Rana for re-election to the CEDAW Committee for the term 2021-2024. The Ambassador also briefed him about Sagarmatha Sambaad and Visit Nepal 2020.

During the meeting, the Swiss side indicated that they would visit Nepal in May or June 2020 for the meeting of Nepal-Swiss Bilateral Consultative Mechanism. However, it could not take place due to the outbreak of COVID-19.

The meeting remained fruitful and productive to promote and further strengthen the bilateral ties and also to accelerate the bilateral exchange and cooperation between Nepal and Switzerland.

Major engagements in bilateral affairs

Participation at New Year's reception in House of Parliament in Bern

The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) organised the New Year's reception for the Diplomatic Corps in presence of the Swiss President Ms. Simonetta Sommaruga in Federal Palace (House of Parliament) in Bern. The Swiss President, who assumed the rotating one-year Presidency on 1 January for the year 2020 received in the audience every Head of Mission attending the reception. As one of the seven Federal Councillors in the Federal Council, she continues to head the Swiss Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications. Ms. Sommaruga had also assumed the Presidency of the Swiss Confederation earlier in 2015.



Ambassador Bhattarai meeting with Swiss President Ms. Simonetta Sommaruga in Federal Palace, Bern, 15 January 2020

Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai attended the reception and had the opportunity to meet with the President and greet her. He conveyed the congratulations and best wishes from the President Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari and the Prime Minister Mr. K P Sharma Oli on her assumption of Presidency of the Swiss Confederation and also conveyed New Year greetings. He also took the opportunity to recall the invitation letter sent in November 2019 by the President of Nepal to the Swiss President to attend the Sagarmatha Sambaad in Kathmandu from 2-4 April 2020 on the theme of “Climate Change, Mountains and the Future of the Humanity”. He mentioned that the last visit to Nepal by Swiss President was 23 years ago and Nepal is keenly looking forward to her visit during the Sagarmatha Sambaad.

The Swiss President Ms. Sommaruga asked Ambassador Bhattarai to convey best wishes for peace and prosperity to the President, Prime Minister and the people of Nepal and recalled that

she has visited Nepal earlier and was fascinated by its beauty. On the invitation to Sagarmatha Sambaad, she expressed gratitude and said: “I will certainly look at it”. Official photographs were also taken with the President. Head of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ignazio Cassis was also present during the greetings reception. Ambassador Bhattarai also greeted the Swiss Foreign Minister and looked forward to his scheduled meeting with the Foreign Minister on 11 February 2020 for a more elaborated discussion on bilateral matters. The Foreign Minister asked Ambassador Bhattarai to convey his New Year greetings and best wishes to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal.

After the individual greetings programme was over, all the attending members of the Diplomatic Corps took seats in the House of Parliament and the Swiss President addressed the Diplomatic Corps highlighting Swiss policy and international cooperation. She particularly focused on the impacts of global warming and climate change. She mentioned that Swiss Alps are also affected by rising temperature. Swiss climate policy is aimed at reducing CO2 emissions and becoming climate neutral by 2050. The Swiss President stressed the importance of solar power saying that it is an ‘extremely democratic source of energy’ that can have positive implications in reducing geopolitical tensions as solar energy is available everywhere and tensions over scarce resources could be reduced with the exploitation of solar power for energy for all. She also said that Switzerland would continue to be a committed and reliable partner to countries and would continue to take balanced approach and defend the rule of law, equality, human rights and social justice as its core values.

[Courtesy meeting with Head of Federal Department of Foreign Affairs \(FDFA\)](#)

Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai had a courtesy meeting with Mr. Ignazio Cassis, Federal Councillor and Head of Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), in Bern on 11 February 2020. Diverse aspects of Nepal-Swiss cooperation and multilateral issues of mutual interests were discussed during the occasion. Although Ambassador Bhattarai had met the Federal Counsellor on various occasions earlier, this meeting was his first formal courtesy call on the Federal Councillor since he assumed the responsibility in April 2019 and presented the credentials to the President of the Swiss Confederation on 25 June 2019.



Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai in a courtesy meeting with Mr. Ignazio Cassis, Federal Councillor and Head of Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), in Bern on 11 February 2020

Earlier, Ambassador Bhattarai had met him on 15 January 2020 at the New Year's reception hosted by the FDFA for the Diplomatic Corps to greet the newly appointed Swiss President Ms. Simonetta Sommaruga in Federal Palace (House of Parliament) in Bern. His request for the courtesy call was pending for a long time due to the busy schedule of the Federal Counsellor in Bern and the Ambassador's continued engagements in multilateral affairs at Geneva.

Ambassador Mr. Bhattarai expressed happiness over the cordial relations between Nepal and Switzerland for the last six decades and noted the geo-political similarities between Nepal and Switzerland, both having democratic federal structures and being mountainous and landlocked countries facing the impacts of climate change. Ambassador Bhattarai also appreciated the Swiss Cooperation Strategy for Nepal that is in tune with Nepal's development needs and priorities, particularly for infrastructure development, technological base and capacity building.

The Swiss Federal Councillor attached importance to bilateral relations with Nepal and expressed commitment to continue maintaining the broad-range of long standing cooperation to Nepal. He expressed happiness that Swiss was providing around 30 million Swiss franc annually to Nepal for diverse sectors particularly decentralization, job creation federal governance, human rights, safer labour migration, and local infrastructure. He congratulated Nepal and wished for success in the marking of Visit Nepal Year 2020. The Swiss Foreign Minister noted the importance of Swiss relations with Nepal which has a strategic geopolitical location between China and India. He further noted that digital governance, ethical question of artificial intelligence and Internet, ecological consideration, humanitarian tradition, and good

governance, among others are priorities areas of Swiss foreign policy and Swiss development cooperation.

Ambassador Bhattarai mentioned about the role of existing bilateral consultation mechanism on political, diplomatic, and development cooperation and cooperation in other areas of mutual interest between the two Foreign Ministries. The last meeting was held in Bern in 2018 and the next meeting is supposed to be held in Kathmandu in 2020. During the meeting, the Swiss side indicated that they would be willing to attend the meeting of bilateral consultation mechanism in Kathmandu in late May or early June 2020. However, in view of the extraordinary situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic, both sides will have to work out for a new date for the meeting.

Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai further emphasized the importance of regular exchange of visits. He mentioned that the President of Nepal visited Geneva in June 2017 to attend the ILO's World of Work Summit and the Prime Minister visited Switzerland in January 2019 to attend the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos and in June 2019 to attend the Centenary Session of the International Labour Conference.

While noting that there has not been a high-level visit from Switzerland to Nepal for the last 23 years, since the last visit to Nepal by the President of Swiss Confederation in 1997, Ambassador Bhattarai mentioned about the proposed Sagarmatha Sambaad on the theme of "Climate Change, Mountains and the Future of the Humanity" in Kathmandu in April 2020 and recalled the invitation extended in November 2019 by the President of Nepal to the Swiss President to attend the Sagarmatha Sambaad. He also recalled the Ambassador's courtesy call on the Swiss President Ms. Sommaruga in January 2020. The FDFA later informed about the inability of the Swiss President to attend the Sambaad due to her prior commitments. As the proposed Sagarmatha Sambaad has already been postponed in view of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Mission will be following up on invitation once new dates of the Sambaad is set.

During the meeting, Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai also conveyed to the Swiss Foreign Minister the greetings and good wishes of the Foreign Minister of Nepal. Ambassador Bhattarai also requested his time for a possible bilateral meeting with the Nepali Foreign Minister in Geneva during 24-26 February 2020 on the sidelines of the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council. The Swiss Foreign Minister fully reciprocated the good wishes and mentioned that he

would be in Geneva for the day of 24 February and would look into a possibility of scheduling a bilateral meeting.

Ambassador Bhattarai commended the constructive engagements of Switzerland in multilateral affairs, including for the promotion and protection of human rights, safer migration, federal governance, sustainable infrastructure, climate change as well as technical cooperation to country priorities. Importance of representation of smaller countries in multilateral forums, including the UN and the WTO was also figured in the meeting.

The First Bilateral Meeting on “Agreement on Cooperation in Migration Matters”

The first bilateral meeting between Nepali and the Swiss side was held in Bern, Switzerland on 5 December 2019 to discuss the draft Agreement on Cooperation in Migration Matters. The Nepali delegation was led by Mr. Eshor Raj Poudel, Director General of the Immigration Department and the Swiss delegation by Mr. Karl Lorenz, Head of Section, International Cooperation Directorate, Swiss State Secretariat for Migration (SEM).



Leader of Nepali delegation Mr. Eshor Raj Poudel, Director General of the Immigration Department with the leader of Swiss delegation by Mr. Karl Lorenz, Head of Section, International Cooperation Directorate, Swiss State Secretariat for Migration (SEM)

At the beginning of the meeting, the Swiss side made presentation featuring introduction and overview of SEM- organizational chart and structure, mandate, migration policy instruments, Swiss federal system and tasks of the Return Division. The Swiss side stated that Switzerland's migration foreign policy is based on three key principles- global approach, partnerships and whole-of-the government approach.

Total number of foreigners living in Switzerland is 2,081,169 out of which 465 Nepali citizens (as of 31.10.2019) are residing in Switzerland. Over 95% of Nepali citizens in Switzerland are living with legal status.

Similarly, Nepali side made presentation on organisational structure of Immigration Department of Nepal and other subordinate offices and also on foreign migrants living in Nepal.

The meeting held thorough discussions on the draft Agreement on Cooperation in Migration Matters in a cordial atmosphere. Both sides shared their positions and exchanged their views and thereby contributing to the draft Agreement. At the end of the meeting, a minute was signed by leaders of both the delegations. The Swiss side expressed its willingness to finalise the draft at the earliest whereas the Nepali side assured that the matter would be taken up to the concerned agencies of the Government of Nepal.

[Celebration of National Day \(Constitution Day\) 2019:](#)

The Permanent Mission of Nepal organised various programs to celebrate the fifth National Day (Constitution Day) in Geneva. Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai hosted a reception on 20 September 2019 inviting Geneva-based Ambassador/Permanent Representatives, Heads of the United Nations Office and International Organisations, other high dignitaries and Nepali nationals working in international organisations. Around 150 dignitaries including 50 Ambassadors were present in the reception. The venue was decorated with tourism materials of Visit Nepal 2020. In the gracious presence of high dignitaries, Ambassador Bhattarai conveyed the greeting messages of the President and the Prime Minister of Nepal. While appreciating the support of international communities, he also shared positive development occurred after the promulgation of constitution of Nepal in 2015 that led to political stability and impressive economic growth. He requested the member states to extend their support to Nepal's re-election to the Human Rights Council for second term 2021-2023.

Ambassador Bhattarai also highlighted the 'Visit Nepal 2020' and urged all to visit Nepal for making their life time experiences, and requested to share with others about their visit experience to make 'Visit Nepal 2020' a grand success. On 22 September 2019, the Mission also hosted a reception program to all the Nepali diaspora residing in Switzerland. Around hundred Nepalis and friends of Nepal were present on that occasion. Addressing the gathering,

Ambassador Bhattarai shed light on ‘Visit Nepal 2020’ campaign and appealed Nepali community and wellwishers of Nepal to make the campaign a grand success. Tourism materials of Visit Nepal 2020 were also distributed. On both occasions, Nepali cultural dance was presented.

New NRN Team Elected for 2019-2021

The sixth National Assembly of Non-Resident Nepali Association in Switzerland unanimously elected new committee on 18 August 2019. Mr. Shiva Kumar Subba was elected as the President for the next two-year term 2019-2021. The outgoing President Mr. Bhumi Raj Gurung was elected for the ICC member of the NRN. NRN election takes place every two years. While addressing the inaugural session as chief guest, Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai wished a success of the Assembly and reiterated the Embassy’s continued support to and collaboration with NRNA Switzerland. He also urged all Nepali nationals living in Switzerland for making contribution to the success of ‘Visit Nepal 2020’. There are 465 Nepali nationals living in Switzerland.

Visit Nepal 2020 Campaign

The Embassy of Nepal in Geneva Switzerland organised a tourism promotional programme of Visit Nepal 2020 in Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne (EPFL), Lausanne, Switzerland on 30 January 2020. The theme of the program was ‘Visit Nepal 2020: a remarkable opportunity to boost Nepal-Swiss partnership for sustainable mountain tourism’.



Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai speaking at the Visit Nepal 2020 program at EPFL

At the programme, Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai highlighted the importance of organising the tourism promotional programme to campaign Visit Nepal 2020 and encouraged invitees to visit Nepal with their friends and families. Ambassador Bhattarai also highlighted

the rich combination of nature, culture and adventures that Nepal's tourism sector offers to visitors from the world all round the year. DPR of the Mission Tirtha Raj Wagle delivered welcome remarks introducing the objective of the programme and highlighting various aspects of Nepal-Swiss relations. Mr. Kumar Rai, Counsellor of the Embassy, conducted the programme, which was attended by over 100 invitees, who included academicians, friends of Nepal, media persons, representatives of NRNA and Nepali diaspora.

Special guest of honour at the programme was Prof. John Claude Badoux, former President of EPFL. Prof. Badoux, a longstanding friend and wellwisher of Nepal, kindly offered to provide the venue to host the programme in one of the most prestigious academic and technical institutes of Switzerland. In his remarks, Prof. Badoux highlighted the values of building bridges at the people's level between Nepal and Switzerland, and admired the way of welcoming nature and hospitality of the people of Nepal.

Mr. Diepak Elmer, Deputy Head of Division at Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, expressed the commitment of SDC to continue supporting Nepal's development efforts. Similarly, Ms. Sophie Lavaud, a well-known mountaineer who has already summited 10 out of 14 mountains of above eight-thousand-meter-high including Mt. Everest, shared her unforgettable adventure experiences of climbing mountains. During the programme, Mr. Claudio Peruycchini, nicknamed in Nepali as "JHILKE DAI", who has recorded also numerous Nepali folk and modern songs sang Nepali songs in the programme; and video clips on Visit Nepal 2020 were displayed. At the end of the programme, Nepali food was served and tourism promotional materials were distributed to the participants.

Handover of invitations for Sagarmatha Sambaad

The Permanent Mission of Nepal in Geneva dispatched 17 letters to concerned dignitaries inviting them to the first edition of Sagarmatha Sambaad scheduled to be held in Kathmandu from 2-4 April 2020. In this connection, Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai called on dignitaries invited and handed over the original letter of invitation.

On 15 January 2020, Ambassador Bhattarai called on Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization and handed over the original letter of invitation from the Foreign Minister inviting him to attend the Sagarmatha Sambaad in

Kathmandu in April 2020. Ambassador Bhattarai requested the Director General to moderate or address a session. The DG noted that impacts of climate change and air pollution on health; and welcomed the initiative of Nepal on this important issue.



Ambassador Bhattarai meeting with Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO DG

Similarly, Ambassador Bhattarai also met in Bern on 15 January 2020, Dr Carolina Adler, Executive Director of Mountain Research Initiative (MRI), and delivered her the original letter of invitation from the Foreign Minister for participation in Sagarmatha Sambaad. There were discussions on the importance of preserving mountain ecosystems. Mr. Bhattarai appreciated the role of MRI and looked forward to her contribution to the discussion in one of the thematic sessions during the Sagarmatha Sambaad. Following the meeting, she confirmed her participation.

On 17 January 2020, Ambassador Bhattarai met with Ms. Martha Rojas Urrego, Secretary General of Ramsar Convention in Gland, Switzerland and presented the original letter of invitation from the Foreign Minister inviting her to attend the Sagarmatha Sambaad. He highlighted the importance of the dialogue and contribution of Ramsar Convention in preserving the wetlands. While thanking for invitation, she appreciated Nepal's initiative to hold dialogue on the theme of global concern.

Ambassador Bhattarai also met with Mr. Ricardo Mena Speck, Chief of Branch supporting and monitoring Sendai Framework implementation and Director at United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) in Geneva on 27 January 2020 and submitted the invitation letter extended by the Foreign Minister to participate in the Sagarmatha Sambaad. During the meeting, Ambassador Bhattarai briefed about the event and its theme. Taking this positively, Mr. Mena assured that there would be a high-level participation from the UNDRR. He also appreciated Nepal's initiation for this kind of global dialogue platform.

Besides, Ambassador Bhattarai also called on other dignitaries and Permanent Representatives, and handed over the original letters. Out of them, seven dignitaries confirmed or indicated their participation. The Mission relentlessly pursued the matter so as to ensure the maximum participation in the event at higher level; however, the event was postponed due to the rapid spread of COVID-19 across the world.

Coordination of World Economic Forum Meetings

The Mission coordinated Nepal's participation in the following meetings of the World Economic Forum: (1) Annual Meeting of the New Champions held at Dalian, China from 1-3 July 2019. The theme of the Meeting was "Leadership 4.0: Succeeding in a New Era of Globalization" and underlined the importance of fostering agile industry leadership, achieving technology leadership, sustaining economic leadership and promoting responsible leadership. Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, Minister for Foreign Affairs, attended the Dalian Meeting. (2) Sustainable Development Impact Summit, held at New York from 23-24 September 2019. The Summit focused on integrating and leveraging the best examples of public-private cooperation and addressed the four thematic tracks, namely transforming markets, accelerating climate action, financing sustainable development and mobilizing action for inclusive societies. Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, Minister for Foreign Affairs and leader of Nepali delegation to the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly, was invited to attend the Summit including a special luncheon to examine avenues for cooperation within a shifting geopolitical landscape co-hosted by the World Economic Forum and the Brookings Institution. (3) India Economic Summit held at New Delhi from 3-4 October 2019. The theme of the Summit was "Innovating for India: Strengthening South Asia, Impacting the World. The meeting was also to address strategic issues of the new geopolitical reality, social system, ecological system and technological system. President to the World Economic Forum had extended invitation to the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and the Finance Minister of Nepal. Dr. Yubaraj Khatiwada, Minister for Finance, had attended the India Summit.

Later, the World Economic Forum announced that the upcoming World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2020 would be held in Davos from 21-24 January 2020 with the theme of "Stakeholders for a Cohesive and Sustainable World". The discussion agenda for this Meeting would include climate and environmental challenge, inclusive business models, governance of fourth industrial revolution and social adaptation to technological trends. Public figures from

G20 and some other relevant countries were invited to the Annual Meeting in Davos. Nepal did not receive any indication of invitation this year for the meeting. It may be recalled that Prime Minister Mr. K P Sharma Oli, was invited for the first time to the 49th World Economic Forum Annual Meeting from 22-25 January 2019 that discussed on the theme of “Globalization 4.0: Shaping a Global Architecture in the Age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution”.

Study tour of Nepali delegation in Switzerland

A Nepali delegation consisting of 18 officials of the Government of Nepal visited Switzerland from 24-28 February 2020 on a study tour of Learning and Exchange Programme on Fiscal Federalism. The study tour was organised by the Institute of Federalism in Switzerland with the support of the World Bank Office in Nepal. The tour aimed at strengthening fiscal federalism in Nepal while learning from Swiss fiscal federalism system and cantonal and local autonomy. The delegation visited different cantons and institutions to be informed about Swiss fiscal federalism with particular emphasis on local governance. The Nepali delegation had the opportunity to acquire a deep understanding of multi-level governance, local autonomy and fiscal equalisation mechanisms.

The delegation visited the United Nations Office at Geneva and also had a courtesy meeting with Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai and officials of the Mission on 28 February 2020.

The Nepali delegation was comprised of Ms. Laxmi Kumari Basnet, Secretary, Office of the Chief Minister and Council of Ministers, Karnali Pradesh; Mr. Madhusudan Burlakoti, Secretary, Office of the Chief Minister and Council of Ministers, Bagmati Pradesh; and Mr. Dal Bahadur Adhikari, Secretary, Office of Chief Minister and Council of Ministers, Gandaki Pradesh. Other participants were Mr. Yam Nath Sharma, Assistant Resident Representative, UNDP and Mr. Bigyan Pradhan, Senior Operations Officers, among others.

Nepal's flag illuminated in Mt. Matterhorn, Switzerland

Nepal's flag was illuminated on Mt. Matterhorn, world-famous mountain in the Alps, situated in Zermatt, Switzerland on 25 April 2020 as the sign of solidarity with Nepali people at the time when the world was reeling under the crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. The light projection of Nepali flag on the Swiss peak was conducted by Zermatt tourism and its partners. The Mt. Matterhorn, a pyramid shaped mountain with the

height of 4,478 meter, is also the most photographed mountain of the world. Illuminating Nepal's flag on this iconic mountain, Zermatt tourism authority noted that Nepal is a country with the highest mountains in the world and the friendly people; and that Zermatt as a mountain village feels particularly connected with Nepal.

It is needless to say Nepal and Switzerland enjoy cordial relations characterised by mutual support and cooperation, understanding and friendship; and such expression of solidarity with Nepal reflects that the peoples of both countries have immense love and care of each other to remain united for fighting against the global crisis unleashed by novel coronavirus worldwide. As the COVID-19 continued to spread, Zermatt illuminated the flag of various countries daily from 24 March-26 April 2020 to instill the sense of 'Light is hope'.



Nepali flag illuminating on Mt. Matterhorn, Zermatt, 25 April 2020

Swiss Economic and Technical Cooperation to Nepal during 2019-20

Swiss provides PCRs to Nepal for COVID-19 testing

Switzerland, through its embassy in Nepal, provided PCR-based test kits to Nepal. Swiss Ambassador Ms. Elisabeth von Capeller handed over 30,000 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test kits to Mr. Bhanu Bhakta Dhakal, Minister of Health and Population, amid a program in Kathmandu on 7 May 2020. The consignment of 30,000 PCR-based test kits were manufactured by Roche Diagnostics and donated by the Swiss government. The Swiss COVID-19 PCR test kits included RNA extractors, which were required by Nepal's health authorities. The Swiss Development Cooperation earlier provided 4,000 personal protection equipment, 1,000 infrared thermometers, 8,000 N95 masks as part of a 5 million Swiss Franc COVID-19 support for preparedness and recovery to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable Nepalis. Likewise, on 24 July 2020, the Swiss Ambassador handed over 20,000 PCR test kits to the Minister of Health and Population as the first batch of the 40,000 PCR test kits that the Swiss Embassy would provide to the Government of Nepal to fulfill the increased

PCR testing demands in the country. The Swiss Embassy also handed over two PCR machines to the provincial government of Province One. The support from Switzerland in times of COVID-19 crisis has contributed to enhancing the testing capacity in the country.

Swiss technical grant assistance of CHF 19.4 million for local projects in Nepal

Agreements of technical grant assistance of CHF 19.4 million (equivalent to Nepali Rupees 2.1 billion) were concluded between the Government of Nepal and the Government of Switzerland. The Swiss Government agreed to provide the grant assistance to the Government of Nepal to implement two programmes in Nepal, namely CHF 9.4 million for implementing Trail Bridge Sector Wide Approach Framework III, and CHF 10 million for the Provincial and Local Governance Support Programme (PLGSP).

Agreement for Small Irrigation Programme (SIP)-Phase II Signed

The Government of Nepal and the Government of Switzerland signed a bilateral agreement on 26 June 2020 to implement Small Irrigation Programme (SIP) – Phase II to be executed in collaboration with the local level and provincial government of Province-One.

Mr. Shreekrishna Nepal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Finance and Ms. Elisabeth von Capeller, Ambassador, Embassy of Switzerland in Nepal, signed the agreement on behalf of their respective governments. As per the agreement, the Government of Switzerland would provide grants worth 17.60 million Swiss Francs (equivalent to NRs. 2.02 billion) for the said SIP-Phase II programme.

The total budget of the programme is NRs. 5.7 billion (equivalent to 49.46 million Swiss Francs) among which Government of Nepal will contribute 8.86 million Swiss Francs (equivalent to NRs. 1.02 billion). The Province-One Government and participating Local Governments will contribute 20 per cent each of the total cost of the civil works while as Water Users Associations will bear 10 per cent of the civil works. The programme will be implemented by the Local Governments of midhills of Province-One over the next four and half years. The programme will develop around 1,300 small irrigation schemes covering total irrigation area of 20,000 hectares benefitting more than 65,000 small farming households with an aim to double their agriculture income. The programme is scheduled to start from 1 July 2020 and to complete on 31 December 2024.

Zurich Airport shortlisted for construction of Nijgadh Airport of Nepal

The relations between Nepal and Switzerland have potentials to grow in the areas of tourism, technology, technical cooperation and investment, among others. Some Swiss companies have shown interest in doing business with Nepal. In September 2020, Zurich Airport (Zürich Flughafen AG) was shortlisted as the only company that met the official requirements for the construction and operation of the Nijgadh International Airport in Nepal. The Swiss company is currently involved in managing eight airports in Latin America. In addition to four airports in Brazil and two in Chile, the Zurich airport operator is engaged in the management and operations of the airports in Bogotá and Curaçao. It is understood that countries such as India, Indonesia and the Philippines are among the future focus markets.

The Investment Board of Nepal has reportedly made a formal request to Zurich Airport International AG, Switzerland, to submit its business proposal for the development of the airport project.

It may be noted that the Government of Nepal had decided to develop Nijgadh International Airport, one of the most ambitious projects in 1995. The timeline for the new airport was pushed back on multiple occasions amid concerns about financing and legal issues over its environmental impact. In March 2020, the said Swiss company made an official request for an extension of deadline of 1 March 2020 so as to submit a business proposal for the development of the airport following the Supreme Court's orders to halt the felling of trees at the proposed site of the Nijgadh International Airport.

Economic diplomacy and outreach activities

Participation of the Permanent Mission of Nepal in Geneva in UNWG Bazaar

The Permanent Mission of Nepal in Geneva participated in the International UN Bazaar in Geneva organised by the United Nations Women's Guild (UNWG) at the Palais des Nations, Geneva on 3 December 2019. The UN Bazaar arranged stalls for display and sale of national products, international arts, crafts, food items and related trade, tourism and cultural products as part of general international community exhibition and exchange. There were 60 national stalls and 57 food stalls from different countries.

The Mission took part in the event and displayed Nepali tea and pashmina along with the tourism materials. Visitors observed the Nepali stall with much love and keen interest; acquired product information; and also bought Nepali products. Profits generated from the sale was contributed to the UNWG fund. Every year the UNWG, in collaboration with the Permanent Missions in Geneva, the Geneva Cantonal authorities and business community organise an International UN Bazaar and Lottery to raise funds for supporting disadvantaged children around the world. Over the years, the Bazaar has become a premier event in Geneva international community. According to the UNWG, the UN Bazaar this year attracted more than 6,000 visitors and raised approximately 300,000 CHF while the lottery tickets provided over 200 fabulous prizes.

The UNWG has been funding a number of projects in several countries. A couple of years back, the UNWG contributed some fund generated from the UN Bazaar to support schools in areas badly affected by 2015 earthquake in Nepal through an NGO called Gautam School.

NEPAL – ITALY RELATIONS

Overview of bilateral engagements

Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai visited Pisa, Italy on 15 September 2019 in connection with the National Assembly of Non-Resident Nepali Association, Italy Chapter. During the visit to Italy, Ambassador Bhattarai visited on 14 September the office of the Honorary Consul General of Nepal in Rome and discussed with the latter intensively about trade, tourism, investment and consular activities of the office. On the way back to Geneva, he also met with members of Nepali society in Venice, Italy on 16 September and inquired about their concerns.

Likewise, during his visit to Milan on 18 February 2020, Ambassador Bhattarai met with Mr. Alan Christian Rizzi, Undersecretary in charge of International Delegation for Lombardia region at his office, and discussed about the potential promotion of bilateral trade, tourism and sister city relations.

As the matter of fact, Ambassador Bhattarai is still awaiting for an opportunity to present the Letters of Credence in Italy. The process of presenting Credentials has been delayed due to severe impact on Italy unleashed by COVID-19.

Moreover, Ambassador Bhattarai got extensively engaged in the promotion of Visit Nepal 2020 and Sagarmatha Sambaad. The Visit Nepal 2020 programmes were organised in Lausanne, Switzerland and Milan, Italy in this regard. Successful conclusion of those Visit Nepal 2020 programmes has immensely promoted Nepal's tourism among the enthusiastic and encouraging Swiss and Italian people.

During the lockdown caused by the COVID-19, many Nepali living in Switzerland and Italy were going through difficult situation. The Mission was able to repatriate altogether 55 Nepali nationals living in Switzerland and Italy through chartered flights.

Major engagements in bilateral affairs

Meeting with Undersecretary of Lombardia Region, Italy

During his visit to Milan on 18 February 2020, Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai met with Mr. Alan Christian Rizzi, Undersecretary- in charge of International Delegation for Lombardia region at his office. During the meeting, possible areas of cooperation with Nepal, especially in tourism, trade, investment and sports, were discussed. Possibility of signing MOU between cities, matters of mutual benefits as well as exchanging of business delegations were also discussed.

NRNA Election of Italy Chapter

Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai attended the National Assembly of Non-Resident Nepali Association, Italy Chapter as the chief guest, which was held in Pisa, Italy on 15 September 2019. The Assembly elected a thirteen-member NRN committee for the 2019-2021 term with Mr. Dev Raj Gurung as the new President. During the visit to Italy, Ambassador Bhattarai visited on 14 September 2019 the office of the Honorary Consul General of Nepal in Rome Mr Paolo Nugari and held extensive discussions with him about trade, tourism, investment and consular activities of the office. Ambassador Bhattarai discussed with him particularly about the promotion of Nepal's tourism and export in Italy. He also met with members of Nepali society in Venice, Italy on 16 September and inquired about their concerns. He urged them to work on economic diplomacy program and contribute to make Visit Nepal 2020 a huge success.

Launching programme of Visit Nepal Year 2020 campaign in Rome, Italy

The Visit Nepal 2020 Secretariat organised a special programme in Rome, Italy from 2-3 August 2019 in partnership with the NRNA to launch Visit Nepal 2020 campaign in Europe in the presence of travel and tour operators in Italy. It marked the formal launching of the promotional event in Europe. Over 80 travel and tour operations were in attendance. The coordinator of the Visit Nepal Year 2020, Mr. Suraj Vaidya gave an informative presentation on Nepal's vast tourism potentials. The Minister of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Mr. Bhanu Bhakta Dhakal, as well as Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Mr. Mohan Krishna Sapkota made remarks, and acknowledged the important contributions made by friends of Nepal in Europe in promoting Nepal as an attractive destination of the world. Honorary Nepali Consul General in Rome, Mr. Paolo Nugari, who is also a travel and tour entrepreneur in Italy, coordinated the event. During the event, a MOU between the VNY Secretariat and NRNA was also signed with the objective of mobilising NRNA in promoting Nepal's tourism. Turkish air and Qatar airways also sponsored free tickets in lottery at the programme. Nepali ambassadors/embassy representatives in Europe (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Russia, UK, Spain and Switzerland) as well as leaders of NRNA and Nepali diaspora community also took part in the interactive event.

The Visit Nepal 2020 promotion programme and the 12th ERM of NRNA also included Ambassadors' meeting as well as a thematic session on economic diplomacy and role of Nepali Missions. Nepali ambassadors/embassy representatives in Europe (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Russia, UK, Spain and Switzerland) were specifically invited by the VNY 2020 Secretariat in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to attend the launching programme of the Visit Nepal Year 2020 campaign in Europe. The Nepali ambassadors and embassy representatives attending the meeting exchanged views on ways and means of promoting Nepal's tourism in Europe particularly stressing on the importance of close collaboration and coordination in promotion activities. They also expressed the importance of branding key messages to be given to visitors and assuring tourists of safety, security, delivery of efficient and professional tourism services, as well as swift rescue efforts in situation of difficulties, particularly while on mountain climbing, sightseeing or in adventurous activities. The Nepali ambassadors highlighted the major promotional activities Embassies were carrying out as part of regular economic diplomacy activities. DPR of the Mission Tirtha Raj Wagle represented the Mission and participated in the interactive brainstorming session.

The coordinator of the Visit Nepal Year 2020 gave briefing on the programmes and activities of the Secretariat. He sought for active cooperation and contribution of the Nepali missions abroad to bring in two million tourists to Nepal by 2020 and introduced promotional materials. He also assured Nepali ambassadors of providing timely information and coordination in the organisation of events and promotional campaigns. The Minister of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs as well as Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation attended the meeting and provided insights into and suggestions on promotional campaigns by the embassies.

[The twelfth European regional meeting of NRNA in Rome](#)

The twelfth European regional meeting of NRNA was held in Rome, Italy from 2-4 August 2019. The theme of the meeting was ‘Tourism and Investment Promotion in Nepal, Goals of NRNA in Europe’. Mr. Bhanu Bhakta Dhakal, Minister of Law, Justice, and Parliamentary Affairs of Nepal, was the chief guest in the meeting, while Dr. Shekhar Koirala was a special guest. The 12th European Regional Meeting of NRNA was opened on 3 August in presence of a large number of NRNA representatives from all over Europe. Also attending the regional meeting were Nepali Ambassadors in Europe, Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Civil Aviation Mr. Mohan Krishna Sapkota, Coordinator of Visit Nepal 2020 Mr. Suraj Vaidya, President of Hotel Association of Nepal Ms. Srijana Rana. NRNA ICC President Mr. Bhawan Bhatta as well as former presidents of NRNA were participating in the meeting. In his address, the Chief Guest Minister Dhakal called upon the Nepali diaspora to contribute to nation building agenda so as to realise the overarching long-term vision of ‘Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali’. He also highlighted the policies introduced by the Government of Nepal in promoting tourism, trade, investment and technology transfer, among others. The Europe meeting was seen by NRNA leaders and representatives as an important occasion also in the context of preparation for the upcoming 9th Global Conference and International General Assembly scheduled to take place in Kathmandu from 15-17 October 2019.

[Visit Nepal 2020 Programme in Milan, Italy](#)

The Embassy of Nepal in Geneva Switzerland, concurrently accredited to Italy, in coordination with the Honorary Consulate General of Nepal and Non-Resident Nepali Association, Italy organised a tourism promotional programme of Visit Nepal 2020 in Milan, Italy on 18 February 2020. Speaking in the event, Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai highlighted about the

importance of organising the tourism promotional programme to campaign Visit Nepal 2020. The event was conducted exclusively in Italian language, as almost all of the guests were Italian speaking. During the programme, Mr. Paolo Nugari, the Honorary Consul General spoke on the various aspects of Visit Nepal 2020. Mr. Marco Confortola, a mountaineer who has already scaled 11 out of 14 peaks of above 8,000 metres presented on mountaineering, trekking and other adventurous tourism products of Nepal.



*Ambassador Bhattarai with Officials of Italy in the Milan and NRNA Italy representatives,
Milan, 18 February 2020*

Similarly, Mr. Marci Casareto, editor of Italian oldest and widely read Travel Magazine MERIDIANI presented various tourism potentials of Nepal that were worth exploring. Bruno Zanzottera, a photographer showcased and talked about a number of photographs that he had taken in Nepal. Also, in the event representatives of three airlines namely Turkish Airlines, Qatar Airways and Air India apprised of their flights connecting Kathmandu with various cities of Italy and also assured of their continuous support to increase tourist flow to Nepal. With their support, a lucky draw was made at the event and three lucky winners were awarded free tickets to travel to Kathmandu.

During the event, a video on Visit Nepal was displayed; and Nepali cultural dances were performed. At the end of the event, Nepali cuisine was served, and tourism promotional materials were distributed to the participants. There were altogether 140 invitees and guests, who included academicians, tour operators, friends of Nepal, media persons, representatives of NRNA and Nepali diaspora at the event.

CONSULAR AND PASSPORT AFFAIRS

Consular Services to the Nepali Community

Rescue of Nepali Nationals from Italy and Switzerland:

The Government of Nepal approved the COVID-19 Order 2077 on 25 May 2020 to facilitate the repatriation of Nepali nationals who were stranded due to the inconvenient situation caused by the pandemic.

In the reporting period, altogether 55 Nepali nationals, 12 Nepali living in Switzerland and 43 in Italy, were repatriated to Nepal through chartered flights arranged by the Government of Nepal for which the Mission played an active role while remaining in close contact with authorities concerned in Nepal and NRNAs, Office of Honorary Consul General in Rome and other Nepali associations in respective countries. The Mission has been coordinating with Ministry and other concerned agencies for the repatriation of few remaining Nepali nationals.

The Ministry has been regularly provided with daily updates on COVID-situation in Switzerland, Italy, Liechtenstein and San Marino since March 2020.

Consular and Passport Services in Fiscal Year 2076/77 (2019-2020)

Passport applications and distribution	During the past fiscal year, Mission had received total 105 application forms for Passport (including two diplomatic). All the application forms were sent to the Department of Passport, Narayanhiti, Kathmandu. Similarly, 10 Travel Documents were issued.
Consular documents issued/attested:	So far, the Mission had received 22 consular documents which were further processed within the fiscal year 2076/77
Visa issued:	The Mission had issued 93 diplomatic/official visas and 2314 visit visas out of which 280 visas were issued by Honorary Consul General of Nepal in Rome, Italy.

The number of Nepali nationals living in the country:	Switzerland: There are around 465 Nepali nationals living in Switzerland and around 300 people of Nepali origin are holding naturalized Swiss passport. Italy: Likewise, there are 1732 Nepali nationals living in Italy.
Rescue and repatriation:	Total 55 persons were repatriated due to COVID crisis (12 persons from Switzerland and 43 persons from Italy).
Injuries, deaths, and compensations:	Two Nepali nationals died during the reporting period - one in Switzerland and one in Italy.

RESOURCE & HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Resources and Property Management

Ambassador's residence purchase process

Throughout the year, efforts were made to purchase Ambassador's residence. Two committees- Kharid Ikai (Procurement Unit) and Evaluation Committee were formed at the Mission. Criteria or requirement of the building to be purchased was prepared by the Procurement Unit and subsequently approved by the Ministry. During more than a year, almost 100 buildings were searched or visited.

In the meantime, the Swiss Foreign Ministry (FDFA) was requested for providing information relating to acquisition of real estate property by the diplomatic missions. The Permanent Representative and Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Switzerland in Geneva was met for acquiring detailed information in this regard.

Later, a notice was published in the Mission's website and also sent to all real estate agents/agencies in Geneva for buying the residence through open bidding. Within deadline of 15 days, 10 proposals were received. The Evaluation Committee eventually recommended one proposal for further action. However, it was later found that the house as recommended by the Committee was already rented to a tenant. It may be noted that the same property was advertised by more than one agency at the same time in Geneva.

Since buying property in Geneva through bidding process was time-consuming and inappropriate in accordance with the process set by the Government of Nepal, property procurement process through direct contact to the real estate agencies available in the market was followed in accordance with the local practice and as permitted by the clause 12, sub-clause (3) of the Guidelines for the Procurement of Property for Diplomatic Missions Abroad 2072 BS.

As a result, three appropriate properties were selected after the in-site visit of all buildings. During the visit to Geneva in connection with the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council, the Foreign Minister Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali made an in-site observation of all three properties. Finally, it was decided to move the process forward to buy the property located in Collonge Bellerive. To this end, property evaluation and technical inspection was conducted by independent company named Analysis and Developments Immobiliers Sarl.

The Swiss Mission in Geneva was also requested to ascertain whether the property identified could be purchased or not. The Mission gave positive indication to proceed and also provided an additional information in terms of the property being located in the cantonal protected area by virtue of being proximate to the Geneva lake side. The concerned officials of International Geneva Welcome Centre (CAGI) were also consulted to acquire the relevant information pertaining to the process of procuring the property.

On the basis of report submitted by the independent company and market value, negotiations for price offer of the property took place in three rounds, the property owner was also contacted, and negotiated for sealing the final deal. Discussion was also held with a Geneva notary for further process.

A video conferencing was organised with the Foreign Minister, Foreign Secretary and other officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance and Department of Urban Development and Building Construction on 26 June. Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai briefed the Ministerial team on the final process and various aspects of property purchase deal.

Nonetheless, the final deal could not be sealed since the Inspection Team from the Ministry expressed inability to come to Geneva for the physical in-site visit of the property due to air travel restrictions in the aftermath of COVID-19. Time was not enough to engage in further

negotiation and also to secure budget release from the Ministry due to the closing date of fiscal year of the Government of Nepal.

Total Budget in NPR

Allocation	Expenditure
NPR 16,81,80,000.00	NPR 15,79,35,224.69

Total Revenues in CHF

Passport	One Page TD	Visa		Other	Total
		Mission	Honorary Consul, Rome		
		125690.00	11400.54		
25245.00	420.00	137090.54		5121.05	167876.59

Staff Members

Diplomatic Staffs

S.N.	Designation	Name
1	Ambassador /PR	H.E. Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai
2	DPR/Minister	Mr. Tirtha Raj Wagle
3	Counsellor	Mr. Kumar Rai
4	Counsellor	Mr. Uttam Kumar Shahi
5	Counsellor (Commerce)	Mr. Buddhi Prasad Upadhyaya
6	Second Secretary	Ms. Antara Singh (Upto 26/10/2076)
7	Second Secretary	Mr. Vijaya Raj Tandukar
8	Second Secretary	Mr. Bhuwan Paudel
9	Attaché	Mr. Bidur Khatiwada

Local Staffs

S.N.	Job Title	Name
1	Office Secretary	Ms. Jolie Pradhan
2	Driver/ Messenger	Mr. Shree Krishna Bhattarai Bashistha
3	Driver/ Messenger	Mr. Dilnessaw Negash Lemma (Driver on daily wage basis)
4	Office Assistant	Mr. Niranjana Thapa

ANNEX

Human Rights, Refugee, Environment, and Disarmament Affairs

1. Text of Statement by Hon. Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal, at the High-level segment of the 43rd Session of Human Rights Council, Geneva, 25 February 2020
2. Text of Statement by Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai at the first Global Forum on Refugee, Geneva, 17-18 December 2019
3. Text of Statement by Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai at 2019 Meeting of State Parties (MSP) to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), Geneva, 3 December 2019

Health, Labour and Migration, Trade and Development and Intellectual Property

4. Text of Statement by Rt. Hon. President of Nepal Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari delivered via video message to the Global Vaccine Summit held in London on 4 June 2020
5. Text of Statement by Rt. Hon. Prime Minister Mr. K. P. Sharma Oli delivered via video recording at the Global Leaders' Day of the ILO World of Work Summit on 8 July 2020.
6. Text of Statement by Hon. Mr. Bhanu Bhakta Dhakal, Minister for Health and Population, delivered through pre-recorded video, at the 73rd World Health Assembly, first-ever a virtual de minimis, Geneva, on 18-19 May 2020.
7. Text of Statement by Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai at the 110th Session of the IOM Council, Geneva, 26-29 November 2019.
8. Text of Statement by Ambassador Mani Prasad Bhattarai at the 59th Assemblies of the Member States of the World Intellectual Property Organization, Geneva, 30 September to 09 October 2019.
9. Text of Opening Statement Delivered by Ambassador Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai on behalf of Hon. Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali as Chair of the 3rd IGE FfD of UNCTAD, Geneva, 4-6 November 2019

WTO and Trade related matters

10. Text of Statement by H.E. Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai, Ambassador and PR of Nepal at the Trade Negotiations Committee Meeting, WTO (2 March 2020)

Bilateral Relations, Administrative Matters and Consular Services = XX

1. Statement by Honourable Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Head of the Nepali delegation at the High-Level Segment of the 43rd Session of Human Rights Council, Geneva, Tuesday, 25 February 2020

Madam President

Madam High Commissioner

Excellencies.

I feel honoured to be back to the Council again.

This session is taking place at the beginning of the new decade marked by optimism, empowerment and equality.

With the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration, the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, and a full circle of a hundred years of multilateralism, we have come a long way towards realizing the common aspiration of ‘leaving no one behind’ by ensuring opportunity, justice and human rights for all.

These landmark events remind us of our determination to maintaining world peace, protecting human rights and fundamental freedom, and embracing socio-economic progress.

Nepal remains steadfast in those commitments, principles and values.

Nepal firmly believes in the universality, in-divisibility, inter-relatedness, inter-dependence and mutually reinforcing nature of human rights, including the right to development. We believe that the rule of law and human rights must be evenly operational at national, regional and international levels.

We are a party to all major international human rights instruments including seven of the nine core such instruments. We have internalized those values and standards into our national laws, policies and practices.

The Constitution of Nepal is founded on universally recognized human rights and such other principles as inclusive multiparty democratic polity, pluralism, the rule of law, and

representative and accountable government. Independence of judiciary and full freedom of press are the salient tenets of Nepal's Constitution.

Social justice is integral to our democratic process. The Constitution guarantees special measures for weaker sections of our society to enable them enjoy fundamental rights and receive a fair share of representation in all spheres of national life.

Nepal, as a secular State, guarantees freedom of religion as a fundamental right. The religious tolerance in Nepali society is exemplary.

We recognize the role of the grassroots community organizations, civil society, human rights defenders, and the media as the indispensable partners in the promotion and protection of human rights.

The National Human Rights Commission of Nepal conforms to the Paris Principles and stands accredited as 'A' category national human rights institution.

As one of the pioneer countries to implement National Human Rights Action Plan since 2004, we are now preparing the 5th National Action Plan.

Madam President,

Having achieved democratic political order and stability in the country, Nepal is now focused to realize the vision of "Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali". We have mainstreamed Sustainable Development Goals into the national development plan with a view to realize them by 2030.

We practice equality and non-discrimination and remain committed to ensuring full enjoyment of all human rights by women and girls. The progress made by Nepal in terms of gender equality and empowerment provides a reason to be proud.

Marking the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child last year, we have pledged to ending all forms of child labour, ending Child Marriage and enacted the Right to Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Act.

We are fully committed to the rights of persons with disabilities. The measures of positive discrimination that we have implemented to enable them participate in political and public

life have produced good impacts. Provisioning of adequate resources and infrastructure for quality and inclusive education for children with disabilities remains our continued priority.

Madam President,

Migration has been one of the defining phenomena of our time.

Being one of the major countries of origin; safety, security, dignity and welfare of the migrant workers is a matter of paramount importance for us.

Protection of rights of migrant workers, including women migrant workers, and combating trafficking in person requires cooperative efforts at national, regional and international levels. We believe that the historic commitment expressed through Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) provides a framework of cooperation to ensuring migration benefits for all.

A clean, healthy and sustainable environment is essential for the full enjoyment of all human rights.

As a mountainous country, impact of global warming is of particular concern for us. While we support Council's attention to human rights vis a vis climate change, Nepal has initiated a multi-stakeholder global dialogue forum- Sagarmatha Sambaad- named after the world's tallest mountain, known as the Mt. Everest, to deliberate on the issues of common interest.

The first edition of this dialogue will be convened in Kathmandu from 2 to 4 April this year on the theme of 'Climate Change, Mountains and the Future of the Humanity'.

Madam President

Nepal presents a uniquely successful case of nationally led and owned conflict transformation and peace process. We are dealing with the incidences of conflict era human rights violations through two independent Commissions - the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission for Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons. The term of the Commissions has been extended to ensure the completion of their work. The newly appointed Commissioners have started functioning in full swing.

We stand firmly to our commitment to addressing remaining issues of transitional justice in accordance with the Comprehensive Peace Accord, directive of the Supreme Court, relevant international commitments, concerns of the victims, and the ground realities.

Nepal appreciates the continuous goodwill and understanding of the international community.

Madam President

The Human Rights Council and its mechanisms have been playing important role in promoting universal respect for all human rights.

The UPR has successfully evolved as a transparent and fair process of promoting dialogue and cooperation and a meaningful exercise for the improvement of human rights situation everywhere.

In Nepal, we have been implementing the outcome of the second cycle of UPR in earnest under an updated plan of actions. Nepal looks forward to the Third Cycle of Review in November this year.

Nepal attaches great importance to the work of Special Procedures mandate-holders. We continue to be constructively engaged with them. We welcome country visits by Special Procedures at a mutually convenient time. We regularly respond to the Communications of the Special Procedures and treaty bodies.

We are committed to our obligation to submit periodic reports on regular basis. In 2018 alone, Nepal's periodic reports under CRPD, CERD and CEDAW were considered. Preparation of latest reports under CAT, ICCPR, ICESCR and CRC are underway.

Our experience as a member of the Council has inspired us to consolidate democracy, advance socio-economic transformation, and promote universal respect for and observance of human rights. We have made utmost efforts to fulfil our pledges and commitments.

In this spirit, Nepal has submitted candidature for the membership of the Human Rights Council for the second term 2021 to 2023. We count on the valuable support of all UN Member States.

We have strong faith in the values of multilateralism to strengthen and sustain our common aspiration of a peaceful, prosperous and just world. We remain committed to working together in a balanced and objective manner for the universal protection and promotion of human rights.

I thank you.

2. Statement by H.E. Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai, Ambassador/Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva, and Head of Delegation of Nepal at the First Global Refugee Forum, Burden and Responsibility Sharing, Geneva, 17-18 December 2019

Mr. High Commissioner,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates!

We take pleasure to attend the first Global Refugee Forum as a primary platform for the follow-up and review of the Global Compact on Refugees.

Our country has provided, on a humanitarian ground, shelter to almost 120,000 Bhutanese refugees over three decades despite our limited capacity and difficult domestic situation. We continue to support their livelihood through access to basic services including health and education. We appreciate the support of all relevant agencies including the UNHCR in this regard.

We commend the core group of eight host countries for taking our significant refugee burden through resettlement. Since 2007, some 113,000 Bhutanese refugees have been resettled. Nearly 7,000 Bhutanese refugees remain; and most of them are desperate to return to their homeland.

Mr. High Commissioner,

True transformation of refugees' lives hinges upon voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration into their homeland. We, therefore, reiterate our call to the Royal Government of Bhutan to resume immediate results-oriented dialogue and, without further delay and on a priority basis, repatriate the remaining small number of its citizens living a refugee life in Nepal over thirty years, as they have chosen the only option of repatriation to their homeland in safety and with dignity and honour.

We, at the same time, call upon the international community to act decisively for protecting refugees' right to return to their homeland and to ensure their rapid rehabilitation under all circumstances.

In this context, we also recall relevant UNGA resolutions placing the primary responsibility on countries of origin for creating conditions for safe and dignified voluntary repatriation of their nationals.

Mr. High Commissioner,

As documented by UNHCR reports, low-and middle-income countries have assumed the huge burden and responsibility of global refugees by hosting about 85 percent of them.

It is, therefore, critical to generate necessary political will and galvanize robust international cooperation and resources mobilization for addressing all global refugee problems.

Let us commit to the spirit of partnership, responsibility and service to the humanity, commensurate with our capacity and leaving no one behind, as we pursue a transformative agenda of sustainable development for all.

Thank you.

3. Statement by H.E. Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai, Ambassador/Permanent Representative and Head of Delegation of Nepal, to the 2019 Meeting of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) at the General Debate, Geneva, 3 December 2019

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the chairmanship of this meeting.

My delegation wishes to align itself with the statement made by Azerbaijan on behalf of the NAM State Parties to the BWC.

BWC is a successful early initiative of the international community in addressing the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).

The rapid developments in the world today in the field of life sciences enabling the use of microbes and toxins for various purposes have created greater necessity for the states to remain in alert against the development and threat of biological weapons.

Nepal strongly believes in general and complete disarmament of all kinds of weapons of mass destruction in a time-bound manner. As a party to the BWC, CWC and NPT and the host to the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament for Asia and the Pacific, Nepal attaches great importance and remains committed to disarmament and non-proliferation.

Nepal is fully in favour of universalization and effective implementation of the Convention. We underline the need for strengthening national capacities especially that of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and assist them in the implementation of the Convention. We appreciate the role played by the BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU) in this regard.

There is also a need to make collective efforts in developing a well-regulated and controlled mechanism in order to utilize the opportunities provided by the Convention for the welfare and advancement of humanity.

My delegation emphasizes the need to ensure full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of Article 10 of the Convention.

We understand that Confidence Building Measures are important tools to ensure transparency and build trust and confidence among the State parties.

We also underscore the importance of enhanced international cooperation in sharing new technologies and successes achieved in the field of life sciences and biotechnologies with a view to preventing various diseases and sufferings, ending hunger and malnutrition and increasing agricultural production and productivity and thereby ultimately promoting peace and prosperity in the world.

Sharing of good practices and lessons learnt and providing appropriate technical supports to the developing countries is equally important especially for achieving global health security as mentioned in Goal 3 of SDG.

Mr. Chairman,

Since becoming a party to the BWC, Nepal has always respected the compliance of its provisions. We are making full and sincere efforts for the implementation of the Convention at the national level.

Nepal has never been involved in production, acquisition or use of biological and toxin weapons nor do we possess any facility whatsoever to develop, produce acquire or transfer any kind of weapons of mass destruction. We do not intend to do so in the future as well. Our National Penal Code expressly prohibits any such act in this regard.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nepal has been working as the National Authority for the implementation of BWC. The Ministry has been taking various initiatives and conducting regular consultations among the concerned stakeholders and relevant implementing agencies for early drafting of the national legislation.

Most recently, a "Legislative Drafting and Review Workshop for the Implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention" was held in Kathmandu in January 2019. We appreciate the ISU and UNODA for their support to conduct this useful workshop. A draft bill has been prepared incorporating the provisions of the Convention (and requirements of UNSCR 1540).

Mr. Chairman,

Before I conclude, I would like to once again reiterate the commitment of the Government of Nepal towards the implementation of the Convention and we assure you of our constructive engagement with the Implementation Support Unit of BWC as well as other state parties in the implementation of the Convention and in creating a world free of weapons of mass destruction.

I thank you.

4. Statement by Rt. Hon. President Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari at virtual Global Vaccine Summit 2020 (London, 4 June 2020)

Your Excellencies

Heads of State and Government

Ladies and gentlemen

I congratulate and thank Prime Minister the Rt. Hon. Boris Johnson for taking this timely initiative to organize the Global Vaccine Summit.

I appreciate the contribution of GAVI in the health sector through research, development and distribution of vaccines. I hope, developing countries' partnership with GAVI will be significant in achieving health-related sustainable development goals.

Immunization has saved lives of the millions in the world. Child mortality rate has declined significantly. However, we still confront with myriads of challenges. A large segment of the population still doesn't have access to vaccine. Vaccination service remains ineffective in many least developed countries. Despite this, scientists have been making significant contribution by inventing life-saving vaccines.

Even today, they are engaged relentlessly in research for development of vaccines against COVID-19. I extend my best wishes for the success of this mission at the earliest.

In the present context, the theme of this discussion, level the vaccine playing field ensuring equitable access to COVID-19 vaccine stands highly relevant. Nepal attaches high priority to vaccination and remains committed to providing equitable access to all basic immunization. Due to the successful immunization programme, coverage of vaccination in Nepal is over 90% of the population. GAVI has made significant contribution for the development of vaccine and protection of human life.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented additional challenges to the global campaign for the development of vaccine. It becomes equally important to ensure equitable access to vaccine as the global pandemic is posing threat to humanity. We should combine effort and multiply cooperation to ensure that no one is left behind in health services.

Through this platform, I call upon the entire international community including international financial institutions, development partners, philanthropists and business community to come forward with renewed commitment in support of the initiative of GAVI.

Nepal's commitment and solidarity will continue to be there in all global initiative for shared happiness and well-being.

I wish for good health of all in the midst of this pandemic. In closing, I wish for the success of this Summit in achieving its objectives.

I thank you.

**5. Virtual Address by Rt. Honourable Mr. K P Sharma Oli, Prime Minister of
Nepal, to ILO Global Summit on COVID-19 and the World of Work – Building
a Better Future of Work, Geneva, 8 July 2020**

Mr. President,

Excellencies the Heads of State and Government,

Director General of ILO Mr. Guy Ryder,

Employers' and Workers' Representatives,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me commend the Director General of ILO for taking this timely initiative.

The world is now seized by an invisible enemy, the pandemic of COVID-19.

Over five hundred thousand people have lost their lives. It is uncertain how it will unfold further. Invention of vaccine and making it judiciously accessible to all remains unclear.

In such a situation, protecting the lives of people becomes extremely important. Loss of human life cannot be replenished.

The pandemic has thrown millions of workers and enterprises vulnerable. Overall economy has suffered with global decline in investment, trade and disruption in travel industry. As a consequence, people are losing jobs.

Economists project a bleak scenario for global growth in 2020.

When labour-intensive job-market declines, millions will fall into poverty. The impact becomes unevenly high in the LDCs and low-income countries. Declining remittances and potential reduction in ODA and shrinking of other resources will further compound economic stagnation.

Crisis of this proportion calls for robust global response with United Nations and its specialized agencies like ILO at the centre.

We should support and strengthen them to promote human-centred agenda of decent work as embraced by the ILO.

Protection of the most vulnerable, including the migrant workers and those in informal sectors, and provision of adequate social security and health care is key to minimize the impact.

However, it is unfortunate that migrant workers who have contributed to the building of destination countries are losing hopes and returning home in the midst of the pandemic without protection of their job and income.

This situation, contrary to the ILO principles, could have been avoided and norms of WHO should have been observed in the process. In Nepal, within 108 days, in an average 3000 people returned home every day from India crossing our land border. About half a million migrant workers are expected to return from the Gulf region and other countries. It does not mean that we are not welcoming our nationals back home. But this scale of sudden return has posed tremendous pressure on our health system as the cases of infection shoot up rapidly.

I held several telephone conversations with Heads of State and Government in labour destination countries seeking their cooperation for the protection and wellbeing of the Nepali workers. At home, we are protecting foreign nationals in our country during this pandemic.

Humanity is tested in the time of crisis. Our conscience should guide us to uphold justice and fairness even in the time of extreme difficulty. International solidarity at this hour could prevent the job loss, return of migrant workers and reversal in the progress of SDG and resulting rise of poverty.

Poverty and sudden stress on local labour market endangers larger peace and stability worldwide.

Excellencies,

We in Nepal have invested resources within our capacity to fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have employed both preventive and mitigating measures that include testing, contact-tracing, quarantine, isolation and social distancing. We are close to meeting the target of testing two per cent of our population.

Temporary measures, such as, nation-wide lockdown and restriction in movement helped us to contain the virus to a large extent. Number of deaths so far remains minimal.

Estimates are that nearly 63 percent of Nepali workforce will face some degree of impacts, which is more severe in urban areas and in service industries like hotel restaurant catering and tourism sector.

We have responded to the situation with some immediate and medium-term measures.

For those in informal sector, we have provided food and wage for work as an immediate relief.

For those in the formal sector, we have ensured payroll protection, re-scheduling and capitalization of loans and waivers on electricity, among others. We are trying to convert this challenge into opportunity with special focus on building our health infrastructures.

In the medium term, we have devised programs such as, Prime Minister's Employment Program, food for work, subsidy to private sector for internship wages, skilling for re-deployment, and reorienting of poverty alleviation funds for production and sustainable employment generation, restructuring of agriculture and support to SMEs.

Provincial and local governments are also implementing programs for promoting job opportunities in coordination and collaboration with the federal Government.

While we are committed to partnership and social dialogue in the process, we also look forward to greater solidarity to address the situation globally.

I thank you.

6. WHA73: Statement from Hon'ble Minister for Health and Population, Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal (18 May 2020)

Namaskar,

Mr President of the Assembly, Mr Director General of the WHO, distinguished dignitaries.

In the context of COVID, we all are passing through a challenging time with many risks and uncertainties.

On behalf of the Government of Nepal, I would like to express high appreciation and sincere gratitude to the frontline health workers for their untiring efforts in COVID response.

Diseases such as COVID have no boundaries, neither they discriminate people based on color, class and group. Hence, it is our collective responsibility to fully secure health rights of people across the globe.

From the outset, Nepal has been responding to the COVID outbreak with high-level political commitment and mobilizing multisectoral mechanisms. While Nepal is institutionalizing federalism, the ongoing efforts to respond this epidemic from the three tiers of government have been instrumental.

In Nepal, number of infected people is in increasing trend. It is therefore, the upcoming days can be further challenging for us.

In addition, it has further emphasized the need for resilient and responsive health systems and sustained level of in-country production of medical goods and services.

The efforts on COVID response from WHO and other national and international stakeholders have been commendable. It has further proved the historic role played by these organizations in protecting human health. I would like to emphasize the need for unified efforts by the member states for universal health security.

Finally, I wish for the successful deliberation of this assembly, which is being conducted with the use of available advanced technologies, despite several limitations.

Thank you. Namaskar.

(As Delivered)

7. Statement by H.E. Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai, Ambassador / Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva at the 110th Session of the Council of the IOM, WIPO, Conference Hall, 28 November 2019

Agenda Item 13: General debate

Mr. Chairperson,

Mr. Director General Mr. Antonio Vitorino,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairperson and the Bureau members for their election. My delegation wishes to express sincere appreciation to the outgoing chairperson **for his** contribution and excellent work during his chairmanship.

We welcome Lebanese Republic as 174th member and International Commission on Missing Persons as observer of the IOM.

We appreciate the Director General for presenting the comprehensive report. We appreciate the DG for his open, transparent and consensual approach to his proposal on strengthening IOM top management structure.

Chairperson

Migration is a global common good that calls for collective action. We need to join hand to manage migration in order to make it a demographic dividend. Migrants can be agents of change, both in their own lives and for societies of host communities. In this context, the strategic vision 2019-2023 with three pillars, namely resilience, mobility and governance, provides a framework for global migration management. We underline the need for its effective implementation.

The World Migration Report 2020 outlines present day opportunities and challenges for further discussion of migration blue at all levels. This evidence-based research work would definitely enrich our migration discourse, not only at multilateral level but also at regional and national level.

With GCM and UN Network on Migration, IOM's role has been expanded. The UN Network provides a platform for enhancing coherence on migration issues within the UN system. In this regard, capacity building for the implementation of GCM at the regional and national level should continue to remain our priority.

On a particular note, my delegation is concerned over a 15 per cent reduction of 2020 operational budget at a time when expanded activities of the Organization demand more financial resources, especially for movement, emergency and post-crisis migration management, migration health, regulating and facilitating migration. We take positive note of the Working Group on Budget Reform to explore longer-term sustainable financial options.

Chairperson,

Over 4.5 million Nepali nationals are out of the country for overseas employment. Majority of them have either semi-skilled or low-skilled jobs. Their remittances make a significant share of national GDP. Therefore, facilitating safe, orderly, regular and managed migration continues to remain our key concern and priority, as it will contribute to our efforts for meeting SDGs. We are engaged in an open dialogue with destination countries for safeguarding rights of migrant workers by ensuring ethical recruitment, fairness and justice at work place. Last year we signed three labour agreements with destination countries in the spirit of the GCM.

We appreciate the IOM along with all eight core-group of host countries, and the UNHCR for their support and cooperation in resettling over hundred thousand Bhutanese refugees in third countries. We are thankful to IOM for providing rescue support to 43 vulnerable Nepali migrants trapped in Libya by human traffickers only few months ago.

Chairperson,

The IOM is uniquely placed as the leading global organization for migration to achieve its primary goal- "to facilitate the orderly and humane management of migration". The

Organization can and has to play a role not just in ensuring fair and transparent policymaking, but also in explaining complex policy choices and communicating their impacts to migrants and the public. In this regard, it is our expectation that IOM will continue to remain instrumental in ensuring rights and dignity of millions of migrants all across the world and making migration a real win-win for all.

We wish this council all success.

Thank you!

(As Delivered)

**8. Statement by Ambassador Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai at the Fifty-Ninth Series
of Assemblies of Member States of WIPO, Geneva, 01 October 2019**

Mr. Chair,

Mr. Director General of WIPO

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates

My delegation aligns with the statement delivered by Singapore on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group.

Let me express our sincere appreciation to you Mr Chair for steering this meeting towards a successful conclusion. we wish to commend the Director General for the presentation of the activities of the Organization carried out during the last year. We appreciate DG for making sound financial health of the Organization and also for undertaking a number of activities including training and capacity-building, supporting the formulation of national IP strategy, establishment of technology and innovation support centres, providing knowledge-based platforms, and transforming the informal sector, and all these with a focus on LDCs.

Mr. Chair,

Effective protection of GR, TKs and TCEs, along with GI (geographical indication) is important for addressing commercial misappropriation of such assets. We appreciate the works of IGC for reaching the consensual text of IP convention and urge all member states to finalize it in a speedy manner.

As to the Broadcasting Organization Treaty and Design Law treaty (DLT), we call upon member states for the early resolution of remaining issues including disclosure requirements, technical assistance and capacity building, and holding diplomatic conference for the adoption. We would also like to see the early conclusion of the issue of External Offices (OEs) in line

with the 2015 GA guiding principles.

Mr. Chair,

WIPO needs to orient its program priorities and budget allocations towards reaching development outcomes. For countries like Nepal rich in genetic resources, traditional knowledge and cultural heritage, innovative ways for their beneficial utilization are critical for achieving SDGs, poverty reduction, employment generation and human wellbeing.

We underline that CDIP should be guided by the principle of mainstreaming development in all WIPO activities. We support its efforts in the implementation of SDGs and WIPO Development Agenda. In this regard, DG's relevant reports are commendable.

My delegation is fully convinced that more geographically representative WIPO could better deliver to the Organization in the spirit of multilateralism. We urge for equitable representation in the PBC, CoCo and all other mechanisms of the Organization. Furthermore, we call for LDC-focus special program in terms of technical assistance and infrastructure and capacity building for supporting their graduation from the LDC status.

Mr. Chair,

Intellectual property is Nepal's important agenda. We adopted IP policy in 2017. We are now finalizing the draft IP Act in consultation with concerned stakeholders. We expect that our reform initiatives in IP regime will contribute towards the effective protection of the rights of creators and the industrialization in the country.

To conclude, Nepal would welcome the WIPO office to support technology transfer and increase IP awareness in line with the DG's vision of "IP for All". Its technical support remains crucial in strengthening our human and institutional capacity building.

I thank you!

**9. Opening Statement Delivered by Ambassador Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai on
behalf of Hon. Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali as
Chair of the 3rd IGE FfD of UNCTAD, Geneva, 4-6 November 2019**

Secretary-General,

Excellencies,

Distinguished experts,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for my delegation to chair this third session of UNCTAD's Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Financing for Development.

I thank you for expressing your confidence in my delegation and I count on your continued and full support for the important work that lies ahead of us in order to lead towards a successful conclusion. Please also allow me to congratulate the duly elected Vice-Chair of this meeting, H.E. Pedro Luis Pedroso Cuesta, Ambassador of Cuba. My delegation greatly looks forward to our close cooperation throughout these next few days and to your support.

This meeting provides a unique and special opportunity to discuss and address the critical question of international development cooperation just before we head towards UNCTAD XV and the Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

As we start business at this third session of the IGE-FFD, allow me to convey to you all words from our Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Hon'ble Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, who attaches great importance to this meeting and to its important topic this year.

Excellencies,

Distinguished experts,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset and when addressing the important theme of international development cooperation, it is essential to recognize that progress in the implementation of Agenda 2030 has been slower than perhaps anticipated, not least because scaling-up the required financing is proving difficult.

Nepal stands ready to further strengthen cooperation with the United Nations and with UNCTAD towards the shared goals of development and prosperity. Nepal's economic diplomacy focuses, among other issues, in particular on trade and finance.

Nepal has an abiding trust in multilateralism, and in the centrality of the United Nations for galvanizing multilateral efforts. In our view, the only alternative to the status quo is an ever better, more effective, inclusive and responsive multilateralism. And the adoption of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development is a “display of inclusive multilateralism at its best”. We stress the need for a similar spirit in the implementation of this core global agenda.

We must deploy all within our power to give momentum to translating the commitments made into meaningful results on the ground. We must not fail to learn the lessons from the delayed implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, and it is clear that reaching the still more ambitious Sustainable Development Goals SDGs will test our commitment, will and ability to make the world a better place to live.

To create a peaceful, prosperous world, is not possible to attain when millions of people continue to live in poverty. The inclusive implementation of the SDGs is a responsibility of all. While national ownership and leadership is a must for such an onerous task, a robust international partnership remains critical for its success.

Globalization has brought both opportunities and challenges. However, when it comes to equitable sharing of benefits, globalization is yet to be inclusive. As global economic growth continues to rise, albeit on an increasingly unstable path and plagued by rising tensions, inequality within and among nations has widened significantly. Elements of inclusion, equity and social justice appear to be missing in the entire process. Opportunities and resources are being concentrated in the hands of a few while leaving large sections of our populations vulnerable to marginalization. Uneven development is reflected in the continuous exclusion and deprivation of a significant portion of the world population from progress and improvements.

I reiterate that it is a common responsibility of all to place the weakest and most vulnerable countries such as LDCs and SIDS at the center of our action. This Group of Experts has an important role to play in advancing discussion, debate and policy recommendations towards the shared end of achieving inclusive, productive and sustainable development through strengthened multilateral cooperation and through effective, affordable and equitable financing mechanisms. The topic of its third session – how to improve, reform and widen international development cooperation – is central to this effort. It rightly highlights the essential role and responsibilities that public institutions and spaces have to play in taking this forward, in regard to promoting official development assistance, further exploring the role of blended financing as well as other and additional financing strategies and options from North to South and within the South, and in regard to the ways in which properly designed and scaled-up international development finance can address the most severe crisis of our days, namely that of our natural environment.

Nepal will continue to extend its support to this important intergovernmental expert group as a welcome forum to fortify the voice of all developing countries and especially that of the most vulnerable amongst us, LDCs and SIDS and to help strengthen its synergies with the UN process of financing for development.

Finally allow me to reassure you, on behalf of the team at the Permanent mission of Nepal to the UN in Geneva, of our commitment to the success of this important meeting, and to the UN's financing for development agenda.

I thank you.

**10. Statement by H.E. Mani Prasad Bhattarai, Ambassador/PR of Nepal, at the
Trade Negotiations Committee Meeting, WTO (2 March 2020)**

Mr Chair,

- At the outset, my delegation would like to extend sincere thanks to you Director General for your comprehensive briefing on the state of the play in trade negotiations. We would like to commend the Chairs of Negotiating Bodies for their updates.
- We wish to align our statement with the statement delivered by Chad, the LDC Group Coordinator.

Chair,

- As a staunch supporter of fair, inclusive and rules-based multilateral trading system, Nepal underlines the necessity of timely WTO reforms for safeguarding multilateralism in the interest of all WTO members.
- In this regard, my delegation would like to highlight some specific seven issues to be addressed in the context of achieving concrete deliverables of the upcoming MC 12:
- One, Nepal underscores the functioning of the dispute settlement mechanism to uphold the rules-based order. The vacancy of Appellate Body members affects the credibility in the works of the Organization. Nepal has, therefore, supported the joint initiative for launching its selection process; and we call for the immediate resolution of this issue.
- Two, WTO reform is an important issue for all of us. We need to deliberate the reform agenda thoroughly. I would like to emphasize that substance of the reform should be comprehensive; able to address global challenges including increased inequality; properly incorporate emerging issues and opportunities of global trade; and support to weaker economies to integrate meaningfully into, and benefit from, the global trading system. The reform outcome should not be burdensome to LDCs and weaker economies rather facilitate their development process.
- Three, development dimension must remain our topmost negotiating agenda, as it is the key concern of all developing countries, particularly LDCs. A clear road map on mainstreaming development dimension in the multilateral trading system and S&DT is critical to achieve SDGs, especially for LDCs and weaker economies.
- Four, Nepal puts strong emphasis on the implementation of Trade Facilitation Agreement, as it aims to reduce time and cost of cross-border trade. I am pleased to share that Nepal has recently notified the definitive date of Category B implementation of the agreement within a given

timeline. However, implementing the category C commitments pose severe difficulties for us; therefore, we encourage our development partners to provide enhanced and additional level of support to implement the TFA in a timely manner.

- Five, in view of having possible impact on revenue posed by the moratorium of customs duty on electronic transmission, I would like to stress that a comprehensive study on the impact of such a moratorium should be undertaken before taking any decision on it.
- Six, various negotiations are gaining a momentum with a view to concluding them in the run up to the upcoming Ministerial Conference in Nur Sultan. We expect that such negotiations would ensure just and equitable share of benefit to all members, particularly LDCs and within them the landlocked LDCs. International support measures for landlocked LDCs need to be discussed, explored and incorporated while concluding the ongoing negotiation on fisheries subsidies.
- And the final one Chair, all LDCs-focused support measures including Aid for Trade and Enhanced Integrated Framework, DFQF, technological support and flexibilities in implementation, among others, are highly important not only to enable us to graduate from the LDC status but also to ensure their graduation more inclusive and sustainable in terms of meeting SDGs by 2030 and fulfilling their development agenda beyond 2030.
- Thank you.

(END OF THE ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20)
