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Address

by

The Rt. Hon. Dr. Baburam Bhattarai

Prime Minister of Nepal

to the 66th Session of the

United Nations General Assembly

New York, 24 September 2011

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Nepal, to the 66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

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Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Distinguished Delegates,

Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to the President of the Sixty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

I also take this opportunity to sincerely thank the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss, for having successfully steered the Sixty-fifth session.

Let me also express our sincere appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations for strong commitment and dedication with which he has been serving the United Nations. We wish him further success in his second term.

Nepal warmly welcomes the Republic of South Sudan as a newest member of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

It is a distinct honor and privilege for me to bring to this august Assembly the voice of the voiceless of the world. I have brought with me greetings from the nearly 30 million toiling but proud people of Nepal, who have recently liberated themselves from age-old feudal monarchy and autocracy. Nepal is an enchanting land of Mt. Everest, the top of the world. It is the birthplace of Gautam Buddha, the apostle of peace. And it possesses an unbelievable variety of natural beauty and diversity.

In recent years, a momentous transformation is taking place in Nepal. After a long and persistent struggle, a feudalistic and autocratic monarchy has been abolished. We have entered into a new historic era with the creation of a new federal democratic republic of Nepal. Today, the new state apparatus is striving to take into account the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-cultural diversity of the country. Abolition of all discriminations and oppression based on class, gender, nationality, region and caste and creating an inclusive democratic system and a just society is at the heart of all our struggles for decades. Thanks to the ultimate sacrifice of the thousands of martyrs of the historic People's War of 1996 to 2006, People's Movement of 2006, Madhesh Movement and many other oppressed people's movements that we have come this far to lay the foundation of a new Nepal. We have to consolidate these historic gains and institutionalize them in order to establish sustainable peace, justice and prosperity to all. My government is fully committed to doing that with the conclusion of the peace process and the writing of a new constitution through the Constituent Assembly at the earliest. The constitution will not only guarantee the fundamental democratic norms and values. But it will also ensure that our multi-party democracy is inclusive, participatory and life-changing for all, especially the oppressed

laboring masses and the marginalized ones. As it is rightly said: 'The highest measure of democracy is neither the extent of freedom, nor the extent of equality, rather the highest measure of participation', we want to institutionalize a really participatory democracy for all, particularly the downtrodden ones.

In this context, I would like to remind this august Assembly of the poignant words expressed from this podium in 2008 by the Chairman of my party, Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and the then Prime Minister, Com. Prachanda, about the landless peasants, downtrodden women, the so-called untouchable *dalits* and millions of exploited masses of Nepal who are aspiring for liberation from all forms of oppression and exploitation.

Nepal's home-driven peace process and historic transformation are unique and could be a good example for drawing lessons. We believe that transformation has to be holistic to have its long lasting impact at the grassroots. Transformation in political, social and economic fields has to be brought about holistically. It is attainable with dedication, dialogue and consensus building among stakeholders. Like in any other countries, transitional pains and delays are there. But we are united in our vision and we intend to complete the transition process with consensus and cooperation of all the political parties and stakeholders. We are confident that with international goodwill and cooperation, we will achieve it at the earliest.

Nepal's foreign policy is based on fundamental principles of the UN Charter, non-alignment and Panchsheel principles and promotion of regional cooperation through SAARC. We would like to be a vibrant bridge between our two neighbours and beyond. At a time when humanity is so much in need of peace, and we all are striving for it, we particularly appeal for the development of Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha, as the fountain of world peace through effective international support and cooperation. The International Committee for Development of Lumbini needs to be reactivated at the earliest.

I extend sincere thanks to the United Nations, especially UNMIN for providing invaluable support and assistance throughout our peace process. We are hopeful that we would continue to receive goodwill and support from the international community in our efforts to institutionalize lasting peace, equity and prosperity in the country.

The United Nations holds a noble vision of peace and security, development and justice and human rights for all. But if we look around the world, we have a long way to go to achieve this. We still face conflicts, deprivation and demeaning poverty all around us. How can we have sustainable peace in the world when there is so much of inequity, deprivation and marginalization around us? We have to deal with their root causes. How can one justify the spending of 1.5 trillion US dollars on war weapons every year while more than two billion people across the globe lack basic necessities of food, medicine, etc?

It is in that context, I appeal to the United Nations to come forward with a far reaching and comprehensive development package. We need a "new Marshall plan" for rebuilding and reconstruction of the post-conflict countries. Lip-services and symbolic supports are not enough. It is time for a bold visionary step to deal with the complex problems of today. This would be a most cost effective approach to deal with the global problems and ensure sustainable peace.

Mr. President,

The principles and purposes of the United Nations as enshrined in the Charter represent the high ideals of the global community. Yet we live in an age of paradox. The gap between the poor and the rich is ever widening. Today the level of inequity between the states is the highest than at any time in the past. The Least Developed Countries, or I would rather prefer calling them Underdeveloped Countries, are facing the full force of negative side of globalization with their deep structural constraints. Jobless growth is a major challenge for all of us. In this integrated world, grinding poverty of the masses in billions is a recipe for disaster. The islands of prosperity amidst the sea of poverty are not sustainable. It is morally indefensible and economically undesirable. In a globalized and interconnected world, our destiny is inextricably intertwined. When my house is on fire, your house cannot be safe, and vice versa.

The recurrence of economic and financial crises, fuel and food crises and the deeper structural crises have vindicated the need to seriously review the current economic paradigm. I believe that this is the right time for deeper soul-searching and the creation of a new, just and scientific economic order. The new global economic order needs to deal with the current global volatility and the growing marginalization of the poor and the weaker economies. The financial capital-driven 'globalization' process is increasingly exposing its inherent structural deficiency and incompatibility. Unless the interest of labour, the basic source of human wealth, is duly integrated in this process, we may soon have to face the 'globalization' of unrest and upheavals. The United Nations should be the principal forum to look at it in a coherent, inclusive and holistic manner.

Mr. President,

The Least Developed Countries (LDCs) face severe structural constraints in their development efforts. Their vulnerabilities have been further aggravated with multiple crises. Despite some good progress in achieving individual goals, LDCs as a group are most off-track in meeting the internationally agreed upon development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. Rights based approach to development is a must.

It is quite disheartening that even today about 75 percent of the population in LDCs lives in abject poverty and hunger. This situation is unacceptable and must come to an end sooner than later. Business as usual is not a solution to the deep-rooted problems. The historically structured process of 'development of underdevelopment' needs to be structurally addressed.

The Istanbul Declaration and the Program of Action must be implemented in its entirety and in an effective and timely manner. In particular, financing for development should be ensured as per the commitment. Duty-free, quota-free market access and supply-side capacity must be ensured to LDCs. Investment, technology transfer and private sector development should be promoted in LDCs. They are essential to translate the legitimate aspirations of the LDCs. A renewed and strengthened global partnership is critical to its implementation. We do not want to see another missed opportunity for the LDCs.

Nepal, in its capacity as chair of LDCs, will make every effort, in cooperation with fellow LDCs to ensure that the issues and concerns of the LDCs remain high on the priority list of the UN development agenda.

Similarly, the special difficulties of the Land-Locked Developing Countries (LLDCs) should be recognized and the freedom of transit should be ensured to them as a matter of right. Together with this, support for trade facilitation and infrastructure development in these countries should be scaled up.

Labour migration is a global phenomenon. We must protect the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families to ensure that 'globalization' is fair to all. As Nepal's economy is increasingly dependent on remittance, this issue is very crucial for us.

Mr. President,

Climate change has clearly emerged as one of the greatest challenges of the twenty-first century. Global warming has precipitated melting of snow in the Nepal Himalayas, a source of fresh water for over a billion people living in South Asia. Therefore, we have taken the initiative of promoting sustainable mountain agenda in order to highlight their special vulnerabilities and fragilities. The industrialized countries should bear greater responsibilities for this.

There is an urgent need to make progress in climate negotiations and to ensure enhanced and predictable financing. The Rio+20 Summit scheduled for next year are critical to define a more sustainable development path and eradicate poverty for the LDCs. Sustainable development agenda should encompass all ecological considerations, including the crucial issue of sustainable mountain development.

Mr. President,

Nepal reiterates its call for general and complete disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction in a time bound manner.

Nepal strongly believes that regional mechanisms complement efforts to promote the global disarmament agenda. The Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament for Asia and the Pacific (RCPD) located in Kathmandu would be instrumental in revitalizing the "Kathmandu Process" to facilitate dialogues and deliberations for confidence building in the region.

Nepal unequivocally condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and calls for an expeditious conclusion of the negotiations on a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. We should differentiate between terrorism and struggles for freedom.

Nepal's commitment to human rights is deep and unflinching. We are fully aware that the protection and promotion of all human rights including the right to development and fundamental freedoms strengthens the sustainability of peace and progress. We have established an independent constitutional body - the National Human Rights Commission as a watchdog institution. We are committed to build and strengthen this specialized national institution as a true custodian of human rights.

Mr. President,

The General Assembly, which is the only representative body at the global level, needs to be given commensurate power and authority to truly work as a 'world parliament'. It should not remain toothless. Similarly, Nepal supports the expansion in the membership of the Security Council in both the categories. Reform must address all the interrelated issues such as representation as well as transparency and accountability in the working methods of the Security Council. The role and contribution of smaller states in the maintenance of international peace and security must be duly acknowledged.

We underline the crucial role of the United Nations in promoting international cooperation for development. Its role in shaping policy debate on and establishing global norms in economic and financial matters must be strengthened. Nepal welcomes all efforts aimed at promoting system-wide coherence, including the operationalization of UN-Women.

Mr. President,

Nepal's participation in UN peacekeeping is long-standing and consistent. We remain steadfast in our commitment to international peace and security. Nepal has already provided over 80,000 peacekeepers, out of which 62 of our soldiers have laid down their lives in the line of duty. Hence, we would like to call for equitable representation at the leadership level.

In recent times, we have witnessed the outpouring of the popular sentiments for change and freedom around the world. We believe that this is a sign of a new beginning, where people are asserting themselves to be the master of their own destiny. We applaud these changes. We should support them based on the fundamental principles of the United Nations. However, no one should hijack the agenda of democracy for its partisan ends.

The long-drawn-out peace process in the Middle-East is a matter of serious concern for us all. We must find a comprehensive and just solution to these problems. It is our principled position that we support a fully independent and sovereign Palestine State based on the UN resolutions. We look forward to its materialization at the earliest.

Mr. President,

Finally, let me reiterate, the UN principles be holistic, and all be pursued in a balanced manner.

The United Nations should not only be the custodian of its noble principles, it must deliver on its promises. Let it not be a mere umbrella of big powers.

In a globalized world of today, the UN has more responsibility than ever before to create an inclusive and just global order. Let it not falter on its historic duties.

Let the UN serve the larger interests of the poor and the weakest segment of the international community.

Let economic transformation of LDCs with a rights-based approach be on top of the UN Agenda.

Let the UN not fail the aspirations of the millions of people for freedom, equality and prosperity. Let its vision be translated into a visible change in the lives of the oppressed people.

And, last but not least, let us keep in mind, either we all reach the goal of global peace and prosperity together, or nobody will.

Thank you.