

Statement by Dr. Illa Mainali, Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of Nepal to the United Nations, at the Third Committee of the Seventieth Session of the UN General Assembly on Agenda item 69 : Rights of Indigenous Peoples (New York, 19 October 2015)

(Please Check against Delivery)

Mr. Chair,

My delegation would like to extend its sincere thanks to the Secretary-General for his report under this agenda item .

Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural country with over 125 ethnicities and almost as many mother tongues. Indigenous nationalities constitute almost 40 percent of the total population, spreading over different geographic location, socio-economic status as well as ethnicity, languages and culture. Majority of them are living in poverty mainly due to lack of access to productive resources and opportunities. As a party to major Human Rights Conventions and ILO Conventions, including ILO 169, Nepal attaches utmost importance for the development of the indigenous peoples. Necessary policy and structural reforms are underway for the effective implementation of the ILO Convention 169. It is also fully committed in the implementation of the outcomes of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, held in September 2014.

A month ago, Nepal promulgated a new Constitution, which has given utmost emphasis in the representation and inclusion of its people, particularly the marginalized and disadvantaged community for their overall development. The constitution protects the fundamental human rights of the indigenous peoples and ensures their participation on the basis of the principle of inclusion and proportional representation at all levels.

Furthermore, it also recognizes all mother tongues as national languages of Nepal. The constitution has also made special arrangements to ensure the rights of indigenous groups to lead a dignified life with their respective identities by enabling them to participate in the decision making process while preserving and maintaining their traditional knowledge, skill, experience, culture and social practices. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the Parliament of Nepal has recently, by consensus, elected an

indigenous woman leader as its Speaker for the first time in the parliamentary history of Nepal.

The Constitution has also elevated different institutions to the Constitutional status, including, the National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities, in order to protect and promote their rights in an effective way. The National Human Rights Commission works as the custodian of overall human rights of the people, with its independent mandates and National Plan of Action.

Mr. Chair,

The Government of Nepal has allocated substantial portion of development budget in the local bodies for the targeted programme meant for marginalized people including the indigenous communities. It has also adopted policies and programmes for social justice and affirmative action for the indigenous groups, as well as other marginalized and disadvantaged groups. Coordination Committees have been established in each district to coordinate, monitor and evaluate these programmes.

Nepal has been implementing rights based approach to development. Accordingly, special provisions have also been made in Nepal's Civil Service Act to ensure the participation of the indigenous and minority communities in different government employments.

The indigenous peoples have been living close to the nature for centuries and have been contributing towards conservation of environment through their indigenous knowledge. Nepal believes that they should be empowered as custodians of the environment and that of sustainable development at the local level. The Government is now focusing on integrating the 2030 Sustainable Development Agendas in its periodic plan, policies and programmes alongside the reconstruction and rebuilding work in the aftermath of massive earthquakes that struck Nepal earlier this year, which has left many people, including indigenous people, in the most vulnerable situation.

Mr. Chair,

Indigenous women often face double discrimination as indigenous people and as women. Nepal believes that the rights of indigenous women should be recognized and they should be protected against the violations of their political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights. Nepal is committed for the gender equality and women

empowerment. The Government has been implementing different National Action Plans (on CEDAW, CRC, CRPD, UNSCRs 1325 and 1820) with a particular focus on indigenous women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities in close coordination and collaboration with multiple stakeholders.

Finally, Mr. Chair, I would like to reiterate Nepal's full commitment to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people, including all ethnic and indigenous communities. In this respect, my delegation looks forward to the international community for an enhanced level of partnerships in a sustained and predictable manner to promote the cause of indigenous peoples also in the context reconstruction and rebuilding works in the aftermath of earthquakes as well as to implement the ambitious 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

I thank you.