

**Remarks by the Prime Minister Right Honourable Mr. K.P. Sharma Oli
at the Luncheon Hosted for Diplomatic Community, Baluwatar,
Kathmandu**

27 March 2018

Honourable Ministers

Honourable Former Prime Ministers,

Excellencies, Ambassadors and Heads of diplomatic Missions

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to welcome you all to this Luncheon at my official residence today. Thank you for accepting our invitation. I have met most of you individually. But we are meeting in this format for the first time since I assumed the office of the Prime Minister recently.

Please allow me to briefly share with you my views on three topics. First, I will speak about Nepal's recent political developments. Then, I will highlight the major priorities of the present government. And, finally, I will touch upon our foreign policy priorities.

As you all know, Nepal has undergone **transformation of historic proportions** in the past one decade. The impact of transformation has not only confined to political sphere but also has been felt across all spheres of national life. The transformation has been monumental in our political and constitutional history.

The most important phase of **political transformation** of Nepal began in September 2015 when we promulgated a highly progressive and democratic constitution through a popularly elected Constituent Assembly. You all are witness to this. I don't think we need further elaboration. I must say that this was a culmination of our successful long and arduous struggles and Nepal's 'unique and home-grown' peace process. The constitution has institutionalized federal democratic republican system of governance, embodying the political gains achieved over the years through successive people's struggles and revolutions.

The next **important milestone** was achieved when we successfully concluded federal, provincial and local level elections in 2017. All of you have personally witnessed this. The elections, which were held in a free, fair and impartial manner, saw high turnout of the voters. We have accomplished this historic responsibility to implement the constitution. I am happy to share with you that we have been able to ensure over 41 per cent of women representation in elected bodies. This is not a small achievement by any standard. We will make further efforts to bridge the gap of remaining 9 per cent.

With all elections completed, the federal system of governance has been fully functional. Governments have been formed at all three levels of the federal structure. Finally, we have entered into an era of political stability. We have paid heavy price to reach this stage. Thank you for your moral support in our struggle for democracy.

We believe that our friends and well-wishers who want to see a peaceful, stable and prosperous Nepal also cherish this historic achievement of the people of Nepal.

At the federal level, we are now poised to have a stable government with more than 3/4th majority support of the House. All provincial governments enjoy above 2/3rd majority support of the assemblies. We are now supporting the governments at provincial levels in creating necessary condition for them to function smoothly. Likewise we are supporting 753 governments at local level. Enhancing their capacity and making them more effective and resourceful is a need of the hour.

These political achievements must be augmented with socio-economic progress. There is indeed a need and a historic opportunity for us to move forward the agenda of peace, good governance, development and prosperity.

We have realized that our efforts must therefore be on turning a page towards peace, stability and development with social justice. We know the cost of inaction will be colossal. Every second of our time is precious and wastage of it is no longer an option. We cannot take resort to any excuse should we fail to deliver. Hence, there is no option for us but to succeed.

The Government, under my leadership, is formed against this backdrop. So, it is very much incumbent upon the present government to take on the generational challenge of socio-economic progress.

And, we are fully committed to transforming this legitimate aspiration of our people into reality.

Please let me now touch upon some of the **major policies and priorities** of this government:

The present government has the motto of ‘Prosperous Nepal and happy Nepali.’ Its policies and programmes will be founded on six fundamental pillars.

The first one is nationalism. I understand nationalism as the protection of our sovereignty, territorial integrity, national independence, and fulfillment of our national interest. We, the Nepalis, are a proud people with our long and glorious history of independence and sovereignty. We are committed to safeguarding that space for the benefit of our national interest and for the good of our posterity. Pursuit of National interest and fulfillment of international obligations must go hand in hand. This comes as a non-negotiable priority for us. We will serve this cause on the basis of our values, realities, and aspirations.

Second, our commitment to democracy and fundamental freedoms is total and unflinching. The long journey of our political struggle is synonymous to the struggle for democracy. Our constitution has incorporated all the universally accepted norms and values which are eloquently manifested in the bill of rights enshrined in it. We believe that democracy is irreversible and no one can snatch it now from us.

No one would dare to dismantle the solid foundation of democracy we have so thoughtfully built. We hold this very dear and will not allow any compromise on democratic norms, values and principles.

Third, we cannot imagine sustainable peace and prosperity without social justice based on equality. We stand firm on achieving social justice that ensures equitable opportunities and equal protection to all sections of our society. Ours is a society full of diversity. Unity in diversity has been a Nepali characteristic and a primary source of our strength. Our constitution prohibits discrimination on any ground and the State is obliged to safeguard this fundamental right. Inclusive polity, which has been the true spirit of our constitution, has been influenced by our culture and tradition. And, we want to implement it in earnest.

Fourth and one of the most important ones will be stability, progress and development. We will continue to strive for progressive changes in our political, economic and socio-cultural set up. We have learnt hard lessons from our own experiences what the price of instability would be. Any attempt to undermine peace and stability will not be tolerated at any cost and will be dealt with firmly and resolutely. There is no space for violence in our society.

Sovereignty lies in people and our constitution has guaranteed it. Sovereign people of Nepal are free to take decision on matter affecting their life. Peaceful pursuit of political objectives must therefore remain at the core of our political discourse. However, we

must remain cautious and vigilant to preserve our political gains. There might be some attempts from different quarters to disrupt our social harmony and cohesion under various pretexts. There might be some elements who believe in perpetuity of conflict and discord in our society. We do not want to see our people exploited under any ulterior agenda. We will stand united and pull our resources together to defeat the forces of divisions and instability and work for the betterment of our people who deserve a decent life. Only the people of Nepal have the sovereign right to decide on constitutional, political and all other issues affecting them.

Fifth, our commitment to good governance is strong and we want to make it a reality in our life. It will continue to guide the policies, programmes and activities of the government. Rule of law will be at the centre of governance and will be pursued in an effective manner. We will also pursue a policy of zero-tolerance against corruption. Our aim is to ensure corruption-free governance. We will adopt efficient and smart mode of service delivery so that people can feel the change. Transparency and accountability will be effectively enforced. Beyond national efforts, I just want to emphasize that good governance must be pursued at all levels, from national to international. We all have to move from rhetoric to reality.

Sixth, with an end of the protracted political transition, the exclusive focus of the government now will be to fulfil people's aspirations for broad based, inclusive and sustainable development. We have a strong

resolve to attain rapid economic growth to underpin political transformation.

We want to overcome the **vicious circle of poverty**, underdevelopment and social backwardness. Our resource-rich country can no longer afford to be poor. We must firmly and decisively attack on poverty, hunger and backwardness.

Centred on these pillars, we will build greater convergence on national development agenda among the government, political parties, private sector, and civil society.

Our development challenges are manifold and daunting. We still are in the bottom rung of the development ladder. Overcoming these challenges would not be possible with the limited capacity and resources at the disposal of the government. We therefore invite the private sector, both domestic and foreign, to invest and contribute to production and employment generation.

We are fully committed to strengthening **business and investment environment**. In order to improve and facilitate trade and investment, we have reduced tariffs, simplified tax regimes and focused on the development and operation of trade related infrastructure.

We are committed to **graduating from the LDC category** at the earliest. We need to achieve a double-digit growth to make it happen. Promotion of trade and investment is, therefore, a natural priority of the government.

All political parties are united to ensure investment-friendly environment in the country. Hydropower, tourism, agriculture, infrastructure development and IT are some of the areas in which we need massive investment. These areas have the potential to transform our developmental landscape.

Advanced, modern and efficient technology is the key to promote knowledge-based economy that is the base of sustainable development. Prosperity through the overall development as well as the utmost use of science and technology in all sectors is our mission.

Nepal has huge **demographic dividends**. Job creation is our top priority. We want to retain our youths and engage them in economic activities.

Post- earthquakes reconstruction of the damaged structures, buildings and cultural as well as historical sites will receive our priority.

Now I will highlight briefly the present government's **foreign policy priorities**.

We live in a world that is full of contradictions and uncertainties. Forces of both stability and disruption are active. Adjustment to a rapidly changing world is a major challenge for everyone and more so for a country like ours. Stability in the global order is essential for peace, development and democracy around the world.

Nepal's constitution has defined national interests and provided a framework to conduct our international relations.

Promoting the image of Nepal at the international level, as a State that is practicing comprehensive democracy as well as advancing the cause of Nepal's socio-economic development will remain our two intrinsic diplomatic goals.

With this direction firmly set on future, we will continue to be guided by some fundamental premises.

First and foremost, the promotion of Nepal's national interest while maintaining sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of the country. As the people of a country that was never under the control of any external power, we hold, more than anything else, the principles of sovereignty, independence and non-interference close to our heart. Independent foreign policy and balanced conduct of relations will be the hallmarks of our external engagements.

Second, our overall engagements will be directed, as always, by the principles of *Panchasheel*, non-alignment, UN Charter, international law, and norms of world peace. Our efforts will be towards promoting a just and equitable international order in which all States- small and big- fulfil their international obligations in good faith, and all countries enjoy equitable opportunities to fulfil aspirations for development and prosperity.

Third, our motto will be '**amity with all, and enmity with none**'. We want to be a good friend of everyone and we want to treat

everyone as a good friend. We believe that this helps foster trust and understanding. We will pursue international relations based on justice, sovereign equality, mutual respect and benefit.

Fourth, development imperatives at home will be the guideposts for our diplomatic engagements abroad. Focused pursuit of economic development agenda at the international level will remain a key priority. We believe that development and prosperity are universal goals and all nations have legitimate interest in achieving them. We must therefore recognize the development space for everyone. Development must not be seen through the optics of geopolitics.

Fifth, our culture, civilization and identity are our assets. Building Nepal's image as the land of diverse and bountiful resources will be our goal.

Our diplomatic machinery will be mobilized in line with these premises. Let me now talk about some of the key areas of our priorities.

On neighbourhood: we enjoy cordial and friendly relation with both our immediate neighbours, India and China. Mutual trust will be the key ingredient of our relationship. We are thankful for all the goodwill and support of our neighbours towards our national aspirations. We look forward to further strengthening these relations at all levels of our cooperation. Serving our national interest and fulfilling our legitimate aspiration of economic development and prosperity will guide our engagements. In particular, we will remain

engaged in the ‘vibrant economic drive’ of the neighbourhood with a view to benefitting from it. We respect the legitimate interests of our neighbours and will not allow anything against them in our soil.

We also wish to enhance our relations with all other friendly countries in our **extended neighbourhood**. Our engagements will be based on mutual respect and cooperation. We want to explore, open up and diversify our relations especially in the areas of trade, investment, tourism and people-to-people exchanges.

We would be working towards enriching the substance of cooperation in our bilateral engagements with **major powers and development partners**. We fully acknowledge the support and cooperation received from our development partners. Given the level of our development, we still need an enhanced level of development cooperation from our partners mainly for economic development. We urge the development partners to align assistance with our priorities, respecting our leadership and ownership in the process and channelizing such support through government mechanisms. We must create a success story of development cooperation. Fragmentation of precious resources and use of multiple channels will not yield desired results.

We will closely work with **labour-receiving countries** for safety, security and wellbeing of our migrant workers. We would like to expand the scope of cooperation with these countries beyond labour issues to encompass trade, investment and tourism.

Our multilateral engagements including at the UN will be made more effective. We know that we all, as a global community, share global challenges. These challenges can only be addressed by an inclusive and rule-based international system. We support the UN reform initiatives to provide equal emphasis on all three pillars- peace and security, development and human rights, and to make the world body more efficient, effective and responsive of the need of our time. On our part, Nepal will continue contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security through its effective participation in UN mandated peacekeeping operations.

We favour **peaceful solution of international disputes**. We support the national leadership and ownership of any solution to crisis situations and apolitical role of the agencies like the United Nations. Nepal will continue to lend support in favour of **total and complete disarmament**, especially of all weapons of mass destruction.

Nepal will also lend support to global efforts to **fight against terrorism**. Nepal condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and believes that terrorist acts cannot be justified on any ground.

Nepal will remain constructively engaged to advance the cause of global peace, security and development. **Solidarity and cooperation with LDCs and LLDCs** will continue to characterize our deliberations.

We call for effective implementation of all relevant international instruments to address the specific development needs of these countries in special situation.

We have owned and integrated **the SDGs** into our national policies and programmes. And, we aspire to achieve them well before the deadline. We urge the international community to faithfully and effectively implement the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Special vulnerabilities of countries like ours must be taken into consideration while taking decision on climate change related funds and support measures.

Nepal has been elected as a member of the **Human Rights Council** for the term of 2018-20. We remain grateful to all those UN member States that supported our candidature. As a member, we will provide a strong voice to all those around the globe who look up to the Council to make a positive difference in their lives. Nepal will always stand for apolitical and objective examination of human rights issues. We consider that by attaining economic development and providing means of implementation of human rights obligations create enabling environment for the enjoyment of human rights by all.

To fully address the issue of **transitional justice**, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons are currently engaged in the country. I reiterate that there should be no blanket amnesty to serious violations of human rights and humanitarian laws.

We are serious to ensure that the process is fair and free from pressure and influences -both from within and outside the country.

Promoting regional economic cooperation remains a priority in our foreign policy. We will continue to closely working together with fellow Member States of **SAARC and BIMSTEC** to accelerate these regional processes for achieving regional peace, progress and prosperity. We will play an active role in Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

The mainstay of today's diplomacy is the **pursuit of economic agenda**. Therefore, we will strive to promote our vital economic interests at the international level. This will be done through activities aimed at attracting more foreign investment in our national priority sectors, expanding our export trade and promoting tourism, among others.

We will be more than happy to **receive high level dignitaries** from our neighbours and all other friendly countries. I am hopeful that our friends will give a serious thought to it. We would like to share our experiences and achievements of our unique peace process as well as political transformation with our friends through exchange of high-level visits.

To conclude, we are aware that the goal of stability and progress cannot be achieved with the efforts of the Government alone. At home, it is a collective responsibility of the government, private sector, civil society and all other stakeholders. Enhanced support and cooperation of the international development partners will also be equally important. I request all of you and- through you- the governments and institutions you represent to contribute to our mission.

I thank you all for your attention.