

Address by the Hon'ble Mrigendra Kumar Singh Yadav, Minister for Agriculture and Cooperatives of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal and the leader of the Nepalese delegation at the World Summit on Food Security held in Rome, Italy, on 17 November 2009.

Mr. Chairman,
Director General of FAO
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed an honour and pleasure for me to be here in the historic city of Rome to attend the World Summit on Food Security. I would like to convey the cordial greetings of the Prime Minister, government and people of Nepal to the distinguished Heads of States and Governments and the delegates assembled here and their best wishes for the success of the Summit.

My delegation appreciates the Director General for his leadership of our Organization in this difficult time. We also extend our sincere gratitude to the government and people of Italy for their warm hospitality.

Mr. Chairman,

As the current chair of the LDCs, Nepal has circulated a position paper prepared on behalf of the Least Developed Countries on **World Summit on Food Security** for your kind consideration. The paper calls for an urgent action in terms of substantial international support to the Least Developed Countries in their continuing fight against food insecurity, chronic hunger, malnutrition and underdevelopment.

Mr. Chairman,

Food is life and therefore food security is fundamental to human security. Most of our primary development goals including the Millennium Development Goals and internationally agreed development goals relate to poverty alleviation, eradication of hunger and improvement in human health. This demonstrates that food security is ensured only when everyone has access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for an active and healthy life. The concept of food sovereignty is a natural outgrowth of this fundamental fact.

Poverty and hunger have stayed as inseparable twins. It is disappointing to know that world hunger is increasing in recent years. Recent projections indicate that number of hungry people is to reach 1.02 billion in 2009. Hungry

people carry the burden of diseases and ignorance, both of which perpetrate their vulnerabilities.

Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy in LDCs. It employs about 69% of the economically active population in LDCs. However, the agriculture sector suffers from lack of credit, irrigation facilities, investments, infrastructure buildings, seeds and fertilizers, required tools, scientific technology, and research and development.

The UNCTAD Report on LDCS 2009 indicates that traditionally food exporting countries have become net food importers over the past 20 years. Of the 31 countries listed by FAO as being in substantial need of external food assistance, 21 are LDCs. The scenario makes a compelling case for immediate attention to the plight of LDCs as they are the poorest and weakest members of the international community. They have been hit hard by a series of crises including food crisis, financial crisis, fuel crisis, and shocks of climate change.

Food security is a development as well as a security problem. Reports indicate that 80% of the LDC population is living in less than \$2 a day. Almost 50 % of LDC population lives in extreme poverty with less than a dollar a day. Some 72% still live in rural areas dependent upon agriculture. 25% of small farmers are virtually landless. It is where the dehumanizing poverty has made its permanent home. It is this situation that makes empty stomach a devil's workshop which knows and listens to no reasons whatsoever. No peace is possible without justice and dignity which come only from the liberation of a bottom billion from the institutionalized traps of hunger and poverty. My delegation strongly feels that this summit should send a convincing message of freeing people from these traps without delay to ensure peace, security, stability and development across the developing world.

One sixth of the global population lives in poor countries, which are either mired in the traps of political tensions, violent conflicts or emerging from armed conflicts. Conflicts have inflicted violence, deaths, and injuries to the society leaving behind disabled population with no productive capacity. This has also caused disruption in normal economic activities where production, distribution and trading are adversely affected with attendant effects in chronic hunger.

Any serious effort to address the problem of food security should, therefore, be directed towards the special needs, and circumstances of poor countries. It is in this context, we welcome the G20 initiative announced in L'Aquila for food security, especially the announcement of \$20 billion for agricultural development over the next three years. We call upon the G-20 countries to have the London Summit pledge of \$ 50 billion for low income countries speedily implemented with a special focus on the special vulnerabilities of the LDCs. The severity and enormity of the crisis calls for stepping up sustained funding,

targeted investments, substantial debt reduction, and extraordinary relief to meet the challenges from natural calamities, and improve long-term food security. It is equally urgent for an early conclusion of the Doha Development Round of trade negotiations taking full account of needs, priorities, concerns and interests of the LDCs to create a non-distorted, non-discriminatory and equitable trading regime to promote development of agriculture sector and contribute to world food security.

Mr. Chairman,

As a least developed country emerging out of a decade-long armed conflict, Nepal is engaged in building an inclusive democracy, promoting justice and dignity of the people and institutionalizing peaceful means of socio-economic and political transformation in the country. We are facing numerous developmental challenges in the process of the post conflict recovery. Rising food prices have been badly affecting us. The adverse effects of climate change that have appeared in the forms of melting of Himalayan glaciers, shrinking forests, landslides, droughts, delayed monsoons, and flash floods, have caused significant decline in crop yields and aggravated the food security situation. It is our view that people's right to food can be ensured only if four aspects of food sovereignty are properly addressed: availability, supply, access, and consumption. The glaring gaps among these constituents need immediate attention to address vulnerabilities.

We also need to implement a better land use policy. In spite of our consistent efforts, our food production and supply situation, however, remain vulnerable. Measures to enable the agriculture sector, especially the smallholders in developing countries, to respond to high prices and carefully targeted safety nets and social security programs for the most food-insecure and vulnerable groups of people become crucial.

The Government of Nepal has initiated several institutional reforms including the process of Land Reforms Act to increase the access of marginal farmers and groups to productive resources. We are also formulating an Agricultural Development Strategy for the next 20 years to overcome the current situation of food insecurity and emerging issues in the agriculture sector. To address the problems of land loss due to increasing urbanization and dependency created by subsidized food distribution, Nepal is also considering formulating a National Food Security Act including land use policy in the near future.

LDCs must also be provided with special support for capacity enhancement as well as institutional and human resources development. They must be enabled to take advantage of new technologies and develop their own research capabilities so as to make efficient use and conserve their genetic resources, biodiversity and indigenous agricultural products and preferences.

Mr. Chairman,

We recognize that in order to achieve the targets and commitments made during the previous World Food Summits in 1996 and 2002 and the global forums, there is an urgent need to accord greater emphasis to increase production and distributional dimensions of food security among regions, nations and vulnerable communities. The Former Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan said in the last summit of 2002 and I quote, 'The time for making promises is over. It is time to act. It is time to do what we have long promised to do – eliminate hunger from the face of earth'. Unquote. We call upon the developed countries and multilateral institutions to increase their assistance to cover the social safety nets, complementing the efforts made by national governments, in sharing the best practices for enhancing agricultural production including the transfer of required technology in easier and simpler terms.

Mr. Chairman,

The present situation of food insecurity is largely the consequence of low investment, decreasing ODA in the agricultural sector and the relative neglect of this important sector in development. On behalf of the LDCs, we commit ourselves to improve the productivity of our agricultural sector and fight against hunger and poverty and at the same time we expect an augmented level of cooperation from our development partners to fight hunger, poverty and promote development endeavors.

I thank you all for your kind attention.

Thank you.