

**Speech by Hon'ble Mr. Khag Raj Adhikari, Minister for Health and
Population, Government of Nepal for the Second International Conference
on Nutrition (ICN2) on 19-21 November 2014, Rome, Italy**

**Mr. President,
Distinguished Ministers,
Director Generals of World Health Organization and Food and Agriculture
Organization, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen**

First and foremost, I would like to first express my gratitude to the Director Generals of WHO and FAO for inviting me to this very important International Conference on Nutrition. I bring best wishes from the foothills of the Himalaya to you and also acknowledge the leading roles that you have been delivering to address the issue of food and nutrition insecurity and malnutrition.

This is a fact that globally we have now recognized “Better Nutrition, Better Lives” as the most fundamental reality linked to the health and well being of people and therefore the nations. We, in Nepal have come to realize this fact even more. Malnutrition has been an enormous problem especially amongst our women and children. With almost half of the young children and one-fifth of women being undernourished, we have one of the highest rates of malnutrition in the world.

There are a number of challenges that we are facing today related to food insecurity and malnutrition. Nepal is a “minimally” food insecure country, and the poor and vulnerable populations have been affected. The problem of food insecurity is being compounded by the fact that Nepal is one of the most-at-risk countries in terms of climate change and natural disasters, which affect agricultural production and livelihoods.

Nepal also has the lowest per capita consumption of animal products where consumption of diversified and nutritious foods is also very low. Moreover, the high use of pesticides in different foods is further challenge for health and nutrition of people of Nepal. At the other end of the spectrum, we have also witnessed the emerging problem of over-nutrition related to increasing urbanization and changing life styles. Nevertheless, we are dedicated and determined to uptake our best efforts nationwide and gradually learning to overcome the challenges in a systematic way, considering our local context into account.

The Government of Nepal has accorded constitutional right to food including food sovereignty, to its citizens in the Interim Constitution, and we are set to

further ensure the health, survival and food and nutrition rights of Nepalese once the new constitution is promulgated early next year. Nepal is a signatory to World Food Summit 1996 and the SUN Movement 2010, and there is political commitment at the highest levels to address the persistent high burden of malnutrition in the country through improved nutrition and food security.

Our commitment to tackle the twin issues of food insecurity and malnutrition is evident with the adoption of policies like the Food and Nutrition Security Plan of Action and the Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan. Both these plans are complementary to each other and involve many concerned sectors and stakeholders including the government, external development partners, civil societies, media and private sectors.

The government has recently introduced a new National Health Policy, which provides a strong guidance for improved nutrition and micronutrient initiatives in line with the global initiatives like Zero Hunger Challenge and the SUN movement. We recently launched the Golden 1000 Days campaign to ensure a healthy start for our future generation. And this week, along with other countries of South Asia, the Government of Nepal will also be pledging to STOP STUNTING, as one of the priority agendas of the 18th summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) being held in Kathmandu.

We recognize the consequences of food and nutrition insecurity, which is pushing more people into the cycle of malnutrition, thereby hindering their productivity, increasing poverty, and seriously impacting the country's overall socio-economic development. We must do more. We therefore call for increased investment in agriculture and health sectors from the development partners, including UN agencies, in order to tackle malnutrition at the roots.

To conclude, I appreciate the global movement that has geared up to tackle food insecurity and malnutrition, and I congratulate the able leaderships played by various organizations in this regard. Given the enormity of challenges, the only way forward is accelerating the proven interventions using multi-sectoral coordination and collaboration and institutionalizing the successes. This is high time that we should mainstream health and nutrition to guide the global development agenda, tackle poverty and promote quality of life of people. We have already set ourselves in this path, and we need helping hands to help us meet the challenges that still lie ahead.

Thank you very much.