

**Message by Hon. Dr. Narayan Khadka, Foreign Minister of Nepal at
the Seventy-eighth Session of the Economic and Social Commission
for Asia and the Pacific on the Theme of “A Common Agenda to
Advance Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific”**

23 May 2022

**Chair of the Commission His Excellency Mr. Don Pramudwinai,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom
of Thailand**

**Excellencies the Heads of State and Government,
Excellencies, and Distinguished Delegates,**

While I am addressing this Session, I fondly remember the 58th Session of the Commission which I had chaired in May 2002. At the outset, let me express my sincere gratitude for steering the Session with high professionalism. I would like to congratulate the UN-ESCAP on its Seventy-fifth anniversary and wish every success of the Commission.

Nepal highly values the work of the Commission and acknowledges its contribution in the region in the field of infrastructure, human development, environment, among others. Nepal has been engaged with the Commission constructively ever since we became its member. I also wish to pay our tribute to the Secretariat for its continuous service to fulfill the goals of the Commission and assure you of my delegation's full support in the days ahead.

The Commission has worked for over seven decades with profound dedication and expertise even during the challenging times such as COVID-19 pandemic. I am confident that this commemorative event will rekindle new aspirations and provide new directions for regional development and shared prosperity among the membership.

In 2015, we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for the benefit of people, planet and prosperity. However, the path to timely achievement of the SDGs has been a challenging one. Natural disasters including climate catastrophe, rising commodity and fuel prices, and trade

protectionism, among others, have marred the achievements to us all particularly to the countries in special situations, including the LDCs.

The negative impacts of the pandemic, the ongoing global crisis, and dearth of development financing have further deteriorated the situation. Such a situation demands global commitment, solidarity, and urgent actions to fulfill our obligations towards posterity. We welcome the global initiatives and support measures taken in response to these challenges. However, we must do more. We need to focus on accelerated and deliberate actions that promote sustainability.

In this connection, the ESCAP's "Reclaiming our Future" report correctly identifies the elements for a common agenda for present and future generations. Nepal welcomes the report of the Commission and holds the view that the global community should work together to protect people and the planet from pandemics and disasters, promote trade and investment, enhance digital capacity, and raise resources to realize development goals.

Excellency,

Nepal has been striving to mitigate the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, health, foreign employment, tourism, and manufacturing sectors. Nepal initiated a nationwide Vaccination campaign in January 2021. We extend our sincere gratitude to all our friends and development partners for supporting us with vaccines, medicines and medical equipment during these trying times. We are on track regarding universal vaccination targets set by the WHO.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Nepal's achievement in SDGs-related goals and targets was significant. Based on this, Nepal is recommended for graduation from the LDC category by 2026. However, the pandemic added new challenges to the existing ones. Moreover, decreasing remittances and trending trade deficits have limited our choices. We have introduced some measures to maintain a healthy economy. We are focusing on strengthening health care systems, reducing poverty, creating decent jobs, and increasing the productive capacity.

We need to strengthen regional cooperation and engage in inclusive dialogue on interconnected issues of the world such as managing debt, tax evasion, environmental sustainability and world trade, among others.

I hope this session of ESCAP provides sustainable and pragmatic policy suggestions that enable people to partake in the collective journey of development, leaving no one behind in true sense. I thank all of you and wish you a successful conclusion of the meeting.