



Statement delivered by Mr. Ram Babu Dhakal, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Nepal, at the Third Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (19 May 2004)

Mr. Chairman,

Let me join others to congratulate you on your well-deserved re-election to the Chair of the Forum. Other members also deserve our congratulations on their unanimous re-election to the bureau. My delegation extends its sincere appreciations to the Secretariat for preparing the voluminous documents of the session.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation attaches great importance to the work of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. We note with satisfaction that the recommendations of the previous sessions of the Forum and a number of activities undertaken in the context of the implementation of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People have played a significant role in raising awareness at national, regional and international levels.

The Secretariat of the Forum has been established; the annual meeting of the Forum has been institutionalized. Participation of representatives of indigenous people at various relevant meetings has significantly increased. The deliberations on the eight mandated areas at the Permanent Forum have adequately covered concerns and interests of indigenous people. Follow-up actions to the recommendations of all relevant United Nations conferences concerning indigenous people help in uplifting the status, protecting the rights and promoting the development of ethnic and indigenous communities.

Mr. Chairman,

Nepal is committed to the development and welfare of ethnic and indigenous people. Nepal is a multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-ethnic country. We believe the progress of all the communities and ethnic groups is essential for fostering a peaceful, prosperous and harmonious society and for ensuring overall national development.

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 1990 guarantees that every community has the right to conserve and promote its language, script and culture. Every person has the freedom to practise his religion. Discrimination based on the grounds of religion, race, sex and caste is prohibited by law. The Constitution also provides for special measures for the protection and promotion of interests of women, children, aged or persons belonging to a class which is economically, socially and educationally backward.

Laws, policies and strategies have been put in place to implement the constitutional measures as well as international agreements to which Nepal is a party.

Nepal has enacted the Indigenous/Ethnic Advancement National Foundation Act in 2001 to promote and advance social, educational, economic and cultural interests of the target groups and to bring them to national mainstream. A national council headed by the Prime Minister having representatives from each of the 59 ethnic and indigenous groups directs the work of the Foundation.

A number of policies and programmes have been undertaken in the past in the fields of education, health, employment, social and cultural development. The current 10th five-year development plan has accorded high priority to the programmes that aim at eradicating social inequality, unemployment and poverty by creating conducive environment through partnership with indigenous people. Emphasis has been laid on promoting different cultures and language to preserve their identity and indigenous knowledge and skills for development.

The indigenous and ethnic communities have become beneficiaries of the special programmes on employment and income generating skill development, easy access to credit for education, health, drinking water, etc. A large of number of students from indigenous and ethnic groups has benefited from scholarships programme and has also easy access to technical subjects of higher studies. Likewise, indigenous and ethnic groups would also benefit from the policies of decentralization, local development and human resources development.

Mr. Chairman,

We have been facing the violent insurgency for a few years that has caused tremendous loss of life and property in the country. His Majesty's Government of Nepal is committed to protect people's lives, freedoms, property and public infrastructure. It is unfortunate that certain NGOs speaking in this Forum characterized the Government's efforts to prevent violence and provide security to people in a prejudicial and incorrect manner.

My delegation reiterates the full commitment of His Majesty's Government to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people. We urge the international community to extend their help with financial and technical resources to complement national efforts.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.