



नेपाल NEPAL

Statement by Hon. Mrs. Kunti Kumari Shahi, Minister of State for Federal Affairs and Local Development, at the 15th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, on item 4: "Implementation of the Six Mandated Areas of the Permanent Forum with reference to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples"

New York, 10 May 2016

(Please Check against Delivery)

Mr. Chairman,

It gives me immense pleasure to address the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues from the national perspective of Nepal today.

Mr. Chairman,

1. Nepal attaches a special significance to the theme of this session of the Forum, '**Indigenous Peoples: Conflict, Peace and Resolution.**'
2. Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural, and multi-religious country. There are over 125 ethnic groups with over 123 living languages and 10 different religions. Fifty-nine of those ethnic groups are enlisted as Indigenous Nationalities, who make up 36.6 percent of the country's total population.
3. Nepal is emerging from conflict. Last September, Nepal promulgated an inclusive and democratic Constitution, marking the end of the peace process that had started in 2006. The Constitution embraces the fundamental principles of human rights, human dignity, inclusion and proportional representation, federal democracy, religious freedom, as well as equity and social justice for the marginalized people, including Indigenous Nationalities.
4. The Constitution requires that President and Vice-President of the country must be from different sex or community. Likewise, either Speaker or Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Parliament, and Chair or Vice-Chair of the National Assembly must be a woman. As a result, the present Speaker of the Parliament is a woman from an indigenous nationality, for the first time in the Parliamentary history of Nepal.
5. The Constitution provides for the protection and promotion of cultures, languages, arts and scripts of marginalized people establishing dedicated independent Commissions for the marginalized people, including indigenous nationalities.

6. The Constitution recognizes all mother tongues as national languages of Nepal. Right to education in mother tongue has been regarded as a fundamental right, which also helps preserve the traditional knowledge, skills, experience, culture, and social practices of the indigenous nationalities.
7. Nepal has been implementing the six mandated areas for the indigenous people as identified by the Forum, through its constitutional, institutional, and development policy measures for ensuring the rights of indigenous peoples.
8. The Government established the National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities in 2002 with the main objectives of social, economic and cultural development of Indigenous Nationalities. Its highest policymaking body, the Governing Council, is chaired by the Prime Minister.
9. The Government has introduced affirmative action and reservation for Indigenous Nationalities in the public services. Twenty-Seven percent out of 45 percent of the total vacancy in government services are reserved for them. Similarly, a minimum of 35 percent of development budget at the Local Government level has to be allocated for the targeted programmes for the Indigenous Nationalities.
10. The Government has been integrating the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into its plans, policies and programmes with particular focus on the Indigenous Nationalities along with different National Action Plans.
11. As a Party to seven core Human Rights instruments and major ILO Conventions including ILO 169, Nepal always attaches high priority for the development of the indigenous nationalities.

To conclude, **Mr. Chairman**, we take pride in the diversity we have in Nepal. The unity in a vast diversity has always been a source of strength in our nation-building. While we continue to respect and further consolidate the unity among all nationalities, we look forward to the international community for an enhanced level of partnerships for the effective results in the six mandated areas. To that end, I call on all to join hands together in adding value to the lives of indigenous peoples of Nepal.

I thank you.