

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Amrit Bahadur Rai, Permanent Representative of Nepal
to the United Nations, at the 20th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum of
Indigenous Issues
23 April 2021, New York**

Item 6: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Time limit: 4 mins

Madam Chair,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you and other Bureau members on your election to lead the 20th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum of Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). I wish you all the best and assure you of my delegation's full support.

The COVID-19 pandemic has derailed the momentum of the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The challenges have compounded, and gaps have widened.

The effective participation of indigenous people is an integral part of the journey toward 2030 Agenda not only because of six direct references to indigenous peoples in the 2030 Agenda, including in Goal 2 and Goal 4 but also because of their substantial knowledge on living with nature in harmony.

Madam Chair

The SDGs are at the center of Nepal's development vision and priorities. They underpin our national aspiration of 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali'.

The Constitution guarantees special measures for the disadvantaged communities to ensure that they enjoy fundamental rights and receive a fair share of representation in all spheres of national life. Twenty-seven percent of government service quotas are allocated to indigenous communities under the policy of affirmative action.

Two independent and empowered entities - the Indigenous Nationalities Commission, a constitutional body, and the National Foundation for Development of Indigenous People, a statutory body, are active in protecting and promoting the rights and interests of the indigenous people.

As a party to the ILO Convention 169, Nepal is committed to promoting and protecting the languages and cultures of indigenous people and those communities, which are on the verge of extinction.

The government of Nepal recognized 59 indigenous communities, which constitute 36 per cent of the population. The effective participation of indigenous communities is indispensable for the

2030 Agenda. Nepal's Roadmap to SDGs aims at doubling agricultural products and profits of small-scale farmers, particularly those from indigenous and minority groups, by investing in their means and value adding to their products. It also addresses the need to effectively manage and mitigate the impact of climate change on these groups.

We have introduced a wide range of social protection programmes including the provisions of cash transfer for the elderly, single women, people with disabilities, *dalits* and endangered ethnicities; scholarship schemes for poor, girls, and those from marginalized groups, among others.

In Nepal, there are 123 languages spoken as mother tongue. In our efforts to provide indigenous children an opportunity to educate in their mother tongue in early grades, we have completed to develop textbooks in twenty-four different languages.

Madam Chair,

I conclude by stressing on Nepal's constitutional provision to empower indigenous people in order to ensure the right of these communities to live with dignity, along with their identity, and protect and promote traditional knowledge, skill, culture, social tradition and experience. Nepal will leave no one behind in its journey to 2030 Agenda.

I thank you for your attention.