

Statement by Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations, H.E. Mr. Amrit Bahadur Rai, at the 18th United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues

New York, 1 May 2019

Madam Chair,

At the outset, let me congratulate you on chairing this important session of the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues. I wish you all the best for the successful completion of the session and also assure my delegation's full support to you and the Bureau members.

We commend the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues and its independent experts' valuable recommendations and appreciate their efforts in raising awareness about indigenous issues to the United Nations and Member States.

Our appreciation also goes to UNESCO and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues for hosting International Year for Indigenous Languages 2019 to preserve, support, and promote indigenous languages at national, regional and international levels.

Madam Chair,

Nepal has metamorphosed itself through a historic political transformation from a unitary monarchical State to the Federal Republican State. In this process, Nepal promulgated inclusive Constitution in 2015 that guarantees the rights and freedoms of Indigenous Peoples.

The Constitution enshrines the principle of inclusion and proportional representation in the state structure as a fundamental right of all sections of society including Indigenous Peoples. As provisioned by the Constitution, the Government has formed five Constitutional Commissions including Indigenous Nationalities Commission – dedicated to conduct study and research and recommend policy measures for the protection of the rights and interests of respective communities. (*National Inclusion Commission, Indigenous Nationalities Commission, Madhesi Commission, Tharu Commission, Muslim Commission*)

Under the new constitution, Nepal accomplished first-ever elections of three tier government- federal, provincial and local levels in 2017. **In the Federal parliament, 40 per cent of the 275 Members of Parliament were elected on the basis of proportional representation in which, representation of Indigenous Peoples, women and other minorities were ensured as per the constitution.**

Madam Chair,

Nepal is committed to promoting the full realization of the social, economic and cultural rights of Indigenous Peoples with respect to their social and cultural identity, which is also in line with ILO Convention 169 that Nepal has ratified.

1. *The Indigenous People in Nepal are mostly engaged in agriculture. In the roadmap to SDGs, the Government of Nepal aims to double agricultural products and profits of small scale farmers particularly women, indigenous people, and minority groups so that their well being will be improved significantly.*
2. There is a legal provision for each community to preserve, promote its language, script and culture, and to operate schools at the primary levels in the native languages. **As reported in census 2011, there are 123 languages spoken as mother tongue in Nepal. The Government has policy to develop curriculums for teaching in indigenous languages in the early grades of schools. So far, textbooks in twenty-four different languages have been developed.** These initiatives aim to protect and promote indigenous languages and encourage easy access to school for children of indigenous community.
3. The policy of ‘affirmative action’ has allocated twenty-seven percent quotas to indigenous people in government service, with a view to making management of state affairs an inclusive one.
4. In an effort to provide support to its vulnerable and disadvantaged population through social protection system, **Nepal has introduced a wide range of social protection programmes including provisions of cash transfer programmes for the elderly, single women, people with disabilities, Dalits and endangered ethnicities;** scholarship schemes for poor, girls and those from marginalized groups, among others.
5. Nepal’s Roadmap to SDGs has also emphasized to reduce adverse impact of climate change particularly on women, indigenous people and marginalized communities.

6. Guided by the letters and spirit of the constitution, the government of Nepal is committed to implementing policies to empower and promote social, economic, and political inclusiveness of indigenous communities.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the importance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from the perspective of Indigenous Peoples. In the spirit of leaving no one behind, we must reach out the furthest behind first. **Nepal remains committed to incorporating the rights of Indigenous Peoples into equitable, participatory and people-centered sustainable development process, and working closely with the international community in this regard.**

I thank you.