National Consultation on Nepal’s Graduation from LDC Category: Implementation of Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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Overview

The Least Developed Countries (LDCs) represent the poorest and weakest segment of the international community. They comprise more than 880 million people (about 12 per cent of world population), but account for less than 2 percent of world GDP and about 1 percent of global trade in goods (UN-OHRLLS, 2017). The LDC category was introduced in 1971 by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly with a view of attracting international support for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the UN family. The UN defines LDCs as “low-income countries confronting severe structural impediments to sustainable development with high vulnerability to economic and environmental shocks and having low levels of human assets.” There are currently 47 LDCs in the world: 33 in Africa, 13 in Asia Pacific, and 1 in Latin America and the Caribbean. The list is reviewed every three years by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP), a subsidiary advisory body of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Nepal has been in the list of least developed country since the inception of the LDC category in 1971.

Least Developed Countries (LDCs) have been facing several structural challenges impeding their progress towards poverty eradication and achieving various globally set development goals. In response, the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Decade 2011-2020 (IPoA) was adopted by the Fourth UN Conference on the LDCs with an aim to overcome such structural constraints faced by the LDCs in order to eradicate poverty, achieve internationally agreed goals and enable graduation from the LDC category. The IPoA charts out the international community’s vision and strategy for the sustainable development of LDCs for the decade 2011-2020 with a strong focus on developing their productive capacities. Based on the lessons learned during the ten-year implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action (BPoA), the IPoA develops a number of goals and objectives, principles as well as priority areas for action. Four years after the adoption of the IPoA, in 2015, the heads of states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the objective to fight poverty and achieve sustainable development during the next 15 years. SDGs have been built on the success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which helped to lift more than one billion people out of extreme poverty. However, the world still experiences high rates of poverty and inequality and the SDGs have been introduced to achieve the unfinished business of the MDGs. Nepal, as a member of the UN, is committed to achieving the SDGs.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development focuses on all dimensions of sustainable development with a special focus on the LDCs as the most vulnerable countries. It also focuses on equality under the headline "Leaving no one behind", which implies giving priority to the
LDCs. The SDGs, with 17 goals and 169 targets, provide a broad and integrated development framework and aim to support the implementation of relevant strategies and programmes of action, including the IPoA. Similarly, the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the IPoA held in Antalya, Turkey in 2016 also stressed the coherence of the IPoA with the 2030 Agenda agreed in 2015. So, both the IPoA and the SDGs share the common objectives of enabling LDCs to overcome their current high poverty and make their development sustainable.

The IPoA has 47 goals and targets. Besides, LDCs committed to undertake 126 actions and development partners committed to implement 109 actions. LDCs and development partners will jointly undertake 16 actions to implement the eight priority areas. Several of the goals and targets of IPoA coincide with those of the SDGs. In fact, there is a strong overlap between the IPoA and SDGs. The IPoA could be understood as the focussed priorities of LDCs going towards SDGs. Hence, an effective implementation of the eight priority areas of the IPoA will significantly contribute towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

The IPoA has set an ambitious goal to enable half of the LDCs to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020. However, since the introduction of LDC category, only five countries have graduated from the LDC category, namely Botswana (1994), Cape Verde (2007), the Maldives (2011), Samoa (2014) and Equatorial Guinea (2017). There are currently three criteria for the graduation of LDCs into developing countries: Per capita Gross National Income (GNI), Human Asset Index (HAI) and Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI). The required thresholds for graduation are: GNI of above USD 1,242, HAI of 66 or above, and EVI of 32 or below. For graduation, an LDC has to meet two of the three criteria, or it should have GNI double of the threshold, that is USD 2,484, if it were to graduate using ‘income only’ criterion.

Nepal envisions graduating from LDC category into a developing country by 2022 and into middle income country by 2030. Nepal met the eligibility criteria for graduation for the first time during the 2015 triennial review. If it meets the criteria for graduation during the 2018 triennial review, it may be recommended for graduation by the Committee for Development Policy (UN-OHRLLS, 2017). It is likely to meet two (human assets and economic vulnerability) of the three criteria for graduation but is likely to miss the per capita GNI criterion. According to 2015 triennial review, Human Asset Index of Nepal (HAI) is 68.7 (threshold for graduation being 66 or above) and Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI) is 26.8 (threshold for graduation being 32 or below) but its per capita GNI (only USD 659 as of 2015) is inadequate to meet the requirement for graduation.
In six decades of planning history of Nepal, thirteen periodic plans have been implemented and currently, the fourteenth periodic plan is in effect. The Government of Nepal (GoN) for the first time included graduation in its policy in the twelfth periodic plan (2010/11 – 2012/13) and set 2030 as the deadline for the same. However, the thirteenth periodic plan (2013/14 – 2015/16) preponed the deadline from 2030 to 2022. The thirteenth plan envisioned to graduate Nepal from a least developed country into a developing country by 2022 and improve the quality of life of the Nepalese by reducing the population living below poverty line from 23.8 per cent to 18 per cent (Government of Nepal, National Planning Commission, 2016). In the second year of the implementation of the Thirteenth Plan, the country had to face two unfortunate events: the devastating earthquake in April 2015 and the economic blockade. These events not only made difficult the country’s plan to graduate into a developing country by 2022 but also adversely affected its aim to reduce absolute poverty to 18 per cent. Consequently, by the end of the thirteenth plan, poverty rate reduced only by 2 per cent to 21.6 per cent. The Fourteenth Three Year Plan (2016/17 – 2018/19) continues the spirit of the thirteenth periodic plan to graduate Nepal into a developing country by 2022 and has also set an ambitious goal to become a middle income country by 2030. With regards to graduation, the National Planning Commission has also drafted an Approach Paper to graduate Nepal from LDC category to a developing country by 2022.

Nepal’s progress in Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were implemented during the period 2000 – 2015, has been encouraging. Reduction in poverty rate; improvement in primary school enrolment and girls’ participation rate in school; reduction in infant, child and maternal mortality rate; and progress in the areas of drinking water and cleanliness are some of the achievements under MDGs. The MDGs set the base for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030. SDGs have been mainstreamed into the fourteenth three year plan (2016/17-2018/19) of Nepal. High trade deficit, negative impacts of climate change, lack of infrastructures, and low economic growth which is insufficient to uplift overall social and economic indicators are some of the challenges for Nepal. The earthquake of April 2015, the five month long trade economic blockade in 2015 and the flood of 2017 further added woes to Nepal’s efforts towards graduating from the LDC category and meeting the SDGs. Sustaining the achievements of MDGs, achieving the unmet goals of the MDGs, and tackling the above challenges are important for attaining the targets of SDGs. Besides, Nepal invested larger amount of resources in social sectors during the implementation period of MDGs and as a result, it could make significant improvements in the same. So, during the SDGs period, it is needed to invest significant resources in the infrastructural sector to build productive capacity.
However, Nepal has limited resources, skills and access to technology which pose challenges against achieving SDGs.

Nepal promulgated a new constitution in September 2015. An important part of implementation of the constitution is institutionalising federal system in the country. Accordingly, local level election was recently held and the country now has local governments after a long gap of twenty years. There is also a constitutional deadline to hold provincial and state elections by January, 2018. Since the implementation mechanism of government is the local government, it is essential to localise IPoA and SDGs to the local and the provincial bodies. Steps in the direction of mainstreaming SDGs into national and local level planning have been initiated. The annual programmes and budgets of 2017/18 have been aligned with the SDGs by introducing SDGs coding to each and every programme. However, since the new provincial and local government levels are under formation, SDGs are yet to be fully aligned and incorporated at the sub-national level planning and budgeting processes. However, LDC specific IPoA has not yet been integrated into national planning processes. Hence, as of now, the major challenge is to cascade national efforts to sub-national levels by mainstreaming the IPoA and the SDGs agenda into the provincial and local level planning and budgeting, as these new levels of government are in the formative process.

Several stakeholders have joined hands with the government to implement the SDGs. The private sector has committed to support the government in attaining SDGs through job creation and infrastructure building. The cooperative sector has taken initiatives under the slogan of 'Cooperatives for Sustainable Development.' Civil Society Organisations are involved in awareness raising and advocacy on SDGs and is aligning its programmes with national programmes. The development partners have also shown interest in supporting government's efforts. This indicates that the government, private sectors, civil society, cooperatives and development partners are all on board for attaining the SDGs and an increased cooperation among them is vital for Nepal to generate resources for realising them.

Mainstreaming IPoA and SDGs into national level planning and their localisation into provincial and local level plans and programmes are crucial for their effective implementation. Equally important is a meaningful partnership among the government, development partners, private sector, civil society, cooperatives and other stakeholders for the country’s planned graduation by 2022 since it requires large amount of resources. Moreover, the government needs to come up with a transition strategy to plan the post-graduation scenario with the objective of sustaining the graduation after achieving it and subsequently progressing into Middle Income Country by 2030. Nepal also needs to maintain peace, tranquillity and political stability for the
much needed sustained economic growth. Lastly, all concerned stakeholders should make best of use the new constitutional foundations to effectively implement and integrate all the National Plans of Action related to SDGs, IPoAs and other Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs) for the graduation from LDC category and building Nepal as sustained and prosperous Middle Income Country by 2030.

About the Programme

The Thirteenth Periodic plan (2013/14 – 2015/16) envisioned Nepal graduating from LDC status to a developing country by 2022. Nepal is projected to graduate by fulfilling two of the three criteria needed for graduation – Human Asset Index (HAI) and Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI). In this context, the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA), a Least Developed Countries specific programme of action, aims to enable LDCs’ graduation from the LDC category. Similarly, the Sustainable Development Goals are transformational as well as inclusive as they highlight the importance of taking the LDCs ahead along with the rest of the countries under the banner ‘Leaving no one behind.’ There are several areas of complementarity between the SDGs and the IPoA which will lead the LDCs towards sustainable development.

Against this background, LDC Watch and Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN), the focal organisation of LDC Watch, jointly organised the National Consultation Programme on August 21 2017 in Kathmandu, Nepal. The Programme expected to raise the level of awareness and importance of IPoA commitments including the acceleration of SDG development agenda in the context of Nepal. The program comprised of discussion and presentations vis-à-vis development plans and processes for Nepal in the context of its graduation.

The key objective of the national consultation was to increase understanding and awareness of the IPoA among government officials, policymakers, civil society organisations and ensure its effective implementation through synergy and coherence with Sustainable Development Goals in Nepal. The consultation aimed to foster fruitful discussion on questions such as: (i) What are the main obstacles for Nepal to obtain graduation from LDC Category by 2022?; (ii)What are the key components of a smooth transition strategy for Nepal?; (iii) How can the civil society of Nepal work together with government in regard to graduation and meeting the targets of the IPoA and SDGs?; and (iv) Of the key priority areas of action highlighted in the IPoA and SDGs, what are ones that have the most important role in attaining graduation in respective countries?
The National Consultation was held at Hotel Himalaya, Kupandol and comprised of around 50 participants, including representatives from the government, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and private sectors.

**Welcome Remarks by Mr. Gyan Bahadur Adhikari, Executive Director, Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN)**

Executive Director Gyan Bahadur Adhikari, on behalf of Rural Reconstruction Nepal and LDC Watch International Secretariat, welcomed all the participants to the National Consultation. He initiated his welcome speech by sharing his dissatisfaction over having to represent oneself as an attendant from a least developed country (LDC) while participating in international conferences and events.

Mr. Adhikari briefed the participants on the status of graduation of Nepal from an LDC into a developing country. In the thirteenth periodic plan, Nepal aims at graduating into a developing country by 2022. Out of the three criteria (Gross National Income (GNI), Human Asset Index (HAI) and Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI)), Nepal meets two criteria (HAI and EVI) but falls short of the required GNI. So, he expressed his hope that the speakers in the half-day long National Consultation would delve into whether Nepal will be able to meet the target of graduation by 2022.

He also highlighted on three important events that adversely affected Nepal’s graduation efforts: The Great Earthquake of April 2015, the economic blockade in 2015 and the recent flood in 2017. He expressed his remark that if these unfortunate events had not taken place, the path to graduate Nepal into a developing country would have been much easier.

He concluded his deliberation by expressing the willingness of the civil society to partner with the government in its efforts to graduate Nepal into a developing country and also meeting the Agenda 2030. He stated that civil society and private sectors are also helping partners to government and called on the government to take them along while meeting the development goals of the country.

*Key point: Civil society is willing to partner with government in its efforts to graduate Nepal into a developing country and also meet the Agenda 2030.*
Remarks by Gauri Pradhan, International Coordinator, LDC Watch

International Coordinator Mr. Gauri Pradhan initiated his remarks referring to the categorisation of countries by the United Nations into three groups: developed countries, developing countries, and least developed countries. Unfortunately, Nepal belongs to the category of Least Developed Countries (LDCs). In total, 47 countries belong to the LDC category. Classification of a country into LDC category is done on the basis of three criteria: per capita Gross National Income (GNI), Human Asset Index (HAI) and Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI). In 1971, when the first conference of the LDCs was held by the United Nations, there were 25 LDCs but thereafter, within the span of 45 years, it reached 50. With this trend, he questioned the current development process in the world leading to rising inequality among countries. The rich countries are becoming richer while the poor countries are still struggling to become a developing country. Armed conflicts and natural disasters further add woes to their development efforts.

He acknowledged that Nepal, in the process of graduating into a developing country, has made significant progress in different social and economic indicators. Nepal has made considerable progress in reducing the percentage of population living under absolute poverty. However, the efforts have not been adequate and Nepal is still included in the group of least developed countries. On women’s issues, he stated that after the promulgation of constitution in 2015, Nepal lies in the group of ten important nations with commendable progress in gender equality, women leadership and women’s role in politics. However, the gain from politics has not translated into socio-economic empowerment of women as expected and Nepal is still backward from the perspective of social equality.

He expressed his dismay over LDCs not being able to graduate from the LDC category as planned by them. Over the span of around 45 years, only five countries, namely Botswana (1994), Capo Verde (2007), the Maldives (2011), Samoa (2014) and recently Equatorial Guinea (2017), have graduated into a developing country. Many LDCs have been planning for their graduation but the evaluation by Committee for Development Policy (CDP), a subsidiary of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), shows that there are considerable challenges for the LDCs to meet the three set criteria.

The challenges faced by LDCs in their graduation process are unique to the geographical region in which they are located. Mr. Pradhan discussed the region-wise causes for LDCs’ vulnerable condition. Geographically, LDCs are divided into several categories by the UN. Africa comprises of the largest number of LDCs (32) and most of them are situated in Sub-Saharan Africa. Although many countries in Africa are very rich in natural resources, problems such as poverty,
famine, epidemics and armed conflicts adversely affect economic development and political stability in the region. In Latin America, no country was included under the LDC category until 2011. But in 2011, there was a powerful earthquake in Haiti which brought massive destruction of infrastructures including houses, roads and bridges. It was then given the LDC status and categorised alongside Africa. Haiti is the only LDC from Latin America. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal and Yemen are included in the list of LDCs from Asia. Bhutan and Bangladesh are in the graduation process. Meanwhile, Nepal follows along and plans to graduate by 2022. LDCs in South Pacific region include the island countries: Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Comoros, Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Timor-Leste, and Sao Tome and Principe. These small countries are prone to natural vulnerabilities which combined with their low population size have caused difficulty in their graduation from LDC category. On a brief note, he also expressed his dissatisfaction that the term ‘least developed country’ itself is humiliating and it should be replaced with some dignified term.

During the graduation process, the UN has divided LDCs into two stages: the countries graduating between 2017 and 2024, and the countries graduating beyond 2024. The countries included in the first stage are Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Djibouti, Kiribati, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu and Yemen. The second stage includes the countries that are still under-performing and graduation is not possible within 2024. Most of these countries lie in Africa such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, the Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Haiti, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi and Sierra Leone among many other African nations. He blamed the inability of the LDCs to utilize their natural resources, human resources and the imported technology to enhance their productive capacity as the main culprit for their slow pace of development. He cited the example of water resources in Nepal which are not utilised well. Similarly, many countries in Africa have diamond and gold mines which are not rationally used for development.

He further went on to explain the export capabilities of LDCs due to their rich natural and human resources. LDCs are perceived to have foreign dependency on food, but countries such as Guinea Bissau, Malawi, Solomon Islands and Somalia have been exporting food. They are viewed as agriculture and food exporting countries. Meanwhile, Angola, Chad, Equatorial Guinea and Yemen export oil because of the availability of vast oil reservoir in these countries. Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Haiti and Lesotho export garments and are the manufacturing exporters. Among the LDCs, Mali, Sierra Leone, Mauritania and the Gambia are the mineral exporters. Likewise, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Lao PDR, Liberia and Madagascar export mixed goods. Among these five categories of exporting LDCs, Nepal is included in none of them.
Though Nepal has made some progress in garment exports, its performance is not so satisfactory to be included in the manufacturing exporting group. Compared to Bangladesh, Nepal is very backward in garment export. Hence, Nepal is labelled as service exporter; especially we export more human resources than goods. Remittance is the largest source of foreign exchange earnings for Nepal. Although remittance has helped to stabilise the economy in the short term, there are many challenges associated with the remittance-dependent economy. Ironically, the human resources who could contribute much towards the economic development, productivity and social empowerment of the country are abroad. We have not been able to utilize the available human resources. We have failed to take advantage of demographic dividend, which is very important for the development of any country. The proportion of youths that we have currently will not remain the same. By 2050, the percentage of youth population will fall while that of elderly people will increase. Even worse is that the labour force that we are sending to other countries is mostly unskilled due to which the return is almost half compared to that of the skilled labourers.

Mr. Pradhan also discussed in brief the path traversed by civil societies of LDCs over time. In 2001 when the number of LDCs reached 50, the Third LDC Conference was held in Brussels and the UN for the first time provided platform to civil society organisations (CSOs) representing LDCs. The Conference of the LDC CSOs ran simultaneously with the conference of the governments. The Chief Guest UN General Secretary Kofi Annan addressed the conference. During the Conference, Brussels Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (BPoA) was declared. Since then, LDC Watch has been associated with the UN ECOSOC, Framework Conference on Paris, and other different processes. Also, in 2011, while drafting the Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs for the Decade 2011-2020 (IpOa), LDC CSO Conference was held alongside the conference of the governments. The Conference had officially submitted its Declaration to the UN. In 2016, in Antalya, Turkey, the UN held the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the IpOa. As a common platform for LDC civil society and NGOs, LDC Watch was granted the permission to organise a programme in Antalya during which an important declaration was passed.

He further highlighted the several options provided by the UN and the international agreements to improve the present status of LDCs, one of them IpOa. Currently, the world has agreed to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and we are in the process of nationalising it. Countries have also agreed to Paris Climate Accord which is expected to support LDC in tackling and overcoming the challenges brought by disasters induced by climate change. An important agreement associated with finance for development is the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA). Other agreements on international aid are Paris Agreement, Doha Round Table and Sendai
Framework for protection against natural vulnerabilities. These different international agreements provide different opportunities to LDCs. For instance, out of the committed ODA of 0.7 per cent of the GDP that is to be given by developed countries, 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of the GDP are to be allocated for LDCs towards sustainable development, poverty alleviation and social empowerment.

Despite these opportunities, we have different challenges. He applauded the latest progress in economic growth of the country and attributed it to the recent developments such as fewer strikes, regular power supply and relatively more stable political situation compared to previous years. This positive trend should continue in the coming years too. If the state could mobilise well all the stakeholders including private sector, cooperative and civil society, then we can meet the aforementioned three indicators of graduation within 2022 or 2024. However, we still have very low per capita income compared to the threshold requirement though we have made progress in other two indicators. He expressed his hope that the Government of Nepal would play a leadership role in bringing together private sectors and civil societies to attain the graduation target. On behalf of all the CSOs, he requested the government to widen the shrinking space of civil society in the country. He stated that the government and the civil society have differences in many instances such as in case of the issues on human rights, but in international platforms, while cooperating with development partners, demanding our rights in international platforms or implementing international agreements, we have common voice and would like to support the government.

In the end, he showed his optimism that though we have underperforming indicators in case of good governance, corruption and inequality, we can achieve the goal of graduating into a developing country by 2022 and into a middle income country by 2030 provided that we move ahead in the process of social and economic empowerment following the political and civil rights provided by the constitution. LDC Watch would support the plan made by the government in this regard and take it as a common responsibility. Lastly, he conveyed the regards sent by President of LDC Watch Mr. Demba Moussa Dembele from Senegal to all the participants and for the successful completion of the event.

Lal Shankar Ghimire (Joint Secretary, National planning Commission)

Nepal is a Low Income country (LIC), Least Developed Country (LDC) and Land locked developing country (LLDC). He stated that Nepal is in a phase of transition towards development. The government is not working alone and there is a sense of partnership with the stake holders to achieve the goal to reach to be a middle income country by 2030. The economic growth rate in the last fiscal year was 7% whereas, the expectation of GDP growth
was around 1%. Now sustaining the 7% is the priority. The recent local elections are likely to eliminate certain levels of political instability in Nepal. He was also a part of the delegation from Nepal to Turkey to attend the 4th UN convention on the Least Developed Countries also known as the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA). The government of Nepal has taken seriousness in following the eight interlinked priority areas of the IPoA. He also mentioned that the 13th Plan set by the Planning commission has aimed to graduate Nepal from LDC by 2022. The graduating strategy has been worked out by the government.

There are three criteria’s necessary for a country to fulfill in order to graduate from LDC, they are: GNI (Gross National Income), HAI (Human Asset index) and EVI (Economic Vulnerability Index). The GNI is set at US$1242, the HAI at 66 or above and the EVI at 32 or below. A single criteria of a country whose GNI is US$ 2484 can be considered for graduation. In Nepal’s context it looks highly unlikely to graduate through the GNI criteria only. In 2015 Nepal was reviewed by the United Nation committee for development policy and the figures were: GNI at US$659, HAI at 68.7 and EVI at 26.8. He also stated the latest figures of Nepal for the fiscal year 2016/17 figures show GNI at US$862, HAI at 70.1 and EVI at 26.3.

In reference to Nepal, over the years, the HAI and EVI targets has been achieved but the GNI threshold is unlikely to be met. Even if Nepal achieves the GNI threshold the difficulty would arise in being able to maintain it. The next review by the United Nations Committee for development policy will be held in 2018, similarly the qualifying review for graduation will be held in 2021. He also questioned the fact that is qualification without GNI going to be meaningful? If Nepal opts for graduation from the two criteria’s(HAI and EVI) then two matters need to be looked at carefully, the implication on ODA (Official Development Assistance) and implication on trade. He assured that efforts are being made to achieve the GNI criteria as well. It has been inbuilt to the 2014 plan and to the vision 2030 plan. He emphasized that it isn’t impossible but to achieve a growth rate of 22 percent in per capita growth and earning 190 US$ in per capita income in the next 2 to 3 years is highly unlikely. He also stated that sustaining the achievements will be challenging.

Remarks by Gopal Lamsal, President, NGO Federation Nepal

Mr. Gopal Lamsal shared the perspectives of civil society organisations (CSOs) on implementation of IPoA and SDGs and graduation of Nepal from LDC category. His deliberation discussed on the issues and challenges that Nepal faces, and suggested possible solutions from the perspective of CSOs to ease Nepal through the graduation process and help meet the goals of Agenda 2030 and the IPoA. He reckoned that the first and foremost issue is the continued political instability that the country has been facing since long. The political conflict and
transition since 1996 has adversely affected development goals. The effect of the two decades of conflict and transition on the development of Nepal has not been measured in detail and has not been brought to light. During the time, the country also could not hold any local level election and was without local government. He stated that political stability is a prerequisite for meeting development goals and graduating Nepal into a developing country. He highlighted the need for stable government at all levels – local, provincial and central. Lack of accountability, indicated by poor corruption indicator, also poses challenge to development. He insisted to make system and institutions stronger and more accountable without which there is going to be no real change even after bringing the new federal system into effect.

He stressed on the need for an effective and timely implementation of the new constitution concluding the political transition to a logical end. Commissions dictated by Constitution of Nepal 2015 should be promptly established. For instance, Natural Resources and Financial Commission – an independent commission – was envisioned in the constitution but local level election was held without establishing the commission. Currently, the resource availability and financial sustainability in each province is not known. He opined that resource and financial aspect are as important as political aspect for the effective implementation of the new constitution.

While acknowledging improvement in several areas especially reduction in poverty rate and gradual increase in per capita, he termed it as inadequate and called for radical reform to make significant impacts. He stated that productive capacity of Nepal is weak as shown by huge trade deficit. Weak productive capacity hampers job creation and increases external dependency. Inability of the state to expedite the spending of development budget has been slowing down the progress although there are sound policies and programmes at place. He viewed the need for a tax reform. Although the amount of tax revenue and revenue target are increasing year by year, there is a need to expand the scope of tax since many sectors still remain untaxed. He also questioned the productive use of remittance. Money from remittance is being mostly used for consumption and not for investment, and this trend has been fuelling imports and contributing towards inflation. He called on the government for increasing investment in agriculture, food security and rural development. It is ironical that though Nepal is an agricultural country, it imports agricultural products worth billions of rupees.

Nepal has agreed to different international agreements, including Agenda 2030, IPoA and Paris Climate Accord. In this context, he calls for a common and coordinated strategy on the part of the government to achieve the objectives of the agreements. He also mentioned that there is similarity between IPoA and SDGs, and their coherence and synergy should be considered while
implementing them. Since all SDGs and IPoA targets cannot be achieved at once, he suggested they should be prioritized during implementation.

He also highlighted on financial challenges to achieve the planned graduation and meeting the SDGs and the IPoA targets. Productive investment in forms of domestic investment and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is low in Nepal. Meanwhile, due to economic slowdown in developed countries and the rise of right-leaning populist forces in countries like the US and Britain, the flow of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to developing countries and LDCs will be less in coming days. So, Nepal should also be skilled at tapping global aid. Issues of LDCs should be raised in international forums. Besides, government, along with CSOs, should logically raise the issue of debt cancellation. Even when a certain per cent, if not all, of debt is relieved, it would free up resources for other developmental activities. Also, shedding light on geopolitical challenges, he emphasised to further strengthen the negotiating capacity of Nepal at international platforms.

The role of bilateral and multilateral development partners in supporting the priority areas should be critically reviewed. He also raised questions over the utilization of aid. He claimed that there is no institution in Nepal which does not take foreign aid, be it army headquarter, Supreme Court, police headquarter, ministry or parliamentary committee. The magnitude of change brought by such aid should be carefully analyzed. He expressed his displeasure that very often, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are blamed for misusing aid, but this sector handles only 1 per cent to 5 per cent of foreign aid – more than 95 per cent aid is taken by different state mechanisms. Nevertheless, even among NGOs and CSOs, the need for reform in utilizing aid among the NGOs and the need to systemize it cannot be ignored.

On disaster management, he asked the government to invest its resources in precautionary measures to tackle disasters such as earthquake and flood, and not only in rescue and relief at times of such humanitarian crises. To have a sustained Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI) for graduation, focus should be on building resilience at local and national level to address vulnerability of economic shocks and natural disasters.

Recognizing state as the most important actor, he called on the government to create more space for private sectors and CSOs at policy level. The role of all three levels of state governance (local, provincial and state), development partners, private sectors and civil society towards graduation process and implementation of SDGs and IPoA should be discussed. The implementing mechanism of every government policy and programme is the local government and so, he stressed on the importance of the localization of IPoA and SDGs.
He briefly described the role of CSOs in development initiatives. Globally, the role of CSOs in design, implementation, follow-up and monitoring is well-recognized. Mobilization of CSOs and strengthening their roles in every development initiative is very important for graduating Nepal and also attaining SDGs. In conclusion, he reiterated that SDGs cannot be achieved without the development of LDCs and hence, graduation of LDCs should be a global concern to all, including the United Nations, and it should be a common subject of discourse.

**Remarks by Chandra Prasad Dhakal, Vice-President, Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI)**

Mr. Chandra Prasad Dhakal started by recalling his participation as a representative from private sector in the Mid Term Review of Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) in May 2016 and also in the Special Thematic Event on Building Synergy and Coherence in the Implementation of the IPoA in the context of Agenda 2030 in February 2016, both organised by the United Nations.

He identified several aspects affecting the ambition of Nepal to graduate into a developing country by 2022, mainly political instability, natural disasters like earthquake and the recent flood and supply disturbance. He stated that Nepal achieved a high growth rate of 7.5 per cent – the highest since 1993/94 – and this growth rate should be sustained for the next 2 to 3 years to ease Nepal through the graduation process.

He highlighted that agriculture and remittance are the two important parts of Nepalese economy. Agriculture contributes one-third of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) while remittance contributes around 30 per cent. He iterated that the money received from remittance should be spent in productive and employment creating sectors. He observed that the wave of people going abroad for earning is gradually declining accompanied with a new trend of expatriates returning home with skills which they use for self-employment activities and also creating jobs for others. The money and skills brought by emigrants, if used in productive sectors, would support Nepal in achieving graduation goals as well as the targets set by IPoA and SDGs. He stated that tourism sector can also be an important contributor to national economy. Tourism is such sector in which one tourist can provide employment to 12 to 13 people. In this context, international airports that are in the process of construction will further support development of the sector.

He blamed low investment in productive activities as not because of lack of resources or funds but because of dearth of investment opportunities and a favourable investment climate. He cited a case in which 220 million rupees equity was to be raised from the public by a
hydropower company promoted by Non-residential Nepalese (NRNs) and locals. It saw an investment commitment of 9 billion rupees. This reflects that Nepal has funds and resources that people are willing to invest but they are not utilised.

However, he acknowledged that investment environment in Nepal is gradually improving. For instance, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has increased and banking service has reached local level providing credits ranging from Small Medium Enterprise (SME) loans to big project loans. Provision of one door policy is also on discussion which is expected to simplify investment procedures. Through the government decision and the monetary policy by Central Bank, Infrastructure Development Bank has been established which would provide much needed impetus to the slow growing infrastructural development. He reiterated that an investment friendly policy by government can encourage domestic investments and FDI commitments. He also emphasised on the importance of political stability. He expressed his optimism that after the conclusion of all three levels of election (local, provincial and central), the transition phase would end giving way to political stability.

He claimed that the real actors in an economy are the private sectors. Government enacts policies and programmes but the actual party implementing it is the private sector. He reflected on the importance of private sector as a sector creating employment opportunities and paying taxes to run the state. He ended his remarks by citing a World Bank report which states that around USD 13 billion to 19 billion would be needed for graduation of Nepal into a developing country, and stated that private investments, both domestic investment and FDI, would be an important medium to fill the resource gap.

Vote of Thanks

Ms. Mana Dahal, President of Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN), expressed her gratitude, on behalf of RRN, towards the speakers in the Consultation: Joint Secretary of National Planning Commission Mr. Lal Shankar Ghimire, Vice-President of FNCCI Mr. Chandra Dhakal, International Coordinator of LDC Watch Mr. Gauri Pradhan, President of NGO Federation of Nepal Mr. Gopal Lamsal and Executive Director of RRN Mr. Gyan Bahadur Adhikari. She also thanked all the participants from different government agencies, civil society organisations (CSOs), private sector and media for their participation in the event and their active contribution in finalising the declaration. She also stressed on the need to perform respective role from each stakeholder, including government, private sector, CSOs and development partners, for graduation of the country from LDC status.
A draft of Declaration was prepared ahead and circulated to the participants in the beginning of the event. Later, Dr. Netra Prasad Timisina, Regional Coordinator of South Asian Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE), facilitated the discussion session for finalising the Declaration. A meaningful discussion was held with active contribution from the participants. After incorporating the comments received from the participants, a twelve point Kathmandu Declaration was adopted in consensus on 21 August 2017.
अतिकम विकसित मुलुकहरूको समूहबाट नेपालको स्टरोनैन्ति तथा
इस्तानबुल कार्ययोजनालाई र दिगो विकास लक्ष्यहरूको कार्यनिवयनको सम्बन्धमा आयोजित
राष्ट्रिय परामर्श गोष्ठीबाट पारित

नागरिक समाज संगठनहरूको काठमाडौं घोषणा-पत्र

५ भाद्र २०७४, काठमाडौँ, नेपाल।

अतिकम विकसित मुलुकहरूको नागरिक निगरानी मन्त्र (एलडीसीवाचै) तथा यसको नेपाल प्रतिनिधि संस्था - नेपाल प्रामीण पुनर्निर्माण संस्था (आरआएन) को निमन्त्रणामा यही २०७४ साल भद्र ५ गते हामी नेपालको नागरिक समाज संगठनहरूको साधनहरूको भेला भई इस्तानबुल कार्ययोजनाले र दिगो विकास लक्ष्यहरूको कार्यक्रमको सम्बन्धमा छलफल गन्नो। यस छलफलको निष्पादक रूपमा नेपाललाई अतिकम विकसित मुलुकहरूको समूहबाट दिगो रूपमा स्टरोनैन्ति गरेको लागि दिगो विकास लक्ष्यहरूको साथ हो अतिकम विकसित मुलुकहरूको सम्बन्धित इस्तानबुल कार्ययोजनाले कार्यनिवयन गर्न आवश्यक रहेको तथ्यतर घरोको व्यवस्था आकृप्त गर्दै नागरिक समाज संगठनहरूको काठमाडौँ घोषणा-पत्र जारी गर्दै। ध्यान दिन्छो।

१. राष्ट्रिय योजना आयोगले आफ्नो १२औं आवधिक योजनामा निधारित सन् २०३० सम्मको लक्ष्यबद्ध अणाहिल १३औं आवधिक योजनामा सन् २०२२ सम्मको नेपाललाई अतिकम विकसित मुलुकहरूको समूहबाट स्टरोनैन्ति गर्न लक्ष्य निर्धारण गरिसकेको छ। सन् २०२२ सम्ममा स्टरोनैन्तिसम्बन्धि आयोगले ड्रिप्टकोण-प्रत्येक निति बन्दिट अपरिषिक शिलाइको लागि 'रणनीतिक विविधता' नामक समस्या रहेको अनुभव तथा मोल्याङ्कन समेतलाई समेट्नेको छ। नेपालले सन् २०१५ बाट 'कोली पनि पढाई नपल' भनेमा मूल नारायण रामलाईर रक्षा गरिसकेको छ। सरकारले दिगो विकास लक्ष्यहरूलाई आफ्नो राष्ट्रिय योजना तर्जुमा तथा बजेट प्राणिहरूको साथ हो १४औं आवधिक योजना (२०१६-१७-२०१८/१९)मा समेत मूलप्राकारिक कार्मिक घरोको हालिस्केको छ। त्यसैतिएक थालीमा हुने काममा रहेको र नयाँ प्रदेश तथा स्थानीय सरकारको कार्यालयमा प्राप्त हुनेको निर्णयलाई आवाज गर्न गर्नै काममा चुनौति रहेको देखिएको छ।

२. इस्तानबुल कार्ययोजनाको कार्यनिवासी गरी नेपाललाई सन् २०२२ सम्ममा विकासीय रूपमा स्टरोनैन्ति गरेको नेपाल सरकारको प्रतिवेदन रहेको सम्बन्धमा, दिगो विकास लक्ष्यहरूलाई स्थानीय तहको योजना तथा कार्यक्रमहरूमा मूलप्राकारिक कार्मिक प्रारम्भ गरेको तर्जुमा स्थानीय सरकारको नवनिवाचित पराधिकारीहरूको दक्षता अभिवृद्धि प्रारम्भ गरिसकेको छ। राष्ट्रिय योजना आयोग तथा सम्बन्धित मन्त्रालयहरूको प्रामाण्यलाई उत्कर्षित गर्न। अतिकम विकसित मुलुकहरूको लागि गरिएको एक आन्तरिक रूपमा समूहलाई रूपमा रहेको इस्तानबुल कार्ययोजनासम्झ ताल्मेल गर्दै दिगो विकास लक्ष्यहरूको कार्यनिवयनलाई सुनिश्चित गर्नु ज्यादि महत्त्वपूर्ण छ।
हामी दिगो विकास तथ्यहरूको प्रभावकारी कार्यान्वयनका लागि आवश्यक पनि आधारित तथ्याङ्कको उपलब्ध गराउन महत्त्वपूर्ण रहेको ‘तथ्याङ्क विकासका लागि राष्ट्रिय रणनीति’ निर्माण गरेको कार्यालाई पूर्ण रूपमा सम्बन्ध गर्न गर्दैछ ।

3. दिगो विकास तथ्यहरूका आधारित योजना तर्जुन तथा बजेट निर्माण प्रक्रियामा प्रदेश तथा स्थानीय सरकारको शासनमा बुझिङ्ग लागि नागरिक समाज संगठनहरूको महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका रहेको हुन्छ । राष्ट्रिय विकास प्रक्रिया तथा निर्माण प्रक्रियाहरूका नागरिक समाज संगठनहरूको सहभागितालाई सुदृढ गर्न र बयो नीति निर्माण प्रक्रिया र कार्यान्वयन गर्न संभव कर्ने तहमा समावेश गर्न हामी आह्वान गर्दैछ । हामी इस्तानबुल कार्यान्वयन तथा दिगो विकास तथ्यहरूको प्रबन्धन गर्दैछ या प्रक्रियामा निरन्तर संयोजन गर्दैछ ।

4. नेपालले असुविधानन्द भनेको अवस्थितिको बाहिर आनन्द लागि अपग्रहको तथा अवस्थितिको सदृशस्थित गर्दौ आवश्यक छ । नेपाललाई भू-सम्पर्कित राष्ट्र (landlocked country) को रूपमा परिवर्तन गर्दौ विशेष आवेदनाको सक्षम रूपमा सहभागी हुनका लागि भौगोलिक तथा गैर-भौगोलिक पुरूषाधार (hard and soft infrastructure) र राष्ट्रीय संपन्न स्थानको जस्ताह्को गर्दैछ । हामी युरोपीय अन्तर्देश विकसित मुलुकको रूपमा यसको पारिवहन अधिकारीलाई प्रस्तुत गर्दौ नेपाललाई सबैभन्दा निकट सामाजिक राष्ट्रको माध्यममा अन्य मुलुकहरूमा जोड्नका लागि प्रक्रियालाई नीति व्यवस्थापन गर्दैछ । यस कार्यको अन्तर्बार्यक व्या पार विश्वासितर्मा परिशिष्ट देखाउने र बड्छो व्यापार घाटालाई पनि घटाउने ।

5. दैनिक रूपमा धेरै जराज्ञ लायक गर्न हामी युवाहरूको छोटो जनसङ्ख्यालाई, खासगरी कृषि तथा गैर-कृषि क्षेत्रमा मयौद्ध रोजगारका नयाः अवसरहरूको सृजना गर्नका लागि नेपाललाई छोटो मालको सामाजिक आवश्यकता रहेको । हामी, उदार तथा पुरूषाधार विकासको लागि सामाजिक र निजी क्षेत्र र विकास सामान्यरुलाई आह्वान गर्दैछ । लागि निजी क्षेत्र र सामाजिक आवश्यकता तथा सामाजिक संरक्षण र उच्चको विकासका लागि सामाजिक- सामुदायिक-निजी सामान्यरुलाई सुधारकर्म पैकेट उपलब्ध गरेको आवश्यक ।

6. दिगो विकास तथ्यहरूको इस्तानबुल कार्यान्वयनका तथ्यहरूलाई हासिल गर्नका लागि आवश्यक पनि सामर्थ्यको लागि सामाजिक-सामाजिक हासिल पुर्त गर्न र निजी क्षेत्रको लागि सामाजिक विभाग खाद्य लाई पुर्त गर्न प्रवेश वैदेशिक लागनालाई आकृतित गरेको उपयुक्त बातचीत सृजना गर्न हामी सरकारसँग माझ गर्दैछ । त्यसको प्रार्थना वैदेशिक लागनाले मुलुकको हितमा हुनेछ र निम्नले करको वाणिज्य लागत कानून तथा नियमावलीहुत लाईलाई पालना पनि भन्ने कुरालाई सुनिश्चित गर्न रकमको चालनाको साथ आफ्नो धेरै गर्दैछ ।

7. यसका साथै, निजी क्षेत्र र सम्बन्धी सरोकारवालहरूलाई नियंत्र र आयातको वीचमा विवाह छुटो व्यापार अन्तरालस्थित घटाउन र गैज ठूलो उपयोग नमूनाको ध्वनीहुत सुदृढ बनाउन, उपयोगको, लागि नियमको एवं नियांतत्त्वको बीचको खाद्यलाई कम गर्नु आवश्यक । नेपालले सर्वसम्म र अवलोकन गरेको समाजवादी उपयोगमूलक प्रार्थनालाई केन्द्रित गरेको आवश्यक निम्नजन्तृ अविश्वास तथा नियम, जस्तै, शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, रोजगारी, आवास तथा प्रांतमा सामान्य आवधिक परिपक्व गर्न हामी नेपाल सरकारलाई आह्वान गर्दैछ । मुलुकमा मिकाइल बुझिङ्ग लागि नेपाल व्यापार अबिन्द कलाईस्तिनि २०१६ को प्रभावकारी कार्यान्वयनका साथै देशमा उद्योग वस्तुहुत, लाख उद्यमहरूको संरक्षणकालागि हामी आह्वान गर्दैछ ।
8. As a part of our continuing efforts to promote a culture of respect and inclusiveness, we are pleased to announce that the 2019 LDC Watch Competition is now open for submissions. The competition is open to students and researchers worldwide, with the aim of fostering dialogue and exchange on issues related to the least developed countries (LDCs). The winner will be awarded a cash prize of $10,000 and an opportunity to present their research at a major international conference.

9. The United Nations has declared 2019 as the International Year of the Sustainable Tourism for Development. This initiative aims to raise awareness about the role of tourism in promoting sustainable development and improving the quality of life for local communities. The year will feature a series of events and activities, including conferences, workshops, and exhibitions, to promote dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders.

10. The National Science Foundation (NSF) has announced a new funding opportunity for research on the impacts of climate change on coastal ecosystems. The program seeks to support projects that address critical gaps in our understanding of the complex interactions between climate and coastal systems, with a focus on the Pacific region.

11. The World Bank has released a report on the impact of climate change on food security. The report highlights the need for increased investment in research and development to develop climate-resilient agricultural practices and technologies. It also calls for stronger partnerships between developed and developing countries to tackle the global challenge of food insecurity.

12. The European Commission has launched a thematic network on digital health, focusing on the development of innovative solutions to address the challenges of aging populations and chronic diseases. The network aims to foster collaboration between researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders to accelerate the translation of research findings into practical applications.

13. The Global Landscape Observatory (GLO) has released a new report on the state of the world's forests. The report provides a comprehensive overview of forest cover, carbon emissions, and biodiversity trends, with a focus on the impact of human activities on the natural world. It highlights the need for urgent action to address the challenges facing our planet.
দুর্যোগহার, ইত্যাদি তথা মমিলাকে হাতিকারক অসম্ভাব্য জোগাইয়ের উত্তরাধিকারিতা উমের ও সমাজের অনুসারী সামাজিক কর্মকান্ডগত পরিপ্রেক্ষিত সহায়তা গ্রহণ সরকার এবং সরকার সরকারের সাথে সরকারের স্ট্যাটার শিক্ষা পানের মান্য অধিকার সুনিশ্চিত গরে নেপাল সরকারের সাথে আলাদান গাড়িয়ে।

১৮. রাষ্ট্রীয় কর্মকান্ডগত মহাকর্ম আদায় শিক্ষা রসও তথ্যালাই মনন গাড়ি আর শিক্ষার বহুল নিজের কর্ম রোক্ষ ও সমাজের স্তরীতি শিক্ষা পানের মান্য অধিকার সুনিশ্চিত গরে নেপাল সরকারের সাথে আলাদান গাড়িয়ে।

১৯. রাষ্ট্রীয় কর্মকান্ডের লাগো দীর্ঘম স্তরীতি প্রথম কেন্দ্র প্রার্থনিক কোষের কারণে মান্য হয়। অধিকরণ বিশিষ্ট মূল্যন্তর (LDCs)গুলি সমূহালি উদ্বেগের দীর্ঘম বিজ্ঞ হভিস গননা লাগিয়া যো অপর উপস্থাপন হয়। তারপর অধিকরণ বিশিষ্ট মূল্যন্তরগুলি মূল্যন্তর মাধ্যম আর ভাষ্ক মূল্যন্তর (MICs) তর সংক্রান্ত গারিহেকার অন্য মূল্যন্তর জাতী নেপালের পিন আনন্দ নির্দেশ অধিক বৃহত্তর লাগি শান্তি ও রাষ্ট্রীয় প্রযুক্তি কামাম রাহু জগতি ছ। সাময়ি, নেপালের অধিক বৃহত্ত ও সাবা সমূহালি গো প্রদান গরে মন্ত্রালাই যোগজনকে সাহায্য পাড়িয়ে। তারপর, অধিকরণ বিশিষ্ট মূল্যন্তরগুলি সমূহালি স্তরীতি তথা সন ২০৩০ সমস্যা নেপালালি এক স্প্যার ও মাধ্যম আর ভাষ্ক মূল্যন্তর (MICs) শূন্য বিশিষ্ট গননা লাগিয়া দিয়া বিকাস লক্ষ্যহো, ইস্তান্বিত কার্যক্ষেত্র লাগায়ত অণু অন্তরীণ রূপন সহমত বিকাস লক্ষ্যহো সমস্যা রাষ্ট্রীয় কার্য যোগজনাহো একীকরণ ও লিনকে প্রাধান্যক করাতো গননা লাগিয়া দিয়া নেপাল নয়া সম্প্রদায় আদায়হো অধিকরণ মূল্যন্তর গননা লাগিয়া দিয়া নেপাল সরকার, রাষ্ট্রীয় দলহো ও অণু সমাবেশিত সম্প্রদায় সরকার সরকার হোলাই আহ্বান গাড়িয়ে।
Annex: Istanbul Programme of Action (in Brief)

San 2011-2020 Ko Darsakka Laagi Aftikam Vikisit Mulukhahkoo

Istanaanbul Karyayojoona


Samag Lakhbait Nirdeeshtu Huude Darsakko Abhadhma Aftikam Vikisit Mulukhahkoo Saptiitiy Niittahro R Antarragitiy Sahyoogaka Upayahulle San 2000 Sam Aftikam Vikisit Mulukhahkoo Aada Sankhalai Strooantikaa Laagi Sakhram Banauune Udreeshyle Nimm Vikoya Udreeshyaadu Joud Dinhe:


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Istanaanbul Karyayojoonako Kabandhaka Prathamik Kshetrahru

Nimna Wamoojimkaa Prathamikantaka Kshetrahru Kaabandhii Sankhalal Gareenye:

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• युवा विकास
• आवास
• पानी तथा सरसफाई
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• आधिकारिक विकास सहायता
• वाह्य क्रान
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• विप्रेषण

ज. सबै तहहरूमा सुशासन
Annex: Photos