Statement by Hon’ble Kamal Thapa, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal, at the plenary of the Comprehensive Highlevel Midterm Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the decade 2011-2020

Antalya, Turkey, 27 May 2016

Mr. Chairman,

It is my honour to be here in this beautiful city of Antalya for the comprehensive midterm review of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs for the decade 2011-2020. I would like to express my deep appreciation to the Government and people of the Republic of Turkey for so generously hosting this important event and for providing us with the excellent hospitality, back to back with the first ever World Humanitarian Summit. Allow me also to put on record our sincere appreciation to the Government of Turkey for their continued interest in, and support for, the cause of the LDCs.

I thank the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, as well as the Secretary-General of the Conference, USG Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya and his team for the preparation of the midterm review. I also wish to take this opportunity to thank the PRs of Belgium and Benin for their expert guidance as co-facilitators during the inter-governmental negotiations in the run up to this conference. I commend the role of Bangladesh as Chair of the global coordinating bureau of the LDCs throughout the process.

Mr. Chairman,

Five years ago, in Istanbul, we agreed to the ambitious goal of enabling half of the LDCs to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020. I recall with pleasure that Nepal had the honour to steer the negotiations on IPOA as Chair of the global coordination bureau of LDCs. For this purpose, we also set priorities and articulated specific goals and targets, along with the actions to be undertaken by the LDCs and their development partners. Yet, the full implementation of the IPOA still remains a challenge.

Nepal stresses the need of effective, full and timely implementation of the IPOA in coherence and synergies with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other landmark achievements made last year. For this, the national efforts need to be complemented by adequate international support measures in all pillars including ODA, investments, trade and technology transfer. Addressing structural problems, building productive capacities, and enhancing trade and investment continue to be in our agenda.

More importantly, the IPOA implementation should help overcome the shortcomings due to which only four LDCs could graduate since 1971, when the group was created. It should also serve as the guide to our collaboration with development partners, and to forging solidarity in the international forums. In this context, the importance of the mid-term review of the IPOA cannot be overemphasized.
During the review exercise, we have reflected on the progress made, together with the best practices, and agreed for a way forward for the remaining period to fully implement the IPOA. Since the second half of the IPOA implementation period coincides with the first five years of the 2030 Agenda, it is important to gear up all national, regional and international efforts in tandem.

Mr. Chairman,

In all our efforts, poverty comes on the way as the main hurdle. For example, the abject and widespread poverty in the LDCs makes every day look like a day in the disaster for many people in those countries. Poverty and exclusion foster the breeding ground for conflicts. Together, the increasingly adverse effects of climate change and frequent natural disasters give rise to frequent humanitarian crises in our countries. These often take away the lives and livelihood of our people, reverse our development gains and diminish the economic prospects. Building long-term resilience to disasters must therefore receive priority in line with the recently agreed relevant instruments.

Poverty in LDCs also restricts their technological advancement – a direct enabler of development. While the existing and emerging crises and challenges pose serious threats to their socio-economic progress, the lack of technology base tends to keep them marginalized from the new opportunities. It is in this context that we need to ensure that the Technology Bank operates and evolves as a mechanism for necessary support for the LDCs.

Mr. Chairman,

Nepal was making all efforts to implement the IPOA and we were on a right track on making good progress. We have integrated the IPOA into our development programs as well as periodic plans. Soon after the IPOA was adopted, Nepal set a goal for itself to graduate by 2022. Nepal even met the two of the three criteria for graduation for the first time the other year.

Unfortunately, the earthquakes of April and May last year, the obstruction in supplies for several months at the southern border points affected the entire economy, resulting into a humanitarian crisis in the country. Against this backdrop, our goal of smooth and sustainable graduation has become all the more challenging.

The cost of recovery from the earthquakes alone has been estimated at 8.38 billion US dollars. The reconstruction works that aim at ‘building back better’ will require more resources, time and strong partnership. We have started the reconstruction in earnest and are confident that, with enhanced and sustained international support, we will build back better and smarter. To this end, the Government has already adopted a post-disaster recover framework.

I wish to inform this meeting that, with the promulgation of a rights-based, progressive and inclusive constitution in September 2015, soon after the earthquakes, Nepal has entered into a new era of hope and confidence for national development. The development agenda has now come to the fore with the logical conclusion of the peace process and protracted political transition in the country.
We are now in the process of finalizing a new periodic plan for the country, incorporating the 2030 Agenda. We share the common vision of the world as set out in the 2030 Agenda and other important instruments. We have already begun to integrate them into our development plans and processes. Obviously, the need for constant support for the cause of the LDCs was never greater. The means of implementation, including the resources, technology and partnership to be further enhanced in view of the broader recognition of our challenges as well as potentials. While we remain committed to mobilizing the domestic resources to the extent possible, the narrow resources base and limited economic activities compel us to seek a meaningful global partnership to mobilize required resources for development financing.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to conclude by stressing, once again, the importance of the full implementation of IPOA for the LDCs, and expressing the confidence that, through the Outcome of this review conference, which I understand is a comprehensive and forward-looking document, the momentum generated five years ago in Istanbul will be maintained and that the IPOA will be implemented with commensurate resources, technology and partnerships, for the benefit of nearly 900 million people in the LDCs.

Thank you very much.