

Speech Delivered by Honorable Girirajmani Pokharal,
Minister for Education, Science and Technology
at the 40th General Conference of UNESCO
Paris, France, 16th November 2019

Mr. President of the General Conference
Madam Director General
Honorable Ministers
Your Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates

Let me begin with mentioning sacred phrases from the Veda and Upanishad- the ancient holy scriptures:

असतो मा सद्गमय ॥:

तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ॥

Which means-

- Lead us forward from an unreal phenomenon to the reality of the world,
- Transfer us from an unconscious state of darkness to the enlightenment of knowledge.

These phrases amplify the UNESCO's noble cause, its mission and goals.

Mr. President,

1. On behalf of the Government of Nepal, I would like to express my sincere congratulations and best wishes to you on your election as the President of the 40th General Conference and also wish for every success during your presidency.

My sincere appreciation goes to Madame Director General for your genuine efforts in guiding and reorienting the strategies of UNESCO for promoting world peace, prosperity and meeting challenges of the 21st century.

2. Allow me to mention that Nepal promulgated a new Constitution in 2015 that has a right-based approach at its core. In line with UNESCO's vision, the Constitution recognizes education as a fundamental right of every citizen. With the spirit of the Constitution, the Parliament of Nepal passed the Free and Compulsory Education Act in 2018, which is being implemented through various measures.
3. Nepal is now chairing the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Through this platform, the *Education 2030: SAARC Framework for Action* has been adopted during the Ministerial Meeting held in the Maldives last October. The adoption of the Framework is a testimony to the solidarity among member states in ensuring the universal right to education in the region.

Mr. President,

4. Nepal is fully committed to achieve the SDGs. Guided by the Global and SAARC-SDG Framework, the Government of Nepal has recently formulated its *SDG-4 National Framework*, which provides an overarching framework for the country to ensure inclusive access to quality education for all children and lifelong learning opportunities for the people. The framework clearly encompasses strategies from early childhood development to the higher education.
5. I am glad to mention that Nepal is moving ahead with the aim of graduating to the status of the developing countries by 2022 and to become a middle-income country by 2030. Nepal aims to achieve its long-term vision of “*Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali*” under the leadership of the Right Honourable Mr. KP Sharma Oli, Prime Minister of Nepal. This vision is guided by the holy chanting of Veda and Upanishad:

सर्वेभवन्तुसुखिनःसर्वेसन्तुनिरामयाः, सर्वेभद्राणिपश्यन्तु माकश्चिद दुखः भाग्भवेत्।	Which means- May all be happy, May all be free from illness and see what is auspicious, and May no one suffer.
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6. As we all know that Nepal lost many lives, properties and public infrastructures due to the devastating earthquakes of 2015. Preservation and safeguarding of the tangible and intangible heritages are our national priorities. The country has been putting all efforts to reconstructing private houses, cultural heritages and public properties including schools and hospitals. Despite adverse geographic and implementation challenges, Nepal is on the track of completing the recovery plan by 2020.

Mr. President,

7. Nepal is committed to develop the ethical and professional journalism in the country by ensuring right to expression, information and communication. However, the misuse of IT and online system have posed negative impact in promoting healthy and honoured journalism.
8. To meet its SDG commitments, developing science and technology is one of the priorities of the Government. In this regard, Nepal promotes innovation and research on science and technology and encourages young scientists to take lead to promote science and technology in the country. The STEM education has been considered as a focused area for school and higher education system in Nepal. We are also exploring ways to foster the Artificial Intelligence (AI) with a view to utilize it for the benefit of the people of Nepal.
9. As a Himalayan country with its rich natural resources and cultural heritages, we are encountering high risk of adverse impacts caused by climate change, global warming and environmental degradation. We believe that these adverse impacts can only be mitigated through our joint efforts.

Mr. President,

10. I conclude with reciting the four truths of life that mentioned in the preaches of Lord Buddha, which are;

- The truth of suffering (Dukkha)
- The truth of the origin of suffering (Samudaya)
- The truth of the termination of suffering (Nirodha)
- The truth of the path to the cessation of suffering (Magga)

According to Buddha's teachings, the liberation from those suffering are:

- right intention,
- right speech,
- right actions,
- right livelihood,
- right effort,
- right mindfulness, and
- right concentration.

11. Last but not the least, I would also like to take this opportunity to invite Mr. President, Madam Director General, Honourable Ministers and all other dignitaries to visit Nepal next year and enjoy the natural beauties and unique landscapes of Nepal including highest peaks of the world-The **Mt. Everest**, Lord Buddha's Birth Place-**Lumbini** and Holy Shrines-**Pashupatinath** and **Janakpur** as the Government of Nepal has declared 2020 as the **Visit Nepal Year**.

I thank you all.