

**Statement by H.E. Gyan Chandra Acharya, Ambassador/Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations and the Chair of the Global Coordination Bureau of LDCs, in the Pre-Conference Event on “Reducing Vulnerability due to Climate Change, Climate Variability and Extremes, Land Degradation and Bio-Diversity Loss: Challenges and Opportunities for LDCs”, New York, 28 February 2011**

Honourable Minister of the Gambia and the Chair of LDC Group under UNFCCC

Honourable Ministers

High Representative Ambassador Diarra

Ambassador Apakan, Permanent Representative of Turkey

Mr. William Kojo Agyemang-Bonsu, Senior Representative from UNFCCC

Excellencies,

Distinguished Representatives

At the outset, let me express, as the Chair of the LDC Group, my deep appreciation to UNFCCC and UN-OHRLLS for organizing this important pre-conference event as an integral part of the ongoing preparatory process for the Fourth LDC Conference which is being held in Turkey in May this year. The theme that has been chosen for this event is, in fact, one of the key priority areas of LDCs for the next Programme of Action which is currently under negotiation with our development partners. This was also the priority issue under commitment 7 in the Brussels Programme of Action. But the urgency and the scale of impacts have made this an issue of preeminence to the LDCs in particular.

We all know that the LDCs as a group contribute least to global warming. Reports indicate that they account for less than 1 per cent of the world’s total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; however, they are disproportionately affected by changing climatic conditions. The impact of climate change is experienced in LDCs in the form of desertification, land degradation, and loss of biodiversity, forests and other natural habitats. Climate change has also impacted these countries in terms of increased food insecurity, increased energy constraints, rising sea level, melting of glaciers and degrading coastal livelihoods, infrastructure and environment. As a consequence of climate change, economic growth, poverty alleviation efforts, the achievement of MDGs and sustainable development in the LDCs are at stake. Yet LDCs has the least capacity and resources to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change. To some of us, it has been an existential threat; some others there is a slow motion yet compounded threat to the livelihood of the people.

It is important to note that the outcome of the COP 16 session of UNFCCC held in Cancun, Mexico in December 2010 made some decisions that are of particular interest to the LDCs, Even though we have yet to see a commitment to an ambitious reduction targets, the meeting accorded some priority to the LDCs for adaptation funding under the "fast start finance"; created the Green Climate Fund with the participation of the LDCs in transitional management; extended the mandate of LDC expert group; and initiated a process to prepare and implement medium and long-term adaptation plans, among others. However, the easy and

quicker access to and the adequacy of these funds and mechanisms to respond to the needs and challenges of LDCs have yet to be fully ensured.

LDCs comprise of small island states, countries with fragile mountain ecosystems and countries with severe livelihood constraints as they depend entirely on rainfall for their agriculture. Similarly, they are also countries with growing deserts, deltaic land and prone to floods and disasters. It is a matter of grave concern that according to one estimate, for every 1°-Celsius rise in average global temperatures, average annual growth in poor countries could drop by 2–3 percentage points with cumulative impacts because of their lack of adaptation capacity, against hardly a change in the growth performance in the developed countries.

LDC Report 2010 documents that the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events in LDCs (e.g. droughts, extreme temperature and floods) have been increasing, with five times as many such incidents occurring during the period 2000–2010 as during the period 1970–1979. The number of people in LDCs affected by these extreme events has almost doubled, rising from 100 million during the period 1970–1979 to 193 million over the period 2000–2010. During the period 2000-2010, economic losses in LDCs resulting from natural disasters amounted to an estimated \$14.1 billion.

As a result of climate change, there is an existential threat in many of the pacific LDCs, as most of their lands are closer to the sea level. Rising sea level, growing Stalination of their fresh water resources, depletion of seaborne resources and damage to the coastal infrastructure and livelihoods challenges are real and imminent. In other regions in Africa and Asia, the impact of the climate change is also causing erratic or unseasonal rainfalls, modifications in rainy season food crop production practice, shorter growing seasons and increased flooding. For other LDCs, reduced rainfall has resulted in longer dry seasons, drought, desertification and unviable agricultural production in the areas of subsistence farming. In the absence of significant adaptation efforts, their economies and food security is already being adversely affected.

Global warming has also precipitated snow melts in the Himalayas. More than one billion people depend upon the rivers flowing down from the Himalayas. About two dozen of our glacial lakes could outburst any time causing huge loss of lives and property. Changing weather patterns have started affecting agricultural production and food security. Flash floods, landslides, untimely rainfall and delayed monsoon have become common problems, often leading to the displacement of people and loss of livelihoods.

Changing climate has further led to the deterioration of the soil ecosystem and biodiversity in LDCs. According to the OHRLLS Report 2009, mangroves and coral reefs, the main coastal ecosystems in Africa, will probably be affected. Endangered species including migratory birds will face higher risk of extinction. A forecast of climate change scenario leads to 10-15% of African mammals fall under World Conservation Union's list of critically endangered or extinct categories by 2050. More than 50,000 hectares of coastal land has already been damaged by floods in Asia and, with a one meter sea level rise, many Asian species, such as Bengal tigers, Indian otters, estuarine crocodiles and mud crabs, will be at the risk of extinction. Likewise, human health has been affected with new strains and virulence of diseases. As such, our progress in the attainment of MDGs and related targets in LDCs are being slowed down.

Similarly, climate change and biodiversity are interconnected. When biodiversity is affected it negatively affects human wellbeing and livelihood. The recent meeting of parties to the convention on biodiversity held in Nagoya, Japan also highlighted that there is an alarming loss of biodiversity at the global, regional and national levels and that we have not been able to meet many of the biodiversity related targets and goals. They are more severe in countries with less capacity and those that depend heavily on natural ecosystem for their livelihoods. Therefore we have to look at the biodiversity based adaptive and mitigative strategies.

Changing climate has further resulted in soil erosion in LDCs. About 46% of LDCs in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia suffer the worst form of desertification. Land degradation in African LDCs such as Burkina Faso, Burundi, Eritrea, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo and Uganda is a serious threat for the livelihoods of their farmers. Among the Asian LDCs, Afghanistan, Nepal and Yemen are in the worst situations in terms of land degradation, where severely degraded land ranges from 13.3 percent to 16.6 percent of total land area.

Most Asian LDCs either have little forest cover or are on the verge of losing their natural forests. With a few exceptions such as Bhutan in Asia and Gambia, Lesotho, Rwanda in Africa, LDCs have lost considerable area of their forestland from 1990 to 2005. As a result, the rate of biodiversity loss has become alarming.

Some of the sectors that are particularly vulnerable to climate change include water, agriculture, human health, tourism, fisheries, and so on. Livelihood activities of millions of people in Bangladesh, Maldives, and Sub-Saharan Africa will be affected worst. Agriculture in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa will be severely affected with a threat to food security. As a consequence of sea level rise due to global warming, many will become 'climate refugees' in coastal and pacific island states, and may turn out to be unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe in modern history.

Any response to the challenges of climate change in LDCs, including reorienting their economies towards more climate-resilient and ecologically sustainable growth paths calls for a significant mobilization of financial resources and technical cooperation in a comprehensive manner and on a sustainable basis. The key question is that these resources would have to be proportionate to the level of challenge and additional to those required to meet existing social and economic development needs. It is unthinkable that LDCs will be able to meet the financial costs of climate change adaptation and mitigation without dedicated and substantial external contributions from the international community. The challenge is to do so now and ensure its sustainability.

In particular, we have taken note that a Fast-Start Finance of \$ 30 billion for the period 2010-12 and a target of \$100 billion by 2020 have been agreed with a priority funding for adaptation for the most vulnerable countries like LDCs. Now that we are already in the year 2011, we must have a quicker and fuller disbursement of the Fast track funds to ensure that commitments are fully implemented. As far as LDCs' representation in the governing body of the climate funds and mechanisms are concerned, the 40-member Transitional Committee established for making the Green Climate Fund operational has two LDC representatives, and the 20-member Technology Executive Committee for the promotion of technology development and transfer has one member represented from among LDCs. While we appreciate the voice and

representation of LDCs in these mechanisms, we would like to see that the concerns and needs of LDCs are also duly taken into account when specific operational issues and programs are discussed and finalized in these processes.

As we have been actively engaged ourselves in the negotiations with our development partners for genuine partnership for the next programme of action for the LDCs, we call for due attention to the following:

**On Climate Change:**

The early conclusion of a legally-binding international instrument with ambitious mitigation targets to succeed Kyoto Protocol is urgently needed than ever before. We cannot wait for that any longer, as the threats from climate change are real and it is already affecting us. Deeper and quicker commitments to cut green house gas emissions should start so that we do not suffer from irreparable loss of livelihoods and catastrophes,

The promised fast-track finance must be fully and quickly implemented in order to support mitigation, adaptation, transfer of technology, REDD+ and capacity-building programs in LDCs. Priority must be accorded to the LDCs and their programs should be supported on a sustainable basis.

More support and funds should be made available for those countries with least capacity to respond to this great challenge. In this context, the easy and quick access to the LDC Fund and the Adaptation fund should be ensured. Similarly, the Green Climate Change Fund has to ensure substantial and dedicated funds to the LDCs in order to provide more meaningful support to LDCs in this area. There should be adequacy, transparency and predictability and fairness and equity in resource allocation in order to address the vulnerabilities of LDCs due to climate change.

And finally, the representation of LDCs, as a principle of fairness and equity, has to be ensured in all funds, mechanisms and bodies.

**On Biodiversity and LDCs**

As we prepare for the implementation of the new ten year strategic plan with 20 targets and five strategic goals together with a resource mobilization strategy to support biodiversity, LDCs should be given due importance for support and capacity building. The LDCs face mounting challenges when we look at the protection of biodiversity from the perspective of livelihood and poverty alleviation.

Secondly, as we signed the Nagoya protocol on access to genetic resources and fair and equitable sharing of genetic resources, its implementation should ensure preservation and due benefits to the LDCs.

**On Extreme land degradation and LDCs,**

As desertification, drought and degradation are more severe in LDCs, we should ensure that there is a holistic approach to resolve these problems. All LDCs depend to a large extent on agriculture or land based resources, therefore protection of land is a key priority. Food insecurity and extreme poverty have become a largest threat to LDCs and by extension to the global community. Therefore they should be given due priority in providing new technology, capacity building, research assistance and best practices and financing them through global support so that we can protect our livelihoods.

Integrated approach to protect agriculture, forestry, soil conservation, and study of hydro and geological basins, new farming system must include LDCs as priority as they lack the necessary capacity to analyze and use them on a sustainable basis. Besides they have to protect them now from the vagaries of climate change.

In conclusion, one of the defining characteristics of the LDCs is that they are all extremely vulnerable to shocks and volatility, with deep structural constraints and extreme lack of capacity. These volatilities and constraints both endogenous and exogenous have grown over the period. Now the extreme vulnerability due to the combined effects of climate change, land degradation and loss of biodiversity is wreaking havoc in the LDCs, who do not have the capacity to withstand such effects and who depend so much on natural resources for their livelihoods. That is the major challenge for us. It is impacting on our ability to reduce poverty and sustainable pattern of livelihood.

But there is also an opportunity before us. Today, there is sensitization and there are dedicated structures and institutions to deal with them. Now what we have to make sure is that they are focused in their tasks, they deliver with dedicated programs on the needs of the most vulnerable group like LDCs and they are provided with the necessary financial resources to carry out urgent tasks on a sustainable basis. The international community will be failing in its basic responsibility and duty, if it were to neglect the plights of the LDCs.

I sincerely hope that the deliberations of this pre-conference event today will give due consideration to all these aspects of in a concrete yet in a holistic manner. I expect that substantive and deliverable policy measures will come out of this event to contribute to the outcome of the Fourth LDC Conference.

Thank you.