

Remarks by the Foreign Minister Hon. N. P. Saud at the 76<sup>th</sup>

Anniversary of Nepal Council of World Affairs (NCWA),

29 February 2024

President of Nepal Council of World Affairs,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and gentlemen:

I wish to start by extending sincere thanks to Nepal Council of World Affairs for inviting me to inaugurate the 76th anniversary of its foundation. I also wish to congratulate the NCWA for reaching the important milestone. May this institution be able to continue with the tradition of quality discourse and rich deliberation on matters of world affairs and foreign policy.

**Dear Friends,**

The top priority of any country's foreign policy is to serve its national interest through external engagements. The Constitution of Nepal stipulates that safeguarding of the freedom, sovereignty, territorial integrity, nationality, independence and dignity of Nepal, the rights of the Nepali people, border security, economic wellbeing and prosperity shall be the basic elements of the national interest of Nepal.

Likewise, under the Policies of the State of the Constitution, it is mentioned that the country will conduct an independent foreign policy based on the Charter of the United Nations, non-alignment, principles of Panchasheel, international law and the norms of world peace, taking into consideration of the overall interest of the nation.

We are guided by these overarching pronouncements in the exercise of our foreign policy.

In our external engagements, relations with our neighbours are always our priority. We seek to maintain friendly, harmonious and cooperative ties with the neighbours based on mutual trust and respect.

Our cooperative relations with both the neighbouring countries are deep and diverse, which is natural given the proximity. Historically an entrepot between the vast territories on both sides of the Himalayas, Nepal wants to take advantage of the rapid pace and scale of economic prosperity and transformation taking place in the neighborhood.

Enhanced connectivity, trade and investment are priority areas in our engagements with both neighbours.

With India, we already have a vast network of connectivity that comprises of cross border roads, railways, petroleum pipeline and transmission lines. We are continuously working to improve these hardware infrastructures as well as software of trade and transit facilitation at the border. As reflected in the outcomes of the visit of Right Honorable Prime Minister to India last year and the visit of the External Affairs Minister of India to Nepal this year reflect that the relations are moving in a positive trajectory, with focus on economic deliverables of mutual benefit.

With China also, we seek to enhance economic cooperation, trade and connectivity. During the visit of Right Honorable Prime Minister to China last year, there was a positive understanding on a number of areas.

The relations with major world powers and our valued development partners are also our priority. Nepal is set to graduate from the status of Least developed Country in 2026. To make this milestone of developmental transformation sustainable, we need enhanced level of economic cooperation from our partners.

Likewise, engagements with countries of destinations of foreign employment for our nationals is equally vital for us. A large segment of our population is outside the country. Our focus is on protection and promotion of their rights and welfare abroad as well as keeping them connected to homeland.

We believe in constructive multilateralism to serve our collective interests. Nepal remains actively engaged in the multilateral forums. Our faith in the principles and purposes of the UN Charter is unwavering. We consider United Nations as the centre of multilateralism to deliberate on global issues of common concerns.

Nepal has made significant contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security through the exemplary participation in the UN mandated peace operations. At present, we are the largest troop and police contributing country to the UN peace operations. Nepali peacekeepers have proven their competence as highly professional and dedicated servicemen.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Nepal is a consistent advocate of fair, rules-based and predictable international order that ensures peace, stability and justice. We have demanded that global trade and economic architecture should be inclusive, democratic and enabling for the resource-constrained countries. Nepal is currently the Chair of the Group of Least Developed Countries in the UN system.

The birthplace of the Buddha, the apostle of peace and non-violence, Nepal values the norms of world peace as the fundamental basis of its foreign policy. We firmly believe that any dispute should be resolved through dialogue and peaceful means.

We continue to maintain principled and independent position on major issues of global concern.

Nepal remains firmly committed to the implementation of Paris Agreement on climate change, which is evidenced in the robust national plan to decarbonize Nepal's economy and to reach a net zero emission by 2045.

We have been urging the international community to recognize the specific climate vulnerability in the mountains and accord high priority to the mountain agenda in all climate-related negotiations.

Regional cooperation is one of the major attributes of Nepal's foreign policy. We have been pursuing such cooperation through regional initiatives including South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and the sub regional framework between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) which is focused on two crucial areas of connectivity and energy cooperation. We are also a member of Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) and have dialogue partner status in Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

### **Dear Friends,**

With the shifting power balance, the world is facing a new geopolitical contest, leading to the uncertainty about the kind of world arrangement we are going to see in the next 10 or 20 years. We are not sure if the current world order will hold. Neither are we sure about the nature, structure, characters and acceptability of the alternative arrangements.

Under these circumstances, small and less resourceful countries are finding it increasingly difficult to navigate. Constraints and conditions under which we operate are getting tougher.

Shaping up and conduct of our foreign policy, therefore, requires nuanced judgement and shrewd calculation. We need a fine balance between values and pragmatism.

We need to be aware that our ability to influence international politics through military and economic means is not viable. Active diplomacy, therefore, continues to remain the only available tool at our disposal.

In today's world, economy has become the top constituent of a country's national power and international stature. For every country, big or small, economic interest is often overriding every other consideration. Our focus should, therefore, be on serving the country's economic interest through FDI, trade, development cooperation and mobilization of other resources as well as better connectivity, regionally and globally. Economic strength can help us overcome many other challenges emanating from being small or landlocked.

I conclude, Ladies and Gentlemen, by thanking you once again for this opportunity of engagement. I wish NCWA successful years ahead.

Thank you.