

Mr. Chair, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honor and privilege to be here in this august gathering to discuss on A Way Forward to finalize the New Urban Agenda for the next two decades. On behalf of Government of Nepal and my delegates, allow me to extend deep gratitude to UN-Habitat for its warm invitation and hospitality bestowed to my delegates and me.

Let me begin by stating that Nepal is steadily emerging out of the shadow of past internal conflict. It is now heartening to note that semblance of social stability has come to prevail. Despite differences, political efforts are in continuous progress to write a new constitution and guide Nepal into an inclusive and modern society.

The path to resurrecting prosperity continues to remain daunting in this post-conflict phase. Furthermore, challenges of growing urban poverty, water in-security being induced from the climate change and degrading environment resulting from the growing urbanization continue to pose concerns to us. Therefore we have been continuously emphasizing and embarked on implementing National Urban Policy of 2007. Further to expedite its implementation, we have also accomplished preparing National Urban Development Strategy, 2015. We believe that our relentless pursuit in implementing these policies and strategies will enable us in our quest for building inclusive, resilient, sustainable and prosperous urban communities. And we believe that the *mantra* in this effort is forging collaboration between government and civil societies, non-government organizations and private sectors.

The interim constitution of 2007 recognizes housing as one of the fundamental rights of a citizen and surely the same will be ensured in

new constitution too. After the Habitat-II Declaration in Istanbul, the National Shelter Policy, 1996 was revised in 2012, to address the new challenges of slums, rental housing and housing for internally displaced and that of the Economically Weaker Section. For providing housing solution to the Economically Weaker Section, poor and marginalized communities, Government has been implementing *Peoples' Housing Program* (popularly called *Janta Awas*) since 2009. Approximately six thousand households have so far benefitted from this program. Also, to house urban ultra-poor living in the flood plains of the Bagmati River in Kathmandu, Government has initiated construction of affordable apartment buildings. The Government also continues to facilitate the private sectors to promote apartment buildings and organized housings through the Apartment Ownership Act, 1997. It is now working on the policies related to the rental and co-operative housing to meet the growing housing demands of the middle and the low-income people. To aid the housing production, Rural Housing Company was restructured into the National Housing Company in 2012. Several Town Development Committees are also involved in producing serviced plots. So far, around 700 hectares of land has been developed through land pooling. Likewise, 475 km of road expansion has been done through the Guided Land Development scheme. This participatory land pooling as well as Guided Land Development scheme have now become a formidable urban development and financing tool for us—that are widely being replicated across the country.

Our efforts in urban planning and development remain guided largely by the national urban policy, which among other things seeks to channel investment to the backward regions as well as towards the regional cities

and secondary towns. Financing still remains a matter of contention owing to a weak revenue generating capacity of local bodies. This has led us to pursue a collaborative effort to finance urban infrastructures. Government, donor partners, local bodies and beneficiaries come to forge a partnership to share the financing and improve delivery of basic infrastructure services. These include water supply, sanitation, solid waste management, roads and community development programs. Already more than 220 million US Dollars worth of Urban Environment Improvement and Urban Governance Development Program are being implemented in about 16 municipalities spread across the country. More municipalities are being appraised to assess the infrastructure deficit.

Besides these efforts, the Government is also continuously working on mainstreaming and reducing the risk of climate change and natural disasters. Nepal's vulnerability to natural disasters such as earthquake, flood and landslides has already been exposed with the flurry of events in the recent past. Each event only demonstrates the significance of community awareness in reducing the risk and vulnerabilities. Hence, much emphasis has been laid on preparing and implementing community based disaster risk reduction programs accompanied by institution building at all layers and sectors of government. Side by side, we are constantly pursuing to implement National Building Code (NBC) to build earthquake resistant buildings. And we have also embarked on effort to prepare and enforce risk sensitive land use plans in the Kathmandu Valley. Given these challenges of urbanization and growing complexities of cities, the Government has created a separate Ministry of Urban Development in 2012 to deal with them. Moreover, we are also continuously striving to formulate evidence based urban policies and

actions. Therefore, we are working towards creating a *Knowledge Hub Center* in collaboration with Institute of Engineering in Kathmandu. We strongly believe that a regional cooperation in sharing knowledge and experiences can be immensely useful to find a right solution to manage urban growth in our countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen, amidst all these burgeoning urban issues, we have decided that this time, we want to go forward with the theme of '**Inclusive Cities: Resilient Communities**' in the 'National Plan of Action' to be presented in the Habitat-3 conference. We believe that these values form the core of sustainable urban planning and development—that we have been cherishing for long.

Thank you.