Statement by Hon’ble Mr. Mahendra Bahadur Pandey, Minister for Foreign Affairs at the High-Level Forum of LLDCs on the theme "Linking Landlocked Developing Countries into Global Opportunities" New York, 28 September 2015

Mr. Chairman,
Their Excellencies the Heads of State/Government
H.E. the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS
Distinguished Delegates:

It is indeed an honour and privilege for me to participate in this high-level forum. At the outset, I would like to express my deep appreciation to the delegation of the Republic of Zambia for providing a dynamic leadership as the chair of the group of Landlocked Developing Countries. My thanks are also due to H.E. Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS for the contribution of his office to the cause of the LLDCs.

This meeting follows the adoption of Vienna Programme of Action in November last year, Livingstone Call for Action in June and Addis Ababa Action Agenda in July this year. Moreover, it is taking place in the immediate aftermath of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. The special needs and concerns of the LLDCs have been reflected in all these documents. The theme of this high-level forum seems to be highly opportune and relevant in the sense that the Vienna Programme of Action also lays emphasis on connecting the LLDCs to the global market with promotion of economic diversification, structural transformation, connectivity to global value chains and regional integration.

Mr. Chairman,

The development of linkage between the LLDCs and the global opportunities constitutes the key challenge confronting the LLDCs. The LLDCs, like any other country, have to look for opportunities based on their respective
comparative advantages in areas such as trade, investment, tourism, foreign employment, etc.

The issues and prospects for linkage have been well articulated in the VPoA. It highlights the significance of the development and maintenance of transit transport infrastructure, information and communications technology and energy infrastructure for the LLDCs. To achieve this, it is essential to develop and maintain roads, railways; distribution of modern and renewable energy services; open and affordable access to internet by addressing the issue of digital divide; promotion of regional trade, transport and communication networks; and harmonious national policies for regional synergy.

Development of transportation infrastructure linking the LLDCs with the transit countries plays a vital role in linking the former with opportunities available at a global level. Closing the transport infrastructure gap, however, remains a daunting challenge in this regard.

Similarly, extensive use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is a must in enhancing the capacities of LLDCs to avail themselves of the global opportunities present in the form of trade and investment, among others.

Harmonization of procedures seamlessly integrates economies enhancing the ease of doing business, reducing cost and expanding opportunities.

We believe that the implementation of VPOA has the potential to significantly transform the lives of people in the LLDCs. The Government of Nepal is, therefore, committed to integrating the programme of actions as elaborated in the VPoA into our national plan and endeavours. We have been trying our best to integrate the Vienna programme of action adopted in partnership with transit countries as well as development partners into our plans and programmes. The current development plan accords top priority to infrastructure development and connectivity improvement. We also intend to continue it in the reconstruction works being undertaken following the
devastation caused by the earthquake in April 2015. We also hope that the VPoA will be seriously implemented by the transit countries as well as development partners.

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda recognizes the importance of addressing the diverse needs and challenges faced by the LLDCs and reaffirms the need to structurally transform their economies including through harnessing benefits from international trade, and developing efficient transport and transit systems. This is certainly a welcome commitment. Its implementation, however, will be a big challenge.

Connectivity of transport infrastructure from the neighboring countries across the border has provided us important leverage. However, there is a need for more infrastructure links, without any hindrance of any kind, to ensure our integration with the vibrant economic growth of the neighboring countries and beyond.

We are of the view that bilateral, sub-regional and regional approaches to transit and transport cooperation can go a long way in providing more efficient and competitive choices to LLDCs including my own country, Nepal. We are effortful in developing and engaging in such approaches.

At the regional and international levels, our efforts should be geared towards ensuring the integration of the VPoA’s priorities and activities into the programs and strategies of transit countries and development partners, in particular in their aid, trade and development strategies.

Mr. Chairman,

The ownership and integration of the VPoA into the development strategies at national level is of prime importance. Understanding of the transit countries, support of the development partners as well as multilateral development institutions and involvement of the private sector and other stakeholders will significantly contribute towards enhancing the capacity of the LLDCs to benefit from the global opportunities.
LLDCs need an enhanced level of foreign direct investment for infrastructure development. There is a need for a mechanism to encourage transnational companies to invest in LLDCs in the areas of infrastructure and productive sectors that create employment, generate exports and encourage optimum use of local resources.

In the context that the 2030 agenda has expressed support for the implementation of VPoA, there is an urgent need for the broader collaboration for the implementation of the programme of Action for the benefit of the LLDCs.

The UN system has been an important support mechanism for the LLDCs. The initiatives taken by the UN have been catalytic not only in identifying the challenges confronting the LLDCs but also in proposing the programme of actions to address them and mobilizing necessary support. We are confident that it will also be able to come up with ambitious plan and mechanism for the implementation of all commitments of support expressed in favour of the LLDCs.

Mr. Chairman,

To conclude, our common concerns and constraints have brought us together at this forum to share our perspectives. The deliberations here truly reflect the inherent challenges, common commitment as well as resolve of the LLDCs to make a difference in the lives of about 450 million peoples in our countries. I am confident that this meeting will come out with productive and valuable outcome.

Thank you very much!