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STATEMENT BY
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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NEPAL
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ON
AGENDA ITEM 28: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN
OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE
OF 65TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
(NEW YORK, 13 OCTOBER, 2010)

Mr. Chairman,

Since my delegation is taking the floor for the first time in this Committee, let me begin by extending my congratulations to you and other members of the bureau on your respective elections. I would like to assure you of my delegation's fullest support and cooperation in the deliberations and work of this Committee.

My delegation would like to extend its sincere thanks to the Secretary General and his staff for the preparation of comprehensive reports on this agenda item.

Mr. Chairman,

The year 2010 marks the fifteenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995. The Beijing Platform remains the most comprehensive global policy framework for gender equality and empowerment of women. The Millennium Declaration includes gender equality and empowerment of women as one of its eight goals. Important international human rights instruments have been adopted for ending discrimination against women. However, much remains to be done.

Nepal attaches great importance to the advancement of women. We cannot achieve sustainable peace and development without ensuring equal rights to women.

My delegation welcomes the new Under Secretary General for UNWOMEN and also extends appreciation in particular for her priorities for bridging the gap between the normative and operational aspects of UN and UN support in coordination with other agencies to the member states for investing in and program support for gender equality. We also appreciate UNFPA report on ongoing problem of obstetric fistula in developing countries and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and the vice chair of CEDAW for their presentations.

As the Secretary General's report notes, the 30 per cent target of women in decision-making set by the Economic and Social Council in 1990 remains unmet, with 19 per cent being the global average of women representation in the parliament. In Nepal, we have adopted a rights-based approach to social, economic and political empowerment of women. Ensuring gender equality and gender mainstreaming constitutes one of our top priorities as enshrined

in the Interim Constitution of Nepal. As required by the Constitution, women occupy approximately 33 per cent of total seats in the present Constituent Assembly (CA) of Nepal, which also has the responsibility of a parliament.

Similarly, special provisions have been made in Nepal's Civil Service Act for women's inclusion at the policy-making level. This has started showing encouraging trends. Likewise, inclusive representation of women is increasing in Nepal army and police also.

National Women Commission has been established as an autonomous statutory body by the National Women Commission Act, 2007, for the protection and promotion of the rights and interests of women, including their effective inclusion in the development mainstream. The Commission has recommendatory and investigatory powers.

Support has been provided for skill development of single women for their social and economic empowerment. Mechanisms relating to gender budgeting have been initiated which take into account the advancement of women in the programmes launched by the Government in all sectors. Involvement of women in the formulation and implementation of local development programs has been institutionalized. The Government has made provisions for equal property and citizenship rights to women.

Working with the civil society and other stakeholders, micro-credit programs, dedicated education programs and food for education programs targeted to the girl and women have contributed to empower them at the community level.

Mr. Chairman,

Nepal has been implementing the Beijing Action Plan and the National Action Plan on Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Nepal is a party to CEDAW and its Optional Protocol. As a State party, Nepal has been submitting its periodic reports on the implementation of these instruments. Nepal has also ratified the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking of Women and Children for Prostitution, 2002. Discriminatory laws have been either repealed or amended. Nepal's independent judiciary has also played an important role in safeguarding and promoting women's rights through judicial pronouncement.

A law review committee under the The Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare is working towards further repealing laws perceived to be still discriminatory. We believe that the negative stereotype persisting in respect of women can be gradually overcome through empowerment of women and expansion of basic education. Women have played and continue to play an important role in the transformation of the Nepalese society with a forward-looking approach and constructive engagement. Their role as an agent for change has been well documented.

Nepal believes that there should be coordinated and concerted efforts at the national, regional and international level to combat violence against women migrant workers and to protect their rights.

Trafficking is a serious global problem. Thousands of girls and women are trafficked internally and internationally. The causes of trafficking are many and there are pull and push factors. Poverty, illiteracy, ignorance and limited employment opportunities have further exacerbated the problem. The Government of Nepal has promulgated the Anti-Human Trafficking Act in 2007. The act among others also provides for compensation to the victim,

rehabilitation, in camera court proceedings, protection and privacy of the victim, onus of defense on the perpetrators of trafficking.

To combat trafficking at different levels, the government has embarked on national programs with the help of all stakeholders. Furthermore, under the institutional arrangements to deal with trafficking, Task Forces have been set up against trafficking of women and children at the national, district and municipal levels. The government has also initiated cross border meetings on issues including trafficking in women and children. Also, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, WCSCs (Women and Child Service Centers) have been formed in 26 districts to protect children and women from violence specially related to trafficking. There is a need for more support and resources to pursue the ongoing preventive, rescue and rehabilitation efforts from a rights-based perspective.

There is a limited access to health facilities in the rural parts of Nepal because of the difficult terrain, lack of infrastructure and well equipped health centers and incidence of poverty. However, with coordinated actions such as dedicated programs and commitment of the health workers, legislation to protect reproductive rights, awareness at the community level, and sustained campaigns including through Safe motherhood programs, trainings to the birth attendants, free delivery service, and monetary support to cover transportation cost in order to encourage the women to go to hospital for delivery, the maternal mortality rate in Nepal has been reduced to 239 per 100,000 now from 539 per 100,000 in 1996. Our aim is to reduce it further and that too substantially in the next few years.

This has demonstrated that more support and global partnership together with national commitment can deliver strong results on the ground.

Mr. Chairman,

Nepal welcomes and strongly supports the establishment of the UN-Women as a single consolidated entity to deal with issues pertaining to gender equality and empowerment of women. We are confident that the new entity will be able to facilitate the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment more effectively around the world. Gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women should have collective commitment and efforts at the United Nations.

The priority should be given to development in rural areas that promotes empowerment of rural women. Financial support is necessary for agricultural and infrastructure development to improve the situation of women in rural areas. There should be a comprehensive strategy of all stakeholders for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. The International community should invest more in the form of additional financial and technical assistance to developing countries, especially those emerging from conflicts, for complementing their national endeavors in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, my delegation reiterates its firm commitment to BPPA. We underscore women's paramount role in building a peaceful, stable, democratic and prosperous world.

Thank you!