**Intervention by Ms. Yam Kumari Khatiwada, Secretary, Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens of Nepal to the 37th Session of the Human Rights Council Working Group on Universal Periodic Review under the theme of "Economic, Social and Cultural Rights"**

**21 January 2021**

**(pre-recorded Video Intervention)**

**(Time: 11 mins 20 secs, Words to read: 1291)**

**Madam President,**

1. I appreciate the delegates for the advanced questions as well as comments and queries from the floor. I have the pleasure to respond the queries that are broadly related to economic, social, and cultural rights.
2. Nepal has recorded significant progress in gender equality and advancement of women. In **political representation**, women occupy 33%, 34% and 41% in Federal, Provincial, and Local Legislatures, respectively. The representation of women in civil service has increased significantly to 26%. The percentage of women teachers in schools has reached 39%.
3. The Gender Development Index scores 0.886% with visible improvement in the health, education, and employment sectors. The **President Women Upliftment Programme** has been implemented, focusing on entrepreneurship development, financial accessibility, and technical and marketing support.
4. Over a dozen laws specifically enacted for **gender equality and women empowerment** are under implementation. The Domestic Violence (Crime and Punishment) Act, 2009, and its Regulation, 2009, Witchcraft (Crime and Punishment) Act, 2015 and Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Control) Act, 2014 are being enforced for eliminating crime against women.
5. The **Single Women Security Fund** (Utilization) Regulation, 2013 and **Gender Violence Elimination Fund** (Operational) Regulation, 2010 have recently been amended with a provision of establishing a rapid rescue and relief committees and establishment of fund in the provincial and local levels. Male Leaders' Network Mobilization Guidelines has been issued to encourage the participation of males in the elimination of gender-based violence.
6. The Crime Victim Protection Act, 2018 ensures non-discrimination and provides a special arrangement for protection of victims of rape and sexual violence.
7. The **victims of human trafficking** are entitled to get compensation, rehabilitation, economic support, and psycho-social counselling. Nepal has recently acceded to the Palermo Protocol to prevent, suppress, and punish trafficking in persons and take stringent measures against the offenders.
8. The National Plan of Action against **Human Trafficking** (2011-2021) is under implementation. Nepal rescued over ten thousand victims of human trafficking in the last few years. There are thirty-six safe houses and rehabilitation centers for survivors or victims of trafficking, and one long-term rehabilitation center. A separate fund has been established to support the rescue and rehabilitation.
9. The National Penal Code prohibits Dowry and Chhaupadi systems, among others. The Government has launched **“Dignified Menstruation Campaign”** to raise awareness. Chhaupadi sheds are being dismantled during the Campaign'. **Massive awareness raising**programmes have been implemented across the country to control gender based violence, harmful practices, and human trafficking.
10. The Constitution ensures every **child**the right to name and birth registration, including the rights to education, health, entertainment, and overall personality development. Every child from 4-13 years of age receives free education with free textbooks. Mid-day meals and scholarships are provided to needy students. In the Fiscal Year 2019/20, nearly 3.3 million scholarships were provided to needy students. The enrollment of children from backward communities has increased at all levels.
11. A Comprehensive School Safety Package has been implemented to reduce the **drop-out rate of girls**, including the construction of separate toilets in school and free distribution of sanitary pads. Nepal has achieved gender parity at the school level. In the academic year 2019, the net enrolment rate has reached 97.1%, 93.8%, and 47.6% for the primary, lower secondary, and secondary levels respectively.
12. The Act relating to **Children, 2018 provides safeguard to the rights** of the children against sexual abuse and exploitation. The Government has operated 18 Child Helpline Services for easy and confidential reporting of complaints related to children. Nepal Police operates a dedicated emergency call service for receiving complaints on the missing children. Juvenile benches have been established in the courts to facilitate child-friendly prosecutions. Nearly 8000 street children have been rescued and rehabilitated in the last three years. The National Penal Code, 2017 prohibits and criminalizes the marriages below 20 years of age. The National Strategy against Child Marriage, 2016 is under implementation that aims at ending the child marriage by 2030.
13. A broader network of Inter-agency Working Group has been set up to facilitate the implementation of the **National Master Plan on Elimination of Child Labour** (2018-2028) to eliminate the worst form of child labour by 2022 and all forms of child labour by 2025.
14. The Act related to the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities** and its Regulations are in effect to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities. The Government has been providing social security allowances to persons with disabilities. Building of disable friendly infrastructures remains our priority. Inclusive education policy has been adopted to ensure the rights to education for children with disabilities under 10 different categories.
15. **Children with disabilities** have the right to get free higher education. Persons with visual, hearing, and speaking impairments have the right to free education by means of Braille script or sign language. There are 33 special schools along with 23 integrated schools and 380 resource classes. Nearly 50,000 students with disabilities were enrolled in the last academic year.
16. The Government is providing special protection and social security allowances to the **Senior Citizens**.
17. The Constitution of Nepal ensures **non-discrimination to both genders** in terms of remuneration. The Labour Act further ensures equal pay for an equal value of work. An enabling law on the right to employment guarantees a minimum of 100 days of paid employment. The labour law has increased the maternity leave from 52 days to 98 days, out of which 60 days are fully paid.
18. Policies related to **labour, employment and social security** have been aligned with the fifth National Human Rights Action Plan (2020-2025) to protect human rights of the domestic as well as migrant workers. The Prime Minister Employment Programme has established 753 Employment Service Centres in all local levels for collecting, analyzing, and storing the demographic data of locally unemployed individuals in the Employment Management Information System-EMIS. The local governments select unemployed individuals from the EMIS database and provide at least 100 days of paid employment.
19. The Government is committed to safeguarding the **rights and interest of the workers at home and abroad**. The Government has introduced policy of 'Free Visa and Free Ticket' since 2015 to promote transparent and fair recruitment of aspiring migrant workers. Nepal has signed several bilateral agreements and Memorandums of Understanding with nine labour destination countries to protect the rights of migrant workers. Grievances of migrant workers are handled by Nepali diplomatic missions abroad and District Administration Offices within the country.
20. The Constitution has guaranteed the sexual and reproductive health rights of women and girls. The Mothers Protection Programme (*Aama Surakshya Karyakram*) has been implemented to encourage pregnant women in receiving anti-natal care and free delivery services at hospitals and birth centers. Free Heli lift services are being provided to the pregnant women facing maternity related complications from the remote parts of country under the President Women Upliftment Programme. Significant progress has been achieved in reducing maternal mortality rate and infant and neonatal mortality rates.
21. Various **micro-nutrient supplement programs have** been launched including Vitamin A for children below 5 years. The National Health Insurance Programme has been expanded to 58 districts now and has a target to cover all districts soon.
22. A high-level Steering Committee has been working to address the **impacts of COVID-19 on women, children, senior citizens**, and persons with disabilities. Testing and treatment of COVID-19 are provided free of cost. Gender response guidelines on COVID-19 have been prepared and implemented in quarantine and isolation centres.
23. **Psycho-social counselling** has been provided to address the pandemic-induced gender-based violence and psycho-social problems. More than 50,000 female volunteers have been mobilized across the country for awareness-raising, sensitization, public health campaigns, etc. Routine immunization and reproductive health services were continued even during the lockdown.

**Thank you.**