

**Statement by Dr. Yuba Raj Khatiwada, Minister of Finance, Nepal
at the Executive Board Meeting of World Food Program,
Rome, 27 November 2018**

Mr. President
Executive Board Members
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am grateful to WFP for inviting me to this Executive Board Meeting and giving me an opportunity to speak on government priorities and the role that WFP is playing in my country Nepal.

I bring with me the compliments of my Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli who is highly committed to ensure food security and to achieve zero hunger in a few years time.

I also bring along Nepali people's aspiration to get out of extreme poverty and hunger earlier than what is envisaged in the SDGs.

This meeting is important for Nepal also for the reason that the new five-year Country Strategic Plan of WFP is being approved by the Executive Board. I am happy to note that the plan has been developed in a highly participatory way, aligning with the national priorities, UNDAF and SDGs. Government of Nepal will work together with WFP to implement it.

Mr. President,

Let me take this opportunity to share the key priorities of our government over the next five years.

First, as we are young democracy and one of the youngest federal system, our key priority is Institutionalizing the Federal System across the country and making public service delivery effective, particularly through the elected local governments.

With 3 levels of government representatives elected in most inclusive way, Nepal moves forward to generate inclusive democracy, society and the economy.

Second, Nepal being signatory to 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we are implementing SDGs and prioritizing them with a focus on SDG 2 which would be instrumental to achieve several other SDGs including poverty, education and health.

This prioritization of SDG 2 is supported strongly by our commitment to ensuring human right to adequate food, now constitutionally enshrined through the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Act 2018 –thereby enshrining Zero Hunger within the constitution.

Government of Nepal looks forward to higher level of development cooperation in this regard.

Third, as the constitution of Nepal envisages an inclusive society, social and economic inclusion along with political one has remained at the heart of development interventions.

In this regard, several commissions constituting women, marginalized communities, Dalits, and indigenous communities have got constitutional status. Now time has come to ensure that their rights are realized through proper actions.

Fourth, the government intends to end illiteracy in two years, ensure universal school enrollment by next year along with free and compulsory basic education, ensure basic drinking water, and renewable energy in three years, make social security schemes universal in five years, and improve nutrition, child and maternal mortality situation at a faster pace.

Free and Compulsory Basic Education Act 2018 commits that “No child will be hungry” and it will be implemented through home grown school meals programme.

Fifth, as Nepal intends to graduate from LDC status and move on a trajectory of medium income country through high economic growth, it is focusing on reducing vulnerability so that graduation becomes sustainable.

Nepal belongs to one of the most vulnerable 20 countries to climate change. The vulnerabilities emanating from disasters and environmental shocks, climate change, and fragile economic structure have to be addressed properly. In this context, I expect a strong partnership between the government of Nepal and development partners including WFP.

Mr President,

Let me also mention some areas of our partnership. As discussed here today, we particularly look to WFP and its member states to partner with the Government of Nepal and match our commitment to the following specific areas:

First, Ensuring the Right to Food: September 25 of this year marked the 3rd anniversary of the promulgation of the Constitution of Nepal and saw endorsement of the new bill on Right to Food which is constitutionally enshrined as our commitment to ending hunger.

National institutions will require support on developing strong policies and systems for the monitoring of food security, and to ensure that all vulnerable people have access to food.

We commend WFP on emphasizing this in the new Country Strategic Plan, focusing on policy coherence - and underpinning all activities around this essential indicator, particularly for a country such as ours undergoing political transformation.

Second, Strengthening Social Protection Systems: This is including food and nutrition security, National School Meals Programme & National Rice Fortification program.

In order to achieve this, we have significantly strengthened our national investment in this programme and would request that WFP and its members equally invest in this critical social safety-net throughout the next five years of this plan, building on the tremendous support from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) programme.

Similarly, we look to WFP’s donors to support in taking the preparatory work on establishing a national system for rice fortification in Nepal.

Third, Preparing for Disasters and Linking Relief to Rehabilitation: With the highest and youngest mountains, also being the source of the worlds largest watersheds within its boundaries, Nepal faces tremendous environmental challenges that impact on the lives of the most vulnerable.

The response to floods, droughts and earthquakes of the past have demonstrated the powerful synergy that exists between WFP and national actors but also highlighted infrastructural and technical gaps.

Enabling rapid response to crises through establishing institutional emergency logistics platforms, building skilled human resources and scaling up the technical capabilities of our core national responders are essential.

We recognize WFP as a global emergency response leader and this partnership with the Government of Nepal is one we would like to see continue into the future.

In closing, Mr. President, let me reiterate that Nepal's more than 50 years' partnership with WFP has been strengthened through multiple disaster responses, working side by side, and also in our shared commitment to addressing child hunger through the school meals.

In recent years, we have welcomed WFP stepping into new roles, supporting the government on policy development, climate change and advanced early warning systems, among others.

These have come at a much-needed time, as the country undergoes transition into the new federal system and with a constitution that includes the Right to Food for all.

We are pleased to have partnered with WFP on the design of this new 5-year strategic plan and look forward to working together on paving the way forward in the new era of change in Nepal.

Thank you very much for giving me the floor and opportunity to speak.