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Statement by Mr. Rudra Kumar Nepal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Nepal at the Third Committee of the sixty-sixth session of the UN General Assembly on Agenda item 28 Advancement of Women.

(11 October 2011, New York)

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to begin by extending my congratulations to the Chair and other members of the Bureau on your respective elections. I would like to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation in the works of the Committee.

My delegation would like to extend sincere thanks to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports on this agenda item.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made yesterday by the distinguished representative of Argentina on behalf of G-77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly provide a most comprehensive global policy framework for gender equality and empowerment of women. In this context, we welcome the operationalization of UN-Women as a focal entity in this area since the beginning of this year.

Advancement of women continues to remain on top of our national agenda for socio-economic development. Advancement is not possible without empowerment. And empowerment is inconceivable without education and a change in social attitude. Therefore, we have adopted a multi-pronged approach including social, economic, administrative as well as legal measures for the advancement of women in our country. We have also adopted a rights-based approach to social, economic and political empowerment of women.

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 effective change-agent has been well documented.

The Constituent Assembly, elected by the people in April 2008, which also functions as the Legislative-Parliament of Nepal, consists of almost a third of its 601 members women including the Deputy Speaker of the parliament. This has given more voice to women, further encouraged gender-focused initiatives and completely changed the development landscape in the field.

Through affirmative actions, capacity building and empowerment, Women's presence in the national Civil Service and other state institutions has significantly grown in recent years.

The national Legislative-Parliament has enacted a number of new and important legislations with a view to ensuring gender equality as well as prohibiting violence and discrimination against women, including the National Commission on Women Act, 2006, the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act, 2007 and the Domestic Violence (Offence and Punishment) Act, 2009. Legislative moves are afoot to amend all discriminatory provisions in the existing laws, to outlaw harmful social practices and to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. Nepal's independent judiciary has been playing an important role in safeguarding and promoting women's rights through judicial pronouncements. An independent National Human Rights Commission works as an important national watchdog institution.

Mr. Chairman,

As a State party to CEDAW and its Optional Protocol, Nepal presented its combined 4th and 5th report to the CEDAW Committee in July this year.

At the regional level, Nepal has also ratified the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution, 2002.

Human trafficking is a serious global problem. We are making our best efforts to grapple with trafficking in women and girls that takes place in various guises. While recognizing the constructive efforts being made by the civil society organizations, we are determined to make further efforts in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders. There is also a growing concern for the safety of women in some cases in foreign employment, which we are making efforts to deal with. Nepal believes that there should be coordinated and concerted efforts at the national, regional and international levels to combat violence against women migrant workers and to protect their rights.

Mr. Chairman,

While Nepal is currently passing through a political transition of a far-reaching nature, and heading towards institutionalizing and strengthening an inclusive and participatory democracy, based on equality, freedom and justice, we have been making considerable progress in promoting gender equality and empowerment of women, in reducing child mortality and improving maternal health with particular emphasis given to the rural areas of the country.

Access to education, health, entrepreneurial skills, resources, entitlements to land ownership and fixed property would greatly strengthen the empowerment of our rural women. Accordingly, we have introduced various targeted programs in the field of women development including gender responsive budgets and allocation of resources.

Given the multi-dimensional nature of this issue, it is our view that the International community should invest more in the form of additional financial and technical assistance to least developed countries, especially those emerging from conflicts, for complementing their national endeavors in this regard.

The International community should chart out its collective course towards further strengthening the promotion of gender equality and elimination of gender discrimination with a comprehensive strategy with concerted and coordinated efforts of all stakeholders.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.