

Translating Commitments, Accountability and Partnership into Actions: A Case of Nepal

Seminar Express Release

The agreed Programme of Action would not be realized without the concerted actions of actors - governmental and non-governmental, and private sector included. The outcome of the seminar might be useful to the Least Developed Countries of Asia as well as Africa by drawing insights and perspectives from the Nepalese context. The commitments expressed in Istanbul Programme of Action will be empty if it goes without concrete implementation. The vulnerabilities of environmental and economic crises and disasters need to be reduced from the coordinated action of development partners and host government. It is suggested that there should be a balanced role of the state and market. To achieve the desired result enlisted in Programme of Action, the donor community has to harmonize its country strategy policy with national plans and policies of the recipient government. It is also stated that this initiative of Institute of Foreign Affairs and today's meeting outcome will definitely support the Government of Nepal.

The primary responsibility lies with the country to own development programmes. Even though there may be rampant corruption and misgovernance, it is up to each country to take proper steps on the road of graduation. There has been positive progress in tune with the Brussels Programme of Action but much more to be done. The United Nations has played a leading role in providing platform for LDCs and reiterated its position to recommit to the graduation of LDCs.

From the civil society perspective, the statements made at the routine international conference have not been seriously taken up to achieve the goals and objectives envisioned in them. International community's priority has been inadequate for mobilizing additional resources and supportive measures in the progress of LDCs. Civil society actors can forge alliance with LDCs and development partners in the area of advocacy and campaign.

With regard to macro-economic policy and orientation the country has good policies but it is lacking the consistency, coordination and harmonization, which are the hurdles that need to be mitigated sooner. It was also recommended that the government should take up few flagship programmes primarily in infrastructure development and hydropower. Liberalization of fiscal policy has enhanced financial system and its aim should be shifted to rural areas where it is more necessary today.

The popular paradigm pursued in development is 'public-private partnership model.' Though it has begun with positive start with an example of Kathmandu Upatyaka Khanepani Limited but has recently been experiencing direct intervention by the government, it is weakening of professionalism and efficiency.

Food security is another paramount concern of the country. It is seriously to be noted that food insecurity occurs despite food surplus.

European Union views that traditional and new challenges were comprehensively included in Istanbul Conference. EU's position is that LDCs must ensure the existing commitments that are to be executed seriously by them and the priority of EU is not to set new commitments in prevailing economic circumstances. EU supports an enhanced inclusive "global partnership." Traditional donors as well as new emerging powers - India and China should be approached to alleviate poverty in the LDCs. EU supports Nepal's peace building and development process providing substantial financial assistance to the country. EU highly appreciates Nepal's leading role at the LDC IV meet in Istanbul.

Structural challenges to LDCs emanate from poverty, achieve internationally agreed development goals and their graduation from the current status. Savings-investment gap, trade gap, fiscal gap, remittance and foreign direct investment in Nepal show negative trends. The country will have to develop an indicative perspective plan. The government has to enhance regulation, monitoring, and evaluation and, if necessary, supervise development programmes supported by the government as well as by international donor agencies.

The country needs to adopt a strategy for productive capacity building through diversification of bio-diversity, agro products and forestry resources. The country has to upgrade the standard and quality of goods and services to create niche in the domestic and international market. Linkages of unprocessed products with manufactured items would be productive. The stakeholders in the production sector should prioritize corrective measures to the existing model of development to be people-centric and on sustainable basis.

People's access to decision making, ownership of resources and participation in local development are some of the ingredients of good governance. There must be also mutual accountability of the government and bilateral and multilateral donor agencies.

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