

Namaste to all and especially to all the children who are present here today.

Following the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) of 1989, all persons of the world below the age of 18 are children in which all states are signatory. This makes us as adults, institutions and states the duty bearers and children the rights holders and the rightful citizen of today.

Over half of the populations living in urban areas are children and young people of this age group. Children of the urban slums and squatter areas are the most vulnerable.

Ensuring their survival, development and protection including participation in local institutions are fundamental for their inclusive growth and development. This has been increasingly difficult to ensure as the world urbanizes faster than ever before.

Nepal is urbanizing from five to seven percent every year and basic services and its quality to children are not keeping up with the speed of population growth.

For this reason, the Norwegian government commends UNICEF, MOFALD and the Asia Pacific Network for leading the third international conference on child friendly cities and to local organizers Nepal School of Social Work and ENGAGE for supporting them.

We are delighted to be a part of a long journey between MOFALD and UNICEF to pilot and scale up the learning from what began as a Decentralization programme for women and children(DACAW) since 1998 to what it has evolved now to become a national strategy on Child Friendly Local Governance.

Bringing a national strategy and guidelines on child friendly local governance is the unprecedented and a success of MoFALD and UNICEF collaboration in which the Norwegian government is very proud. We also see a strong need to combine these efforts with schools under child friendly schooling movement.

We commend MOFALD for ensuring that at least \$40 million USD per year investment (at least 35% of their annual fund) from local bodies (all 3915 VDCs and 58 Municipalities) on targeted programme of children, women and disadvantaged groups. The CFLG framework that mandates local bodies to invest 15% of their annual fund in children is an important springboard for achieving child-friendly cities in Nepal.

This is also commendable that a space for an impressive 80,000 children to represent 40,000 wards citizens' forums of the Local Governance and Community Development Program (LGCDP). However there is a long way to go for making this representation meaningful.

This framework requires all sectoral ministries and stakeholders to come together to fulfill our duties towards children for progressive realization of their rights, both in urban and rural areas – this is more urgent in cities.

We are confident that the outcome of this conference will be instrumental to ensure children and young people friendly cities and local governance in Nepal.