

Respected chair,
Your Excellency, Charge d'Affaires a.i. Norwegian Embassy ,
Former UN Assistant Secretary General, Mr. Kul Chandra Gautam
UNICEF Nepal Representative, Ms. Hanaa Singer
Delegates,
Participants,
Media persons,
Children representing child clubs from districts and other children
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In today's world, urbanization is happening very rapidly. Today over half of the world's populations are living in cities and that number will rise to a shocking seventy percent by 2050. Nepal is not immune to this global phenomenon: we are seeing a national urban growth average of five to seven percent every year. Nepalese families and individuals are moving to the cities for a perceived better life, but infrastructure and services cannot keep up with the urban growth: increasingly, we are seeing the quality of urban life decline, children and adolescents living on the streets during school hours and lacking even basic nutrition, water and sanitation access.

Last year, the World Health Organization declared Kathmandu as the most polluted city in South Asia, with a pollution level that is twelve times the level deemed acceptable for healthy breathing. Children in Kathmandu and all of Nepal's cities deserve to have a healthy life; air pollution levels are increasing, however, and current and future generations are most at risk from potentially fatal respiratory diseases.

Then there are the climate and earthquake risks. When a disaster such as a flood or earthquake hits a city, urban population density means that death rates could explode. With floods, epidemics like cholera can spread like wildfire in a city, killing thousands of children over short time frames. As global citizens, we can build our cities to withstand these disasters and we can educate our children to develop their cities with environmental efficiency at the center.

If cities are to be healthy habitats, the well-being of the children in those cities is essential. The second UN conference on human settlement (it was called Habitat II) declared that the well-being of children is the ultimate indicator of a healthy habitat, a democratic society, and of prevailing good governance. It is our pleasure to be organizing this 3rd International Conference on Child Friendly Cities. Nepal

is committed to the well-being of children and has expressed this commitment by signing up to the Convention on The Rights of the Child.

For the first time in the history of Nepal, provisions for child rights were made in The Interim Constitution of 2063. In the constitution, child rights are viewed as fundamental rights. To ensure that child rights are upheld in Nepal, the Children's act (1992); the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (2000), and the Local Self Governance Act (1999) are enforced.

At the local levels, Nepal has uniquely internalized the CRC principles of non-discrimination, a child's best interests, service delivery, holistic development, and participation. To promote every child's right to protection, survival, development, and participation, the government of Nepal implements Child Friendly Local Governance (CFLG), with the essential support of UNICEF, the Royal Norwegian embassy and other partners. CFLG has influenced the government to develop the National Child Friendly Local Governance Strategy and Guidelines and the Local Body Resource Mobilization and Management Guidelines, (2069), which requires every local body to allocate at least ten percent of the local budget to children-centered interventions.

MOFALD is the line ministry for local government bodies. Local bodies function as the head office for all development-related activities at the local level. The main roles of the local bodies are coordination and implementation. MOFALD also operates networks that stretch to the community level, enabling all kinds of development activities to be carried out effectively. This puts us in a strong position to take the lead in initiating Child Friendly Local Governance throughout the country.

Approximately 312 Village Development Committees, 15 Municipalities and 39 District Development Committees have already initiated the adoption process to become Child Friendly Local Governments. If local bodies can demonstrate that they have fulfilled the adoption criteria, they are eligible for funding in addition to the ten percent required.

However, it is not just funding that is needed. In government, we often work separately, focusing on our own sectoral results and expertise. Children's wellbeing however is not sectoral; it is holistic, and therefore requires us to work together. If local government experts in education, water, sanitation, protection, health services, environmental sustainability, and participation collaborate to

improve the survival and development of children, we will have achieved true success.

One of the vital components of child development is nutrition. In Nepal, forty –one percent of children suffer from chronic malnutrition, stunting and underweight. Furthermore, the most vulnerable –women and children suffer from all the major micronutrient deficiencies. Malnutrition is hindering our efforts to enhance socio-economic development and to attain the Millennium Development Goals(MDGS) To address the problems on malnutrition and micronutrient a multi–sectoral nutrition plan , (2013-2017) has been developed and implemented .Access to health service including child immunization, contraceptive prevalence rates, maternal care practices-both antenatal and post natal have improved

One of the primary interventions that local governments already lead is the critical process of birth registration. Children’s rights cannot be realized if they are not registered, and VDC Secretaries have the mandate in this country to make that registration happen. This is certainly one of our priorities and we are working to further improve the current system.

This gathering of experts and fellow government leaders is a first step in creating conflict-free, sustainable and resilient cities for the current and future generations of young people. All of you sitting here today are committed to this effort and it will take concrete commitments from us all this week to effect real change. This gathering is not about talking; it is about actions. As the Minister of MOFALD and the lead organizer of this conference, I commit to taking forward the concrete recommendations you propose over the coming days.

Thank you and I commend you all for your collaboration in this important work.