**A statement to by Nepal as a focal point of the core group on Trade Facilitation of LDC Group during the informal meeting of Trade Facilitation Committee 30 September 2020**

* Thank you, madam chair, for convening this meeting and giving me the floor. I am delivering this statement as focal point of the core group on trade facilitation of the LDG group.
* Let me take this opportunity, madam chair, to congratulate you for your new responsibility and you can count on Nepal’s full support during your tenure.
* First, I would like to congratulate all paper presenters from the World Bank, WCO, UNCTAD, ITC and Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation for their insightful presentations in the context of COVID-19 and its implication in trade facilitation, and their support initiatives.
* While going through and hearing the presentation, all the presentations are found to be informative, and useful.
* As indicated in the ITC’s presentation, MSMES and women entrepreneurs have been suffered most from the COVID-19 pandemic which may be the case of all over the world. ITC’s policy recommendations, online capacity building programs, and support initiatives have become important.
* Similarly, communication, partnership and capacity building initiative from the WCO, as presented by the representative of the WCO, have also become very beneficial for us.
* The program aimed at ensuring uniform implementation of the WTO TFA with an objective of ensuring security, stability and continuity of global supply chains, and also facilitating and expediting the global supply of emergency relief goods as reflected in the presentation of World Bank are important.
* Furthermore, the supports extended by the World Bank which focused on maintaining business continuity, keeping trade flowing in the short and medium term and taking a forward-looking view towards recovery, are also highly commendable.
* Similarly, the initiatives taken by UNCTAD in various research and studies, cross border trade facilitation activities and others, especially for LDCs and LLDCs are very supportive.
* Interventions made by the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation are also commendable.
* My delegation would like to thank all organizations for these initiatives.
* It seems that most of these supports have focused on improving and strengthening border procedures and bringing agencies and business people in virtual mode which would be contributory to economies in many countries.
* However, the situation in LDCs is different. There is huge digital divide among and within the countries and therefore, support extended to strengthen border administration and procedures may not be sufficient. Most businesses may not operate in border but far from the border and therefore, it needs well-integration of entire domestic business with ICT system so that the domestic supply chain could be operational and linked with the cross-border trade.
* If there is still a huge portion of business running without automation and not connected with ICT, then border improvement would only facilitate imports of LDCs, but not export. This will not promote job creation, domestic economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and ultimately the achievement of the global target of LDC graduation and SDG by 2030.
* In most LDCs, even few domestic online business operators concentrated in major cities have not been able to run their business smoothly due to insufficient health protective measures and disruption in domestic transportation and supply system.
* Furthermore, major businesses of the countries are compelled to remain fully disconnected from the regular supply system and are mostly closed.
* Additionally, developing road maps, action plan and strategy from such international institutions would be supportive once we could fully translate those policy instruments into actions and results by effectively implementing them with some flexibilities in the country context.
* However, implementation requires sufficient resources which mostly seems lacking and such resource gap keeps important policy recommendations less effective due to under implementation.
* Against this background, my delegation would like to extend sincere appreciation to all international organizations including the World Bank, UNCTAD, WCO and ITC for taking timely responses to the crisis that business is facing during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in developing and least developed countries.
* Additionally, we urge all international community and development partners to join hands to translate these policy instruments into results on the ground with significant additional supports in terms of resource, technological, institutional and human capacity building in order to strengthen and reconnect our domestic supply chain through development and utilization of ICT and ecommerce and then integrating local business community of LDCs with national, regional and global value chain process.
* I thank you chair.