

Statement to be delivered by Honorable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Health & Population, Nepal, on the occasion of Global Conference on Primary Health Care Astana 25-26 Oct 2018

Mr Chair

Honorable Ministers, Distinguished Guest and Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen

This is my warm greetings from Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal.

It is indeed my distinct honour and great pleasure to attend this “**Global Conference on Primary Health Care: from Alma-Ata towards Universal Health Coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals**” being held in historical and beautiful city, Astana. I would, at the outset, like to express my gratitude to the government of Kazakhstan and partner organizers, WHO and UNICEF for inviting me for such an important international conference. On such occasion, I would like to pay tribute to all the primary health care leaders and health professionals for their enormous contribution during the last 4 decades since 1978.

To internalize the concept of primary health care, despite many barriers, difficulties and political unrest in Nepal, we have been steadfast in implementing the strategy and approach initiated forty years ago in Alma Ata declaration and we made a remarkable progress in terms of health indicators. Nepal *succeeded to make* a drastic change in terms of *Maternal Mortality Ratio* which was 850 maternal deaths per hundred thousand live births in 1990 to 239 death per hundred thousand live births in 2016 and this achievement became possible because of the global PHC campaign. Our priority for strengthening primary health care network across the country with an integrated approach of comprehensive health care included ante-natal care, post natal care, safe abortion services, delivery conducted by skilled birth attendants, institutional delivery have played significant role in reducing maternal deaths.

Taking collective responsibility on United Nation’s 2030 agenda for development goals, I suppose, we all across the globe, are in unprecedented action in each individual country to achieve all Sustainable Development Goals. With a dream and determination in mind, of having an earth with a healthier people, having a fear-free planet, having a conflict-free world, having a habitat without hunger and hatred, all of us are highly committed to step forward towards making our planet full of health and happiness, peace and prosperity, making safe society live in harmony prevailing justice & equity, without any discrimination; this is the dream we all ever have that does not allow us to sleep well.

However, the real world is different. If we talk about good health and well beings which is Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) No.3; this is obviously also related with SDGs 1, 2 ie, poverty problems. Good health and well being is also closely related with

Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG-6) and all these are related with GOAL 16 & 17 (ie, Peace and Justice Strong Institutions and Partnerships to achieve the Goal). So, all SDGs are heavily interdependent on each others.

It may be worth mentioning here that I gave top priority to define basic health services package, after I took the responsibility of ministry of health and population. A bill submitted to the federal parliament by us as health minister, 2 months ago, has been already approved by the federal parliament and came out as a Nepal Public Health Act 2018, ensuring health as the fundamental human right. This act also provides a multi sectoral board as a tool for ensuring 'health in all policies'.

Higher percentage of out of pocket expenditure on health is an important issue; so we are launching health insurance scheme to protect people from financial hardship.

Right to the health, as one of the fundamental human rights, binds the state to equitably provide primary or basic health and emergency services to be delivered free of cost to the people.

In our country Nepal, we have to strengthen primary or basic health service networks across the country, with the expanded scope of the integrated health service provision to cover the preventive, promotive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative health services with the new structure, established three devolved levels of governance: federal, provincial and local.

Excellencies and distinguished representatives!

In our country Nepal, we work hard complying with our international commitments in terms of achieving universal health coverage of basic health services as Alma-Ata Declaration in 1978.

While monitoring the progress of Universal Health Coverage, we should not forget the social determinants of health and how to address the variation of social strata. We have taken specific strategy to achieve Universal Health Care and Sustainable Development Goals. However, looking at the current circumstances and social determinants of health, the goal of Universal health coverage and Sustainable Development Goals, in such a least developed countries including Nepal, it is difficult to assure within time-frame, because of insufficient resources. As we know, least developed and land locked countries are struggling against enormous difficulties and economic hardship to invest in health care. I am confident that developed countries and external development partners will work together collaborating especially with least developed countries in meeting universal health coverage as well as Sustainable Development Goals.

Once more, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the government of Kazakhstan, WHO, UNICEF and others for organizing such an historical event.

Thank you all for your kind attention.