

Draft statement to be delivered by Dr. Ramesh Chandra Paudel, Honorable
member of National Planning Commission at the eightieth session of UNESCAP
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Mr. Chairman/Madam Chair
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honor and privilege to address this august gathering at the 80th session of Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on the theme “Leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development for Asia and the Pacific. On behalf of the Government and people of Nepal, I would like to extend greetings to all of you.

The world has undergone phenomenal changes in the past decades owing to the unprecedented development and innovation in science and digital technology. The result of which can be seen immensely in areas such as transportation, agriculture productivity, industries, energy, information and communication technology, including the artificial intelligence.

Nepal acknowledges that the digital technology has great potential of addressing the most complex challenges facing our nation and the region. From improving governance and service delivery to promoting inclusive growth and reducing inequalities, digital innovation offers us unprecedented opportunities to build more resilient, equitable and sustainable future.

Implementation of e-government services and the use of digital platforms can enable citizens to access government services and information more conveniently, leading to greater transparency and accountability

Digital governance could be an instrument to improve the quality of governance and to expedite the pursuit of sustainable development goals in a challenging geographical location like Nepal.

The pandemic is also a stark reminder of the importance of digital technology. Developing LLDCs’ capacity to realize the full potential of digital technologies and e-commerce, and its expansion is critical to offset the constraints facing LLDCs.

But, starting this transformative journey is not without challenges, though. Similar to many other LDCs in the region, Nepal also faces obstacles such as digital divide, inadequate infrastructure, and capacity constraints. These challenges threaten to widen

existing disparities and undermine our efforts to harness the full potential of digital innovation for sustainable development.

Nepal faces gaps in digital literacy and internet connectivity particularly in rural and remote areas. Lack of sufficient digital infrastructure, digital literacy and internet coverage poses significant barriers to the implementation of the digital governance.

LDCs continue to face both traditional and emerging development challenges. Eradicating poverty, reducing inequality, providing health and education to their people, and ensuring them decent living condition remain daunting tasks for all LDCs.

High transport and trade transaction costs remain a major impediment to LLDCs' foreign trade. Improved trade facilitation is vital to address this constraint

Trade promotion based on IT and Digital innovation can be more competitive to reimburse the trade costs associated with landlockedness.

Despite the challenges, Nepal is optimistic about the future of digital innovation in governance and development. Nepal is committed to embracing digital innovation as a cornerstone of our development agenda. We have already made significant progress in this direction, with initiatives such as our National Digital Strategy and our efforts to expand access to broadband connectivity across the country.

But, Nepal cannot accomplish this task alone. In order to fully realize the potential of digital innovation for sustainable development, cooperation and partnerships are crucial.

At the same time, our approach to digital innovation should also incorporate the values of inclusivity, equity and sustainability. We also make sure that the needs of the marginalized and vulnerable citizens are given top priority so that they are not left behind.

More than half of LLDCs are also LDCs including my own country Nepal. As our risk and vulnerabilities are higher, our efforts must also be stronger. Financing is a key to meeting these countries' development and infrastructure needs.

Finally, I would like to reiterate Nepal's unwavering commitment to using digital innovation for achieving the goals of sustainable development. By working closely with UNESCAP and the member states, we can leverage collective expertise, resources, and best practices to accelerate the adoption of digital solutions and achieve our shared development objectives.

Thank you.