



**Indian Council of World Affairs**

**Sapru House, Barakhamba Road**

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**7<sup>th</sup> Sapru House Lecture**

by

**H.E. Mr. Madhav Kumar Nepal**

former Prime Minister of Nepal

on

**"Recent Political Developments and upcoming Constituent  
Assembly Elections in Nepal"**

at

**Sapru House, New Delhi**

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Your Excellency the Chairperson

Director General, ICWA

Academics and Intellectuals

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to be invited to speak at a program organized by this prominent institution, the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA). The Council has had a long existence as an important public forum for organising and promoting debates, discussions and interactions on important and topical issues, which has been well recognised and appreciated all over the world. I have no doubt that informed debates and discussions of all kinds and on various areas provide valuable inputs to the policy makers in formulating pragmatic policies. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all in the ICWA for your continued engagement and contributions in this important field. I also express my thanks to the enlightened audience for sparing time to participate in this programme today. I also express my special thanks to Ambassador Dev Mukharji, India's former Ambassador to Nepal, for chairing this programme.

These days, I am on an official visit to India at the invitation of the Hon. Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh. Ever since my arrival in this historic and beautiful city, I have received very warm welcome and hospitality. I have taken it as the reflection of the depth and closeness of relations between the Governments and the peoples of Nepal and India. I sincerely thank the Hon. Prime Minister and the Government of India for

the invitation and warm hospitality accorded to me and the members of my team.

As you know, I was the Prime Minister of Nepal from May 2009 to February 2011. As Nepal's Prime Minister, I had paid an official visit to India in August 2009. I vividly recall my meetings with the Indian leadership, and the understanding we developed for further expanding and consolidating our bilateral ties and cooperation. We are aware of the issues of our mutual interest, and also understand each other's legitimate concerns and sensitivities. I feel that the issues we discussed during my visit as Prime Minister are relevant even today, and we have to build on them for taking Nepal-India relations to a new height of mutual understanding and cooperation. During my tenure as Prime Minister of Nepal, I tried my best to improve, expand and cement Nepal-India ties on the basis of equality, mutual respect and cooperation. Nepal-India relations are marked by the warmth of friendship, goodwill, mutual understand and cooperation; and the very close ties and exchanges among our peoples have remained the greatest source of strength for our Governments.

This morning, I intend to speak very briefly about Nepal-India relations in the broader context of Nepal's foreign policy. As all of you are aware of Nepal-India relations, I do not think it necessary to spend longer time on this matter. I would rather like to update you on the ongoing political developments in Nepal, preparations for the elections for the Constituent Assembly, and also inform you of my Party's position on the election and some other issues.

Nepal and India enjoy excellent bilateral relations, and treasure very close and multidimensional ties. The relations are strengthened further by the age-old ties of history, culture, tradition and religion, and pronounced more in social and economic dealings with each other. Our unswerving commitment to the principles of peaceful coexistence, sovereign equality, and understanding of each other's aspirations and interests has been the bedrock of our relations. In pursuance of Nepal's solemn desire to cultivate and foster cordial and friendly ties with its neighboring countries, Nepal has been pursuing its long standing position of not allowing its territory to be misused by any inimical elements against its neighbours, including India, and also expects same sort of reciprocity and assurances from the neighbours as well. The Government of India, Indian political parties and people of India strongly supported peaceful People's Movement of April 2006 for the restoration of full

democracy in Nepal. The GOI welcomed the promulgation of the Interim Constitution and the formation of the Interim Legislature in Nepal on 15 January 2007, the Constituent Assembly elections in Nepal on April 10, 2008, and the peace process as well as the subsequent political developments thereafter.

While talking about Nepal-India relations, we have also come to understand that we have to work together in some new areas. The recent natural calamities in Western part of Nepal and Uttarakhand of India, caused by incessant rains and floods, have resulted in death of lives and destruction of properties. In the disaster, citizens of both Nepal and India have died, perhaps of some other countries also. We have expressed our deep sorrow over the death and destruction of lives and properties, irrespective of their nationalities; and have communicated our condolences to the victims' families. We have also appreciated the rescue and rehabilitation of Nepalese citizens in Uttarakhand by the Indian authorities. The disasters have also starkly reminded us of the necessity for working together in new areas like climate change. I am sure our Governments would pay attention towards this reality and start working together meaningfully.

Distinguished Participants,

As you know, after the popular uprising of April 2006, Nepal has been passing through a prolonged transition. We are in the threshold of holding election for the second Constituent Assembly in less than a decade's time. It is due to the failure of the first elected body to deliver a new constitution incorporating popular aspirations of the masses expressed during the uprising. The goal of popular people's movement was to establish democratic system based on social justice and bring economic prosperity for the people, on the one hand, and to bring the armed Maoists combatants into peaceful democratic political process, on the other. Moving towards this direction, the newly restored parliament of 2006 made some remarkable decisions for the consolidation of newly achieved democratic rights and freedom. Likewise, a much awaited election to the Constituent Assembly was held on 10 April 2008 which elected the 601-member Constituent Assembly. The Constituent Assembly took a number of historic decisions, including abolition of Monarchy and declaration of Nepal as a Federal Democratic Republic, thus paving the way for ending the 10-year Maoists armed conflict and restoring peace in the country. The newly elected Constitution Assembly was one of the most inclusive forums in the history of Nepal which included significant

number of people from various ethnic groups, Dalits and women. More than 33% seats were secured by women. Likewise Dalits, Madhesi and other minority groups had also been able to secure substantial numbers. It was the first time in Nepali history that people of such diverse background in terms of gender, ethnicity, class, cultures, castes, religion and backward regions were allowed to seat at the highest decision making body of the country. In order to consolidate democratic system, abolish exclusionary practices and ensure equal rights and opportunities for the people, the unitary system of governance was being replaced by the federal system.

However, the newly elected CA, which had generated much hope and expectations among the Nepali people, failed to fulfil its assigned task and got dissolved without drafting a new constitution. The differences between the various political parties and their inability to reach consensus on a number of pertinent issues, and lack of flexibility among them, ultimately led to its dissolution. The demise of the first CA pushed the country into further uncertainties and difficulties. However, the major parties again engaged in sustained dialogue and have now reached an understanding that the only proper way to end the prevailing political crisis is to hold elections for another Constituent Assembly. Moving towards this direction, the parties agreed to amend the Interim Constitution, and also formed a new non-party government under the leadership of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Nepal. The newly formed election government has declared November 19, 2013 as the date for the election for the second Constituent Assembly.

After declaration of the date of election, the most important task at this stage for the government and political parties is to hold the election on stipulated date in a free and fair manner, and in a fearless environment. The government and the major parties have the responsibility to create conducive environment for the elections. They have to play important role in bringing disgruntled parties and groups into the election process through dialogue and negotiations. I am sure, through our collective efforts, we can generate trust and build confidence with them; and this will ensure their participation in the election. Holding election on the announced date will help in institutionalizing democracy and drafting a new democratic constitution for the country. Although, the differences that emerged in the last CA among the major political parties on number of pertinent issues remain the same, I hope that the demise of the previous CA without fulfilling its tasks has given us a great lesson to be learned. In this context, I want to add here that there are certain

achievements made by the last CA. It has made some decisions, has reached some agreements, and has developed some understandings. My Party strongly feels that we have to preserve those decisions, agreements and understandings, own them, and build upon them. It will greatly help the next Constituent Assembly to draft the constitution in a stipulated time.

My Party, the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), strongly believes that only holding of election can enable us to consolidate durable peace and build democratic society in Nepal. We are also fully convinced that this is the only way to end the unstable political environment of the country and also to create conducive environment for much needed economic development and social transformation. I also believe that only through a process of regular consultation, understanding and consensus among the political parties, we can complete these tasks. Therefore, broader understanding on national political and developmental issues and mutual trust and confidence among the parties and leaders, particularly among the major parties in the country, are the need of the hour. Only through this, we can resolve some of the most delicate and contentious issues and hold the election on stated date in a fair and peaceful environment despite some downside risks.

It is our view that the future government should focus on economic development by enhancing the roles of public, private and cooperative sectors, which are the key players in our society; and their proper mobilization will ensure the much desired economic growth and sustainable development. We must focus on economic growth but equally addressing the distribution aspects of the economy. The new constitution should incorporate the progressive agendas of the people. At the same time, some fundamental rights of the people in the areas of education, health, shelter, food security, drinking water and employment have to be guaranteed. A special consideration has to be given in the Nepali context as Nepal passed through a more than decade-long violent conflict, and is still confronting with various forms of social contradictions. A parallel drive towards progressive socio-economic transformation will be essential to enhance equitable growth and development for the prosperity of the people within a short span of time. It can ensure and further consolidate our centuries-old social harmony. Still there are some tendencies which try to follow some status quo approaches which are not conducive for consolidating durable peace, democracy and justice in our society. In this entire process, not only strengthening of a system of consultation and building of political consensus will be necessary but also there is a need

for continued generous support from the members of international community like India with whom Nepal has close ties throughout long history.

We have to strengthen the professionally weak state structures such as security agencies, bureaucracy and other state organs. They must get involved in planning and setting priorities and improving the quality of life of the people. If security situation is stabilized and democratically elected government can mobilize societal forces for national collective action in areas of CA elections, drafting of new constitution, peace-building, economic development and social reform, we can make tangible progress in those areas.

As we have still been passing through a transitional period, building national consensus and maintaining it among main political parties on major political and socio-economic issues is the need of the hour. To move towards this direction, we all have to be honest and dedicated. To draft and promulgate a new democratic constitution by encompassing people from various walks of life and transform Nepal into a peaceful, stable, democratic, prosperous and harmonious society are the major tasks before us. To achieve such challenging tasks in this very competitive world, we must unite and act together inside the country. And to achieve such endeavours, we need cooperation and solidarity from the international friends, particularly from our neighbours like India.

With these words, I conclude my statement and thank you very much for your kind attention.