

## PRESS RELEASE

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Hon. Meen Bahadur Biswakarma, Minister for Commerce, Government of Nepal delivered a statement on 10 December at the High level Meeting of Trade Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) that took place on 10 December in Buenos Aires, Argentina on the sideline of the 11<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference of the WTO. Her Excellency Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, UN High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS), DDG, Development Division of the WTO, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay, Coordinator of LLDC Trade- Issues and Trade Ministers of LLDC countries were among the speakers. The meeting was chaired by Her Excellency Ms. Margaret Mwanakatwe, Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry of Zambia.

Hon. Minister Biswakarma highlighted the challenges the LLDCs have been facing in transport and transit connectivity which result in 20% higher cost for them in doing business as compared to the coastal neighbors. He said that narrow production base and low productivity, low economic growth, poor infrastructure and inadequate trade facilitation measures are some serious challenges suffered by LLDCs, and highlighted the need of unfettered transit transport and free access to the sea as important measure to achieve their structural transformation. He raised the issue of downward trend of exports of LLDCs in the global market which fell to 0.97% in 2015 as compared to an average of 1.21% maintained between 2011 and 2014.

In that backdrop, Hon. Minister underlined the need of bilateral, regional and global partnership and cooperation to build seamless infrastructure, modern facilities for inspection of Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) compliance for smooth trade operation. Mainstreaming of the six priority areas of Vienna Programme of Action is the best means of addressing the special development needs of the LLDCs, he added.

While underscoring the need of support from the UN system to the International Think Tank for LLDCs, he underscored the need of development of grid transmission of clean energy, advancement of information and communication technologies, quality transit and transport infrastructures, including multimodal transport connectivity and efficient trade facilitation measures which are fundamental for LLDCs in raising efficiency of doing cross-border trade.

Similarly, Hon. Minister attended the formal Opening Ceremony of the 11<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference, the highest decision-making body of the WTO, held on 10 December in which delegations from 164 WTO member countries, observer countries and representatives from international organizations participated. H.E. Ms. Susana Malcorra, Foreign Minister of Argentina and Chair of MC11 and the H.E. Mr. Roberto Azevedo, the Director General of the WTO emphasized on the necessity of reasserting commitment to and strengthening the rule-based multilateral trading system for inclusive economic growth, poverty reduction and job creation throughout the world.

The opening ceremony witnessed the signing of a symbolic Presidential Declaration by Presidents of the Latin American countries, including the President Mauricio Macri of Argentina. They have collectively stood for preserving and strengthening the multilateral trading system, including its

dispute settlement mechanism, in order to promote rules based, open, transparent, inclusive, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system that is needed to face the challenges of the 21st century. Similarly, Ministers from 44 WTO members issued a joint statement underscoring their support for the WTO and reaffirming the centrality of the rules-based multilateral trading system.

Also present in the above events were Mr. Chandra Kumar Ghimire, Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, H.E. Ambassador Mr. Deepak Dhital, Ambassador/PR of Permanent Mission of Nepal to Geneva, Mr. Toya Narayan Gyawali Joint Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, among others. Accordingly, H.E. Ambassador attended a Side Event, as a Panelist, on Keeping Pace with Trade Developments: Needs of LDCs and Small Developing Countries, organized by CUTS International.

Permanent Mission/Embassy of Nepal

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