Statement by

Rt. Hon'ble Agni Prasad Sapkota, Speaker
House of Representatives of the Federal Parliament of Nepal
On
Contemporary challenge to democracy: Overcoming division and building community
at
143rd IPU Assembly, (Madrid, Spain 26-30 November 2021)

Your Excellency President of this Session
Speakers of the Parliaments,
President of the Inter Parliamentary Union,
Members of the Parliaments,
Distinguished Participants and Observers,

First of all, on behalf of the delegation of the Federal Parliament of Nepal, I thank the Parliament of Spain and the IPU for inviting me to participate in this Assembly. I extend sincere appreciations to the Government, Parliament, and people of Spain for the warm hospitality accorded to me and my delegation since our arrival.

The theme chosen for general debate today, "Contemporary challenge to democracy: Overcoming division and building community", is timely and reflects the realities of emerging issues of contemporary world. Discussions on overcoming division to strengthening international community will go a long way in addressing national, regional and global issues in the interest of all.

Throughout the history, people have strived for participation in decision making. This explains why democracy has evolved to be the ultimate form of governance as it gives people as much role in the national policy making as practically possible. While prevalent as the most preferred form of rule, democracy is not without challenges.

Information is more easily and comprehensively accessible today than it has ever been. The overwhelming spread of social media means that anyone can easily say what they want to say, and what they say is heard by a large demographic. But what can be used to spread information, can just as easily be used to spread misinformation. Heated exchanges, false data, misleading statistics, anger and frustrations, everything spreads fast and wide. This has weakened the trust of people towards political institutions.

In light of these challenges, it is imperative that the political institutions respond effectively to regain public trust. Division is not good for the democracy; it leads to resentment and hatred. The root cause of the division is when some groups feel that they have been left out. It is important to identify why those groups feel so. It is important to include them in decision making. Marginalized groups should be brought in to the mainstream of national life.

Parliament is the living embodiment of democracy; it is where people can change their rulers in a peaceful manner. It is where people's representatives earn trust and respect by ensuring justice and fairness to the weaker section, in absence of which people question whether this democratic system even works at all.

Democracy works; and it has to. If it doesn't then nothing will. It is upon us to make the people believe it works. We have to raise their engagement in the democratic processes. In order to overcoming division and building community, we have to ensure that no one is left behind.

Your Excellencies,

I take this opportunity to share Nepal's initiatives towards strengthening democratic institutions by addressing these challenges. The frustration built up by a long history of marginalisation of several communities led to the formation of an inclusive Constituent Assembly. The Constituent Assembly promulgated a rights-based Constitution in 2015 that embodies the fundamentals of participatory and inclusive democracy.

Nepal has made full commitment to establish a society founded on the proportional inclusive and participatory principles. The result so far has been promising towards building of a cohesive and inclusive society. The philosophy of inclusive democracy has been internalized in all three tiers of governance. Women now make up one third in the Federal Parliament and about 41 percent at the provincial and local levels. Affirmative action has created an increasingly representative governance structure, taking on board the marginalised communities.

I am fully confident that our consolidated efforts through IPU Assembly will complement the work of political leaderships towards promoting peace and security and ensuring just society. Concrete actions, backed by innovative solutions to emerging challenges of social division, are required for world peace.

The IPU Assembly is an extraordinary forum that brings together the legislators and policy makers from across the globe to discuss the contemporary issues. In the last couple of years, IPU's activities have been affected by the global pandemic. I highly commend the dedication and efforts of the IPU Secretariat to keep the IPU active even in such difficult times. I also congratulate the Parliament of Spain for successfully hosting what has been one of the most challenging IPU Assemblies ever.

I am confident that this global Assembly will result in constructive exchange of ideas and in adoption of creative resolutions to enable us work together in the days ahead. I assure you all support and solidarity of my delegation for the successful outcome of this Assembly.

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