

Statement by
**Rt. Hon. Ganesh Prasad Timilsina, Chairperson
National Assembly, Federal Parliament of Nepal**
On
**Overcoming the pandemic today and building a better tomorrow:
the role of parliaments**

At
142nd IPU Assembly
(Virtual Meeting 24-27 May 2021)

H.E. President of the 142nd IPU Assembly

H.E. Speakers of the Parliaments,

H.E. President of the Inter Parliamentary Union,

Members of the Parliaments,

Distinguished Participants and Observers of this virtual IPU Assembly.

1. We are standing together in this IPU Assembly through virtual medium amidst the biggest pandemic and crisis our generation has seen. This effort for protection of lives and strengthening of democracies despite the crisis is in itself commendable.
2. While I was in Serbia for the 141st IPU Assembly in 2019, I couldn't have imagined that the 142nd Assembly would be virtual. Between then and now, there isn't a part of the world untouched by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic that has infected millions and caused hundreds of thousand fatalities has adversely affected our personal, social, political, and economic relationships.
3. While it has not been possible to gather physically, international organizations like IPU and the UN must keep alive the dialogues, cooperation and sharing experiences. I have considered this Assembly as an important event in this context and thank the organizer.
4. In the interdependent global village that is the 21st century world, international cooperation is the biggest tool to defeat a pandemic like COVID-19. While the first wave was contained with relatively less damage, the second wave of COVID-19 is far from being contained. The cooperation Nepal has been receiving from the

international community in the matters of hospital beds, oxygen, ICU, ventilator, PPE, life-saving medicines and COVID vaccines has been commendable. We are hopeful that in a time when almost every country is struggling with this pandemic, Nepal will continue to receive further health support including vaccines.

5. The protection of human lives is the utmost priority in the time of this great crisis. A pandemic is not bound by geography and politics. Compared to human civilization and a question of life and death, things like geographical borders, political alignment and economic status are negligible. No one can deny that we are all inherently one and need to fight it as one.
6. That we will get a triumph over this pandemic is a matter of when, not if. We will have a lot of rebuilding to do then. It is upon us to rectify the fragilities in our healthcare systems and establish the access of every citizen to healthcare. Appropriate policy tools should be implemented to inject new energy into the fallen economy. Job creation should be an important priority. We, as legislators, should take initiatives to legally establish healthcare as a universal right. We must rely on cooperation as well as diplomacy to make sure that the COVID vaccines are equitably distributed throughout the world.
7. We parliamentarians, with the primary task to represent people, have to play a pivotal role. They have trusted us to get us elected, they will certainly listen to us when we appeal them to follow the safety protocols, not spread misinformation, adopt sanitary habits and help those in needs without compromising own safety. In this regard, I myself, as the Chairperson of the Upper House of the Federal Parliament, have directly interacted with the members of all seven State Assemblies. I had a virtual dialogue with the Speakers of the State Assemblies and the elected representatives at the local level during the first wave of the pandemic. I have known the government agencies to have adopted the conclusions of these meetings and the recommendations of Parliamentary Committees as guidelines.
8. During the first wave of the pandemic, we had given continuity to the Parliament's regular sessions, Parliamentary Committee meetings and other parliamentary processes. These meetings conducted by adopting appropriate physical distance and precautionary measures should be remembered as inherent part of lively democracy. Even during the second wave with larger casualties, we are trying to

keep alive the minimal democratic processes. Informal discussions of Parliamentary Committees and several parliamentary processes have been helped by virtual technology. This has given rise to a need for global exchange of cooperation in technology transfer and infrastructural aspects thereof. I would like to call the attention of every participant to this as well.

9. At last, it is certain that a complete eradication of a pandemic like COVID is a long wait. Thus, it is essential to establish a unanimous standard for organization of small but representative international and parliamentary programs adhering to necessary safety protocols and distancing measures. Such representative programs help to build the confidence amongst public that essential social activities can be performed while still adhering to the safety measures and that the pandemic can be defeated.

Thank You.