



Ladies and Gentlemen!

1. I am pleased to be here with you today in this Nepal Country Program Evaluation Workshop, organized jointly by the Government of Nepal and Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD.
2. We all know that IFAD has been supporting Nepal for three decades in the field of agriculture and forestry. Agriculture is the prime mover of Nepal's economy and development in this sector affects the poor and our development choices. We need to address the issues of agriculture sector within the context of our broad-based and inclusive development strategy in order to grow, promote employment and alleviate poverty at the same time. Nepal believes that commercialization of agriculture can play a powerful role in this regard.
3. A large majority of farmers in Nepal still carry out agriculture at subsistence level. This has denied them higher income, which would have resulted from concentration on high value commercial agricultural crops. Since past several years, government of Nepal has been initiating efforts to transform agriculture from subsistence to commercial farming. However, our efforts alone would not be sufficient in this drive. The shortage of fund is always there, and we also need to update technology and knowledge, and carry out research. It is in this context that international institutions like IFAD and others can play a more active role to cover up the gaps and fill in the lacunas that constrain our drive towards commercialization of agriculture.
4. Nepal's political situation is still in transition, and transition always presents some degree of uncertainty. However, we are committed and effortful not to allow political uncertainty affect

our development efforts. We have prioritized our development activities based on considerations of what we need to achieve, and where important issues lie. Agriculture is our number one priority and our focus is on diversification and commercialization of this sector. In this regard, the biggest and most difficult challenge for us is to make significant improvements in productivity and competitiveness of our agriculture. Addressing these challenges requires finance, technological inputs, extensions and market facilities along with effective and efficient delivery of these to the farmers. This can be made possible by reforming and strengthening both the supply as well as the demand side. In this context, we have given high emphasis on cooperatives, because it is our belief that farmers can be best organized into cooperatives which would help them to assert their rights and work for profitability and welfare of the members.

5. I consider this workshop highly valuable, as it would provide a platform to review the past and draw lessons for the preparation of forthcoming Nepal Country Strategy of IFAD. This is very important for all of us to work jointly to remove poverty and food insecurity from Nepal.

6. Tomorrow, we have a very important gathering for the NPPR Annual Meeting, where we will have in-depth deliberations in each area and come up with some concrete agenda of reform and actions. I am happy to know that IFAD is also participating in this meeting as a core member. My congratulations and best wishes.

7. I wish you all every success in your deliberations as well as a pleasant and memorable stay in Kathmandu. And hope that this meeting will provide valuable inputs towards developing right strategy and operations of IFAD for Nepal.

Thank you!