

Summary Report of Third NRN Global Conference 2007

The Third NRN Global Conference was held on 15 – 17 October 2007. There were approximately 400 participants from 40 countries in the conference. The conference was a mega event with extensive coverage in the national media. Major political parties were positively oriented towards the conference. The major political parties, namely the Nepali Congress, the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist Leninist), and the Communist party of Nepal (Maoist) organize special functions in honour of the participants of the NRN conference. The leaders also attended the conference on various occasions.

The conference was organized jointly by the Government of Nepal, Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and Non-Resident Nepali Association. The government by a special cabinet decision had constituted a High Level Organizing Committee under the convensorship of Honorable Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Sahana Pradhan. The Non-Resident Nepali Association with support from the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry acted as the Secretariat of the Conference, while the Executive Director of the NRNA was the member secretary of the committee. The Kathmandu Metropolitan City hosted a special dinner with cultural program in honour of the delegates. The conference was financially supported by various partners. The Sanima Group, Spice Nepal Pvt. Ltd. and Mr. Janak Basnet (Isle of Man) were the platinum partners. The Asuka group was the gold partner whereas Nepal Ektrat Engineering, NRNA – National Coordination Council – Russia, The Gurkha Construction and Training Centre, Bank of Kathmandu Ltd, Everest Bank Ltd., Krishi Premura, Surya Nepal Pvt. Ltd., Hulas Steel Pvt. Ltd. and Varun Developers Pvt. Ltd. were the silver partners. The Nepal Association of Foreign Employment Agencies also supported by co-hosting a lunch. The participation was on basis of registration.

The conference had several plenary and parallel sessions on topical issues. The main points of what transpired and what was discussed in the conference are given below:

INAUGURAL SESSION:

The Inaugural session was graced by Rt. Honorable Prime Minister Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala as Chief Guest and Rt. Honorable Speaker of the Legislature-Parliament Mr. Subash Nembang as Special Guest.

The session started showcasing the plight of mother Nepal during the recent past. After indicating the suffering of a mother, the children representing the diversity of Nepal vowed to end the suffering of the mother and bring smiles to the faces of Nepali children. It provided a setting to the conference to discuss the transformation for a better and prosperous Nepal. After the choreography of the children showing the unity in diversity of Nepal, the Kids sang the National Anthem. The leading artists of Nepal arranged by the Madhurima group offered a special song dedicated to the Non-Resident Nepalis.

After the brief cultural welcome, Hon'ble Minister for Foreign affairs and Convener of the High Level Third NRN Global Conference Organizing Committee Mrs. Sahana Pradhan delivered the welcome address. In her address she highlighted the recent initiatives of the Government of Nepal to safeguard the interests of the NRNs and making use of the connection of the NRNs for promoting the interests of Nepal. She also spoke of the new law concerning the NRNs passed by the parliament offering added scope for the NRNs to be involved in the transformation of Nepal.

The keynote address in the inaugural session was delivered by Ramon Magsaysay Award Winner Mr. Mahabir Pun. Highlighting the possibility of using the knowledge and skill gained outside of Nepal in the social and economic transformation of Nepal, Mr. Pun cited from his personal experience how the most modern knowledge and skills acquired in the developed countries could be used for improving the livelihood of the rural folks of Nepal. According to him small contributions can mean big to so many fellow countrymen. Citing John F Kennedy, former President of the United States of America “Ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country”, he challenged the NRN community to join hands in helping people in remote Nepal.

Delivering emotional impromptu speech, Chief Guest Rt. Honorable Prime Minister said that he personally was in full agreement with the issues raised by the NRNs. According to him he was for granting the dual citizenship status to people of Nepali origin as it would encourage them to be involved with the mother country and her people. He called on the NRNs to focus on issues like poverty eradication as the divide between the haves and the have-nots was a subject of major concern for the country. As a Prime Minister he had some limitations, but he assured to give proper considerations to the issues and concerns raised by the NRNs.

Dr. Upendra Mahato, NRNA President urged the government to focus more on using the skills acquired by Nepalis while residing and working abroad within the country rather than just emphasizing on remittance and direct financial investment. He stressed on the importance of dual citizenship for addressing the concerns of the Nepali diaspora who had acquired foreign citizenship. He also called for ensuring the overseas Nepali citizens' participation in the upcoming Constituent Assembly election.

Expressing gratitude to all organizations and individuals who had helped in organizing the event, Mr. Chandi Raj Dhakal, FNCCI President called not to confine the role of NRNs but to recognize their contributions in sectors like education, health, ICT, finance, hydropower etc.

PLENARY SESSION I - Foreign Employment – "Gains and Pains"

The session Chaired by Hon'ble Minister of State for Labour and Transport Management – Mr. Ramesh Lekhak, dealt exclusively on the issue of Foreign Employment. Mr. Deepak Khadka – ICC Member, made the theme presentation on the issue, Mr. Sagar Nepal – NRNA Vice President for Middle East, Mr. L.P. Shanwa Limbu – President, Foreign Employment Association of Nepal, Mr. Hit Man Gurung, ICC member were in the panel.

Mr. Deepak Khadka opined that the foreign employment was too important for Nepali Economy. He called for policy and procedural reforms and initiatives that will maximize the benefits of foreign employment for the nation as well as the workers and minimize the pains associated with foreign employment. He called for a compulsory insurance scheme and also for training that will prepare the workers better. Mr. Sagar Nepal also spoke on the issue.

There was lively discussion on the issue. There was unanimity of view for the need to make foreign employment well organized, legally regulated, transparent, with improved access to new markets, and protecting rights of Nepali migrants. There was a consensus that various stakeholders need to work together to tap the new emerging opportunities. The obligation of the state was also to protect the rights of its citizens, Nepali workers. There was also need to enhance their earning capacity and utilization of the skills they had acquired while outside. By combining the efforts of various stakeholders the foreign employment could be made more beneficial to the nation.

PLENARY SESSION II - Contours of "New Nepal" and Role of NRN Community

The second plenary session was with the leaders of the main political parties of the country. This session was moderated by well-known Journalist Mr. Yubaraj Ghimire. Those participating in this session were Mr. Sushil Koirala of Nepali congress, Mr. Madhav Kumar Nepal of CPN(UML), Mr. Puspakamal Dahal (Comrade Prachanda) and Mr. Baburam Bhattarai of CPN(Maoist), and Amik Sherchan of Samyukta Jana Morcha . Although the session was planned to be a panel discussion by the leaders on the questions raised by the participants, owing to the difficult political situation and ongoing emergency session of parliament the arrival of the leaders could not be timed perfectly. But the limited question-answer session was lively. The main issues raised was what the leaders saw as future of Nepal, why they could not come to certain consensus on important issues, what they see as future for the Non-Resident Nepali community etc.

There was unanimity that the country was going through a very rough phase and the issues needed to be resolved urgently. The leaders were of positive opinion about the role and contribution of the NRNs. They spoke highly of the role played by the NRNs in the struggle for democracy and also in sustaining the economy in difficult times. They also spoke on the need to use the knowledge and resources gained for the betterment of the country and people.

There was discussion on NRNs being unofficial envoys of Nepal to the outside world. The NRNs could be a lobbying force in the interest of Nepal in the country they live in. Their achievements in the host country could also be beneficial to the motherland. The leaders also narrated their experience in meeting with the representatives of the NRN community. All spoke highly of the initiatives taken by the association in trying to contribute to the development of the country.

PLENARY SESSION II - Inclusion and Transformation

This session focused on the transformation of Nepal and how the social and ethnic groups who felt excluded could be made equal partners in the transformation process. This session was moderated by well-known TV journalist Mr. Bijay Poudel. Mr. Upendra Yadav from Madhesi Peoples' Right Forum, Mr. Pasang Sherpa from Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, Mr. Binod Pahadi from Dalit Nagarik Andolan and Mr. Janak Basnet, ICC member from the Isle of Man were in the Panel. There was a very lively discussion on the issue of inclusion, exclusion, division and unity. There was wide acceptance of the need to bring the groups feeling excluded to the mainstream. The unity of the country would be strengthened, if all the groups felt that they were part of the national

mainstream. Questions were raised why there were tendency to divide the country along ethnic and caste lines. There was unanimity of the view that the opportunity for all should be equal.

The session also focused on equality, unity, right and proportional representation in the social, economical and political activities. There was sort of a consensus of having increased representation of socially excluded communities in the national mainstream and in the decision making process. In the emotional speech thoroughly enjoyed by the audience, Mr. Janak Basnet called for mutual understanding and help. He was of the view that every person had a complexity of characteristics and nobody could be big or small by birth. He called for providing the persons with role and place according to their competency.

The first day proceedings ended here. There was an official welcome dinner in honor of the participants on that day. The dinner was attended by a wide range of personalities representing a wide spectrum of the Nepali society.

There were 4 simultaneous sessions next day.

Split Session A : Culture and Tourism

The session chaired by Minister for Tourism, Culture and Civil Aviation - Mr. Prithvi Subba Gurung, had Mr. Madhav Prasad Ghimire, Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Civil Aviation, Ms. Indra Ban, Vice President NRNA (Australia), Mr. Satya Mohan Joshi, renowned Culture expert of Nepal as speakers. There was unanimity of the view in the session that the Nepali Community Organizations all around the world needed to unite all Nepali emotionally and introduce Nepali culture to the world. There was a suggestion to the government to develop a “Culture Policy” that will help promotion of Nepali Culture. The identity of every nation was through its culture. There was a presentation on send home a friend. The Nepalis living in developed countries could be the marketers of Nepal. If each Nepali could persuade one person to come to Nepal, the tourist arrival could see a big boost. There was suggestion of Tourism Campaigns aiming to attract tourists in Nepal by the slogan “Send Home a Friend” followed by the strategy of “Nepal for all Seasons”. Most persons participating in the discussion complained about poor accessibility. Better connectivity with the outside world was the primary requirement for increasing tourist arrivals was the conclusion.

Split Session B : Investment Opportunities in Infrastructure

The session chaired by Hon'ble Minister of State for Water Resources - Mr. Gyanendra Bahadur Karki, had Mr. Purna Prasad Kadariya, Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Physical Planning, Dr. Rameshananda Vaidya, Former Nepalese Ambassador to Japan, Mr. Anup Kumar Upadhaya – Joint Secretary - Ministry of Water Resources, Mr. Sharda Jung Thapa, NRNA Vice President (Americas), Mr. Anil Bhadra Khanal and Prem Nidhi K.C. from Bagmati Basin Sewerage Project, and Mr. Deewakar Golchha - First Vice President of FNCCI as speakers.

The presentation and discussion focused on Infrastructure as a potential area for investment. The Hydropower, Road Transportation, Urban Infrastructure were cited as areas of priority to the government. The government representatives seem to be ready to listen to the issues raised by the NRNs and the private sector operators. The participants highlighted the need to have investment friendly atmosphere for attracting private investment in the infrastructure. The issue was not merely to have a seemingly investment friendly policy but also have a mechanism that will ensure the execution/implementation of the policy. The issue of governance was very important. The government could not stay idle by declaring a policy but need to be active to ensure smooth execution of the projects. The private public partnership model was seen to be the best option for solving the sewerage problem along the Bagmati River.

Split Session C : Youth, Education and Sports

The session chaired by Arjun Bahadur Bhandari - Acting Secretary in the Ministry of Education and Sports had Saurabh Jyoti President, Nepalese Young Entrepreneurs' Forum, Mr. Sagar Onta - Youth Representative NRNA, Mr. Bal Joshi from NRN Youth Forum, Mr. Nilendra Shrestha, NRNA ICC member, Mr. Rabi Raj Thapa, Vice president Nepal Olympic Committee, Mr. Jeevan Ram Shrestha, Member Secretary, National Sports Council, Mr. Ajad Shrestha, FNCCI Third Vice President as speakers.

The presentation and the discussions focused on the need to tap the unlimited benefits provided by the strategic positioning of our country. There was sort of an agreement to do the necessary homework so that Nepal could be made a transit link between India and China and make it a hub of information technology. The education and sports could be the vehicle. The mass sports like long distance road races could be a vehicle to get Nepal known in the international circle and promote mass tourism in the country. Nepal had the benefit of altitude required in training of long distance road races. Government alone could not develop the sport infrastructure. Business and sports could go hand in hand. The NRNs could

take developing sport infrastructure as a potentially profitable business venture. A sport was one area which was beyond political conflicts and divide.

Split Session D : Role of Global Nepali Women

This session was graced by Hon'ble Deputy Speaker of the Interim Parliament Ms. Chitra Lekha Yadav as a chief guest. This session was chaired by Mrs. Ranjana Udas NRNA Woman Representative. The session had Ms. Manju Gurung President of Paurukhi, Ms. Pramila Rijal, First Vice President of FWEAN, Mr. Gunner F. Anderson from Save the Children Norway, Mr. Bishwa Kanta Mainali President of Nepal Bar Association and Ms. Bhawani Rana, FNCCI Executive Committee Member as speakers. There was unanimity of the view that the country's transformation will not be there if half of the population were not included in the mainstream. The problem of including women in the various aspects of political, social and economic life of the nation could not be treated in isolation. The difference in the social and cultural status of women in countries where Nepalis were living in significant numbers was highlighted. The issue of the difficulties faced by Nepali women who had gone to foreign employment was also highlighted.

There was unanimity of the view that prohibition and ban were not the answer. The employment and earnings enhances the status of women. The government, the Nepali missions and the Nepali organizations operating in different countries required to be sensitive toward the problems and issues concerning women. The need for coordination and collaboration among Nepali women living in Nepal and outside of Nepal was also emphasized. The women also needed to assert themselves to be heard and recognized.

PLENARY SESSION III : NRN Law - What is there and what is missing?

This was a lively session chaired by Hon'ble Attorney General of Nepal Mr. Yagya Murti Banjade. Mr. Chiranjibi Dhakal NRN-ICC Joint Coordinator, Mr. Dinesh Tripathi - Advocate (NRN USA) and Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs presented the NRNA's and Government of Nepal perspectives on the diaspora issues especially with regard to the legal provisions concerning them. In the lively discussion, the NRNs stressed on the need to reform the law passed by the parliament. There was discussion on the definition of the NRNs. Participants strongly felt that the definition contained in the present law was faulty and would lead to more confusions.

The issue of dual citizenship was dealt in great length. The participants felt that the foreign citizens of Nepali origin should be given right to hold Nepali

Citizenship and also have the right to ancestral property at par with the Nepali citizens.

There was discussion on the voting rights for the overseas Nepali citizens. There was sort of a consensus that the NRNs should be able to exercise their voting rights in the country of their residence. The NRNs expressed the interest to help the authorities if the NRNs were given the right to vote from the place/country of their residence.

The dinner of the second day was hosted by Sanima Group. There was a large presence of guests not participating in the conference. This provided the opportunity for the participants to interact with a wide spectrum of Nepali society.

NRNA GENERAL BODY MEETING

The second half of the second day was devoted to the formalities of the General Body Meeting of the NRNA. At the beginning, the ICC International Coordinator - Mr. Bhim Udas presented a report of the ICC. The report highlighted the growth of the Diaspora and also the increasing acceptance of NRNA as a common organization of the NRNs. The report also highlighted the formation of the NCCs in 38 countries. The Treasurer – Mr. Prakash Pun presented the financial report of 2006 and also the audited balance sheet.

After the report formalities the discussion focused on three issues pertaining to the NRNA namely its constitution, code of conduct of the NRN ICC Members and the NRNA. There was also discussion on the sustainability of NRNA. The meeting adopted the constitution with certain changes. The focus in the discussion was on how to make the organization vibrant and sustainable.

NRN MOVEMENT: Problems, Prospects and Road Ahead:

After the formalities of the AGM there were a series of presentation on the NRN Movement. At the beginning various Project coordinators presented the progress report on various projects accepted as NRN projects by the ICC. The projects and the persons presenting the report are listed below.

- ▶ *NRN Devghat Briddhashram Project* - Mr. Jiba Nath Lamichhane -ICC Member
- ▶ *Public Library* - Mr. Naresh Koirala, ICC Member
- ▶ *Own District Program* – Mr. Bhim Udas- International Coordinator
- ▶ *Nepal Investment Fund*- Mr. Niley Shrestha – NRN America

- ▶ *NRN Kathmandu International Marathon* – Mr. Nilendra Shrestha – ICC Member
- ▶ *One Village One Product (OVOP) and Trade School* – Mr. Kush Kumar Joshi, 2nd VP, FNCCI
- ▶ *Daijo Fund* – Ms. Usha Sharma, NRN Germany
- ▶ *NRNA Building* – Concept report – Mr. Subash Adhikari, NRN UK

After the project report presentation, there were presentation from various NCCs. The NCC presentation focused on the difficulties faced by the Nepali Diaspora and the activities and initiatives of the NRN NCCs in different countries. Most of the NCCs seem to be conducting regular activities and facing difficulties in running the organization. The need to popularize the NRN movement among the diaspora was stressed. The NRNA was acquiring greater significance. More efficient organization was required.

Towards the end there was the election formality. The election process was piloted by a three member election committee comprising of Mr. Sharda Jung Thapa (USA), Mr. Belu Thapa (Japan) and Ms. Arati Shrestha (UK). Although there was quite a heightened interest on the election, but towards the end most of the office bearers were elected unanimously. There was an election for a single post of Joint Regional Coordinator of Asia Pacific Region. After the election formalities, the newly elected President, Vice Presidents, Other Office bearers and ICC members were congratulated by the election committee, FNCCI President and Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The culmination of the conference was the concluding session. In the concluding session chaired by Mrs. Sahana Pradhan, Convener of the Third NRN Global Conference High level Organizing Committee and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Rajendra Bahadur Shrestha, FNCCI Senior Consultant presented the summary proceedings. He mainly highlighted the issues. Then various partners were honored by presenting the token of appreciation.

Dr. Jugal Bhurtel – Spokesperson NRNA read the Kathmandu Resolution 2007 drafted by the drafting group. It was adopted unanimously. The resolution is attached herewith. Then the newly elected NRNA president – Dr. Upendra Mahato spoke about the conference and the challenges ahead for the NRN movement. Thanking all concerned he called on the NRNs to continue in the same spirit as in the conference. He asked for their continued interest, involvement and support for taking the movement ahead.

Expressing thanks to the participants, Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya spoke on the need to continue the dialogue between the government and the NRNs and also ensure on the commitment made. Mr. Dev Man Hirachan, Coordinator of the

conference organizing committee formed by the NRNA thanked the partners and other contributors as well as those who worked for the conference. He was of the view that such a major event required support from many quarters. He especially thanked the Government of Nepal and the FNCCI for their continued efforts that helped make the conference a grand success. Speaking on behalf of FNCCI Mr. Kush Kumar Joshi, FNCCI Vice President especially thanked the NRNs for responding so positively to the conference and assembling in large numbers. He thanked them for their understanding and support. He also thanked the secretariat staff for their hard work.

The last official program was the dinner with cultural program hosted by the Kathmandu Metropolitan City. The dinner was preceded by a cultural program showcasing the Kathmandu Cultural heritage.

The conference was widely covered in the media. Many delegates had the opportunity to speak in one of the media. Ms Usha Bhatta ran the program as Master of Ceremony. The conference can be considered a success in spite of the minor hiccups especially regarding the printing and identity cards. The Secretariat was excellently supported by volunteer interns studying in various universities and colleges of Nepal.

KATHMANDU DECLARATION 2007

Issued by the Third NRN Global Conference

Reiterating the full commitment to the long term peace in the country, Democracy, Press Freedom, Human Rights including Rights to Private Property the Third NRN Global Conference organized jointly by the Government of Nepal, Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Non-Resident Nepali Association has issued this Kathmandu Declaration 2007 on 17th October 2007.

1. The conference welcomes the cooperation among the Government of Nepal, NRNA and FNCCI for the social and economic transformation of Nepal in the context of the country marching on the path to peace. The conference reiterates its unequivocal support to the peoples' wishes for change, the movement towards it and the decisions taken in this context.
2. The Third NRN Global Conference appreciates the positive response from the prime minister and leaders of main political parties to the continued request of the NRNs dual citizenship provision.
3. The conference welcomes the plea by the government, political parties, civil society and others for the use of knowledge, skills and the intellectual capital of the Non-Resident Nepalis in the overall development of Nepal. The NRNA reiterates its commitment to extend all possible cooperation in this context.
4. The conference welcomes the new law on Non-Resident Nepalis passed by the interim legislature – parliament and expresses its commitment for initiatives for amendments in the law incorporating the suggestion raised in the present conference including the need for change in the definition.
5. The conference reiterates its position that the election of the constituent assembly should be carried out as soon as possible in order to end the political deadlock in the country. The conference reiterates its commitment for continued efforts to ensure the NRN's participation in the constituent assembly election.
6. The remittance from Nepali workers working in foreign countries has been making significant contribution to the economy of Nepal. In this context efforts will be made to create opportunities of foreign employment in developed countries. We reiterate our commitment for a fund in the welfare of persons in foreign employment. Initiatives will be taken to increase the

insurance amount and ease the process of insurance for those going for foreign employment and also for resolution of various problems faced by persons going on foreign employment.

7. Necessary initiatives will be taken to maximize the use of knowledge and skills of persons returning from foreign employment
8. The Nepali mission abroad will be made more effective in promoting foreign employment and investment, tourism and export of Nepali products under economic diplomacy. Initiatives will be taken to establish Nepal missions including consulates in countries with large Nepali population. The nearest missions of Nepal will be authorized to provide consular services to Nepalis in countries where their number is small.
9. The National Coordination Councils of NRNA in different countries will initiate at least one philanthropic project in Nepal. The priority in implementing such projects will be accorded to the conflict ridden and economically and socially backward areas.
10. The conference reiterates its commitment to continue efforts to mobilize the women and youth in the overall development. The NRN community will initiate development of Nepali cultural centers in different cities of the world.
11. The conference reiterates NRNs commitment to set up the 100 million dollar Nepal Investment fund within 1 year of official registration of NRNA. Through this fund, the individual and collective investible resources will be channelized for the development of national infrastructure.
12. The conference supports the campaign "Send Friend a Home". The NRN community will be mobilized to make this program a success.
13. The conference commits itself to mobilize the entire NRN community to attract tourists to Nepal by marketing Nepal using such world famous landmarks as Lumbini 'The birth place of Lord Budhha' and Sagarmatha 'The highest point of the Earth as the USP of Nepal'.
14. The NRNs will cooperate with organizations and institutions devoted to protection of environment as well as Nepal's natural and cultural heritage.
15. The NRNA will take initiatives to add and upgrade facilities/services at the Tribhuwan International Airport.

