Statement by Mr. Bishnu Prasad Gautam, Under Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Nepal and Member of Nepalese Delegation to the 68th session of the UNGA at the Second Committee of the sixty-eighth session of the UN General Assembly on Agenda Item 25: Agriculture Development, Food Security and Nutrition

(28 October 2013, New York)

Mr. Chairman,

I am honoured to address this important meeting under this agenda item. My delegation associates itself with the statements made by Fiji, Benin and Lao PDR on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the LDCs and LLDCs respectively. I thank the Secretary-General for the comprehensive reports submitted under this agenda item.

Mr. Chairman,

Agriculture has been the main source of the people’s livelihood in the developing world. Despite the global efforts to ensure sustainable agriculture development and food security, there are still 1.2 billion people living in extreme poverty, 868 million people suffering from undernourishment and 26 per cent children of the world are stunted. The massive poverty in the agricultural sector, gender inequality, food insecurity and excessively volatile food prices are the main challenges to address this problem.

Sufficient and nutritious food availability is critical to fully develop and maintain one’s physical and mental capacities, especially to those of women, children, older persons, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities. The multiple and complex causes of the food crises that occur in different regions require a comprehensive and coordinated responses at national, regional and international level. We also need to look into the issue of food waste, overall consumption and production pattern, and trade of agricultural products.

Mr. Chairman,

As agriculture is the lifeline of the people and economy of Nepal, my delegation attaches high importance to the achievement of food and nutritional security. Our policy is to make continuous efforts to make agriculture sector an industry by increasing productivity, enhancing entrepreneurship, developing and diversifying environment friendly agricultural technology, protecting, promoting, and utilizing agricultural bio diversity.

Nevertheless, we face a number of challenges and problems despite our continued efforts in this direction. The subsistence level of agriculture, lack of infrastructures and advance technology,
high price rise and low supply of food, scarcity of labour force in this sector due to labour flight, adverse and disproportionate impact of climate change, and internal and external shocks are few such challenges. The compounded effects, such as the melting of Himalayan glaciers, loss of biodiversity, increasing trends of landslides, droughts, and flash floods, and other natural calamities have caused adverse effects on agriculture alongside the rapid loss of land fertility, decline in crop yields, leading to food insecurity and poverty. This has serious impact on the life of common people, especially to those living in the remote, rural and geographically disadvantaged areas, and particularly the vulnerable segments including women, children and elderly.

Mr. Chairman,

We firmly believe that food sovereignty is a vital issue. The right to food can only be ensured if food sovereignty is properly addressed in terms of its availability, supply, access and consumption. It is evidently clear that the present situation of food insecurity is largely due to low level of investment, relative neglect of structural transformation of the agricultural sector, lack of application of appropriate technology and decreasing level of ODA. This calls for multiple interventions at different levels with collective responsibilities and concerted efforts to meet the challenges of food security.

Apart from the fulfillment of ODA commitments, countries like ours also require an enhanced level of investment in sustainable agricultural and rural development for generating maximum employment opportunities for rural poor and ensuring long-term agricultural productivity and food security. We also underline the importance of the transfer and use of appropriate, affordable, sustainable and climate resilient agricultural technology that combines local knowledge and is also supportive of international trade rules.

Together we should make efforts towards enhancing the production and distributional aspects of food among regions, nations and vulnerable communities to ensure food security. We call upon the developed countries and international financial institutions to increase their assistance to cover the social safety nets, complementing the efforts made by national governments, in sharing the best practices for enhancing agricultural production including the transfer of required technology in easier and simpler terms. We also highlight the importance of the Zero Hunger Challenge initiatives launched by the Secretary-General at the United Nations Conference for Sustainable Development last year.

Finally, we urge all the stakeholders for the full and effective implementation of Istanbul Program of Action and integration of the issues relating to agricultural development and food security in the respective United Nations development processes and programmes in predictable and transparent manner. We also call for according due priority to agriculture and food security in the post-2015 UN development agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.