World Day to Combat Desertification and Draught is observed every year on June 17 under the auspices of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The day in 2020 under the theme - “Food, Feed and Fibre” reminds individuals globally to reduce their personal impact on lands and contribute to the global goal of sustainable production and consumption. Nepal as a party to UNCCD since 1997 would like to join hands with international communities to achieve land degradation neutrality with strong partnership with them at all levels.

It is more relevant to pay attention to the theme "Food, Feed, Fibre" of this year at a time when the world is facing COVID-19 pandemic, which demands increased production of foods and fibre to feed deprived communities across nations. Considering the high dependence of rural people on land resources for their livelihoods, the theme has substantial significance to Nepal.

Land degradation exacerbated by deforestation, forest degradation and climate change is a challenge to biodiversity conservation, watershed management, sustainable agriculture, and food security. The Ministry of Forests and Environment (MoFE) has three major mandates namely forests/biodiversity conservation/watershed management, environment protection and combating climate change. In order to address these three domains, Government of Nepal in 2019 has issued National Forest Policy, National Environment Policy and National Climate Change Policy respectively. Nepal has also prepared National Action Programme on Land Degradation and Desertification in 2016. MoFE with these policy instruments aims at contributing ultimately to combating drought and land degradation in the country in an integrated way. While implementing these policies, MoFE works together with provinces, local levels, civil society organizations, women networks, indigenous peoples, local communities and private sector.
Maintaining land quality and productivity is a challenge. Enhancing supply chain of foods and fibre is also equally important. Nepal is facing two-fold problems of land - acute land fallow problem on the one hand, while misuse of land through haphazard infrastructure planning on the other. Anthropogenic activities are posing severe pressure on land that damage ecosystems and biodiversity. Ongoing climate change effects and COVID-19 impacts are further aggravating the vicious cycle of vulnerable people across the country.

Having considered these problems, Nepal has also ample opportunities to increase green jobs based on agriculture, forests, biodiversity, clean energy, and nature-based tourisms through green growth strategy. Green growth strategy can be introduced as a means of increased production of foods and fibre. In addition, it supports to adapt to adverse impacts of climate change and reduce emission of greenhouse gases.

Forests are sources of agriculture while both produce foods and fibers. Nepal as a part of globalized world, the food that we eat, the feed that livestock eats and the fiber for clothes that we wear impact lands not only within the country, but those thousands of miles away. Therefore, no matter where we live, the protection of nature and natural world including lands is always crucial for our survival. Eventually, our collective efforts will help to secure our planet and also protect our future.

We wish the successful celebration of the 26th World Desertification and Drought Day 2020.

17 June 2020
Kathmandu, Nepal