

Briefing Note
(Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 11:30 hrs. 04 May 2015)

1. It has been more than a week since we met last time. I would like to express my sincere thanks to all of you for your continued cooperation, understanding and expression of solidarity with the people and government of Nepal at this difficult hour. The response of the international community to disaster in Nepal has been overwhelmingly supportive and encouraging. More than Fifty (50) countries, including our immediate neighbours India and China, fellow SAARC Member States, our donors and other friendly countries, the United Nations, the EU and Multilateral institutions have already been involved in the ongoing rescue and relief operations. I consider this as a significant gain as well as a source of comfort amidst the tragic and unprecedented loss besetting the country.

2. Over the past ten days, the loss of lives has been constantly on the rise. The scale of damage to property and infrastructures as well as to the historical, cultural and archaeological sites, including famous World Heritages Sites, has been heartbreaking. Some of them are with inscriptions from the 5th century. It may take several days to get a full picture of the loss and devastation.

3. In the aftermath of the devastating earthquake, Nepal not only confronts the immediate humanitarian challenges but also the long-term impact on the socio-economic development undermining the country's efforts in achieving internationally agreed development goals including the MDGs.

4. The Government is equally saddened by the loss of lives of many foreign nationals. Some of them have also been injured and some are still missing. I would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt condolences on the loss of lives, and wish for a speedy recovery of the wounded people. We will continue to pursue our search for the missing people.

5. The following is the summary of the devastation as of now:

- a. **Deaths: 7276**
- b. **Injured: 14362**
- c. **Houses completely destroyed: 200552**
- d. **Houses partly damaged: 186285**
- e. **Death of foreign nationals: 58**
- f. **Number of foreign nationals injured: 52**
- g. **Missing foreign nationals: 112**

6. The Government of Nepal commends the international community for the spontaneous and generous support extended to Nepal at this hour of national tragedy. More than 76 rescue teams and 70 medical teams with the strength of above 4050 trained personnel with 129 canines from over 34 countries were effectively involved in rescue operations across the earthquake-hit districts (Sindhupalchok, Kathmandu, Nuwakot, Dhading, Gorkha, Rasuwa, Kavre, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur and Dolakha). They have recovered 16 people live and 150 dead bodies from the rubbles of the collapsed structures. I extend my sincere thanks to all of them for their heroic jobs so professionally and courageously undertaken despite difficulties posed by recurrent aftershocks, rainfall, remoteness of hardly-hit areas, Himalayan terrain, etc. We wish them a safe journey back home.

7. The high level visits from neighbours, and other friendly countries as well as from the UN, EU and WFP have been significantly reassuring. We understand a few more visits would be undertaken in the coming days. We thank them for their visit and expression of genuine concerns and solidarity with the Government and people of Nepal.

8. As the rescue works have come to an end, the government has laid its focus now on relief operations in all affected areas. We are concerned about the need to speed up the delivery of relief materials to the people in need with greater efficiency. The government is committed to doing its best to facilitate the process and mobilizing all its resources for this purpose. An effective coordination between the security and civilian agencies has been established. We immensely value the support being extended by our friends from the international community. While we are guided by purely humanitarian objectives, we should also take into consideration the need to incorporate transparency in our efforts. This is in commensurate with our policy to follow the rule of law and good governance. Moreover, the people as well as the parliament would like to know what we receive from our well-wishers and how we distribute them to the victims. The government would like to ensure that the support received from our friends at this difficult hour is best utilized for the benefit of the affected people. We expect cooperation and understanding of our donors and friends in sharing the list of relief materials they bring in. We are ready to welcome your suggestions in this regard.

9. The Government of Nepal has issued an indicative list of priority items (that cover shelter, food, hygiene, clothes; drug and surgical items and construction; emergency veterinary medicines, vaccines,

disinfectants and feeds; and agricultural nutrients) required in connection with the relief operations and basic needs. The list may be revised based on the evolving circumstances in the areas affected by the devastation. It is expected to serve as a useful reference for any friendly countries and organizations willing to donate relief materials in support of the ongoing relief operations. The list is transmitted to all Diplomatic Missions, United Nations and its Specialized Agencies and other International Organizations based in Kathmandu for ready reference.

10. We are assessing whether we still need the fully equipped, self-mobilizing, smart and efficient medical teams comprising orthopedic surgeons, anesthetists, neurologist, paramedics, general surgeons, etc.

11. To facilitate customs clearance of relief materials, the Government has assigned at TIA a Joint Working Level Team consisting of representatives from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Immigration Office and Nepal Army. It has been instrumental in significantly speeding up the clearance procedures. Similarly, with regard to the landing permission for the flights with relief materials, we would like you to understand that we are doing our best in view of the capacity of our airport, need for maintaining the regularity of commercial flights as well as the arrival of the priority items. We have excellent mechanisms in place to facilitate the immigration procedures. We request you to ensure that all members of your team have proper documents and that the request for landing permission also includes the list of persons travelling and the items to be brought in. For safety, security and practical reasons, except in exceptional situation, diplomatic vehicles will not be allowed to have access to tarmac.

12. NGOs and other charity organizations are advised to get involved in relief works in coordination with the designated local authorities of the Government of Nepal.

13. The Government of Nepal appreciates all genuine initiatives of individuals and organizations to help victims by raising funds. However, it has also become a duty of the government to regulate the public funds and contributions raised in the name of disaster so that benevolent contributions are not misused. In this context, the Nepal Rastra Bank issued a directive on 29 April directing that all funds thus raised be deposited with the Prime Minister Disaster Relief Fund and that no withdrawals from the related accounts be made. It has become necessary to clarify that the directive does not affect the operation of accounts maintained before 25 April 2015 by development organizations, relief agencies and other social organizations.

14. Also an e-portal to facilitate online transfer of money (through Visa/Master Card) to the Prime Minister's Disaster Relief Fund (PMDRF) has been created for the ease of contributors from around the world. The strict regulations under which the fund will be spent will ensure that the funds will be utilized only for the search, rescue and relief operations. The Fund's activities are coordinated at the central level by a committee headed by the Vice Chairperson of the National Planning Commission that also includes secretaries of eight different ministries. To ensure accountability and transparency, all expenditures under both the central fund and the district fund are audited annually by the Auditor General of Nepal.

15. Rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts will require huge resources. Therefore, the Government has decided to set up a

Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Fund (RRF) with a target of collecting US\$ 2 Billion. The Government has already transferred US\$ 200.00 Million to the Fund as seed money. I am confident that generous contributions of the international community to the Fund will significantly contribute to the rehabilitation and reconstruction process.

16. We place high priority on the restoration of the monuments and sites of historical, cultural and archaeological significance and urge the international community to share their expertise and extend necessary cooperation to preserve our ancient cultural heritage.

17. The Government of Nepal welcomes the launch of the United Nations' Flash Appeal of 29 April 2015 and calls on all Member States to contribute to it to provide the affected people with the life-saving assistance and protection in the next three months.

18. This earthquake, probably being the first major disaster after the adoption of Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction last month, we believe that the international community has to take actions in line with the provisions of this Framework. While the immediate response needs to be in the form of rescue and relief, we need further support for rehabilitation of the victims and reconstruction of the infrastructures and architectures.

19. The situation in the aftermath of the tragic disaster in the country is quite delicate also in the context that the political constitutional process of drafting a new constitution is in the final phase. The government needs your continued support and full understanding to confront the unprecedented challenges in the days ahead.

Thank you very much!