

With the Workers For the Workers

Bishnu Rimal



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PREFACE

Nepali workers have been instigating a protracted struggle for more than seven decades now to establish political regime and labour market institutions so that the rights of the working class people including the right to organise, a decent work, adequate social security, and dignity are guaranteed. They have been instrumental force for the successful political revolutions including of those in early 1950s, 1990 and 2006. All these have kept on adding to building blocks to safeguard people's sovereignty, transform Nepal into people's democratic republic, create an empowered citizenry and take the country to the path of prosperity with social justice where the workers also enjoy their rights.

However, the conditions of workers have not changed much. They are still struggling for their right to form trade unions and make collective bargaining for fair and non-discriminatory wages, safety at work place and adequate social security coverage. Nearly a quarter of the workers are unable to meet their basic needs with their wages and income; and they are in absolute poverty as 'working poor'. A large number of in-country and migrant workers are deprived of remunerative pay, job security, safety at work, and social security. As such, every third Nepali youth is exposed to exploitative, insecure and risky job in foreign labour markets. While their savings abroad provides the country a lifeline for survival of the domestic economy, they are not secured by any social protection scheme; nor have their savings been productively utilised.

Moreover, predominantly an informal labour market, growing informalisation of formal labour market work, and the lack of

enforcement of existing laws and regulations make the existing work and employment relations unfair, exploitative and insecure at both the formal and informal labour markets. These common issues, which the trade unions have been fighting against for the last seven decades still remain the key labour issues in this 21st century labour market. Despite several political regime changes, the distresses of the workers are alive; and GEFONT has been fighting for their cause for the last 28 years.

This book authored by Bishnu Rimal is the manifestation of GEFONT's footprints in Nepali labour market. Mr Rimal, the President of GEFONT and a legendary trade union leader of national and international repute, has put together, in this book, the major deliberations he made during his presidency. The speeches and addresses assembled in this book are a clear expression of very dynamic role that GEFONT and its leadership has played in pleading, raising voices, and making policy advocacy in both the national and international arena to put working class and employer friendly labour policies in place.

This book, entitled "With the Workers, For the Workers", portrays a living history of trade unions' contribution to bringing in a political regime that better serves the working class and works for the progressive and equality-based transformation of the economy and the society. Divided into six chapters covering Congress, Conferences and Special Ceremonies; May Day and Solidarity; Women and Youth; Politics and Policy Issues, International Conferences and Seminars, and Miscellaneous, this book compiles important testimonials related to the history of the trade union movement in Nepal, major contributions made by GEFONT for workers' wellbeing, and lead role it played in global and national policy advocacy.

The publication of this book is a reflection of Mr Rimal's untiring engagement in the struggle for the welfare of working class. This book will definitely help GEFONT to keep its history alive and inspire the world of work with how working class can be a part of building a just, progressive, and prosperous nation. I am confident that all the readers

in general, and the public policy makers, trade union leaders and other trade union activists in particular, will benefit from this publication to build on the successes made and to carry forward the unfinished agenda of the working class.

Yuba Raj Khatiwada, PhD

Former Vice Chairperson, National Planning Commission

Former Governor, Nepal Rastra Bank

April 2017

FOREWORD

Nepal, like other countries in South Asia, is in a state of rapid dynamism. The social, political and economic transformations taking place in the region have endowed Nepal with references to silhouette its state and society. In September 2015, the Constituent Assembly of Nepal passed a new constitution through democratic and inclusive processes by guaranteeing equal rights and representation of all Nepalis in state organs. Comrade Bishnu Rimal, as a member of the Constituent Assembly, was one of the active contributors to this process of setting goals and standards of governance system in Nepal. His long association with the working class movement both at home and abroad has shaped him with the capacity to offer a vision for social change that embraces freedom and equality, and solidarity among all actors and stakeholders.

Over two decades back, sometime during 1994, Comrade Rimal and I came to face-to-face in Kathmandu to discuss and design a growth-path for the trade union movement in Nepal. I found him with the strong belief in trade union as the force to fight an end to all kinds of exploitations against weaker sections of society - mainly the working class people - and to establish a just and equitable society for all. Following our first introductory meeting, we have had numerous sessions, shared our perspectives and discussed possible paths for achieving a unified strong trade union movement as an instrument to empower the workers in Nepal. We always aspired for and dedicated to consolidate a trade union movement that is inclusive, representative and proactive to democratic developments in and outside Nepal.

During over two decades of my association with Nepalese trade union movement and, especially with the GEFONT, I have experienced that an open and accommodating approach paves way for closer cooperation among the national trade union centres in Nepal. Comrade Bishnu's activism in political arena and his open mindedness has helped understand the prevailing conditions in the world of work. His insights have always been instrumental in the growth of GEFONT, not only as an institution but also as the defender of workers' philosophy and interests. Views expressed by Bishnu in various forums, including at ILO, ITUC, etc. in the presence of trade union leaders from countries have led to wider appreciation of GEFONT ideology and successes.

Comrade Bishnu Rimal, apart of being fighter for the same cause, is a dear friend of mine, and the entire working class. Our long association with each other has matured into strong bond of brotherhood through mutual understanding and comradeship. I can strongly vouch that his contribution in the capacity of General Secretary and later as President of GEFONT; and subsequently as the member of Constituent Assembly and Chief Adviser to the Prime Minister of Nepal has made pivotal success in the growth and sustainability of the GEFONT as representative body of the working class in Nepal.

The present volume *With the Workers, For the Workers* will serve as an important source of information and a guide to trade union functionaries active in various parts of the world. The compilation of his speeches brings out areas of concerns for the working class and indications of instrumentalities for achieving social justice. Like all of us, Comrade Bishnu Rimal has a dream and that is achievable only through full commitment and engagement towards desired goals.

Dr Pravin Sinha

President, National Labour Law Association
 Secretary General, Indian Industrial Relations Association
 Labour Adviser, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

INSCRIPTION OF MOVEMENT

At first glance, this book may seem just a compilation of speeches and statements. But once a reader delves into it, s/he feels that it is an inscription of the Nepali trade union movement. And, in fact, it is what the book is about. In reality, this book is an anthology of speeches and statements. But they are not the speeches what we understand about speech by tradition. They are not loaded with the words that make us tedious. They are not burdened with the expression as in the traditional speeches. They are not haunted by discounted talks. Because, these speeches are not made for the sake of making them; these are the speeches made to tell the audience something special on some specific themes.

The speeches in this anthology are made in different assemblies and seminars. Though they are speeches, they are like the articles and write-ups written with careful effort. Each speech and statement is different by its subject-matter and presentation. No speech and statement is filled with balderdash. They are straight to the point, focused on particular theme and are logical and perceptible. Comrade Bishnu Rimal has set a benchmark in the realm of making speech by breaking the tradition of keeping them long and for formality.

This book is the assemblage of selected speeches and statements made by Comrade Bishnu Rimal after he held the office of the GEFONT President. The speeches analyse and interpret the ideology, strategy, limitation and concerns of the trade union movement in Nepal. They have highlighted the ideological and practical aspects of the trade union movement at home and in international level.

The speeches and statements in this book are divided in different sections by the themes and contexts. Each speech is comprehensive by itself. But still, Comrade Rimal has made the context and terminology used in the texts further clear by adding 'context and intended meaning' where necessary. It has made the book more profound and informative.

This collection by Bishnu Rimal is a significant achievement to understand about the ideological and practical aspects of the Nepali trade union movement. It can be a good reference material for those who are passionate to align with the movement. Some speeches also discuss about the past, present and future of the trade union movement in Nepal. We feel that it is important to appraise the past, analyse the present and based on it engineer the future direction of the movement.

GEFONT

THANK YOU

I never felt comfortable to publish this anthology. In the first place, I do not think I am a person an audience should spare their valuable time to read. My comrades, however, did not stop insisting that I bring this publication out sooner than later. They feel my works would be a reference for future, especially for the generations to come. I could not deny them for.

In this collection are some speeches and addresses I delivered since I assumed the office of the GEFONT President. Most of the works were written in English. A few of them are a translation from Nepali.

A brief context precedes some speeches. Context and Intended Meaning follows others, where there is a need to define the context or explain the phraseology used in the texts or communicate the meaning between the lines.

Bal Krishna Kattel has generously edited this collection. **Dr Sharan KC**, the *Mekong Regional Manager* of the Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA, which is the global justice organisation of the Australian union movement, has also parallelly contributed with his valuable inputs.

Dr Pravin Shinha, the President of National Labour Law Association (India), the Secretary General in Indian Industrial Relations Association and the Labour Adviser of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES-Germany); and, **Dr Yuba Raj Khatiwada**, Former Governor of the Nepal Rastra Bank, and former Vice Chairperson of the National Planning Commission of Nepal spared their valuable time to overview the collection and prepare

prologues despite their busiest schedules.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to them, and extend a vote of thanks.

My sincere thanks go to Secretary of GEFONT Veteran Network **Kabindra Shekhar** who painstakingly collated the materials; to Secretary **Jitendra Shrestha** of GEFONT's publicity department for searching relevant photographs, and to members of the department **Kiran Mali** and **Mahendra Shrestha** for the tedious work of layout and graphic design.

I owe a lot to GEFONT Secretary General **Bishnu Lamsal**, Department of Foreign Affairs Secretary **Ramesh Badal** and the entire GEFONT family. If it were not their constant push and encouragement, the collection would not be out in the form it is.

I would also take this opportunity to recognise the support of **Mukunda Kattel**, **Ushakiran Bhandari** and GEFONT's former Secretary General comrade **Umesh Upadhyaya**. They have been a great aid whenever I needed.

If I made any contribution to the World of Work as the Secretary General or the Vice-chair or the President of GEFONT, it was only because of the love, cooperation, solidarity and support that I have received from you wonderful comrades!

I am always thankful to all of you!

Bishnu Rimal

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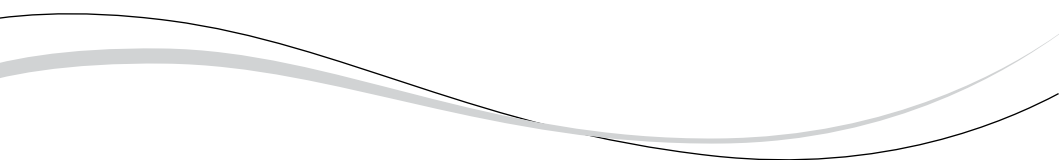


Let's Heartily Welcome the Constitution

Communiqué Issued on the Constitution Promulgation Day,
GEFONT Headquarters, Kathmandu, 20 September 2015

The historical Constituent Assembly promulgated the Constitution of Nepal on 20 September 2015. But the promulgation was not a cakewalk. Different power centres at home and abroad stood against it. Hard to believe, but a special envoy of the Prime Minister of a neighbouring country made a special visit to Nepal, on the eve of the D-day, and served an errand to the political parties to not publicise the constitution as planned. The Madhes-based parties were against the constitution writing process, but for no any apparent reason. The Communist Party of Nepal (UML) and the then Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) were firm in their understanding that if the Constitution was not promulgated then, it would never be possible again and the situation thereafter would take the country to chaos. The Nepali Congress and Madhesi People's Rights Forum (Democratic) parties also had the similar viewpoint when they signed a 16-point agreement with other parties to agree to promulgate the constitution. Later they seemed swinging in their stand but did not walk out of their commitments. It made the promulgation possible.

Time to promulgate the Constitution by the President of Nepal was scheduled for the evening of 20 September 2015. This statement was issued on the occasion to share happiness and call for the working class and Nepali people to light candles at their homes and welcome the Constitution joyously.



"Mother, does that come?
 Yes, dear, that comes!
 That comes illuminating
 Like the morning sun
 You will see a weapon hanging from his waist
 Glazing like dewdrop,
 With it, he will fight evil;
 When that comes
 You, at first, will feel as if it's a dream
 And fumble it
 But that comes more palpable
 Than the snow and the fire!

- From 'A Dream of Mother' by Gopal Prasad Rimal

For almost seven decades, we have been awaiting for this day – the day to promulgate the constitution written by the elected people's representatives. And, today, the waiting is over. We have been able to promulgate the constitution!

Six years ago, the day was almost at hand but it slipped away. It was because the demon of uncompromising spirit for gaining all the rights at once did not allow the first Constituent Assembly (CA) to reach a minimum compromising point to agree on the constitution. The "It's now or never" mannerism led to losing the achievement. We lost the bird in the hand while trying to get two from the bush!

The second CA election somehow brought Nepali politics back on track, which was almost to meet with an accident. But by standing firm on the balance of power developed after the second CA elections, the

Communist Party of Nepal (UML) President K P Sharma Oli repeatedly assured all Nepalis that the second Constituent Assembly would not suffer the same fate as the first CA. He declared that the members of the second Constituent Assembly would not return home defeated and without a constitution.

Today that declaration is proved correct. The Constituent Assembly has completed its task of taking ownership on all the work done by the first CA.

Several levels of engagements were ensured during the Constitution writing process. While people's representatives directly participated in the entire process lasted for almost a decade, opinions were sought from the public at large on the draft constitution. A series of consultations with stakeholders were made during the constitution drafting process itself. Despite a very engaging process followed as a part of it, there remained marginal voice from within and 'outside' to delay the promulgation of the Constitution.

Turning all the pressures and doubts down, on 18 September 2015, the CA members signed the copy of the constitution, which was authenticated by the CA chairperson. The wish of the Nepali people to have a constitution written by their own representatives has been fulfilled. Significantly, the political transition which lingered long has ended today. The sovereign CA is meeting this evening (20 September 2015) for the last time and to promulgate the new Constitution of Nepal.

With the promulgation of the Constitution, achievements gained through the struggles and people's movements for decades have been institutionalised. I, on behalf of the GEFONT affiliated four hundred thousand members; congratulate you all on this happy occasion. I would like to pay tribute to the martyrs who sacrificed their lives to make this achievement possible.

I would like to share my happiness with the Nepali people and wholeheartedly value their untiring struggle for the successful

completion of this political mission and open up the country's journey towards prosperity.

The CA proportionately represents women, *Dalits*, ethnic communities, *Madhesi*, *Tharu*, *Muslim*, marginalised communities of all strata along with all religious and cultural minorities and *Khas-Arya* population. Therefore, the promulgation of the Constitution of Nepal in terms of process is participatory and highly inclusive. The Constitution that has embraced democracy, federalism and multi-party competition is the most progressive constitution so far written through a democratic process. It has consolidated aspirations of people from all strata as far as possible. The constitution has transformed the country from a unitary setup to a federal structure as per the will of the people.

A constitution is a political document based on agreement of the immediate balance of power. Therefore, no constitution is a hundred percent complaint-free. In some parts of the country, there is dissatisfaction especially over the issue of delineation of state boundaries. The sovereign CA could not accommodate some of the important agenda of our confederation and trade union movement in the constitution. However, it has laid the foundation to move forward. Based on this, we hope our agenda will be addressed in due course of time. So, we want to remind the disgruntled groups that we can continue our struggle to make our demands heard by the Legislature-Parliament. The demands from the disgruntled groups are mainly political in nature so our request to the concerned authority is to listen to the groups and address their just, appropriate and logical issues through dialogue.

We thank all the political parties in the CA and outside, and the CA members for bringing the Constitution to the public and concluding the struggle to achieve it for decades. We thank the working class people, the community in general, people's organisations and civil society groups for helping in every way they could to write and promulgate the Constitution.

The new Constitution is ours. We have ownership of it. Therefore, we heartily welcome it. We appeal to all our members, supporters and well-wishers to light candles at home nationwide. And, we direct all our members to participate in the all-party victory rally to celebrate the achievement.

**CONGRESS/CONFERENCES
AND SPECIAL CEREMONIES**







20th July 2016, Kathmandu



We All are with You

Address at the Inaugural Session of Sixth Meeting of the Congress Delegates' Council of GEFONT
Nepal Academy Hall, Kathmandu, 20 July 2016

There is the folklore of an axe and a tree. The axe was being used to cut the tree. The next tree witnessing this started crying. The tree getting chopped asked, "Why are you crying? It is our destiny to be chopped!" The crying tree said, "I am not crying because I did not know this fact or for the fear of getting hurt. I am crying because we are getting chopped by our own - the axe handle is wood like you and me."



*Chair of the Session Comrade Mukunda Neupane
 Chief Guest Right Honourable Prime Minister; the President of
 CPN- UML Comrade KP Sharma Oli
 And, Comrades present in the hall*

First of all, I welcome all the distinguished guests, delegates, media persons and workers on behalf of GEFONT and its four hundred thousand members.

GEFONT was established in 20 July 1989. After many hits and trials, the National Congress Delegates' Council was set-up as a permanent body to act as the 'parliament' with the right to amend its statute and policy-related issues. The Council finalises the annual plan and programme, and revisits the work done by the National Executive Committee upholding the democratic procedure of checks and balance. This year is very significant for us. We are going to amend our Statute as per the provision of federal states and will remove some old structures that are not necessary due to the new provision; and add new structures as needed.

Last year on November 2, I had said here that "the country has now a new constitution. As per this constitution... .. one of the leaders of the well-known "Jhapa Movement¹" is now the Prime Minister of the country. The wife of late Madan Bhandari- the People's leader, political thinker and the propagator of the People's Multi Party Democracy - is now Head of the State. The important figures of the decade long Maoist armed insurgency are now Deputy Head of the State and Speaker of the Legislature-Parliament respectively. History is now institutionalised. ... People's aspirations for six decades to write the constitution of sovereign Nepal by themselves have now come to a decisive end. Our struggle and movement for rights and writing the constitution has reached a conclusion."

Nepal was under an undeclared blockade in the southern border at the time when I said this. The conspiracy against our state and constitution was continued and the nation was under serious threat. Therefore, we had concluded that along with the challenge to protect and institutionalise our achievements, we also have huge possibilities and potentials.

There is the folklore of an axe and a tree. The axe was being used to cut the tree. The next tree witnessing this started crying. The tree getting chopped asked, "Why are you crying? It is our destiny to be chopped!" The crying tree said, "I am not crying because I did not know this fact or for the fear of getting hurt. I am crying because we are getting chopped by our own - the axe handle is wood like you and me".²

Today once again we are at a difficult juncture after passing through many ups and downs, and we too are facing the same destiny as that tree. The new alliance formed after the promulgation of the constitution has now broken down adding to the existing challenges. The Session of the Legislature-Parliament set to begin from tomorrow will jeopardise overall achievements including our labour agenda and we could risk of losing them all if it fails to reach an understanding.³

We have here with us, our Right Honourable Prime Minister. We are all aware of his busy schedule. Therefore without further delay I would like to remind you of our agenda, which we had put forward nine months ago.

We had said - our agenda is a triangle of fair pay – responsibility - and social protection.

- Fair wages rather than productivity-led growth
- Conducive environment for doing business
- Unemployment benefits for a worker who suddenly loses his/her job

We had said that we need a new mechanism to monitor whether the rights along with duties are fulfilled or not. For this, our calls are:

- A permanent mechanism in legislature parliament such as a “Multi Stakeholder Socio-Economic Dialogue Forum” where representatives of trade unions and employers’ organisations are invited for policy dialogue with members of parliament
- Passing the bills on social security and amending the labour act, which are now dumped in the council of ministers
- Revisiting the issue of the minimum wage sooner rather than later
- Election of an authentic union for collective bargaining should be held in civil service and service sector public enterprises to form a single union to have dialogue with the management. Create an environment to conduct collective bargaining at one time in all of the private sector enterprises.
- Legal recognition of the Joint Trade Union Coordination Centre (JTUCC), formed by all the trade unions of Nepal and which has already got recognition by the state and employers’ organisations in practice.
- Trade union representative in the National Reconstruction Authority to mobilise the workers as a part of the campaign for post earthquake reconstruction

Right Honourable Prime Minister! We would like to offer you our sincere gratitude for including our various agenda, of which we have high optimism, in the Government’s policy and programme, and the budget:

- For the first time in the history of Asia, an election was held in Nepal for an authentic trade union in the civil service sector. This step has built a base for managing the trade union movement in the civil service.
- The bill to replace the current labour act and social security bill is in the parliament. The Government has expressed its

commitment to start the contributory social security schemes from this fiscal year for workers. Likewise the Government has also committed to revisit the present provident fund and gratuity mechanism to manage pension related issues of the workers and employees.

- The budget has the provision for a compulsory accident insurance of workers from the industrial sector, tourism, transport and construction industries.
- The government has made a commitment to establish at least one labour office in each province and implement a labour inspection system to avoid labour disputes.
- Initiation to establish a multi-stakeholder socio-economic mechanism in the parliament for policy level discussion.
- The Government has committed to arrange policy and legal provisions to utilise remittances for the country's development; build infrastructure with the involvement of citizens and increase access of workers to the means of production.
- Proposal to begin the system of examining and certifying the skills of Nepali workers who have returned from foreign employment with the involvement of the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) and fit these workers in the Nepali labour market.

I do not think it is necessary to go into the details about the Government's declaration to increase incentives of health volunteers; revisit workers' minimum wage, salary increment of civil service employees, and the issue of health and education in the social security concept. Everyone present in this hall is aware about these.

Friends have asked me to thank Right Honourable Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli for all these good initiatives.

Still the three responsibilities are remained as unfinished tasks - implementation of the Constitution, post earthquake reconstruction,

and socio-economic prosperity programmes! We are worried about what will happen to these agendas of ours, which are also a national agenda.

In the end, I would like to share with you a moment when a parliamentarian from the Nepali Congress party shared his experience with me. He said:

“When I became minister once, my persona was something. During my tenure, I gave employment to more than twenty-six hundred people. I was removed from the post not because I did something wrong, but because I was with the people. I thought something would happen. That very day in my official residence, my personal security guard came, lowered the flag, saluted me and left. I looked around - my personal secretary had already left me. My wife, who would otherwise be busy preparing tea endlessly for the endless visitors, was sitting there staring at me. A dog was beside me wagging its tail. And I thought this is the language of power! When you have it, you are surrounded by masses of people; when your power is stripped off, you are alone!

I got an email from Australia, which read “Bishnu, you have made your friends proud and your Prime Minister has made all Nepalis proud!”

Right Honourable Prime Minister! The media is now filled with news about “those nine months” and “these nine months”⁴- comparing the history. Nepalis are now thinking - does a good government survive only for a short term? And, only a government with an average record or worst and poor performance can survive for long?

Now the country is going through an undeclared referendum, I believe. When we see the streets and roads filled with the young generation voluntarily holding placards and wearing t-shirts with messages of “#I am with K P Oli”⁵ it inspires us, we feel proud!

Along with the young generation, the GEFONT family, the entire working class, we all are with you, Prime Minister KP Oli!

Let me ask colleagues in this hall, would you please raise placards that you have in your hand?

Look- it reads- I am with KP Oli!

Comrades! You are with Prime Minister Oli, I am with Prime Minister Oli, and we all are with Prime Minister Oli!

All the best Right Honourable Prime Minister Oli!

I welcome you all once again, thank you!

Context and Intended Meaning:

1. **Jhapa rebellion:** Jhapa Movement was a peasant rebellion against absolute monarchy and despotic political regime in the early 1970s. It shook Nepali feudal society tremendously and inspired the fragmented communist movement of Nepal to reunite. The present day's largest communist faction - the UML - originated from this rebellion.
2. **The story of an axe:** Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) was the second largest party in the UML-led coalition government. But the Maoist and another communist splinter clandestinely played foul to topple the government. The story of an axe is used here as a metaphor to the context that a communist party was used to depose the government led by another communist party.
3. **No confidence motion:** A no-confidence motion was tabled at the Legislature-Parliament against the popular government led by KP Sharma Oli. Prime Minister Oli resigned from the post with an inspiring address in the Parliament.
4. **Those nine months, these nine months:** The minority government led by the CPN UML in 1994 was very popular. It brought to implementation many popular programmes including Old Age Allowance for the senior citizens and Build Your Village by Yourselfs (BYVY). Those scared by the popularity of the government filed no-confidence motion and unseated it prematurely. However, programmes started by the government led by Prime Minister Man Mohan Adhikari remained fresh for long in the hearts and minds of Nepali people. After 21 years of that incident, the country got another UML-led government, which caressed the Everest of popularity again! But this government too suffered the same fate of Adhikari-led government. It was ousted in nine months.
5. **I am with KP Oli:** Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli was very popular even among the youth. When they felt a conspiracy was being hatched against the Oli government to pull it down, the youth spontaneously took to the street with placards carrying slogan of 'I am with KP Oli'. The demonstration was to extend solidarity to the government and also to warn the opposition

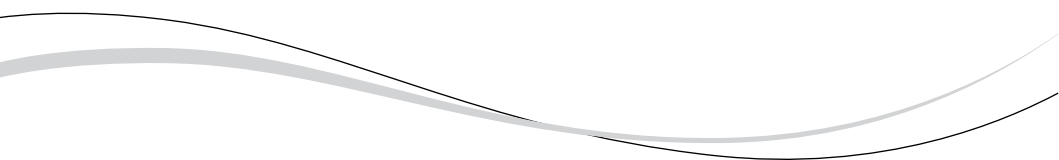
not to pull down the government. Even when this programme was taking place in the Assembly Hall, all the GEFONT Representative Council Members were carrying the placards with the slogan of 'I am with KP Oli' in support of the government.



Happy Birthday GEFONT A Very Happy Silver Jubilee

Keynote Speech on the Occasion of Silver Jubilee Celebration of GEFONT
Nepal Academy Hall, Kathmandu, 20 July 2014

We talk about empathy for fellow workers with the slogan of "An injury to one is an injury to all!" But if we fight among ourselves, among the citizens and workers of the same country, will we have the moral standing to shout the slogan of global unity of the workers? If we are not able to forge solidarity among ourselves, how can we have solidarity among workers of our country? Will we have moral ground to ask JTUCC affiliated unions to unite? Therefore, the first condition of the labour movement is internal unity! The house should be in proper order. Only then can we bring national labour movement on track.



Guests, Comrades!

Five years ago, while celebrating the 20th Founding Day of GEFONT, I had quoted the then GEFONT President Comrade Mukunda Neupane: “In that rainy day of July, disguising the search and warrant of the then brutal autocratic *Panchayat* dictatorship, we converged together and proudly declared ‘now a coordinating mechanism for trade unions has been launched in Nepal’. It was the establishment of GEFONT to address a long-felt need of the nation.”

I had also spoken of the context and the changes that Nepali society had seen and achieved, including the changes in the world of work, during the 20 years of our struggle.

After 5 years, today, there are no significant differences from those points of my address. I will not repeat the history. I will not dwell on the analysis of the situation leading to GEFONT’s establishment. To add to the changing context over time, which I then referred to, we have achieved the seemingly impossible dream of a republic.

Together, we can proudly declare: Transformation is possible!

Today, I would like to remember two of our founders- Comrade Madhav Neupane and Comrade Nooru Wangxu Sherpa. Comrades you are not with us today, but your spirit is in this hall, all over Nepal and world, embedded in movements to fulfil the dreams that we cherish together. I want to express my gratitude to Comrade Prakash Nepali who provided us his house to launch GEFONT office ignoring the possible cruel suppression of the then tyrannical regime. Thank you Comrade Nepali!

Let me thank Comrade Binod Shrestha for managing such a safe house to launch our great organisation. I thank Comrade Lalit Basnet,

our Founding President, Hari P Sharma, Jyotilal Ban and Raju Silwal. Comrades, I recall, you all attended the GEFONT founding meeting. Thank you Comrade Chudamani Jangali and Loknath Pandey for bearing the responsibility of founding membership. Comrade Mukunda Neupane and Comrade Pradip Nepal were the mastermind of GEFONT establishment! I still remember your sincere efforts to establish GEFONT were even questioned by the party in which you were leaders. Dear Comrades, I offer my heartfelt thanks to you. Time has proved you were perfectly right and those questioning fingers were wrong!

Dear Audience, kindly give a big hand to our dear comrades. Thank you!

Comrades,

I ask your permission to bring you back again to the 20th Founding Day Ceremony held five years ago. Making a departure from some sort of interpretation of 'class struggle' as "establishment of a classless society by wiping out a class of opposite interests"; we had underlined that social transformation – a radical change of the complex of class exploitation and social oppression – is possible only through the unity of several social groups. As we said so we were referring to the specific character of the Nepali revolution.

After 5 years, today, we have walked past the people's uprising of 2006. It soon transformed into a peaceful peoples' revolution, which was really original to the Nepali reality both in terms of the extent and leadership. It did not subscribe to the so-called European or Chinese model. This revolution was possible through collaboration between two competing classes – the class of the haves and that of the have-nots! It brought about a historical political change, but is yet to trigger a social and cultural transformation. The movement concluded with the establishment of rights, but is yet to create an environment in which the rights can be realised. Most importantly, the hegemony of the anti-working class is yet to end.

Therefore, today, on this occasion of the Silver Jubilee, I am not going to detail the social changes. Allow me, however, to elaborate with an example of how the dream that we had just five years ago, not 25, has been shattered and the agents of change, like us, have been disheartened.

May I request the former General Secretaries of GEFONT, Comrade Binod Shrestha and Comrade Umesh Upadhyaya, Deputy Member of the ILO Governing Body Comrade Binda Pandey and former Deputy Member of the ILO governing body Brother Laxman Basnet, to help me out here?

Kindly come to the podium. May I request you to unveil the stand?

Thank you. What is written here is "Ratify ILO 87 and a figure- 10.1:20:20!"

Right Honourable Chairperson,

Five years ago when we were celebrating the 20th Anniversary you were our Guest of Honour. We had handed over a demand letter to constitutionally guarantee the right to organise and social security for the working class. We were encouraged when you assured us of your full support from the Legislature-Parliament and Constituent Assembly. Ratification of ILO Convention 87 was related to our demand.

As a reminder, I would like to mention the meeting of the Right Honourable Chairperson with the then Director of ILO – ACTRAV, Don Cunniah- in your office in Singhadurbar. The meeting was about the ratification of ILO Convention 87. Today, we repeat our request for your support to ratify the same Convention. We would now like to hand over a letter arguing why Nepal should ratify the Convention.

In the first meeting of the CA this year, the CA members representing the trade union sector and the three major political parties had requested you to arrange a discussion in a Full House to propose a Resolution of Commitment. In the past four years, the CA did not introduce a bill on the implementation of social security despite the national budget allocating funds to that end. The budget levies a one percent social

security tax on workers' pay. Over years, the tax has been accumulated into billions of rupees. It is a serious concern that the bill agreed by the government, employers and workers has not moved from Singha Durbar, the government building, to reach the Parliament in Baneshwor- your good office! To resolve this problem we had proposed a resolution. It is sad that we were not provided with a time slot to present the proposal in parliament. We would like to take this opportunity to request the Rt. Honourable Chairperson to extend your support to establish a law for implementation of the social security fund. We rest assured that honourable Chairperson will do all that is needed this time around.

May I request honourable Chudamani Jangali, Binod Shrestha, presidents of two ITUC affiliated confederations – Comrade Shalikram and Brother Khilanath – and friends from JTUCC affiliated unions to kindly hand over the letter to the Rt. Honourable Chairperson. Thank You!

I believe progress is not possible by a dead review of history. For progress, we need a roadmap and work-plan to face the challenges ahead.

Brother Suzuki, our regional General Secretary, Brother Chris, Secretary of UNI-APRO, Dr. Sharan K.C, Brother Devraj, Brother Narayan and Comrade Deborah may I ask you to come forward in this stage please? May I ask you to unveil that stand please? Thank you brothers, sisters and my dear comrades, please have a seat.

Today, the international trade union movement follows the model of unionising through an organising academy. The stand that you just unveiled, mentions four subject-areas: GEFONT Trade Union Policy Institute (TUPI), GEFONT Trade Union School, National Labour Resource Centre and GEFONT Solidarity Fund.

This is the gift from our generation to the new generation of trade unionists. For the information of the participants present here, a renovated GEFONT building will be ready in a week to ten days' time. From today, you will see changes in GEFONT website. GEFONT will have a personal labour resource centre operating from October dedicated to

the general working class. The Trade Union Policy Institute will also work with a renewed zeal. In the leadership of Comrade Umesh Upadhyaya, former Secretary General of GEFONT, GEFONT-TUPI will contribute to the Nepali World of Work at a policy level. Now we will have a regular trade union school to upgrade the capacity of our leaders and cadres. The school will run in National Labour Academy for now.

May I request Comrade Deborah Nicholls to kindly stand up? She will mentor to our teachers and our movement will greatly benefit from her. I request you to give her a big round of applause. Some 200 of our unions have invested 25,000 rupees each to form a Solidarity Fund. GEFONT has matched the same amount. Now we declare the establishment of the Solidarity Fund of 10 million rupees. This fund is different from the existing relief funds and will be operated together by investing unions and GEFONT.

All of these issues are termed as structures of support and are headed by the transitional GEFONT body: the GEFONT Governing Council.

Comrades,

May I also have your permission to share another story? Many of you may be organised members of CPN (UML). Some of the comrades present here may even have been delegates to the CPN (UML) National Congress. One of fellow delegates told me an interesting story related to an election for the new leadership in the party.

“Once, Gold met Iron and asked the latter, “Iron, why do you scream when an iron hammer hammers you? A goldsmith also hammers me but I do not scream like you.” Then Iron said, “Had a goldsmith hammered you with the gold hammer then you would have felt the pain of being lashed out by your own.”

‘All the workers of the world unite’, we say. We talk about empathy for fellow workers with the slogan -“An injury to one is an injury to all!” But if we fight among ourselves, among the citizens and workers of the

same country, will we have the moral standing to shout the slogan of global unity of the workers? If we are not able to forge solidarity among ourselves, how can we have solidarity among workers of our country? Will we have moral ground to ask JTUCC affiliated unions to unite? Therefore, the first condition of the labour movement is internal unity! The house should be in proper order. Only then can we bring national labour movement on track. We can then mobilise South Asia's SARTUC; we can then play a significant role in ITUC-AP; and, then we can sing the slogan of global unity.

After five years from now, when we will be celebrating the 30th Anniversary, I will definitely not be in the same position as I am now. But you comrades will be. You will then be responsible to take the trade union movement and GEFONT forward from the envious profile that GEFONT has achieved today. It will be upon you to ensure that GEFONT continues to receive the glory from the world trade union movement.

Twenty-five years ago when GEFONT was formed, we had our office in a bag with a few sheets of paper and some files. Our total fund was personal savings accumulated together about 1,250 rupees. Those of us who were working full-time in the union had no fixed place to sit or time to eat. But we had limitless passion to work for the working class. In crisis, we asked our cadres to contribute a day's salary to the union. The well-equipped GEFONT office today and its property of about 120 million rupees are the earnings of those hardships.

I would like to quote a famous businessman and former CA member Binod Chaudhary from his autobiography:

There is a famous hotel near Gateway of India in Mumbai called Hotel Taaj, a highly expensive hub for highly powerful politicians and high profile cine artists from Indian cinema. Mr. Binod Chaudhary had gone to visit Mumbai after his SLC. He was roaming around the area with his father's personal assistant; and wanted to see inside the hotel. When he asked his guide to take

him there, the guide denied it and said the guard will hold him by the collar and throw him out if he attempts to go in.

Same Binod Chaudhary today owns the same hotel. Whenever he visits Mumbai he stays in Hotel Taaj. Whenever he visits Mumbai he stays in the suite facing the Gateway of India paying a tariff of 30 to 40 thousand Indian rupees a day. Thinking of his past he feels there is no substantial change, it is just a journey from the gate to the suite. Writing to his sons from the suites he says, "My journey of life is a travel from that point to this point. And, you guys are starting from here. Now I am going to see where do you go from here?"

Comrades, Comrade Mukunda and us, the first generation of the GEFONT movement, can ask you the same question. And, may I, finally, request you to watch the documentary prepared on GEFONT and the Nepali trade union movement "25 Years in Building Workers' Power!"

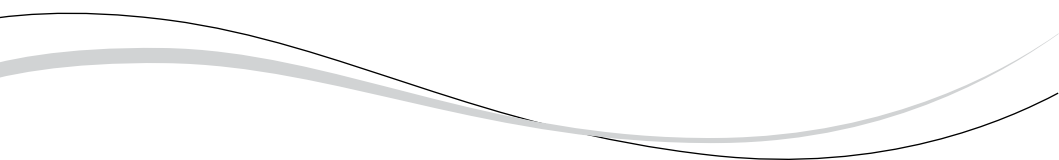
Please do not throw the question away from your mind! With this, let me conclude here!



**We will not Let the Movement Deviate from
Your Dream of Building an Ideal Society**

Inaugural Address at the Sixth National Congress of GEFONT
Nepal Academy Hall, Kathmandu, 28 March 2014

As the tool of transformation, we divided “revolution” into “political” and “socio-economic” halves. In Nepal, we concluded that “political” revolution, and this Rhododendron Revolution replaced the age-old institution of feudal monarchy with republic. The new regime will be institutionalised once a new constitution will be promulgated by the Constituent Assembly, now in business. But the “socio-economic” aspect of the revolution, which is central to social transformation, has not begun yet.



Distinguished Chief Guest, Respected Guests!

Today, the 28th of March, the authoritarian Rana regime of the day was forced to bow before the working class people 63 years ago.¹ A 23-day labour strike not only forced the regime to raise wages by 15 per cent but also to pay the wages for the entire strike period. Perhaps it was the first time the rulers, who used to treat people as their slaves, were forced to negotiate with agitating workers.

Today, the 28th of March, in 1981, the tradition was begun of the non-violent protest of national strike (*known as Nepal bandh*)², with the involvement of trade union movement of our generation. Taking away the absurdities linked to the culture of strike today, the tradition we began was the decisive force to shake the foundation of the then authoritarian regime.

Today, the 28th of March, in 1992, we began the historic 'First National Congress' of our union with the slogan of "*Social Justice and Economic Parity –Industrial Growth and Workers' Solidarity*".

From those on day on, we have completely dedicated our attention and energy to the welfare of the working class. Now, as I recollect the past, I feel obliged to record the note of my respectful honour to all colleagues and co-workers who have been with us throughout this journey; and, pay my deepest tributes to the martyrs who we left while fighting the tyranny.

And to you seniors: I reiterate the commitment that we would not let the movement deviate from your dream of building an ideal society!

While taking over the leadership five years ago, I had made this promise on behalf of the National Executive Committee: "GEFONT will organise all

workers of all trades of all sectors of investment. It will reach all workers wherever they will be”.

- One Union, One Voice – is our institutional mantra and ideal. We have been following this ideal for a long time.
- An Injury to One is an Injury to All – is our institutional motto, which we have adopted from the world union movement. In our context, we elaborate it as: “Let us take care of each other; love each other; and, respect each other.” For the working class who have “nothing to lose but their chains” and the “whole world to win”, nothing could be more important than this institutional culture of mutual care and respect. Indeed, we are proud of this culture of ‘collectivity’ that has taken us far above the hateful culture of competition marred by the binary opposites of “gain versus loss” and “you versus me”. “We GEFONT, Our National Centre” has been our collective culture.

Five years ago, we had dreamed of the following:

- Establishment of a state that would free itself from the clutches of the domineering voices and bring itself down to the voiceless, and
- Building the society where the weak and marginalised would not further weaken but would have an opportunity to climb up the ladder of progress, a society that would open the door to dignified, prosperous and creative lives for the workers

We had taken an oath that “we would leave no stone unturned in the movement for equality and justice.”

Five years later, standing before you, I wish to ask you very sincerely: Did we deliver on our promise? This National Executive Committee is available for your scrutiny as to whether it could live up to the commitments made five years ago.

Dear Comrades,

As workers, our dreams are very simple.

- Some savings from our earnings after the fulfilment of daily needs – to address emergencies, which is rightfully the state’s responsibility, but which it fails to fulfil
- A piece of encouraging news such as the redress for pregnancy-related deaths in rural areas or dowry deaths – not just the news of a VIP being taken abroad for treatment in an air ambulance

You are aware that 30 persons per hundred are unemployed and some 30 per cent of the total population is poor. We wish to see the progress of our society measured against the income of the working class people not against the names of those billionaires listed in the Forbes Magazine.³

As we commence this National Congress, we want the concerned to be reminded once again that the unequal society stunted under the shadow of high-rise buildings is not what we are struggling for. And we do not call any show a progress that builds on the deprivation of the weak.

We are tired of such expressions as “labour disputes” or “the fault of unions,” which often comes our way linked to the closure of a certain industry or some work-related issues. These date-expired slogans build on the rhetoric of workers’ emancipation as well as on the design to frame workers for the owners’ inefficiency. In the last five years, we came across such tuneless singing many times.

- *Bhrikuti* Pulp and Paper and *Momento* Apparels were closed not because of workers but due to other reasons. The workers have yet to get their wages despite several agreements. Who is accountable for this?
- Who is there to listen to the story of the workers displaced from the Pizza Hut and Casino in this capital city itself? Is there any one to care for the fate of the self-employed eking out a living

as street vendors? Who is there to aid the workers who do not get the pay in time in the construction and service sectors?

- Thousands of workers in the tea estates are deprived of the minimum wage fixed by the state. So are agricultural workers – in want of legally mandated periodic review of wages. Who listens to their agony?

We humbly ask: Is unionism an obstacle to industrial operation; or is the fault in policymaking and implementation?

We are not in confusion that our interests do not match with those of industrialists and businesspersons. We are different. But their businesses do not run without us. We are together despite differences. We are also clear that:

- Capital should survive because our livelihoods depend on it
- Labour should benefit to transform the Nepali society
- It is nonsensical to expect high productivity and quality products and services from those deprived of their basic rights and minimum wages

And, we are also aware of the extreme exploitation in the agricultural and construction sectors; of comparatively less exploitation in the industrial sector; and, also of the comparatively better pay structures in the service sector. However, the gap of wages between high-ranking officers and the workers in the service sector is disheartening.⁴

We are aware that the world of work has two categories of investors. One of them is proudly identified in society as an 'employer' – who invests their property to produce services and goods. The other, who is hesitatingly identified as a worker, invests his/her entire life in the production process. In return for the investment, both these investors expect at least three guarantees.

- **Return** – in the form of a profit or a wage; **Sustainability** – in the form of business longevity or continuity of employment; and, **Security** – in the form of the physical security of property or social security of life.

As we have seen, the state machinery has always stood in favour of the first, while abusing the latter. We have only this question: Why this double standard?

What we are saying is just a minimum: not just only wages in return for the work and a few hundred rupees at the end of life, but a system that ensures a pension and unemployment allowances from the fund set up with contributions from the workers themselves; and, a system of state support for universal social security such as education and health that each of us are entitled to as voters.

Be aware! Trade union is not a part of a machine to follow the orders of a party when it is in power. Neither is it a barrack of followers of the opposition ready to swarm in the streets in protest of the price hike by the Nepal Oil Corporation⁵

We want the state to stand as a fair regulatory mechanism between the two investors. Capital should not be left unchecked, just because it is in demand. To the extent it happens, we will not cross the fair line of discipline we need to obey as workers.

Dear Comrades,

As in the past, 'transformation' is our main theme even in this Congress. Five years ago, we had concluded that transformation would not be possible without unity. Unfortunately, our society remained divided, failing the people's expectations. As a result, we are almost in the situation we were on 28 May 2008.⁶

As the tool of transformation, we divided "revolution" into "political" and "socio-economic" halves. In Nepal, we concluded that "political"

revolution, and this Rhododendron Revolution replaced the age-old institution of feudal monarchy with republic. The new regime will be institutionalised once a new constitution will be promulgated by the Constituent Assembly, now in business. But the “socio-economic” aspect of the revolution, which is central to social transformation, has not begun yet.

To address this problem, we have added “building workers’ power” in the word *transformation* as the theme of the 6th National Congress; this theme because building of the workers’ power forms the backbone of the process of peaceful transformation. To balance the movement for rights and interests with the process of production, reinvestment and redistribution is the best way to operate what we call the “class struggle”.

In our understanding, we need a triangular strategy to develop and strengthen Nepal’s workforce, a strategy that addresses all the in-country wage-labour workforce, self-employed workforce and the workforce beyond the country simultaneously. To consolidate the in-country workforce, we propose a focused intervention in the agriculture, construction and urban informal sectors – for numerical reasons; in the modern service sector – for quality reasons; and, as a block- the manufacturing sector.

The intervention should be made in five activity-areas, namely, workplace democracy, wage, social security, social dialogue, and productivity and efficiency. To make the outcome sustainable, following five activities should be implemented:

- **Get Involved** through the policy of ‘where there are workers, there is a union’
- **Organise** each worker to enhance the number of members
- **Educate** to enhance skills of members through workers’ education and trade union education in such areas as agenda setting, issue prioritisation and public policies

- **Agitate** the workforce to propagate union agendas, issues and activities
- **Intervene** to guarantee workers participation in state processes and further consolidation of the union movement so that it can influence public policies

This year, GEFONT is celebrating its silver jubilee. Since it began in the late 1970s, we now have the second generation in our movement of the second generation. We have both grandparents and grandchildren together now. We take the zeal and courage of the young generation; to assign leadership on tested ones; and the wisdom of the old as the energy to keep the union movement more active and vibrant. As such, in this National Congress some of us in the older generation will resign from executive positions and hand the leadership over to the young generation.

We will, however, develop a transitional mechanism through which to mobilise the wisdom of the old generation for policy analysis, trade union education and union expansion so that the new leaders will be able to further develop themselves to work freely and independently.

This is how we are prepared to hold the sky above us. We have similar expectations from those below us that they also become prepared to hold the sky above them.

There is a saying- Happiness is a place between too little and too much! We are enjoying a similar feeling in your presence.

I would like to thank you all for accepting our invitation and sincerely welcome you on behalf of the GEFONT family.

Thank you!

Context and Intended Meaning:

1. **Demand of 1947:** The first trade union movement was started in 04 March 1947 with the demands for eight hours work, clothes for workers in subsidised price, increment in wages commensurate with price-hike and so on. Of all, the major demand was the guarantee of right to form a trade union for workers. This was the first time, during the Rana regime, when the workers took to the street and demanded for the freedom of right to association..
2. **Why Nepal *Bandh*?** If strikes are organised in developed countries, it will wobble the regime forcing it to reach out to the protesters and address their concerns. Strikes are generally accepted forms of peaceful demonstrations by all. However, the industrial strikes organised after the 1960s against the partyless *Panchayat* regime in our country, which was based largely on subsistence agriculture generated narrow effect among the people. The entire population could not feel the heat and effect of it as strikes were limited to industrial zones only. So the then underground political party, Communist Party of Nepal-Marxist and Leninist (CPN-ML), started finding alternative methods of protests. It introduced general strike (Nepal *Bandh*) as a form of public protest again the regime after the 1980s. All Nepal National Free Student Union; a sister wing of the CPN-ML; called the first Nepal *Bandh* on 27 March 1981 to protest against then government. The strike generated a huge hue and cry in the country. This form of protest used thereafter played a vital role in toppling down governments and bringing about regime change in 1990 and 2006. It is not always good to call a *Nepal Bandh* as a form of protest. But it has been a powerful and indigenised form of demonstration in Nepal.
3. **Binod Chaudhary in Forbes Magazine:** The Forbes magazine enlisted Binod Chaudhary, Chairperson of the Chaudhary Group in Nepal, as one of the billionaires with the property of one billion dollars in 2013. The news sparked discussion about Mr Chaudhary in the country. Many criticised him for amassing such a big amount of property in the country where half of the population goes to bed hungry every day. Those who loved to play with statistics tried to generate average share of property of Nepalis and presented it in a way that the country was making stride in the reduction of poverty. But such average share of wealth never reaches to the poor. Poor cannot be rich unless the poor benefit from wealth and income directly.

4. **Democracy in hungry stomach!:** In 1990, the employees in civil service took to the street demanding increment in their salary. They strongly opposed and criticised government's biasness to recruit staff based on sources and nepotism. The employees close to Nepali Congress party, the party that was leading the government then, were supporting the government's move to not hike salary. They chanted slogan as saying, "We are ready to eat less at the cost of protecting the 'baby' democracy!" It was the year democracy was restored in Nepal. This context is used in the speech to highlight that the empty stomach cannot safeguard democracy and freedom; only the stomach full of diet can do it.

5. **Social security and competition:** When the policy makers fail to understand the concept of social security, the State will end up distributing support beyond system and drain the state coffer. Therefore, the State should develop such a system that provides support more to those who work and less to those who stay idle. The ILO has introduced the concept of Social Protection Floor. The 'Floor' embraces basic social protection such as maternity protection including medicare, education and guarantee of employment as the universal social security. Facilities higher than these are guaranteed through contributory social security schemes.

If there is competitive human resource, it's not necessary to make minor thing the issue of protest by the opposition parties. For example, the petroleum products in Nepal are imported from India. Price of the products keeps on changing with the change of the price in its international market. When the Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) starts to adjust price accordingly, the opposition parties start protests completely downplaying this fact. So was happened when the NOC hiked price in the time when UML General Secretary Ishwar Pokharel was the Minister for Industry and Supply. Youths ate raw rice and grass to protest the NOC's move then. It was actually not an issue and fault of the ministry. It was the natural practice of price adjustment of the products by the NOC.

6. **Constitution writing process:** The constitution writing process and modality was not clear yet even after the elections of the Constituent Assembly (CA) for a second time. The first CA had completed 90% of its tasks and the second CA was still to decide if it would take the ownership of the works done by the first CA. Everyone was not clear yet and everything was like in the 'ground zero'.

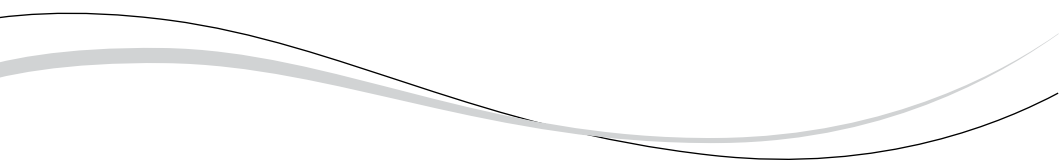


Why is Labour Action at Industries Being Heavily Criticised?

Keynote Speech on the Occasion of Launching the 100th Issue of *Shramik Khabar*
Baneshwar Banquet, Kathmandu, 08 Sept 2012

Capitalism ends Feudalism, and Socialism originates with the development of Capitalism. But in Nepal, evolving capitalism comprises of the dying feudalism. The bourgeoisie became like semi-feudals and the workers became like semi-peasants, semi-waged labourers. The production relations kept moving around these situations. And with the latest change as well, we have seen the situation where the subsistence-agricultural economy is destroyed but the modern capitalism is yet to be reconstructed!

Do we agree with this analysis?



Colleagues,

Back in 1990, when the media was not as strong as it is today, we started publishing '*Shramik Khabar*' with the aim of giving a printed version of the trade union movement of Nepal with the tagline— *by the workers, for the workers*. Today, we are launching the 100th edition of '*Shramik Khabar*'. When analysing the publication from its very first edition, we can see the picture of thousands of incidents, which demonstrates the development of GEFONT.

GEFONT didn't seek favours from anyone for its existence; similarly the *Shramik Khabar* didn't rely on the market for its development. It didn't run behind advertisers, but focused instead on the members. Profit was never its aim; survival was enough.

Information is to be shared and published, not to be hidden. And it is also the same with union's work - we have always understood this. You can all see what '*Shramik Khabar*' is today; I don't want to make many comments on this. Hence, on GEFONT's behalf, I want to thank everyone who was involved with it from its first edition. We are indebted to everyone who cared for '*Shramik Khabar*' - we will never forget your valuable help and kindness.

Today, we want to take this august occasion of launching the 100th edition of '*Shramik Khabar*' as a special opportunity. With the involvement of intellectual personalities, we are conducting a panel discussion based on the articles published in the 100th edition of '*Shramik Khabar*'. 'How can we interpret the change after the April Uprising- 2006?' We have fixed the main theme of this Panel's discussion. We do believe that the debate, arguments and discussions are important. However our discussions sometimes fly far from the reality on the ground! And we are fully aware of it.

Among one of the aspects of the discussions, we have taken the subject of *political- economy and trade union movement in the change context*.

The trade union movement of Nepal began with the birth of the political parties. Initially, it was following the route of the European trade union movement. However in the later period, it was mirrored the Indian sub-continent experience.

- Whom does the trade union belong to? What sort of equality are we talking about ?
- What types of class struggles are there? What is the interrelationship between production-relations and labour-relations?
- What is the relationship between the party and the union?
- And, what is the way forward of the trade unions?

In the present context, we are aiming to raise these issues as the subject of the discussion.

We also have the following thoughts on *Nepali society, class, political party and social groups in the changed context*.

- Nepal's state-making process is not based on the European or American model, but on the Afro-Asian experiences. Today's federalism and state restructuring, thus, is not based on the process of tribe-community-caste/ethnic/ nationalities to nation-state. Instead, the Nepali modern state is formed from all castes/ethnic groups of the country which are yet to develop into nationality. One of the articles in this issue focuses on this issue. Are we in the favour of this?
- The formation of political parties in Nepal in the decade of the 1940s was settled with the establishment of the Congress and Communist parties. One of the articles in '*Shramik Khabar*' states that the remaining political parties in Nepal are either the satellite or by-products of these two parties. And again, do we agree with this?

- Capitalism ends Feudalism, and Socialism originates with the development of Capitalism. But in Nepal, evolving capitalism comprises of the dying feudalism. The bourgeoisie became like semi-feudals and the workers became like semi-peasants, semi-waged labourers. The production relations kept moving around these situations. And with the latest change as well, we have seen the situation where the subsistence-agricultural economy is destroyed but the modern capitalism is yet to be reconstructed! Do we agree with this analysis?
- Our political parties do not rest in the economic class but the ideological class! It might be the reasons that their differences are limited to theoretical documents and the party's flag. However one can see similarities in governance and the service to the people! Which side are you on? Class or general Masses? Can we reach the conclusion that such dilemmas prevalent in our political parties are hurdles of social transformation?
- The space of the proletariat is slowly being replaced by the 'Precariate'¹. In the discussion on traditional thoughts and the changing context, why is social group dominant over class, identity dominant over ideology and mass struggle dominating the class conflicts?
- Manufacture based capitalism has changed to financial capitalism. Why is labour action in industries being heavily criticized and the Wall Street movement being highly praised?²

We have taken these questions as important ones for the future course of the trade union movement. We hope that after today's discussion, our level of understanding will be broadened.

I, hereby, once again would like to welcome you all intellectuals, media, and everyone connected with our labour movement.

Thank you!

Context and Intended Meaning:

1. **Not the 'proletariat' but the 'precariat':** on 28 February 2011, British Labour Economist Guy Standing published a book *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* and introduced the word precariat. He used the word to refer to the workers who have fallen out of the old-style industrial working class. He has analysed precariat as a new emerging social class - an upshot of neoliberal capitalism - who has no secure occupational identity, has to do a lot of precarious job that does not count and is not paid. He says precariat is a new class in the making. It is not a reliable class like the proletariat as Marx has described. Precariat is a dangerous new class.
2. **Occupy the Wall Street:** It was a protest movement that began on 17 September 2011 in Zuccotti Park located in New York City's Wall Street financial district. It received global attention in the name of 'occupy' movement against economic and social inequality worldwide. The issues raised by the movement included socio-economic inequality, corruption, a reduction in the influence of corporations on politics, and so on. "We are the 99%" was the major slogan of the movement and the slogan referred to the wealth and income inequalities between the 1% wealthiest and 99% poor Americans. The protesters were forced out of Zuccotti Park on 15 November 2011. To protest it, they turned their focus to occupying banks, corporate headquarters, board meetings, foreclosed homes, and college and university campuses. The US government and its FBI did not label it a peaceful movement so it had monitored the movement through its Joint Terrorism Task Force.



Can the World of Work be an Organic Nursery of Our Party?

Welcome Speech at the Third GEFONT Congress Delegates' Council's Inaugural Session
Kathmandu, 31 July 2012

The 10 years long violent conflict hatched by the Maoists destroyed rural-based employment. Working hands, which were happy holding the tools of creation, were either forced to hold the tools of violence or forced to leave their birthplace with the entire family. The Tarai was burnt ruthlessly in the name of the 'Madhesi movement' which forced the working people to leave the county. Both the violence perpetrated by the Maoists in the name of the 'class-struggle' or the Madhesi movement operating in the name of 'autonomy', might have contributed in the political changes of the country. However, in totality, both have destroyed the productive force.



Comrades,

Today, we have the opportunity to welcome more than one leader from the party. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of our comrades who lend their solidarity and participated in this programme after agreeing to accept our invitation.

This is our regular annual programme, an important meeting of the permanent delegates who were elected by the workers in the last congress. This is an important forum to discuss not merely the annual work to be carried out by the National Executive Committee, which they themselves had elected, but also to amend and even launch a new set of programmes if necessary. This official forum has given full rights to the workers to question and alter the decisions made by the leadership partially or fully. That's the reason we also call this the GEFONT-Parliament.

This team elected by the Fifth National Congress is near the end of its tenure. For this whole year, we will be working on the basic priorities to develop the future leadership. Thus, this might be the last meeting of this Delegates' Council.

A positive note to mention here is that the GEFONT Parliament exists; and we are on our democratic path to operate our activities under the watch of the workers. The sorry tale is, the National Parliament - the Constituent Assembly -formed as an outcome of our six and a half decades long expectations, doesn't exist anymore. It has fatally crashed, caused by the caretaker prime-minister and ruling coalition, despite visible chances to keep it alive. What will happen to the rights of the workers documented in the preliminary draft of the constitution? —there is an uncertainty! Where will this political fiasco end? There is an uncertainty! There is

also a question of whether we can move ahead with the demand of implementing the consensus made between parties on May 15, 2012!¹

Today, the media is all over. This hall is very much aware of the news coming in through television, FM stations, print and digital media. Thus, I want to take the opportunity to comment briefly on some of the policy level contexts.

In the last six years, we have been discussing the concept of transformation as the revolution.

Marxism instructs us that the revolution means “[H]andover of state-power from one class to another class; Transformation from one socio-economic condition to another; and Transformation of one production-relation to another.”

Data shows us that average national income of a Nepali worker is net NRs. 5,117; which means the average income is less than the national minimum wage of the day i.e. NRs. 6,200. Considering the definition, ‘labour underutilization’ (used by the CBS) as a reference, 30 people in out of 100 is effectively jobless today. The State is indifference about their plight.

- Today’s labour force found no attraction in the non-cash jobs
- Agriculture has not converted into capitalist commercial farming
- Workers are not inclined to undertake subsistence agriculture

The result is that people are moving from village to market, market to city, and city to overseas. Things are still the same. This means, the socio economic condition of our society still remains the same; it has not changed.

Comrades, the working class of today doesn’t seem to be ready to follow behind the ‘worthless dreams’ of revolution. If the workers are not made to understand what s/he will achieve in their lives, there is no point in

thinking that they will blindly trust any institution such as a political party or the trade union.

The year 2006 brought about a gargantuan change in the political sphere of our country. But in its journey to the year 2012, the share of the bottom 40% of poor families in household income has decreased from their share 34 years ago (It was 12.8% in 1997, but it has declined to 11.9% in 2011); whereas mid-income (middle 50%) and rich (upper 10%) families have progressed. Why does nearly half of the national per capita income concentrated in the middle class? We are organizing the workers with the slogan that change is for the better. But, this bitter truth manifests itself loudly and clearly: power hasn't been handed over to another class! That means, our socio-economic condition has not been transformed! That is, the current production relations have not changed.²

Lenin says in 'The State and Revolution'- "A democratic republic is the best possible political shell for capitalism, and, therefore, once capital has gained possession of this very best shell, it establishes its power so securely, so firmly, that no change of persons, institutions or parties in the bourgeois-democratic republic can shake it."

If we agree with this statement, change is not only necessary but yet to come. We were under the power of the state time and again, though for relatively short periods; where did we go wrong? From the People's Movement of 1990 to this transitional stage, why couldn't our nation be labour friendly? How will the upcoming change benefit the lives of the working class? How will the Nepali state be, which is still in the imagining period?

The CPN (UML)'s guiding principle is for a People's Multi-Party Democracy (PMPD). I don't see any flaw in this. This is the Nepali edition of Marxism, thus PMPD is a science. Science is not only about 'contents'; but it's also about 'methods'. The interpretation of PMPD into other meanings can be dangerous.

Has the same thing happened again? We are willing to get an honest reply from our party.

Some comrades here have asked me the following: we are hearing some buzz within the party, is that true? We talk about the labour and economic class; so why are those leaders who recruited us in the party talking about the interest of just social groups? Why are they so linked with identity-polity, which de-links itself from 'class'? Why is inclusion being taken as a policy to get representatives on ethnic or regional basis? In a multiparty system, isn't it true that all kinds of socio-economic exploitation--maybe in the form of class or gender,-caste/ethnicity or geographical disparity, so inclusion should be dealt within the frame of political parties?"³

Political party is the representative institution of the 'class'. The party, which ignores class is only a 'temporary front' of some selfish persons. The issue of 'class' is ideological/theoretical. The issue of 'gender-caste/ethnicity- and geographical region' are issues of identity. 'Class' brings the whole nation together, whereas 'caste-ethnic/ gender/ geographical' identification demarcates us only as citizens of various communities and the region. For a long time, this has been our understanding. Please, let us know, Comrades, where are we wrong in our understanding?

Comrade, can the world of work be an organic nursery of our party to produce new leaders/cadres?

It is said that, if the party memberships are increased from the working class, that the party will be more pro-working class. If more members of the party are from youths and students who are unseasoned and immature comparatively; the party will turn into a platform for 'intellectual exercise'. Where is the party heading? It is the responsibility of the party leadership to suggest ways so that the party can reach more to the working class. What is the labour agenda of our party?

The labour agenda of a party means the development plan of the productive force. Many delegates present in this hall have told me to ask the party the following question: what is the CPN (UML) planning

in order to develop a productive force? To develop a productive force means having working persons achieve gainful employment in a decent working condition! The labour agenda of a party can be understood by its employment policy, wages policy and its commitment regarding the future of the working class.

Let's take this case as an instance--

The 10 years long violent conflict hatched by the Maoists destroyed rural-based employment. Working hands, which were happy holding the tools of creation, were either forced to hold the tools of violence or forced to leave their birthplace with the entire family. The Tarai was burnt ruthlessly in the name of the 'Madhesi movement' which forced the working people to leave the county. Both the violence perpetrated by the Maoists in the name of the 'class-struggle' or the Madhesi movement operating in the name of 'autonomy,' might have contributed in the political changes of the country. However, in totality, both have destroyed the productive force.

Thus, in our understanding, the present ruling-alliance is not for the development of the productive force but for the destruction.

What didn't Maoist Party do in its good days? Here is the reminder of the previous incidents once again of the heinous acts which are known to the workers present in this hall:

- Sudden locking up of factories and offices;
- Kidnapping the factory manager or the managerial staff and forcefully making them sign prepared documents. Taking the documents as a weapon to drag the workers into their fold;
- Controlling the managerial staff during working hours and 'instructing' them to assemble all the workers in the enterprise premises;

- Forcefully collecting 5 rupees each from all the assembled workers and warning them that they are now their 'members'; and compelling not to deny it;
- Physically assaulting the leaders and cadres of competing unions and forcing them to sign prepared resignation papers or the document to dissolve the existing unions;
- Capturing Union offices, destroying their sign-boards;
- Humiliating and abusing the leaders;
- Releasing fake statements of joining their unions etc.

Comrades, our schooling didn't allow us to cross our limits neither in the 1980s nor in 1990 and 2006. We faced every challenge! We countered them and saved our integrity. We are proud that we didn't give up in many severe situations. Be it being attacked in Kathmandu or being humiliated at the workplaces; we followed the 'rules of game' and won the hearts of our workers. Was it right or wrong? Was it praise worthy or does it point to denunciation? All of those who are present in this auditorium today request the party to be clear on this issue.⁴

We decided to stand on our own. We didn't want to be any kind of burden to our party. We created the human and material resources on our own as much as we could. People say that we are the best among our competing unions or the employers' originations.

It is obvious that the opposition will not praise our work or evaluate us. However, we have been hurt by some people within this party-family who go so far as to even question our political/ ideological integrity. The delegates have told me to ask whether we have the right to know about these matters.

Comrades, there is a famous African singer called Miriam Makeba. She is well-known in South Africa. One of her songs is titled 'West Wind'. The lyrics make a call to 'unify us, don't divide us – we are tired of poverty, we

are tiring of dying – we don't want to die we don't want to be poor - unify us, don't divide us!

We want our labour-force to be unified. This is for the betterment of the country, working class, the party itself and politics. In our point of view, the world of work should be unified even if there are different ideologies and principles. Those unions, which follow the same ideology and principles, should be unified within one larger structure. The road of change can be wider if 'all kinds of workers and all kinds of employees' can come under one umbrella. What does our party think about this issue?

Communist party is the vanguard of the workers. Its aim is to make the Nepali society equitable. Trade Unions are the organized institutions of the workers. We decided to inaugurate today's programme with all the invited comrades jointly to send the message that we shouldn't create a hierarchy in society when our aim is to create an equitable society. The role of our respected leaders has already been decided by the party then why should we draw a line of division by adding different prefixes or suffixes in the post of our leaders?

Thus we want our comrades attending this programme and supporting our requests to deliver this message of equality! Thus, I would like to welcome all the invited comrades and delegates on behalf of entire GEOFNT family.

Thank you!

Context and Intended Meaning:

1. **Agreement of 15 May 2012:** Political parties reached an agreement in a bid to settle the contentious issues of constitution drafting as follows:
 - A) Federal Structure
 - All states in Nepal will embrace multi-ethnicity, entailing that every citizen will have equal political, economic, social and cultural rights regardless of their ethnic, religious or cultural backgrounds.
 - The central, the provincial and the local governments shall be responsible in upholding and defending the fundamental rights and the human rights of each citizen.
 - There shall be 11 federal provinces. The names for the provinces shall not be proposed for the time being.
 - Central Federal Commission shall be empanelled to address the issues concerning delineation, naming and regional distribution of the provinces.
 - The Legislative Parliament shall make the decision pertinent to the aforementioned point based on the recommendation made by the Central Federalism Commission.
 - Regarding provincial nomenclature, the decision taken by provincial assembly shall be held supreme.
 - B) System of Governance
 - There shall be a mixed system of governance.
 - There shall be a directly elected President as mentioned in the law.
 - Prime Minister shall be elected by parliament. The parliament-elected Prime Minister shall constitute the cabinet of ministers. The cabinet and its members shall remain responsible towards the parliament.
 - C) Parliament Formation
 - Parliament shall be formed through mixed-electoral system.
 - The House of Representatives shall have 171 directly and 140 proportionally elected members.

- The National Assembly shall have five representatives elected from each province. Based on the recommendation of the cabinet of ministers, the President shall nominate 10 distinguished individuals from different fields as the assembly members.
- The central constituency shall be divided into two electorates while conducting election for the Provincial Assembly members.
- Local government shall be formed as per the law.

D) Court

- Remaining tenure of a Justice shall not affect his/her eligibility from becoming Chief Justice
- Judicial Council shall appoint the justices.
- The Chief Justice shall preside over the Judicial Council that shall have two senior-most justices, Minister of Law and one representative from the Bar Association as councillors.
- The incumbent justices sworn in under the interim constitution shall automatically retain their appointment with the promulgation of a new constitution. They shall, however, be required to re-take the oath of office under the new constitution.

E) Constitutional Court

- Constitutional Court shall be constituted under the Chief Justice.
- The Constitutional Court shall consist of the Chief Justice, two senior-most Supreme Court justices and two legal experts, with the eligibility on a par with Supreme Court justice, appointed by the President based on the recommendation of the cabinet of ministers.
- The Constitutional Court shall adjudicate the disputes between the provinces; province and the centre; and between province and local government. The Constitutional Court shall have a five-year term.

- F) Pertinent to the demand for incorporating the nine districts of Seti and Mahakali zones under one single province, public opinions shall be collected in the region as proposed by the senior leaders of the three political parties. By public opinion collection, it is understood that a proper referendum could also be conducted to decide the on the matter.

2. **Unequal society:** Following table compares the changes in share of different income groups in the national per capita income. It is based on the statistics made available to public by the Nepal Rastra Bank and Central Bureau of Statistics.

Year	Lowest 40% (poor)	Middle 50% (midlevel)	High Class 10% (Rich)
1977	12.8	28.2	59.2
1996	15.3	49.7	34.9
2004	14.2	48.1	37.7
2011	11.9	48.5	39.5

3. **Trouble of caucus:** The Maoists vehemently raised the identity-based agenda in the first Constituent Assembly. The Maoists who came to power by violent means were so adamant that they could go any extreme to galvanise the caste and ethnicity issues. Being dragged by the Maoist agenda, other political parties including the CPN-UML maintained low tones to discuss class-based agenda. Ideology-based discussions were pushed to margin even within the parties. It was mainly because of the 'caucus' that troubled all parties. But it did not last long.
4. **Arbitrary of Maoists:** Violence of Maoists was rampant everywhere after 2006. The Maoist cadres stormed to a rally organised by GEFONT and attacked its leaders. The then GEFONT Secretary Bidur Karki and Dipak Paudel sustained injuries on their heads and ears. A Dialogue Team to find a solution was formed by both the parties – the Maoist and the UML – and agreed to not coddle in physical attack again. The Maoist also requested UML to train their cadres on trade union movement. But in no time, the Maoist cadres resorted to attack Comrade Madhav Neupane, the founder leader of GEFONT, at Hotel de'la Annapurna and injured them. They did not only manhandle him but also smeared his face with black soot and offered him with shoe-garland. The Maoists were difficult to believe in their words. Their arbitrary behaviour was too much to tolerate.

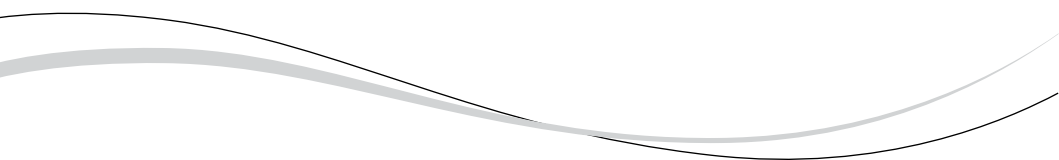


Trade Unionism and the Political Economy of Tomorrow

Keynote Speech at the High-level Panel Discussion on
Trade Unionism and the Political Economy of Tomorrow
Kathmandu, 10 July 2011

What we are expecting from tomorrow's economic system is a society free from all kinds of inequality and prevalence of social justice. And, equality is related to the economic system and the latter is interrelated with the policies of the political parties.

As we know, equality means ending of inequality embedded on 'income, asset, power and opportunity'. In Nepal, the parties have been articulating the issue of equality in three ways: a supporter of unequal-equality, staunch follower of absolute-equality and the advocate for relative equality.



*Comrade Chair,
Chief Guest, Guest Speaker,
Comrade Participants, Media Persons!*

The trade union movement is basically the professional movement of the working class. When it comes to social transformation, it becomes itself a political movement. The trade union movement may be inclined towards or be independent of the political parties. But its broader issues are not separated from politics. Basically, political parties are the representatives of the people of different economic-classes. Thus, the nature of the party is identified by the 'class' it serves. And, this is the main point concerning the trade union and our reason for talking and understanding them and their policies.

Being for the working class, the policies and programmes of the party should be pro-working class as well. It depends on the membership of the party. If it is more from the working class, there are more possibilities for the party to favour the working class. In the experience of the European countries, first there was the Labour movement and later the movement established a *Labour Party* to raise their political issues in parliament. Though the policies, action-programmes and goals were different, the *Labour Party* or *Social Democratic Party* or *Communist Party* all those were known as the parties for the working class. And, the parties with names such as *Conservative*, or *Republican* or *Christian* with the '*Democratic*'-tag, maintained a bias for the employers and privileged class. These parties maintain their image on social issues like 'pro-working class vs. pro business class', 'expansion of the tax vs. trimming of tax', 'welfare state vs. liberal capitalist state' and so on. They limit their election campaigns to such issues.

Generally, the trade unions provide policy-feedback to the parties on the labour agendas. And, labour-friendly parties consider these suggestions for their policies or promise to do so. This kind of co-operation between political parties and the trade unions existed in Europe, America, Latin America and some countries in East Asia.

But in Nepal, the formation of the parties is on a different basis. Here the parties are based on “*ideology*” instead of an “*Economic*” base. Thus, the parties in Nepal seem to be the representatives of “*Ideological-class*” rather than “*Economic-class*”. Thus, issues such as ‘social transformation, class-struggle and people’s welfare’ are confined at the level of theoretical discussions. Even the communist parties, which are known as ‘the vanguard of the working class,’ encourage “*mass*” during the time of elections and advocate for the concept of “*class*” in theoretical dispensations. This can be considered as an instance of the neglect of working class.

Thus we have invited the Genral Secretary of CPN (UML) in the Delegate Council’s meeting so that we can know, understand and judge the politics and political parties for tomorrow.

The Nepali Congress is brushing aside the issues of *social transformation* and adamantly harping on the core-values of democracy only. Maoists opt to ignore democratic values and continue to espouse the rhetorical dream of prosperity in a virtual ‘wonder-world’; the *Madhes* based parties are on a seemingly directionless journey with expectations of a large share of power politics. In such a “political cloud”, the CPN (UML) is offering relatively correct political-ideological stance but is often badly blamed. We are interested to learn how the UML is charting its future political discourse and comrade General Secretary will definitely clarify this.

What we are expecting from tomorrow’s economic system is a society free from all kinds of inequality and prevalence of social justice. And, equality is related to the economic system and the latter is interrelated with the policies of the political parties.

Prof. Dev Raj Dahal, who has been involved in our movement lending his solidarity through his rich intellect, will clarify us about the subjects today as well.

As we know, equality means ending of inequality embedded on 'income, asset, power and opportunity'. In Nepal, the parties have been articulating the issue of equality in three ways: (i) a supporter of *unequal-equality*, (ii) staunch follower of *absolute-equality* and (iii) the advocate for relative *equality*.

In the individual context, equality refers to similar opportunities and access of citizens to economic, socio and political rights. In the party context, it is the policy of the party on 'distribution and redistribution' of national wealth. Whatever name that the party has, those advocating for a 'liberal market economy' fall under the first category. Market based liberal economy is the system to impose political and economic hegemony of the 'over-powered' section against the weakest masses of society. To support a system, which makes *the rich richer and the poor poorer* is to be a system follower of 'unequal equality'!

The second category propagates that "all are equal, everything equal for all!" Such parties barter 'dreams of a virtual 'wonder world' to the general people. Denying the famous Marxist notion- "[t]o each according to his/her work" they opt to distribute "equally" whatever exists in hand. They mobilise the party's 'rank and file' with "egalitarian fallacy" and we encounter with a huge difference between their promises and deeds. Ultimately their results are a distribution of poverty instead of making peoples' lives prosperous.

The third category is realistic. Such a party balances between the 'theory and the practice'. It stands against the distribution of poverty in the name of equality. What's the upper limit of earnings of the rich? This is an irrelevant issue for such a party. The party, however, emphasises which way and how much the portion of earnings of the wealthiest class should be spent to assist the marginalised poor through the state mechanism. Thus, the advocates of 'relative-equality' make efforts to help the poor to

become prosperous and upgrade the class itself from the lower to upper echelon.

In my opinion, three major political parties of Nepal are the proponents of these three categories: Nepali Congress, UCPN (Maoist) and CPN (UML) represent the *first*, *second* and *third* positions on equality respectively.

We will be discussing the issue further on the party and labour agenda as well. When asked about the *labour agenda* of a party, it refers to the policy on developing the productive force. Development of productive force means that working people can enjoy gainful decent employment. One can gauge the party's labour agenda by analysing its employment policy, wage policy and its commitment to planning the future of the working class. ¹

We can mention the Maoist insurgency and *Madhes Movement* in this context. The decade long violent conflict fatally destroyed the rural-based employment opportunities. The productive force had to compulsorily lay-down their tools. They were forced to accept the option to either raise the weapons of 'war' or evacuate their home along with the entire family. Similarly, the anarchical flames spread all over the Terai as the *Madhesh Movement* forced many working families to leave the country. Be it the Maoist hatched violent conflict in the name of a *class-struggle* or Madhes ignited flame in the name of autonomy, both might have contributed to some extent to political changes, and fatally destroyed the productive forces.

Thus, when talking about the parties,, it means either being in favour or against the upgrading or degrading of politics. To upgrade or degrade politics means to maintain or destroy a significant portion of the nation's life. That's the reason why we, trade-unionists, are so interested in politics and take part in the party's programmes. If the membership of the party is from the working-class, then the party will chart policies and programmes in favour of the working-class. If the membership is recruited from only those youth and students who have not bore the brunt of practical life, then the party is prone to conversion into a

forum for intellectual exercises. Thus, we always encourage thousands of working people to join the party concerned in order to make it pro-working class party.

In these two days, we will discuss the future of the trade union movement. We will also review our works and make plan of action for the coming year.

Context and Intended Meaning:

1. **Labour and labour-power:** Labour and labour-power are different things. 'Labour-power' refers to a person's ability to work whereas 'labour' refers to the activity of labour-power to produce goods and services. Human being is a sum of labour-power, therefore, by labour-power is to be understood the mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being that s/he exercises to produce a use-value of any description. According to Marx, what a worker sells is not a 'labour' per say; it instead is a 'labour-power'.

There are three types of owners of labour-power: first, those who have means of production or 'self-employed' who do not sell their 'labour-power' but they sell production of their labour; second 'wage workers' who do not own the means of production but sell their labour-power to an employer in exchange for a wage for a specific period of time; and third, 'slave' who do not own means of production and are not free to use their labour-power at their will. They are compelled to 'sell' their labour-power without wages to the owners for indefinite period of time.

'Value of labour' means the minimum cost required to maintain the labour-power of a worker. It is the cost necessitated for a worker to meet established minimum human needs. The production cost of labour-power refers to the costs required to protect labour and invest in education and training for a worker to fit to work. But the value of labour must also entail the cost needed for developing a new generation of workers and nurture their children. However, the wages and other facilities of a worker are determined through the struggle between the workers and the employers and mutual competition among workers.

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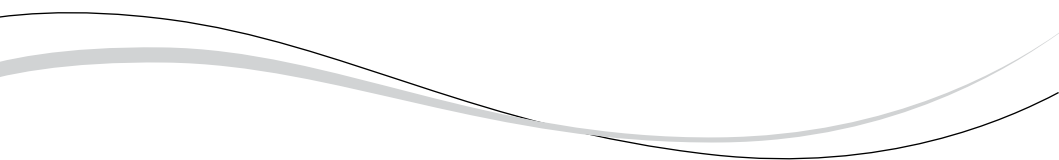
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Twenty Years in Transformation

Closing Remarks at the 20th Anniversary of GEFONT
National Theatre, Jamal, Kathmandu, 20 July 2009

There is no possibility of transformation without trade unions. The limited political reform of 1980, the political change of 1990 and the possibility of structural change that we have had after 2006 have all been possible because of the working class. Their quantum participation in all processes leading to these political epochs resulted in the quality of change that we see now. It is a given that without the participation of the working class an equitable society cannot be established. And the working class cannot exert their decisive influence unless they work to expand the diameter of their constituent classes and cooperating forces.



Guests and Friends,

“It was a rainy day in July 20 years ago. In the face of extreme oppression of the then autocratic regime, we had gathered in a secret location in Lagan, Kathmandu, quietly and taking every care to protect us from the evil eyes of the reactionary State, to declare the start of a coordinating mechanism of trade unions in Nepal. To respond to the pressing need in this respect, we established GEFONT.”

A decade ago, our immediate past President Comrade Mukunda Neupane had thus remembered the day of July, the 20th of July, while commemorating the 10th Anniversary of GEFONT. Today, we have gathered to commemorate its 20th Anniversary to remember the historic day.

Between then and now, the gist of the problems facing us remains the same, so is the set of our demands. Time has, however, taken a new turn. The autocratic monarchy has become history now, and republicanism, which we used to talk of as a long-term dream, has become a reality.

Our consciousness as a movement and related agenda of transformation has come to the fore both in complementary as well as in contradictory ways.

The traditional notions of ‘class struggle’ and ‘social transformation’ have become a cliché. We are now faced with the dilemma of questions of priorities. Is “social oppression” primary or “class exploitation”? Is it “identity” or “equality”?

In the language of statistics as well, we can see remarkable changes in the span of 20 years.

- The percentage of people below the poverty line has declined from 45 to 31 %.
- The middle class has expanded.
- Twenty years back there were 65 workers per 100 in gainful employment, now the number of such workers has risen to 70.
- Every year, as the result of the review in minimum wages, we have been getting increased wages. Twenty years ago, an average monthly wage was NPR 931 but today it is NPR 4,682. On average, there has been an annual increase of 1.34% in real wages.
- Twenty years back, Nepal's productive workforce was 6.6 million, and only 0.76% of the workforce was organised. Today, the number of the workforce has increased to 11.4 million. And, the proportion of organised workforce is 9.96 %.¹

At the time of our establishment, we had said the following as the way to address the problem facing us:

“This Confederation has been formed as a coordinating mechanism in order to build an integrated movement by unifying workers engaged in various labour sectors and creating an environment in which one would cooperate with the other.”

We kept moving ahead despite malicious criticisms. Then, there was a certain group who saw our work as “mysterious”. We also have such groups today who negate us and downplay our achievements.

We have not been deterred by all this. Instead, in the changed context, in reflecting on our slogans and demands, we have reached this conclusion: *unity is a must for transformation*. It is the unity amongst unions, amongst political parties, and between unions and political parties that has become a precondition for the transformation of our society.

There is no possibility of transformation without trade unions. The limited political reform of 1980, the political change of 1990 and the possibility of structural change that we have had after 2006 have all been possible because of the working class. Their quantum participation in all processes leading to these political epochs resulted in the quality of change that we see now. It is a given that without the participation of the working class an equitable society cannot be established. And the working class cannot exert their decisive influence unless they work to expand the diameter of their constituent classes and cooperating forces.

Some may feel that the time has passed without any gain. But we claim that the two decades of Nepal's trade union movement have been both extremely challenging and rewarding. The pamphlet in your hand – 'Twenty Years in Transformation' – is a witness to this challenging journey that GEFONT has travelled.

A decade ago, we were preparing to organise agricultural workers. We had just been able to influence an amendment to the Act and fix wage rate. Until then, wages were paid mostly in-kind and there were no standard rates. Dr Pravin Sinha, you had then said, chairing a session: "We have the unorganised sector, in addition to the rural sector. I would like to call your attention to their organising. New alternatives of capacity building, such as through technology-based information and cooperatives, should be explored."

I would like to thank Dr Sinha, who has been supporting our campaign continuously, on behalf of the GEFONT family. Dr Sinha, in our family today there are 27 affiliates and the majority of them are from rural and urban informal sectors. An urban informal sector union council and a non-agricultural informal sector union council have also been formed to coordinate the work in these sectors.

At a time when some were asking the working class to boycott education and were exploding schools/colleges and killing and abducting teachers/professors, we were encouraging the workers, engaged in whatever cheap and lowly work available, to participate in a feasible education

programme available, whether literacy, informal or formal. Some 2,500 of our worker colleagues have become literate through informal education and more than 500 colleagues have their children who graduated from school-level education.

Through us, some 1,000 children are getting formal education in more than 12 districts now.

Through the micro health insurance scheme of “All for one and one for all”, hundreds of us and our families have received health services. Hundreds more have benefited through regular health campaigns.

Through the transportation workers’ welfare fund, established and operated in our initiative, hundreds of workers have benefited in times of transportation accidents and difficulties.

Aren’t these achievements? Comrades, shouldn’t we be proud of these?

We have reason to feel lucky to experience two centuries: the 20th and 21st centuries. I am moved by joy to see the veterans in the podium who have experienced numerous ups and downs, summers and winters, and typhoons and tsunamis of the past century. These are the veterans who laid the foundation of the trade union movement. Comrade Raghunath, Comrade Ramdash, you are not just individuals, but are representatives of the hundreds, whose names I have heard, and a history in itself. The whole GEFONT family is grateful to you for accepting our invitation. Through you, we would like to pay our respects to all the veterans and elders of that time. 2

Comrade Pradip Nepal is with us now. He is a well-known and well-established political leader. He is also a key figure of the May Day Pamphlet Incident of 1976, a day that marks a milestone in Nepal’s trade union movement. He is one of the senior party leaders to design the establishment of GEFONT. I would like to pay our sincere respects to Comrade Nepal for accepting our invitation to be here with us today. Comrades, your contributions will not hide under the heap of history.

Today, we have remembered Comrade Bam Bahadur Khadka. How can we forget the movement they led to give our shattering trade union movement a new lease of life in the period of transition before the formation of the Nepal Independent Workers Union (NIWU). We remember Comrades JB Rai and Kamal Lama who gave sweat and tears to found the base of GEFONT, which has today passed the journey of two decades through NIWU. We pay tributes to our founding member Comrade Nuru Wanxu Sherpa, who passed away, while climbing Mount Dhawalagiri, immediately after the establishment of GEFONT.

I would like to sincerely acknowledge the presence of the family members of the deceased comrades. Thank you for accepting our invitation to be here with us today. Our heartfelt sympathies are with you for all the difficulties you have been facing.

Our heartfelt thanks to Comrade Bam Bahadur Lama, Comrade Nripendra Maskey and Comrade Nawa Raj Gautam for accepting our invitation to be here with us today. You have had the experience of both the former and later trade union movements of Nepal. For us, you are the representatives of all those who struggled for the establishment of NIWU, which is known as the second edition of Nepal's trade union movement.

The ILO has been a close partner in all our campaigns. On this occasion of the 20th Anniversary, I would like to offer our thanks to ILO through our friend Shengjie- Li. Our thanks are also due to ITUC, GUFs, FES, 3F, FNV, SASK, LO-FTF/TCO, Solidarity Centre and all other solidarity support organisations and agencies for their continuous solidarity and support to us.

Comrade Ishwar Pokhrel is connected to GEFONT for as long as its life. From the then CPN (ML) to current General Secretary of CPN (UML), he is with us and with our campaign. We would like to offer our thanks to the moving speech you delivered just a while ago. And, we expect, as usual, your continued support in the days to come to consolidate the integrated union movement in Nepal.

Chairperson of the Constituent Assembly Right Honourable Subash Chandra Nembang has long been supporting us as a special personality. On behalf of the organisers of this event, I would like to offer our heartfelt thanks to you, comrade, for accepting our request to grace today's event as the chief guest. Your presence has been inspirational.

My thanks are due also to trade union colleagues from the Joint Trade Union Coordination Centre, leaders of entrepreneurial organisations, other guests, media-persons and fellow colleagues. We are thankful for your presence and encouragement.

Finally, with us today are our founders. We have Prakash Nepali with us, who allowed us to use his house to establish and operate the federation in those terrifying days. We have with us the former as well as immediate past presidents, and former members and office bearers of the National Executive Committee. On behalf of the National Executive Committee, I would like to offer sincere thanks to you all. And, before you, I would like to commit that I would leave no stone unturned to continue the campaign you have initiated.

Thank you!

Context and Intended Meaning:

1. **Share of National Income:** There has been a remarkable change in the share of National Income of different income groups between the years 1977 and 2004. The share of 40% low-income group in national income was 12.8% in 1977. But it was increased to 14.2% in 2004. Share of 50% middle-income group surged to 48.1% in 2004 from 28.2% in 1977. However, the share of top 10% income group was declined to 37.7% in 2004 from 59.2% in 1977.

2. **Salute to pioneers:** GEFONT in its 20th anniversary honoured 10 senior trade unionists to pay tribute to their brave contribution to the trade union movement. Of them, four received the honour posthumously. Those who received the honour of bravery were Raghunath Prasad Gupta, the leader of the trade union movement in 1947, and Ram Das Chaudhari, the leader of the minimum wages movement in 1965. It was the movement that made the rulers to implement the minimum wages system in Nepal. Bam Bahadur Khadka was a popular leader in 1972. He went on hunger strike continuously for 31 days demanding the government to fulfil the workers' demands. Others were Ram Narayana Shah, Nripendra Maskey, Nawa Raj Gautam, Kamal Lama, Bam Bahadur Lama, JB Rai and Noor Wang Xu Sherpa.



We are in the Midst of Transformation of Nepali society

Inaugural Speech Delivered When Accepting the Presidency of
GEFONT at Leadership Handover Ceremony
Hotel de'l Annapurna, Kathmandu, 30 April 2009

To accept leadership is not to swim and relax in the pond of achievements of the past. It is, however, to unpack the problems entangling the world of work and tackle them, and rise to challenges that lie ahead. Of the major challenges facing us are inadequate legislation, non-enforcement of existing laws, livelihood insecurity, and workers being forced to bear the brunt of the rise in the cost of production. Another challenge to be tackled is us; within the trade unions, we see the mix of hypocrisy and dilemma. We are fighting, sometimes unhealthily, for our presence and existence in the labour sector, which is relatively easy and employment-secure.



Comrades,

In 2009, our journey as GEFONT will cross two decades. We have come this far facing numerous ups and downs and fighting oppression of the absolute monarchy. I would like to remember all those who have played a crucial role in establishing and leading GEFONT to this point, and highly acknowledge their contribution.

In this period, two people's movements were launched for the restoration of democracy. In each, we were able to make some sacrifices, to offer our blood and sweat. Such auspicious moments rarely occur in history. In this sense, we should be proud of ourselves.

We leave it to history to explain what we did and how much to conscientize the working class and mobilise them for transformation of the state and society. Let us only make this small claim - in low or no presence of the working class, the changes we have had now would not have been possible.

We might have made numerous mistakes. There might be a number of things we could have done differently. However, we have invested more time and energy than anyone else to bring the labour movement out of chaos, organise it and link it to the norms of modern industrial relations. In the last one-and-a-half-decade, we left no stone unturned to promote investment-employment and the rights and welfare of the workers. Nor did we bow to any pressure against the interest of the workers. Throughout the last two decades, our leadership remained firm, undivided and intact.¹

Both as an organiser and Chairperson, Comrade Mukunda Neupane consistently led the GEFONT movement. Thank you Comrade Neupane for your decisive and firm leadership!

Throughout this period, you have fortified the summit of leadership of Comrade Man Mohan Adhikari that was seen during the 1947 labour movement: selfless, flawless, and disciplined leadership. On behalf of the newly elected committee, I assure you that this unique historic tradition will be maintained, further popularised and exploited for the rights and welfare of the Nepali working class.

Comrades,

For some, congresses, elections, leadership change and handover have become an issue of 'loss' and 'gain'. For others, they have also become an issue of prestige and revenge. For us, however, these are normal and inevitable events and processes. Our formula of operating an organisational life involves a triangular policy, in which we collect organisational strength from the activism and aspirations of youths, we assign leadership to those who have been tested, and we follow the advice and guardianship from the senior members. It is this formula that forestalled confusions and divisions amongst us while political parties were caught up in extreme internal conflicts.

Colleagues,

To accept leadership is not to swim and relax in the pond of achievements of the past. It is, however, to unpack the problems entangling the world of work and tackle them, and rise to challenges that lie ahead. Of the major challenges facing us are inadequate legislation, non-enforcement of existing laws, livelihood insecurity, and workers being forced to bear the brunt of the rise in the cost of production. Another challenge to be tackled is us; within the trade unions, we see the mix of hypocrisy and dilemma. We are fighting, sometimes unhealthily, for our presence and existence in the labour sector, which is relatively easy and employment-secure. But we are silent about the workers in other sectors of labour. Similarly, we have the tendency of displaying radicalism when our actions are marred by inconsistencies and anarchies.²

We are informed of a number of allegations made against us. An allegation links us to those “development” organisations that are engaged in making money while being insensitive to the class struggle. Another allegation links us to a party’s sister organisation that does not care about the rights and welfare of the workers, and does politics only for the sake of politics. These are heavy allegations, and our leadership is committed to tackling them. On behalf of the new committee, I would like to commit that all the tasks that have remained pending for whatever reasons will be completed under the leadership of this committee.

I, on behalf of the committee, commit to the following.

Where there are workers, there is GEFONT. GEFONT will organise all workers engaged in all sectors of investment, irrespective of whether they are daily-waged or permanent, and whether they are in organised or unorganised, or formal or informal sectors. GEFONT will reach the majority of villages and cities in all districts, and will leave no space for others to question our commitment to the movement for justice and equality.

GEFONT will search for an alternative to highly bureaucratic and status-quo promoting enterprise unionism. It will do all it can to give justice, through collective bargaining, to the workers where they work, whether in umbrella organisations of capital investors or at the level of commodity-based industrial organisations. It will adopt a different method of “class struggle”. It will particularly be different and not use the method of submission to ‘donors’ to benefit a handful of people as well as the one of anarchic and inhumane treatment.

We are in the midst of a transformation of Nepali society. An important task towards the transformation is the restructuring of the state through a new constitution. Our expectation of a restructured state is one, which opens up options and opportunities for the workers to live a “dignified, creative and prosperous” life. The new restructured states will, we expect, break with the existing trend in which might makes right and where the voiceless are condemned to oppression. We are not envious of the

rich people. We wish them to get richer. All we want from them is the compulsory use of their riches for social transformation. We want to build a society in which the poor and marginalised take a step upward towards prosperity. And, for the state to invest transparently the money received from the rich for the benefit of poor and/or people with no-income so that the gap between the rich and the poor narrows. We do not want to see a state or a system in which, under any name and pretext whatsoever, those who invest in labour are deprived and denied while those who invest money or physical capital continue to rule and reap all the benefits. We do not want a society that discriminates on the grounds of bodily differences determined genetically, between male and female, for example.³

Our Confederation will adopt the policy of “initiation competition and excelling” for interaction with all forces in our society. We believe this to be an appropriate policy to find unity in diversity in a plural and diverse social setting like ours. Based on this policy, we will pursue our unity campaign with confederations associated with the Joint Trade Union Coordination Centre. This is the policy that will influence our interaction with the state, political parties and the government. The slogan of “unity for transformation” that has been adopted by our Congress also builds on this policy position.

I would once again reiterate our commitment – GEFONT will always stand in the front line of social transformation and will do all it can and should to materialise it.

Thank you all guests and colleagues for accepting our invitation and participating in this event.

- Let’s take care of one another
- Let’s love one another
- Let’s respect each other’s points of view
- Let’s build a strong organization of the workers

Thank you!

Context and Intended Meaning:

1. **Looking through GEFONT's eyes:** With the restoration of democracy in 1990, the industrial world in Nepal suffered surge of strikes. The change in political system raised the expectations of workers. To bring the environment in world of work under control, GEFONT organised the protesters and brought them within its ambit. Then, it pushed the demand of the need for a new labour bill to address the needs of the workers. GEFONT was aware that it was only the parliament that could facilitate the process of developing new laws. So it emphasised to hold the elections of parliament. After elections, GEFONT played lead role to draft the Labour Bill, Industrial Relation Bill and Trade Union Bill. The Labour Act 1991 and Trade Union Act 1992 are the results of GEFONT's interventions. Similarly, GEFONT also played a key role to draft and endorse the Labour Policy. With the continuous effort of GEFONT for one and half decades, the Joint Trade Union Coordination Centre is being institutionalised now. Because of all these result yielding initiatives of GEFONT, the entire population has started to look at the world of works in Nepal through GEFONT's eyes!
2. **Where there are workers, there is GEFONT:** A kind of cacophony marred the trade union movement for quite a long time in Nepal. All trade unions were at race to form union in easily accessible area but neglect the informal sectors where workers were unorganised. We had to face a lot of questions about it. So, we determined to reach out to the informal sectors with the slogan of 'where there are workers, there is GEFONT'. As a result, we have been able to yield better results in informal sector too.
3. **Class plus 'Three':** Trade union is the class-based organisation. It classifies human being in the categories of 'well-off' and 'poor' based on income and wealth; and 'employer' and 'employee' based on their roles. The idea of 'haves' and 'have-nots' is based on this concept. Different voices about 'identity' were surfaced after the political change in 2006. Discussion about 'society' and 'identity' based on class was outstripped by the discussion on caste, gender, ethnicity and geography-based identity. Some tried to interpret gender, caste/ethnicity and geography, and 'class' as same and equal. But GEFONT opposed the interpretation and such understanding, and put its viewpoint that there are two sides of exploitation and oppression in a society. First, there is an economic exploitation, which we call it class-based difference and second, there is a social oppression, which

is based on gender, caste/ethnicity and geography. 'Class' is the pedestal of all these 'exploitations' and 'oppressions'. So, GEFONT formulates its policy based on 'Class plus 'Three" notion. 'Class' is the base where other 'three' are its by-products.

**MAY DAY
AND SOLIDARITY**





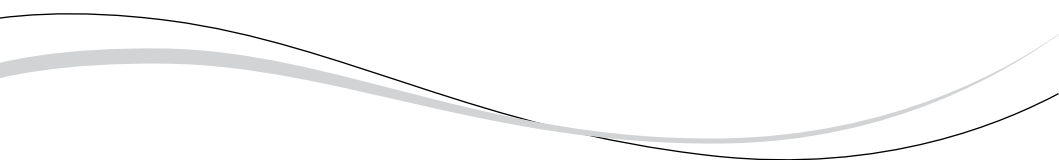




Work Together and Accept the Position Determined by Your Strengths

Welcome Address Delivered at the Second Session of the Labour Parliament of JTUCC
Trade Tower, Kathmandu, 14 December 2016

The formation of JTUCC is, thus we believe, a wise reciprocity of our political system, which is a reflection of the multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic reality; which is in turn based on competitive-cooperation as internalised by our political system. It didn't permit the notion of 'the winners take all'; but directs us instead to work together and to accept every position determined by your strengths! The JTUCC has manifested it through its slogan- 'Unity in Diversity!' We take every decision in consensus; where every affiliate enjoys its freedom to continue its position independently on the issues of non-unanimity. The best part till today is the social dialogue, which takes place with other social partners on a common agenda agreed to by JTUCC. We proudly call it the Nepali model of trade unionism!



*His Excellency Guy Ryder, Director General of ILO,
Guests, Colleagues, Friends, Comrades, and Media Persons!*

Kindly accept my warm welcome in this august gathering- the convergence of trade union leaders, perhaps some may feel strange with the term 'Labour Parliament'. This is the policy making body of the umbrella organisation of Nepali trade union centres. We have thus named it the parliament; and its session commences once every year in the month of December.

This is the Second Session of our Labour Parliament. The Right Honourable President of our country had inaugurated the first session last year. In this Session, we are privileged of having His Excellency Director-General of the International Labour Organisation, Mr Guy Ryder, as the Guest of Honour.

On behalf of two million JTUCC members along with the entire Nepali working people, I take this opportunity to congratulate His Excellency, Mr. Guy Ryder, on his recent election to the ILO Governing Body for the next mandate and wish him a successful tenure.

His Excellency Guy Ryder! You are now the Director General, an efficient CEO of a unique global body- the ILO. For us, you are still our brother a comrade behind the endeavour to bridge the distance in the international trade union movement; that leader whose role was crucial to create an independent international trade union body covering most despite the legacy of the Cold War period- either aligned or not. I recall here the proud moment in November 2006 when we were celebrating the launch of a new trade union body and your election as the founding General Secretary of that body - the ITUC!¹

Today, we are delighted to welcome you here as the Guest of Honour to inaugurate the Second Session of our Labour Parliament; the parliament of another unique platform of trade unions in South Asia- the Joint Trade Union Coordination Centre (JTUCC).

The JTUCC has covered unions of a wide range of political diversity. Realising the importance of every individual union irrespective of their size and affiliation, it has welcomed all and has managed differences, gradually narrowing the gaps between them.

Our country Nepal is a country of minorities! We are mosaic of 125 ethnic minorities along with caste groups, which communicate through 123 dialects and languages. It is a country of vast geographical and bio-diversity with land from the lowest level to the highest peak in the world. Our constitution promulgated last year has defined Nepal as a unified nation with shared aspirations and psychology of all and has internalised Nepal's features of ethnic multiplicity, linguistic diversity, cultural pluralism and religious heterogeneity.

The formation of JTUCC is, thus we believe, a wise reciprocity of our political system, which is a reflection of the multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic reality; which is in turn based on competitive-cooperation as internalised by our political system.² It didn't permit the notion of 'the winners take all'; but directs us instead to work together and to accept every position determined by your strengths!

The JTUCC has manifested it through its slogan- 'Unity in Diversity!' We take every decision in consensus; where every affiliate enjoys its freedom to continue its position independently on the issues of non-unanimity. The best part till today is the social dialogue, which takes place with other social partners on a common agenda agreed to by JTUCC. We proudly call it the Nepali model of trade unionism!³

Standing on the citadel of this unity, we are now in the process to institutionalise all of the achievements of our decades-long struggle through the execution of our constitution. The effective execution of

the Constitution will lay down a solid foundation for political stability and economic prosperity. JTUCC is waiting on the immediate adoption of labour related bills, which will ensure social protection in response to our constitutional spirit of the pro-socialist character of the state.

The Nepali world of work is waiting for concrete plans of decent work. Such a plan which will attract over three millions youth toiling under condition of right to work deficit in those destinations including the GCC countries. It is sad to note here that even in this week a sister working in Lebanon has been deported without any reason. This is a routine phenomenon. We feel extreme pain when some of the colleagues in our global trade union family, even from our own sub-region undermine our effort to protect our sisters and brothers and blame us as for being spokespersons of those regimes that undervalue our labour.⁴

We are expecting strong solidarity and support to realise the sustainable development goals from UN agencies like the ILO. This cooperation will help us to design various social insurance schemes, which are in the 'menu' of the Nepali State. It includes:

- National Reconstruction process which has started to rebuild the destroyed infrastructures devastated by the earthquake of 2015;
- Addressing a grave situation of labour under-utilisation numbering 30+ out of 100. The government should apply some proactive measures such as the one we are requesting to ensure at least 200 days of full-employment with an average pay of US\$ 8 (nearly NRs 800) a day into the Reconstruction Plans;
- The Government of Nepal should include 14 extremely earthquake-prone districts first on the list to implement its health insurance schemes for all citizens out of 25 selected districts of this fiscal year.
- The Government should make null-and-void all clauses of various laws including the Industrial Enterprise Act, which is

against the provisions of ILO core conventions and sharply contradicts with spirit of mutual agreement signed between JTUCC unions and the employer's organisations.

We hope this session of labour parliament would be instrumental to redesigning our future, fitting itself with the federal setup where unions would be considered as the unifying element!

We sincerely extend our gratitude to His Excellency Guy Ryder, Honourable Minister Brother Jaap, Suzuki-san, Honourable Members of the Legislature-Parliament and all of the guests for accepting our invitation. On behalf of all affiliates of JTUCC, I am honoured to welcome you all.

Thank you!

Context and Intended Meaning:

1. **Vienna Convention of ITUC:** In November 2006, ICFTU, WCL, GEFONT and other 17 independent trade union centres of the world established the International Trade Union Confederation. But the WFTU did not align with the ITUC founded with the objective to end cold war in the trade union movement. Guy Ryder, the incumbent Director General of the ILO, was the key ideologue of the ITUC who is also the founder General Secretary of the ITUC.
2. **Competitive-cooperation system:** The political change in 1990 adopted the multiparty competitive system. Any political party if won the elections through First- -Past- the-Post (FPTP) system would form the government. It was a system of “winner takes all”. Whereas the political change in 2006 adopted a cooperative system based on competition. The competition determines strengths; the strength identifies position and directs to work together. It accepted the mixed form of electoral system and guaranteed inclusive proportional representation.
3. **Nepali model of the trade union movement:** There have been a lot of efforts to form a ‘joint front’ of the trade unions in countries where multiple unions are in place. But the working modality of the trade unions in Nepal is different than other countries. We have been able to manage the ‘ego’ of the trade union leaders within us. It has adopted the modality to remain relative to certain ideology and political party, but work through common mechanism for common good. To accommodate the migrant workers in the trade union movement in countries of destination through Support Group is the special feature of Nepali trade union movement.
4. **The allegation:** President of Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) wrote a letter to Guy Ryder, Director General of the International Labour Organisation and urged him to look into the matter of Qatar issue and trade unions’ involvement. He says in his letter that – ‘World Solidarity Movement (WSM), a Belgium-based NGO, is working in collaboration with the local trade unions in India and Nepal with the agenda-based objective of collecting negative testimonials from workers returning home from the Gulf ... This practice of taking testimonials of workers to enquire about their working and living conditions has been known to be misused to

target certain entities ... We need to stop this exploitation and adopt more engaging and meaningful means for their welfare.'

GEFONT was supporting the workers there. The letter was published in the news portal of *Siasat Daily* (7 November 2016) on the same day when the Governing Body of the ILO was discussing on the issues of workers in Qatar. The ITUC was firm against the injustice against workers in Qatar and encouraged its affiliates to speak against it. But it is a shame, in the same time, that the President of Asia Region and Vice President of ITUC wrote a letter to ILO in a manner that he was the spokesperson of the Qatari government. The issue was raised in the Regional General Council Meeting of ITUC AP and clarification was sought with INTUC President. He denied the allegation. But when the letter was shown to him, he was speechless. This is the context referred to in the speech above.

Following is the link of the said online portal:

(<http://www.siasat.com/news/ilo-must-stop-ngos-exploiting-indian-nepali-workers-returning-gulf-says-intuc-leader-1059598/>)



President: Symbol of National Unity and Faithful Tower of Our Republic

Address to the First Meeting of the Labour Parliament
City Hall, Kathmandu, 21 December 2015

Today we take pride that for the first time in the history of Nepal, the Head of State is participating in an event of the Nepali trade union. We feel this is the high respect given to the Nepali working class by the State. The sentence in our constitution regarding the “dignity of work” that “labour cannot be contempt and to prohibit any such acts legal provisions can be made” has now been implemented.



*Right Honourable President,
Honourable Minister and
Members of the Legislature-Parliament,*

Today we are here to participate in the first ever meeting of the Labour-Parliament, the representative body of the working class. On this occasion of the inaugural session, I would like to welcome all representatives from employers' organisations, invited guests, leaders and cadres of different trade unions, media persons, ladies and gentlemen.

Our country is suffering from the earthquake and the political unrest in the southern plain of the country. The earthquake is a natural disaster and we are destined to accept it. But the unrest in the South is the result of disagreements among us and it could have been avoided.

The world of work is affected by both. According to experts, the country has lost the revenue of approximately 50 billion rupees in this period. Hundreds and thousands of workers are without work, and children are unable to attend their schools.¹

We are in the proximity of humanitarian crisis. The compassion shared among people from the North to South, East to West – our centuries old tradition of mutual help towards all, irrespective of origin, is now in question.

We respect the Right Honourable President as a symbol of our national unity and guardian of our republic. Our duty as citizens is to maintain the dignity of this prestigious institution that we Nepalis have achieved after decades of struggle. Therefore, we trust the Right Honourable President as the respected institution of all Nepalis, and have complete faith in it that it will inject hope and inspiration among all Nepalis.²

Today we take pride that for the first time in the history of Nepal, the Head of State is participating in an event of the Nepali trade union. We feel this is the high respect given to the Nepali working class by the State. The sentence in our constitution regarding the “dignity of work” that “labour cannot be contempt and to prohibit any such acts legal provisions can be made” has now been implemented.³

Right Honourable President,

The work of trade unions all over the world is similar - advocating for the rights and interest of the working class. Rights, as provisioned in the Constitution, Laws and Acts, and Interests, the benefits beyond the provisions, are guaranteed through bilateral and multilateral collective agreements, and **in** some cases through struggle.

But the process of forming trade unions may differ. In some countries, there is a single union where agreements made by the trade union with employers’ organisations become the law of the land. In some countries, multiple unions compete with each other. In other countries, there is a closed-shop practice where workers in the world of work have to have union membership. In some countries, there is open shop where it is not compulsory to have union membership. We can also see that in some countries, workers doing irregular jobs and in highly sensitive professions including the armed forces have trade union rights; whereas in other countries, trade union rights are for all sectors except those in security agencies and public service.⁴

We have organised our approach after the 2006 peoples’ movement. After the hard work of eight years, a unique structure – the Joint Trade Union Coordination Centre (JTUCC) has been formed.

The journey started by two trade unions with an agreement to work together on common issues and agendas has now come to a point where all Nepali trade unions, recognised by the law, have come together to formulate action on common issues, common perspectives through a consensus in decision making. This Centre has now been transformed

into a common institution for trade unions with different perspectives and sectors. Therefore we say – Unity in Diversity!

These are some of the approaches we have applied.

- Declare union membership voluntarily and pay dues to the centre based on declared membership
- Allocate representatives according to the paid-dues. Irrespective of the numbers of representatives, the decisions will not be taken on the basis of majority/minority and the agenda will not be accepted /rejected.
- Will not entertain differences based on small or big unions but ascribe roles of the large and small trade unions with dignity as per the statute of JTUCC

We call our regular working institute the Presidium, and the main committee the cabinet. The structure to review the work annually and draft future work is called the Labour Parliament. Just as the democratic state has legislative and executive bodies to check and balance, we have provisioned these structures for our Centre.

Today, to become a member of JTUCC is a matter of pride for Nepali trade unions and trade unionists; and JTUCC has become a subject of interest for the international trade union movement. To become its President or General Secretary is to be a representative of the working class recognised by the state who represents the Nepali working class in the country and at international forum. The Labour Parliament meets annually, forms a team of President, General Secretary, Women's Committee Coordinator and Secretary to lead the Centre for a year effective from January 1 every year.

Like this, we have tried to consolidate multiple voices into 'One' by establishing a unified institution of the trade unions as per Nepali reality to address the demand of workers belonging to the same economic class. This way, we have freshened up multi trade unions with the system

of a multiparty democracy based on different ideologies. Therefore, we call this structure a unique structure!

Her Excellency President,

We work at both the professional and the policy level. Therefore we have some unfinished agendas with the Government:

1. The Bill assuring a Social Security system to protect all the workers, formulated in a trilateral agreement of the Government, employers and trade unions has finally reached the parliament. We are hopeful that it will be adopted at the earliest possible time.
2. The Bill to amend the labour law formed by the tripartite agreement to make the world of work flexible in employment relationship is yet to be presented to the parliament.
3. The minimum wage to be revisited and implemented from this fiscal year is yet to get its headway.
4. Trade unions are willing to work hand-in-hand with the state in the post-earthquake reconstruction phase. They want to be involved in managing the workers in reconstruction and monitoring the on-going reconstruction work. Therefore, JTUCC wants trade union representation in the National Reconstruction Authority.
5. We want the State guarantee in practice to have 10% representation of working class people in several state mechanisms.
6. Nepalis should not be forced to go to foreign countries in search of employment. There should be sufficient job opportunities in the country. And their earnings sent through remittance should be invested in productive sectors so that the working class people can reap benefits from it.

Right Honourable President,

We like to call these agendas the subject of decent work. In our understanding decent work means:-

- Having a pay which enables the workers to live a fair life
- Having work where there is no discrimination and every worker has equal opportunity to strengthen his/her financial condition
- Having a workplace which is appropriate and safe
- Having an environment where trade unions can be formed, and workers can freely express their opinions regarding work
- Having a state, which has social security mechanisms in place to protect the sick, weak and old workers and can provide welfare for all victims in difficult conditions.

This is probably my last address as President of JTUCC. Therefore, I would like to express my gratitude to the Right Honourable President on behalf of our 20 hundred thousand members. As President of JTUCC, I would like to welcome the Honourable Minister for Industry, Members of the Legislature-Parliament, and invited guests and with your permission conclude my address.

Thank You!

Context and Intended Meaning:

1. **Effect of blockade:** The online news portal of Arthik Abhiyan Daily reported on 29 December 2015 that collection of revenue in the last 5 months of the fiscal year 2072/73 BS (2015/16) was decreased by NRs 50 billion than projected. It was less than NRs 30 billion as compared to last year for the same period. The decrease was because of the blockade in the southern borders that affected import and export of goods. All the revenue collection offices suffered the loss because of the blockade. Also the Inland Revenue Office fell short of collecting the projected revenue during the period.
2. **Disrespect to President:** On 16 December 2015, President Bidhya Devi Bhandari visited to Ram-Janaki Temple in Janakpur to worship god and goddesses on the occasion of the Ram-Janaki marriage ceremony. It was the tradition that the Head of the State had to visit the temple on the day. But, instead of welcoming her and showing respect to her, the Madhesi Front resorted to protest and tried to disrupt her visit. After the President returned back to Kathmandu from attending worship event there, the Front's cadres organised a 'cleanliness' programme at the temple premises alleging the President that she made the temple 'impure' by touching it because 'she was a widow'. Such disgraceful act of Madhesi Front did not show disrespect only to the President but also disregarded their sisters and mothers. Such an act of the Front was criticised everywhere.
3. **President in the programme of the trade union:** The JTUCC invited the first President of Republic of Nepal Dr Ram Baran Yadav to inaugurate the National Trade Union Conference. He was briefed with the pros and cons of his participation in such event. But he did not go to the JTUCC event as invited. Similar event was organised after the promulgation of the Constitution. President Bidhya Devi Bhandari was invited to the inauguration function of the JTUCC.

She accepted the invitation, participated in the inauguration ceremony as the guest-of-honour and expressed her solidarity to the trade union movement.

4. **Union: single and multiple!** Different countries have recognised the trade unions differently. There are single trade unions in the countries like Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Canada, USA, China, Vietnam, Cuba, Singapore, and Malaysia. In Belgium, there are three recognised trade unions. In Japan multiple trade unions are in place but only one is recognised as an official trade union by the State. Also there are different management practices where there are multiple trade unions.



A May Day with Destruction and Pain Let It Never Happen Again

Delivering May Day Message during Candle Lighting in Memory of Earthquake Victims
Maitighar Mandala, Kathmandu, 01 May 2015

The fury of nature has not only destroyed the weak and old huts of the poor but also the modern buildings of privileged class. Nature did not differentiate class. From *Dharahara*, known as the Eiffel Tower of Nepal, to all the heritage and historical monuments built in the Second Century are destroyed. As reported by the Nepali media, as many as 10 hydropower projects are badly affected. Fearing the aftershocks, all are forced to sleep outside their houses under the sky for a week. Of the affected, many are from the working class. The darkness of anguish has fallen on them once again. Thousands of children are forced to face uncertain future, insecurity and fear.



Dear Comrades, Colleagues and Friends,

May Day, our glorious day of the working class is this year surrounded by inconsolable grief. The devastating earthquake that hit Nepal on April 25 has left Nepalis in immeasurable anguish and heartbreak. A usual Saturday turned out to be an unusual and furious attack of destruction. The symbols of sweat, labour, art and skill were all demolished. Everything was destroyed, and with them the lives and shelters were devastated. That fearful earthquake shook us again and again. The people- symbols of dreams, hope, dynamism and energy - turned lifeless in a matter of seconds. There are thousands of injured survivors helplessly facing the pain of losing their loved ones amidst the grave disaster. The whole nation is now in the whirlpool of death, grief, pain and uncertainties.

According to UNDP in Nepal the earthquake has affected 8 million people in 39 districts. Among them, two million people from the badly affected 11 districts are the most affected. The epicentre of the devastating earthquake, *Barpak* village of *Gorkha* district has now hardly 50 houses standing up out of a total of 1,470. The captain of *Shimrik Air* involved in the rescue operation informed us that the whole tourist village of *Langtang* in *Rasuwa* district is wiped-out. According to the latest data, *Sindhupalchok* district has the highest death toll followed by the *Kathmandu* valley and *Nuwakot*. The data provided to us by the Government of Nepal as of this morning, May 1st, tells us that the death toll has reached 6,198. There are 13,568 people injured so far. The number is definitely increasing as new information keeps coming.

The fury of nature has not only destroyed the weak and old huts of the poor but also the modern buildings of privileged class. Nature did not differentiate class. From *Dharahara*, known as the Eiffel Tower of Nepal, to all the heritage and historical monuments built in the Second Century

(*Lichhavi* and *Malla Periods*) are destroyed. As reported by the Nepali media, as many as 10 hydropower projects are badly affected. Fearing the aftershocks, all are forced to sleep outside their houses under the sky for a week. Of the affected, many are from the working class. The darkness of anguish has fallen on them once again. Thousands of children are forced to face uncertain future, insecurity and fear.

The GEFONT/JTUCC family too, is facing the fearsome aftermath of the devastating earthquake. Many construction sector workers affiliated to CUPPEC (GEFONT) along with others have lost their lives while working in several hydropower projects. Many UNITRAV (GEFONT) comrades lost their lives buried in the avalanche of Mt. Everest while climbing the peak. Some transport sector workers lost their lives on the road. GEFONT's Finance Secretary *Gunaram Acharya* has suffered severe head injury and has undergone surgery. He is in the ICU in hospital at the moment. GEFONT's Migrant Committee member, *Bajra Rai*, has sustained severe injury. We have got sad news of the demise of PAN (CONEP)'s General Secretary *Chandra Bahadur Shrestha* and his wife. The confederations affiliated with JTUCC are still getting information about the whereabouts and safety of their members. Among the dead are teachers of several schools in villages. We can definitely say that the death toll is rising. In general, our members working in every sector of employment have lost lives or they have lost their relatives and shelters. Just one week before May Day, the Nepali working class is burdened with the unbearable load of tears, injuries, fear and uncertainty.

The rescue operation is on-going to retrieve lives buried under the rubble. With the help of international rescue experts, Nepali security agencies have saved more than a thousand lives. *Ms Krishna Kumari Khadka* rescued in Balaju, Kathmandu after 128 hours of the earthquake is the latest example. We appreciate the patience and bravery of our rescue teams. We thank and express deep gratitude to the governments of different countries, the international trade union family, domestic and international organisations and individuals who offered help and expressed solidarity with Nepal at this time.¹

This is not the time to be destructive, depressed or irritated. Nor is this time to be involved in a blame game. We must realise that this is the time to demonstrate mutual compassion and patience; and mobilise to help each other. Standing on the rubble now we are entering into the phase of a new construction and overcoming grief. Before us are three tasks at present – i) speed up the on-going rescue operation to save as many lives as possible and manage the garbage to avoid epidemics and outbreaks of various kinds of illness; ii) make available relief materials like food, medicine, water and tents to the victims who are in dire need. The State should take special measures to make the relief distribution process impartial; and iii) guarantee shelter to those who are made homeless by the earthquake.²

At a time when villages are badly disrupted, the best option now is to follow an integrated reconstruction approach to build back better and safer. More than three million of the Nepali labour forces are in foreign lands and it is certain that we will face a labour deficit in reconstruction. Therefore, we suggest that the State should revisit its migration policy and make policy to absorb the Nepali workforce in Nepal.

GEFONT has decided to mobilize all of its members to support the rescue and relief operation. Based on the expertise of its affiliates, GEFONT will mobilise them nationwide. To counter the negative opinions about the transport sector and to promote the feeling of “*Transport Workers: the Companion of Citizens*” the transport sector union council will be mobilised. The construction sector workers will be useful to clear the rubble and they are reliable for reconstruction. The health sector union councils are mobilised in hospitals and villages. As your president, I call on the member confederations of the JTUCC to mobilise all your members in the sectors of their expertise.

The value of life can be understood when the people give the title of “Hero” to the rescue team. The Armed Police Force has done heroic work by saving the life of a teenager, Pemba Lama, who was buried in the debris for 120 hours. We direct all our members to cooperate with the security agencies and experts or citizens involved in rescue operation

according to your capacity and contribute as much as possible. May Day has come carrying grief, trauma, tears and uncertainties. We do not have an alternative other than to convert our tears into energy and move forward with new vigour and hope. Therefore, this May Day is not for celebration and agitation for rights, but for tribute, condolence and the reconstruction campaign.

Today, with a heavy heart, I pay tribute to all who lost their lives in the devastating earthquake. My deepest condolence is for the families of the victims; and I wish speedy recovery to all who are injured.

This year's May Day came with destruction and pain. May this never happen again! I, on behalf of the Nepali trade union movement and its two million members express best wishes to you all!

Thank you!

Context and Intended Meaning:

1. **Miracle:** The earthquake rescue operation team succeeded to rescue worker Krishna Kumari out of rubbles after 128 hours of the earthquake. Pemba Lama another worker was rescued alive after 5 days of the earthquake. All others buried with him were died but he survived by licking ghee he found in the rubbles where he was buried. A total of 65,016 Nepal Army, 41,776 Nepal Policy, 24,775 Armed Police Force and 4,138 Armed Force from 18 different countries were mobilised in rescue operation after the earthquake.
2. **GEFONT in humanitarian work:** GEFONT mobilised its members in rescue operation immediately after the earthquake. It disseminated posters with the message calling all to maintain health and hygiene, and take measures to protect the self from the communicable diseases. GEFONT also supported the earthquake victims with relief materials including tarpaulin, food and other essential items. It provided them with the rice, lentils and salt. Altogether, it supported 10,000 affected families in 10 days of its relief distribution. In the rehabilitation phase, GEFONT mobilised 300 volunteers to clean the rubbles at heritage sites, support family to safely rescue the materials from their flattened houses, construct temporary shelters and support in maintenances of schools and health centres.



Change: By Building Workers' Power

Keynote Speech at May Day Mass Meeting
Open Air Theatre, Kathmandu, 01 May 2013

There is a long list of tormented workers who have been victimised by the unchecked runs of corporate greed of the Bosses. Whether they are European workers who were shattered with the fake dream of economic liberalisation or African workers victimised by neo-colonial plunder and corruption, I would like to extend solidarity on your behalf on May Day 2013. While celebrating May Day 2013, we do not have a remarkable story to tell the rest of the world. We also suffered the chronic side effects of the prolonged political transition. We have been forced to accept the rule of criminals of the people's movement as our decision-maker.



Comrades, Colleagues and Friends!

There are almost 360,000 fatal occupational accidents every year, and almost two million fatal work-related diseases.

Every day, more than 960,000 workers are injured and on average 5,330 workers die because of work-related diseases.

The World Health Organisation's July 2010 factsheet estimates asbestos claims 107,000 lives worldwide every year. That means that at even this conservative estimate, every five minutes around the clock a person dies of asbestos-related diseases.

Let us see an example published in the media in our country. About 1,500 Nepalese head for employment abroad daily, out of which seven workers on average are packed in coffins each day.

Therefore, today, I should not be limited only with the Haymarket martyrs of the global labour movement who were hanged and imprisoned for demanding an eight-hour working day in Chicago in 1886. I would like to pay tribute to all those victimised workers all over the world.

Comrades,

There is a long list of tormented workers who have been victimised by the unchecked runs of corporate greed of the Bosses. I would like to pay homage to more than 300 Bangladeshi workers who were buried en-mass due to the collapse of the factory last week and the hundreds of Pakistani workers who were immolated alive some months ago.¹

The trade unionists who are paying the ultimate price for their commitment to social justice from Colombia to Guatemala and facing

extreme judicial repression for standing up for their rights in Turkey are in my heart and memory while extending solidarity on behalf of the Nepali working class! My tribute goes to the struggling workers of the Arab world who have gone 'out of frying pan into the fire' in their struggle to abolish the dictatorship to establish democracy in their respective countries.²

Whether they are European workers who were shattered with the fake dream of economic liberalisation or African workers victimised by neo-colonial plunder and corruption, I would like to extend solidarity on your behalf on May Day 2013.

While celebrating May Day 2013, we do not have a remarkable story to tell the rest of the world. We also suffered the chronic side effects of the prolonged political transition. We have been forced to accept the rule of criminals of the people's movement as our decision-maker.

Let us review the political economy where the lowest 40% are the poor who have less per capita income than in 1977. The upper 10% are the rich who have maintained their privilege, while the middle 50% are the middle class and continuously progressing. If we look at the indices, our society is unequal and unjust just like it was 35 years ago.

So, what is the solution? We have proposed some agenda of building workers' power on this May Day. As a plan of decent work, we focus on:

- A fair income that ensures a decent livelihood;
- A job with equal treatment and opportunities for all;
- A workplace with good working conditions which ensures health and safety
- An environment with freedom of organisation and expression, where both women and men are able to participate in decision making that affect their own lives;
- A State with mechanisms for social protection for weak, sick, and aged workers

- Internalising these points, we have coined the theme of May Day 2013- Change: By Building Workers Power!
- Building workers power in our context is providing Social Security for all!
- Building workers power in our context is to increase wages and benefits for all workers!
- Building workers power in our context is to ensure 10% workers representation in all elected bodies!
- Building workers power in our context is to introduce a job-led investment policy!

And to achieve these we need to end the prolonged political transition!
And to end the political transition, we need to set a new date of elections for CA now!³

Dear comrades,

The 1st May is also the New Year for unionists like us. This is the day of commitment of work for the current year and evaluation of the work of the previous year. I would like to clarify that the main points of the commitment for the current year underlies the issues involved in our Theme. I would also like to recall what GEFONT did last year in brief:

- Before the CA was dissolved due to a conspiracy, we jointly became active to enshrine our rights in the draft-statute through the dissolved CA although it was unpopular. On the previous May Day, with a hope of getting a new constitution through the CA which operated amid disorder and chaos, and with a hope to get our rights as well, we had asked, 'Where is our space?' The issue raised as a question has now turned to our demand. Our struggle is on-going.
- In order to form the appropriate labour legislations by amending the existing laws for providing social security to all, we were busy round-the-clock throughout the year. We have been updating you about its periodic progress. We

have reached a conclusion that the Social Security Fund Act, the draft prepared by tri-partite understanding, should be issued through Ordinance. The legal struggle is still on-going regarding the issue. We expect the solidarity of the political parties, especially our party, CPN-UML, on this issue.

- The well-equipped Rapid Action Team (GEFONT-RAT) of the senior leaders was mobilised from the central level in your work place for four months. About 50,000 activists from more than 1,175 committees of 31 districts were directly called on. I would like to declare that the on-going campaign of building workers' power will go on.
- With the formation of the Jute, Textile, Garment and Carpet Workers' Union, Nepal (JTG-CWUN), we have already launched the campaign of strengthening the affiliates. We are planning to form the leadership of new a generation in our movement after merging three unions of industrial sectors by next month.
- Out of 15 CBA elections held under the regular process, we have had victory in 12 elections. I would like to proudly congratulate the respective unions for their victory.
- We have been able to solve the complicated labour disputes of various enterprises like Thai Airlines, Bhrikuti Pulp and Paper, Swavlamwan Bikash Bank and Butwal Power Company. The struggle is on-going in many other workplaces.
- In association with *Jan-sangeet Manch* we organised a workers concert for thousands of people for the first time as a new process for mass education. I would like to extend my gratitude to Jan-sangeet Manch for the cooperation.
- Various types of welfare programmes run within our organisation have been on-going. Hundreds of friends have benefitted from the medical treatments worth of thousands of rupees with the cooperation of Helping Hand Community Hospital. Thank you Helping Hands!

- GEFONT has held the participatory gender audit for the first time in its history. As a regular aspect of the work carried out with an objective to make the union gender friendly, the fifth national women workers' conference was held involving 700 women workers. It reinforced the need to bring about a balance between work and life. Along with endorsing the Code of Conduct on Violence against Women, the slogan, "It's A Crime! Do not commit or tolerate! Attack on Violence against Women!" was designed by the Conference.
- Our joint campaign is on-going. Ruling out the divisive tendency, we pledge to strengthen workers' power through the method of 'Single Issue: Different Places' in response to workers who plead for unity of workers all over the world.⁴
- We have a plan of operating a regular trade union school with a view to strengthening workers' power by next year.

I would like to announce the decision of bestowing the Madhav Neupane Memorial Award of the year to Bed Kumar Khatiwada, a unionist working in Malaysia for organising migrant workers; the Nuru Wangxu Memorial Award to Sarkiman Tamang, the former president of UNITRAV; the Gangadevi Memorial Scholarship to Sunita Danuwar and the Gangadevi Memorial Health Assistance to Parashu Ram Ghimire of Jhapa District.

Finally, I would like to repeat the priorities fixed for the year to materialize the 'Change: By Building Workers' Power':

- Increase of wages and benefits for each worker
- Collective bargaining agreements across the country at one time
- Operation of a social security fund
- Amendment of the labour legislation to guarantee the formation of a Labour Inspection System, a National Labour Commission and systematic system on sectoral collective bargaining.

- Guarantee of organisational freedom for workers and the guarantee of workers' rights as fundamental rights in the constitution itself
- Election of the Constituent Assembly as soon as possible for the sake of drafting a pro-labour, pro-socialist constitution to ensure a welfare State
- An Employment Summit for a strategy focused on employment
- 10% representation of workers in the elected representative bodies of the state so as to make the policy and programmes of the state in favour of the workers.
- Protection and guarantee of the franchise rights and benefits of migrant workers.

Best wishes for May Day, 2013!

Thank You!

Context and Intended Meaning:

1. **Betrayal in Bangladesh:** On 24 April 2013, an eight-storey building running a garment factory was collapsed in Bangladesh because of the structural failure. It claimed the lives of 1,129 workers and injured more than 2,500. This is considered to be the largest accident in the garment history that claimed that many lives in the world of work. Similarly, 257 people lost their lives when the garment and shoe factory in Karachi and Lahore was set on fire on 11 September 2012. More than 600 people sustained severe injuries. It was the largest life-claiming industrial accident in the history of Pakistan.
2. **Arab Spring: Leave or Continue?** Rebellion, protest and armed revolutions started in Arab World with the beginning of 2011. The protests were against the rulers who suppressed the people in their respective countries. The rebellion was started from Tunisia in Spring Season and gradually expanded to other Arab countries. New governments came to power but could not sustain longer. 'Old' rulers regained their power and started to suppress the 'new' ones in Egypt. Same happened in Tunisia and Yemen too. The turmoil in Syria and Libya has plunged to uncertainty. The hard won change in Arab World has now been like whether to leave it or to continue it!
3. **When is the election?** On 14 March 2013, Chief Justice Khil Raj Regmi was appointed as the Chairperson of the Council of Ministers with the task to hold Constituent Assembly elections. But the date for the elections was not declared until the May Day. After some time, the date for the elections was slated for 19 November 2013. Elections were successfully held and Mr Regmi resigned from the position on 9 February 2014 handing over the business to the elected government.
4. **Issue is same but places are different:** Affiliated Federations of JTUCC organised rallies and public meeting in different places to observe the May Day. Many asked us about why the events are in different places despite the common slogan of 'unity'! We responded them as saying that we were making our issues public from different places. Later, we coined a new slogan: 'we are different but still united! Our identity is unity in diversity!'

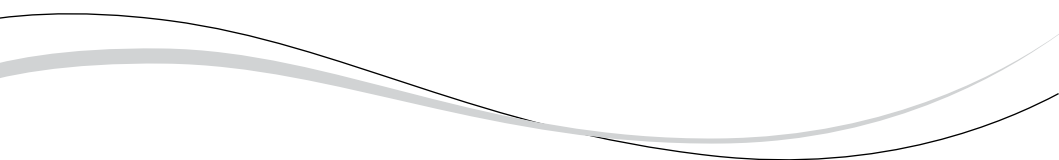


**A Map of the World That does not Include
Utopia is not Worth even Glancing At**

Addressing the May Day Mass Meeting
Kathmandu, 01 May 2012

As the workers in the USA have made a flag featuring “99%” this year, we had discussed number “87” last year demanding the ratification of ILO Convention 87 relating to freedom of association. This year we have made figure “10” as the flag of Nepal’s trade union movement. It means 10%.

As we learn from history, the Tsars of Russia had made a formula of representation in politics. In their formula, 1 bourgeoisie would be equal to 47 workers. In our Republic, when the leaders from the left-democratic movements are in power, we have implemented a formula of representation of the following (sociological) order: 37.8% for ethnic groups, 13% for Dalit, 30.2% for other caste groups; 31.2% Madhesi; and 33% plus for women’s representation.



Comrades,

May Day is not merely a day – the first day of the fifth month of the Gregorian calendar. It is a day of worldwide solidarity! May Day is, definitely, the 1st day of May. However, it is a day of special significance to the trade union movement. It is the day to remember our years of struggles and to demonstrate our hope for a better future! It is a historical day to remember that *'an injury to one is an injury to all'*!

As usual, this year, we are celebrating May Day with grandeur. All Nepali workers are celebrating it, both at home and beyond the borders of Nepal, where they are toiling. They are expanding their expectations in line with our country's specific reality. GEFONT is celebrating May Day at an altitude of 7,500 meters. We are above the base camp of the world's highest peak Mt Everest, for the first time in history!

The activists of this year's much publicised movement in the USA - the "Occupy Wall Street" movement – set the figure of 99% as the 'flag' of May Day 2012.

What the figure 99% symbolises is that while the 99% of us suffer, the remaining 1% prospers. "May Day 2012 is a day in which the 99% steps onto the stage of history"; claim the organizers, "declaring from New York to Wisconsin to Cairo to Durban to Madrid"

- We are all workers
- We are all immigrants
- We are all the 99%!
- And, we demand a better world for all!!

They further claim- "We ask you to do one of two things to commemorate this day: Don't like what you do? **Don't do it.** Take one day to do

something you love instead. Love what you do? **Do it for free.** Take it to the next level and bring it to the public.

On May Day we remember the martyrdom of August Spies, Albert Parsons and others due to their rebellion against exploitation. Among us, some are copying and chanting the same slogan of those days in the streets to exhibit them as “pure-revolutionaries”.

They also said that- “A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at!” Perhaps because of this, the guru of rebellion of the 20th century, *Che Guevara*, had once said: “Be realistic – demand the impossible!”

In a proclamation printed just before May 1, 1886, one publisher appealed to working people with this plea:

- “Workingmen to Arms!
- War to the Palace, Peace to the Cottage, and Death to luxurious idleness!
- The wage system is the only cause of the world’s misery. It is supported by the rich classes, and to destroy it, they must be either made to work or **DIE.**
- One pound of **DYNAMITE** is better than a bushel of **BALLOTS!**
- Make your demand for **Eight Hours** with weapons in your hands to meet the capitalistic bloodhounds, police, and militia in a proper manner.”

Is it realistic if we put forward such a position these days? Or what would the issue be for discussion on this May Day? What will be the relevance of these points in our context?

In our opinion, the feelings recorded in the pages of the history of May Day signal that what looks possible today was seemingly ‘impossible’ in the past. Let’s learn a lesson from that past! Let’s continue our struggle for further achievements!

As the workers in the USA have made a flag featuring “99%” this year, we had discussed number “87” last year demanding the ratification of ILO Convention 87 relating to freedom of association. This year we have made figure “10” as the flag of Nepal’s trade union movement. It means 10%. As we learn from history, the Tsars of Russia had made a formula of representation in politics. In their formula, 1 bourgeoisie would be equal to 47 workers. In our Republic, when the leaders from the left-democratic movements are in power, we have implemented a formula of representation of the following (sociological) order: 37.8% for ethnic groups, 13% for Dalit, 30.2% for other caste groups; 31.2% Madhesi; and 33% plus for women’s representation. Surprisingly, the representation of workers is not reflected in any of these figures. It means that in Nepal’s political process, the workers’ representation is 0%. The formula for inclusion, which is to bring the marginalised into the centre, has been a “short-cut” for “elites” to climb the summit of the political ladder!

This is injustice. That is why we have demanded a separate workers’ constituency in all state-mechanisms where the peoples’ representatives are elected! We demand the guarantee of 10% representation of workers in the state mechanisms. And this is an absolute minimum.

The workers constitute some 50% of our population!

Be they in Nepal or abroad, we should respect all the workers who have contributed to the country’s economy with their sweat and labour!

Let me share my May Day wishes to all workers toiling in different trades, services and industries on behalf of the e 350,000 GEFONT members. I send wishes for “safe migration and decent work” to those migrant Nepalīs working in various countries of the world!

Long live our solidarity!

Workers of the world, Unite!!!



Review of the Past and Commitment for the Future

Keynote Speech at May Day Celebration
Kathmandu, 01 May 2011

The conflict based on ethnicity, race, caste and gender does not directly fall in the sanctuary of class struggle. They are simply the manifestation of discriminations and exploitations rampant in society. Class supremacy is economic discrimination not based on in the colour of people, place of their origin or gender. An individual with ethnic, gender and regional identity may be an oppressor and s/he may fuel violence among the people with such identities. In such a situation supporting either of the poor or the rich is positioning oneself against each other. When the time comes to take a side, the oppressed stands against oppressor, poor against rich, and a class against another.



“The conflict exists because there are classes!
Classes do not exist because there is a conflict!!”

A famous American community organiser and writer Saul Alinsky classifies humankind into three tiers: the Haves, the Have-Nots and the Have-a-Little, Wants more. The Haves are always at the top of the social pyramid with the control over power, wealth, protection and luxury. Whilst they suffocate in the limitless property, the Have-Nots are often in the clutches of starvation. The Haves account for a minority of the population in the society but wants to keep things as they are and are opposed to change. Politically, they are cold and committed to freeze the status quo.¹

Underneath the Haves is the world of the Have-Nots. The Have-Nots are largest in number. They are threaded together by the common misery of poverty, scarcity, ignorance, malady, political impotence, despair and poverty-wages if they are employed. Needless to say, of these two classes, the strong always exploits the weak.

The conflict based on ethnicity, race, caste and gender does not directly fall in the sanctuary of class struggle. They are simply the manifestation of discriminations and exploitations rampant in society. Class supremacy is economic discrimination not based on in the colour of people, place of their origin or gender. An individual with ethnic, gender and regional identity may be an oppressor and s/he may fuel violence among the people with such identities. In such a situation supporting either of the poor or the rich is positioning oneself against each other. When the time comes to take a side, the oppressed stands against oppressor, poor against rich, and a class against another.

Today, we are observing the May Day. We observe the Day in a festive mood. But a question may arise, why this commendation of struggle even in the day of festivity?

Because the flag of our May Day is pierced with the blood of the world's working class who chose martyrdom against tyranny for the sake of dignity. The glory of May Day is grounded on the magnificent struggle of the working class against a handful of the Haves who belligerently oppressed many of the Have-Nots. The history of May Day is the grand history of labour leaders in Chicago who were crucified by the brutal regime some 125 years back for a simple reason. The leaders dreamt of a dignified, prosperous and creative life for their generation. In this way, the history of the Day is closely linked with the struggle against a repressive past. On top of this, the history of May Day is stained with the blood of Nepali workers who waged a struggle for democracy, equality and prosperity against all sorts of tyrannies imposed by the 104-year Rana oligarchy, a despotic regime of absolute monarchy in various forms, including the so-called partyless Panchayat system. May Day stood firm on the strong citadel of workers who chose death to despotism but did not give up their hope to prevail over oppression.

So we cannot help emphasising the glorious history of the workers when we talk about May Day. Even last year, we bore in mind the Rhododendron Revolution called in 2006 by the Nepali people, which shook the fortress of feudalism in Nepali society. With the political change in 2006, we voiced our high expectations that transformation is possible! But one year down the road, Nepali politics could not paint a rosy picture in its mandate to write a new constitution. Instead, this opportunity has been lost in the vortex of power struggles. While observing May Day last year, we called on the opposition party to relinquish its obstinacy to capture state power from the street protests. As we foretold, their attempt to capture state power could not yield results in their favour. Instead, they faced public opposition that obliged them to call off their struggle. Now the characters in power have been changed, the method of being stubborn has been altered. Nonetheless, the lust for power among the

political parties is still there with the same strength as it was last year. There is no breakthrough in the status quo of Nepali politics for over the year.

If this is the case, is the current political leadership irrelevant?

When celebrating May Day last year, we were firm in our belief that the drafting of a new constitution should have been accomplished by then. Article-wise discussion of the compiled constitution-bill should have been concluded by then. But progress in that direction has not been made by this time too. We are still at the same juncture as we were a year ago. The remaining task for the 65 Constituent Assembly (CA) members (who are the member of Constitutional committee and responsible to conclude the draft of the Constitution) now is to cast a vote for or against the draft of the new constitution to be tabled in the Full House of the CA after the draft is prepared by the 65 members of the Constitutional Committee. But sadly, the discussion has not even started yet among the top leadership on how the remaining tasks of writing the constitution can be accomplished within the remaining time of the CA and how to manage the prolonged transition after May 28. The leadership instead has fallen in the gorge of irresponsible debate of whether or not to extend the CA tenure. The debate simply is nothing more than a trick to escape the responsibility by shifting the blame onto others.

Why should we extend the CA's tenure? This is the question even we, workers, want to ask the leaders who have belief in and respect for democracy. We need a firm and convincing answer: have we achieved the mission of drafting and enacting the new constitution through the elected CA? Or was the demand of Nepali people to enact the new constitution through the CA for 65 years now wrong? What is the alternative to the CA if it is dissolved as per the rumour being circulated? Do we return to the revival of the interim constitution of 2006, or the revival of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990 or the presidential rule as a testimony to the failure of the current political leadership?

On this historic occasion of May Day, these questions are not only directed to the major political parties. We also put the same questions to all parties represented in the CA, the intellectuals and civil society who project themselves as 'opinion makers'. We are never tired of blaming and commenting on others 'failure' and 'inactions'. But what do **you** think to be the right alternative to the CA? This is the question to the 'intellectuals' and civil society - their answer is still pending!

Obviously, all the faces in Nepali society are not new to the Nepali people. At a time when the highly acclaimed and inclusive CA elected through exceptional momentum and elevated expectations of the people could not yield results as per the people's wish, how can we anticipate that the alternative institution of the CA will hold water? How can we convince ourselves that the rumour of fresh elections is the right alternative? Can the elected body like the CA be dissolved simply on the grounds that it could not serve the purpose of a few leaders who are defamed by their wrongdoings in the past? Or, can the political vacuum like before in 2001 serve the purpose of the CA?²

It is definite that the CA cannot be a 'writing team' of a group of people to draft a constitution. Neither can it dish up the interest of certain groups of people or individuals.

Given this, a question may arise, was the CA a waste of time over the past year?

Obviously, there are some complications in the political spectrum. However, we succeeded to harvest some fruits in the world of work. We, the workers, managed to materialise the Social Security System which has been the demand of workers that was pending for 20 years. The Social Security System is based on the Social Security Fund collected through 1% tax on the workers who are entitled to regular/permanent jobs. We also succeeded to strike a Collective Agreement between the employers and the trade unions for a contribution ratio on both sides plus the government of 1.1:2. The incumbent government has guaranteed the Tripartite Social Security Fund Management Board under

the coordination of the Labour Ministry and agreed to the operational guidelines of the Board.

These definitely are the major achievements in favour of the working class. Unlike past agreements, the new agreement of this year is a landmark step to take our society forward to equality and a welfare direction.³

As part of the social development process, the present politics in Nepal is in transition. As is the politics, so is the economy. As we are in transition, we are leaving the old legacy behind but we still are yet to form a new but firm foundation. In other words, we are no more in the phase of destruction nor already entered in the era of construction. We are passing through the phase of deconstruction. Deconstruction per se is to leave out the useless things of the past and take those useful ones to create a new reality.

In an unequal society like ours, we do not put a hook on the rich people in their campaign for gaining wealth. Instead we advocate for charging a proportionate tax and using it for the support of low-income people. Through the contributory Social Security Fund, we can provide social protection to those workers in employment with the benefits of education, health, pension and unemployment benefits. In the name of class struggle, instead of intimidation, violence and maiming, we feel that this is a practical method to address the class struggle of Nepali society. We have a firm belief that we can develop a labour force through this process. That's why we have applauded the Collective Agreement reached between the employers and the trade unions as 'historic'. That's why we have thanked the immediate past leadership of FNCCI who demonstrated adequate flexibility in the recent agreement. And, it is on these grounds that we have promoted a slogan: 'world of work would get liberal policy; if the workers could enjoy employment and social security!'

Leading to this May Day, a new leadership of the FNCCI has been elected. Last year, we urged the employers and their organisation to respect the

rules of the games in letter and spirit and abide by it. We feel the call that we made last year is still relevant this year too and we further ask them to implement the collective agreement in letter and spirit, and do not try to revoke the Social Security System under any pretext. We strongly support the businesspersons in their call to allow them to work without hindrances and stop the goons to enter and loot the workplaces. Once again, we reiterate our position: 'worker-employer relations do it according to the labour legislations! Oppose highhandedness in our workplaces!'⁴

Last year, we raised such important issues that have an enduring effect in our world of work. After the present team of GEFONT ascended to the leadership, it has insistently implemented the slogan "where workers are, there is GEFONT". In a bid to put the slogan into practice, we have convened a National Convention of different affiliates including the 12 Zonal Committees. No matter the terms or conditions of the workers in workplaces, we succeeded to reach out to them all under the slogan "Rights to Union for all, social protection to all".

Despite the achievements of last year, we still have to do more to achieve the following:

- Ratification of ILO Convention Number 87
- Formation of a constitutional and powerful National Labour Commission based on the tripartite agreement and as per the spirit of 'Labour Commission' enshrined in the Interim Constitution.
- Timely amendment to the existing labour laws and development of new and necessary labour laws like the Social Security Bill
- Schemes for the design of Social Security System and management of the Fund

- Guarantee of labour friendly new constitution with the inclusion of workers' issues in the draft prepared by the Thematic Committees of the Constituent Assembly
- Organising the workers against exploitative and inhumane labour practice and mobilising them for a dignified, prosperous and creative life.

These are the priority agenda for workers in the coming year too. However, many of them rely on the action of the Government of Nepal. We, the hardworking class, have the right to ask the Right Honourable Prime Minister:

- Which force is impeding the Government to ratify ILO Convention Number 87?
- Who is behind the force to thwart the democratic reorganisation of the world of work?
- Who is hindering the introduction of labour friendly policy and programmes in a country like ours where nearly 50 percent of the population is living below the poverty line?
- Who is putting a spoke in the wheels of you leaders to move forward to bring about transformational change in Nepali society?

We expect a considered response from the government. If the government is ready to address the agenda raised above, we on behalf of the Nepali trade union movement with no hesitation say that the world of work will be transformed into a "peace zone" in the days to come.

Finally, I, on behalf of all Nepali workers would like to welcome all guests and the invitees present here and request your solidarity to the Nepali workers. I wish you all a happy May Day!

Thank you!

Context and Intended Meaning:

1. **Share of wealth:** The gap between rich and poor is widening in the world. Just 80 individuals have the same wealth as 50% of the world's citizens. Eight richest people own the same wealth as the poorest half of the world. The incomes of 80 richest people increased by 50% in the last four years whereas the incomes of poor 50% of people decreased by 750 billion dollar. According to the statistics made public by Forbes, Bill Gates, founder of the Microsoft, is the world's richest person who owns 75 billion dollar. Others include Amancio Ortega, Warren Buffett, Carlos Slim, Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg, Larry Ellison and Michael Bloomberg.
2. **The fate of Constituent Assembly:** With the extension of the tenure of Constituent Assembly (CA) on 16 May 2010, a heated discussion started whether to dissolve the CA or keep it until it promulgates a new constitution. There were two different opinions: one was in favour of keeping it until it serves its purpose because the promulgation of the constitution by the CA was crucial to end violent conflict and fulfil the aspiration of Nepali people who wanted to write a constitution through elected CA. Another opinion was in favour of dissolving it because the Maoist, being the largest party in the CA, was reluctant to write the constitution. A new election of CA for a second time was imperative to write the constitution through CA.
3. **Negotiation of 24th March:** On 24 March 2011, a crucial agreement was reached between the trade unions and the employers to review the minimum wages of workers. This agreement paved a way to establish the social security fund based on contribution. The employers also agreed to contribute 20% total in the social security fund where the workers had to contribute 11% to it.
4. **Let us to work:** Youth entrepreneurs and other associations and organisations terrorised by the donation drive of YCL started a campaign with the slogan of 'let us to work!' They raised three key demands as their campaign's asks: i) life of the workers must be protected, ii) rule of law must be guaranteed, and iii) workers and entrepreneurs must be provided with the environment to work and run their business and entrepreneurship without hindrances.



May Day

1st May 2010, Kathmandu

महासंघ, नेपाल (कोनेप)

संयुक्त मे दिवस आयोजक कमिटी २०१०



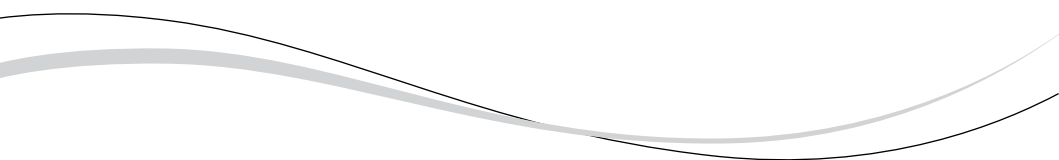
Transformation is Possible

Keynote Speech Broadcast Live by TV and Radio Stations on May Day
Nepal Academy Hall, Kathmandu, 01 May 2010

Rookmangud Katawal, the then Chief of Army Staff of the Nepal Army, was at odds with the then government led by Maoist Supremo Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) on several issues. The government unilaterally decided to sack Katawal. But the President of Nepal overrode the government's decision and asked Katawal to continue his service. This resulted in the resignation of Prime Minister Prachanda and collapse of his government.

Immediately after the incident, the Maoist announced protest programmes demanding 'citizen's supremacy'. But the hidden agenda was to pull down the succeeding government led by UML senior leader Madhav Kumar Nepal. The Maoists also created obstructions in all public events organised by the trade unions to observe May Day.

Because of the obstruction and possible collision, GEFONT together with CONEP organised a mass meeting in the Nepal Academy Hall to celebrate the May Day. The following speech was delivered in the meeting, which was broadcast live by TV and radio stations.



Comrades,

It has been our conviction for generations. And it is this conviction that has engaged us in struggles over generations. One hundred and twenty-four years ago, workers in the streets of Chicago had declared, “we labour-selling people are not the machine to earn property for the capitalists... To protect our labour power, refresh it and keep it creative, a whole day should be divided into three components of ‘work,’ ‘rest’ and ‘recreation’”. They raised these voices for the working class people of generations to come.

The historic day today is being observed as the 121st May Day to pay respect to the workers such as August Spice, who sacrificed and offered their blood.

On behalf of all the workers of Nepal, a glorified land under the golden aura of Everest, I would like to pay tribute to all the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the welfare of the working class people. My salute to them all! I would also like to take this opportunity to offer my heartfelt greetings to all the working class people of Nepal who have been struggling over the last 6 decades to jettison the autocratic monarchy and establish a democratic republic.

Nepali trade union movement has embraced “the right to work”, “right to wages”, “right to equality” and “right to liberty” as the “four rights” central to social transformation.

Why is social transformation crucial? It is to enable every worker to-

- earn property sufficient to live with dignity
- get employment that does not discriminate and provides equal opportunity to grow and develop professionally

- have a safe and appropriate workplace
- get an opportunity to form unions and express opinions freely
- live in a state that provides a social security system for protection and which cares for the sick, elderly and those in need

These agendas for transformation are combined and known as “decent work” today. And the right to “decent work” has been the summary of all demands of all trade unionists in all countries.

Has our movement been able to address these demands?

The year 2009/10 has fallen short in terms of resolving political crisis and addressing the rising expectations of the people. However, the efforts made and initiatives taken by trade unions have not gone in vain. We rated number one the task of peace building and constitution making. We submitted the trade union recommendations to various thematic committees in the Constituent Assembly (CA), and shared them with the CA Chairperson, Prime Minister and major political parties. We succeeded in influencing them: our recommendations have been included in the drafts prepared by the CA committees.

What are the challenges facing us?

The first challenge is to include issues not covered by initial drafts in the final draft of the constitution and also to ensure that those already included in the draft will not be removed from the final draft. Another challenge is to prepare society as a whole to stand against exploitative and illegal labour practices.

There are employers and employees in each component of the would-be-states proposed to be inclusive in terms of ethnicity, gender and regionalism. The existing system stands in favour of the employers, and not of employees. This scenario throws up a challenge to ensure participation of workers in each forum represented by industrialist-entrepreneurs as well as in elected bodies.

The ratification of ILO Number 87, the establishment of a social security fund, amendment to the Labour Act and enactment of a new law are all central to our campaign. I would like to recall the grand mobilisation of workers on 1st February 2010. It was the day GEFONT distributed some 10.5 million pamphlets across the country. The pamphlets aimed to inform people of the social security system and ILO Convention Number 87, and mobilise public opinion in favour of these instruments.

It has been a year since the team under my leadership has taken charge of GEFONT. I would like to recall what we said when we took charge a year ago: GEFONT would reach most of the districts should the situation allow us at least to move; where there were workers, there would be GEFONT. I am proud to declare now that we have reached 65 districts from 35 a year ago. And, we have built a new structure to organise 50,000 rural woman health volunteers.

Is it enough? What do statistics say?

Some 11.18 million people are in employment in Nepal. Around 17% of them (around 2 million) are in paid-employment. Of those in paid employment, more than 79% are in the private sector.

Of those in employment, only 46% receive regular/monthly payment. The rest are piece-rate, weekly and daily waged workers.

Every 24 in 100 workers are paid in kind. Except for permanent workers, others do not get paid leave, provident fund, gratuity and other benefits related to education, health and housing. Most of the issues are thus around whether or not to issue appointment letters, whether to hire on a permanent or temporary basis, no work-no pay, plus hire and fire conditions.

Although the average monthly income of workers has doubled in 10 years (from NRs 2,143 to 5,117), the majority of workers are still deprived of the national minimum wage (NRs 190 daily).

The percentage of those unemployed is 36.7 of the total workforce. Some 81, 000 of them have never been employed, and 172,000 have lost their previous employment.

More than 8% of those in the 20-29 age groups are under-unemployed, and men outnumber women in the case of under-unemployment.

This statistical picture painted of our economy is not encouraging. The stagnating global economy has brought about the downward trend in remittance. Our current economy is in a more critical state than it was during the armed conflict, like the unstable politics that we are confronting.

We tried our best to keep the labour market away from the hazardous armed conflict. We organised a “Nepal Forum” in Geneva in the presence of trade union leaders from a dozen countries to implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the then rebels and the state. The Forum coincided with the International Labour Conference and was organised jointly by GEFONT and 3 other trade union confederation, the first of its kind.¹

Unfortunately, the labour relations which were expected to improve after the establishment of a democratic republic took an opposite turn. The community of entrepreneurs submitted themselves to those strong in anarchic forces while flouting the “rule of law” to deal with labour disputes. The world of work was held hostage to a series of wild-cat strikes called by such elements, but the workers were made to pay the price, thereby the deceptive slogan of “no work- no pay” was coined.²

I would like to call on all industrialists/ entrepreneurs and their leaders and organisations to play by the rules. We are ready to be flexible to amend the Labour Act. Are you ready to implement the social security system for the protection of the workers? Are you ready to support the proposal to establish the social security fund with the scheme of benefits involving unemployment allowance, health benefits, accident insurance, and survival benefits, among others? We have started contributing 1%

from our salaries. Are you ready to contribute your part of 25% as you do in the case of permanent workers? We are ready to amend the existing Trade Union Act for social dialogue. Are you ready to establish a tripartite National Labour Commission to give immediate justice to the labour sector?

Finally,

The constitution should have been written by now. Issues not covered in initial drafts prepared by the CA committees but recommended for inclusion in the constitution by the workers, should have been presented to the CA by now. As the representative of the workers, I, together with other members, on behalf of GEFONT, should have already cast our votes for the right and against the wrong provisions of each article of the constitution. Instead, it is a shame that we are observing this great May Day in open air due to the negative consequences of our dilapidated politics. Even May Day has been prey to the largest party's obstinacy. Again the kettledrum of conflict is being heard. And there are troubling signs to replace the tool of invention in our workplace with the weapon of destruction.

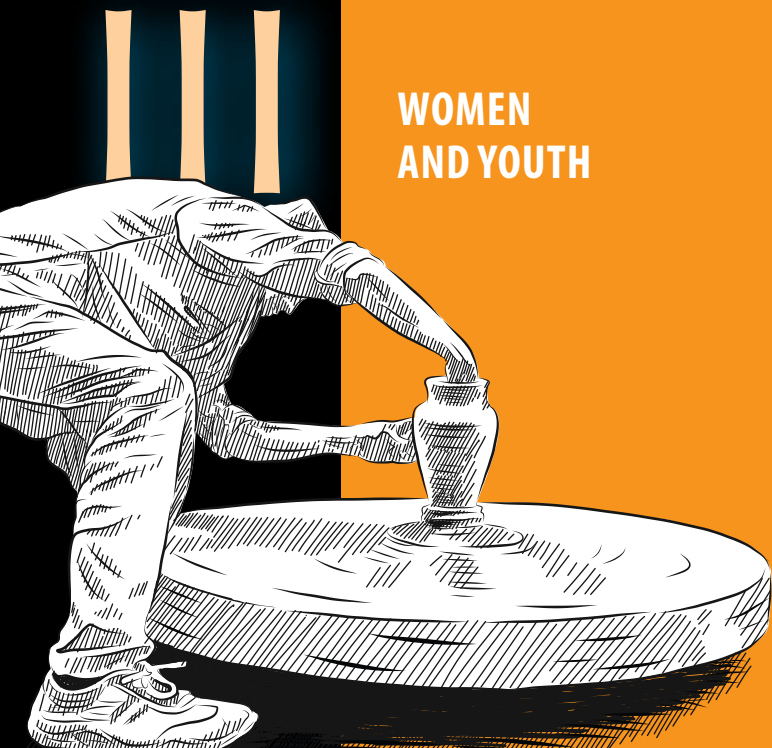
On the occasion of this May Day, I urge the main opposition party, UCPN-M, to ditch its obstinacy "to capture state power from the streets" and adhere to consensual politics. I call upon all the main political parties to act prudently for to reach consensus, and not engage in conflict.

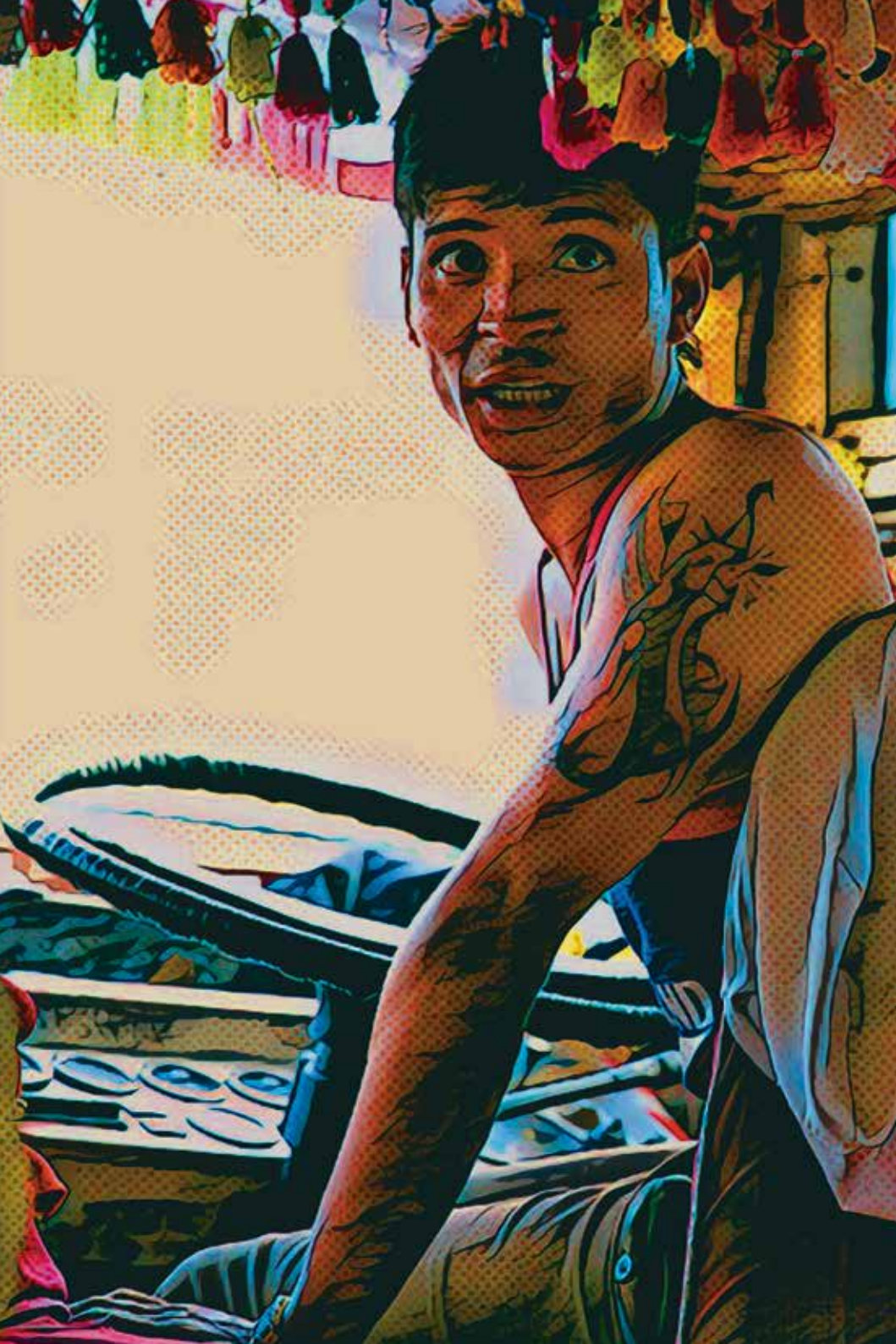
And, once again, I would like to express my best wishes for May Day to all the guests here for solidarity, and thousands of our listeners and well wishers watching and listening to us through television and radios!

Context and Intended Meaning:

1. **Geneva gathering:** The Government of Nepal and the CPN (Maoist) signed a Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) on 21 November 2006. With it, the Maoist came to the peaceful politics and joined the government. Following the CPA, initiations were taken to bring All Nepal Federation of Trade Union (ANTUF), an ally of Maoist's decade long insurgency, to the mainstream. A team of trade union delegates from Nepal was taken to Geneva with the support of Finland's trade union solidarity agency- the SASK. Nepal Forum was organised in the ILO headquarters in the presence of trade union representatives from 85 different countries. It was in the Forum where ANTUF was declared it joined the peaceful trade union movement. But ANTUF still had to go a long way to change its attitude and behaviour in regard to respecting other trade unionists.
2. **Power of muscles:** Those days, the members of GEFONT and NTUC usually furnished "clarification" to the employers indulged in misconduct and facing fined against them. However, the employers were ready to sign any documents contravene with laws before the bunch of ANTUF and YCL stormed into workplace anytime; ready to close their enterprises and agreed to conduct mass meeting of ANTUF/YCL in workplace premise. In public, the employers were harping the rhetoric of 'No work-No pay' and used to talk about the labour-relations as per laws. But in practice, they were ready for anything before gangs of ANTUF/YCL, and used to harass those who were submitting grievances in due process as per prevailing law of land. The Bosses actually were maintaining double standards.

**WOMEN
AND YOUTH**









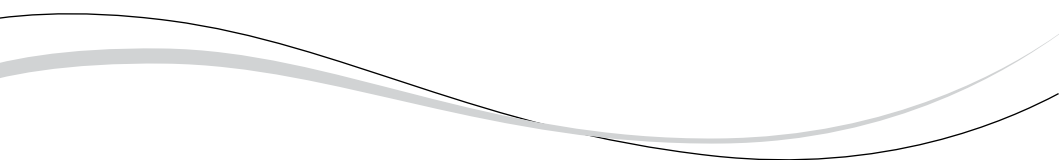
What is the Opposite of Patriarchy? Matriarchy?

Keynote Speech at the Inaugural Session of the Fifth Working Women's Conference
Kathmandu, 08 March 2015

Count Us IN!

While saying “Count Us In” we can also say, “it is being counted”. The question is “if women are counted, if they are taken seriously, then why can’t we feel the results?” Therefore, this question is for me and everyone present here today. Especially for those who are always calculating! “How are we calculating? What is our goal and timeframe to reach the target? Women are counted – why can’t we achieve results!”

Therefore, it is not sufficient to say, “Count Us In”. We need commitment. For example the UN had a theme two years ago: “A promise is a promise: Time for Action to end violence against women!”



Guests and Colleagues,

Today for this inaugural programme of International Working Women's Day, I would like to begin by commemorating the pioneer leaders of the women's movement: *Sahan Pradhan, Sadhana Adhikari, Mangaladevi and Sneha Lata* and others.

I salute all the senior woman leaders and those who have departed. I would like to pay tribute to them on behalf of GEFONT and its members.

I would also like to commemorate those undocumented women activists who took part in the first ever organised labour movement in 1947, and those women activists of all Nepali working class movements who were actively involved but who are always forgotten from the pages of history. ¹

I express solidarity with the girls including the victims of recent acid attacks and wish them a speedy recovery. I loathe the perpetrators of such inhumane violence and express solidarity with women victims of all age. ²

I would like to begin my address by referring to a particular episode of a popular Indian TV talk show, "*Satya meba jayate*". The host was Bollywood actor, Aamir Khan, and the guest was Kamala Bhasin, an international campaigner for Gender Equality. ³

Kamala asks Aamir- "Aamir, what is the opposite of Patriarchy?"

Aamir quickly answers- Matriarchy! "Wrong", she says, 'you get zero points for this. Everybody makes this mistake. We do not want to overthrow patriarchy to establish matriarchy. Matriarchy is as wrongful.'

Everyone in the show is quiet in anticipation of her answer.

Aamir asks- 'What is the correct answer then?

"Equality!" The opposite of patriarchy is not matriarchy but 'equality!" she replies.

Instead of engaging in a futile debate of how many men and how many women participated in a programme, while celebrating the international working women's day, we should try to understand the difference between patriarchy, matriarchy and equality. We need to understand that we are not upholders of any sort of domination but of equality.

"I can compete with anyone based on capacity; I can't on the basis of gender."

I had read the comment by a Chinese woman on "Capacity and Gender Equality" published in the International New York Times. As she said, when we talk about equality, we are not saying to make women like men or men like women. If anyone is doing so then we are again making a mistake. Equality refers to equal behaviour, not similar physical outlook.

Therefore, now in GEFONT we are talking about the theme prepared by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) for its Gender Equality Campaign – "Count Us In".

- Count Us In the economy
- Count Us In the labour force
- Count Us In decision making
- Count Us In leadership

This is the crux of "Count Us In". Are our daughters/sisters counted? The facts indicate otherwise. Let's look at the corporate world - where is the equal participation of women there? Women are usually in small and medium scale businesses. On an average around 30% is either owned or managed by women. At the global level, women's presence is only 19% in the corporate board. If we look at the big companies of

the world, women CEOs are only about 5% or less. If we look at data of any specific country, the situation is similar. According to the data of 2014, women's presence in corporate boards in Norway is 35.5%, France: 29.7%, UK: 22.8%, Australia: 19.2%, Germany: 18.5%, EU: 17.8%. Our two neighbours, China has 9.6% and India has 9.5%. In Japan, a developed country, the situation is even more disheartening with women making up only about 3.1% of corporate boards.

This means we are facing the same challenge in the world of work for decades.

- Women's trade union membership stands on average at 40 percent, yet women occupy only 15 percent of the top decision-making positions in their organisations.
- Women's labour force participation rates are stagnating at 26 percentage points lower than those of men.
- Women continue to predominate in informal, low quality, precarious and undervalued jobs.
- Women's average wages are between 4 and 36 percent less than those of men.
- Gender-based violence remains an all-too-tolerated feature of the workplace, with no comprehensive international legal standard to outlaw it.

A famous trade union leader of our time and former President of Brazil, Lula da Silva, once said, *"I will never tire from repeating my commitment to ensuring that every Brazilian can have breakfast, lunch, and supper every day."* He was so committed to launch his popular dream "Zero Hunger" and was successful to free about 40 million Brazilian from hunger in his 8 years term.

Learning from Lula, can we express our commitment to gender equality?

Recently, the ILO General Director and founder General Secretary of ITUC, Guy Ryder, asked members addressing a forum:

“Are Working Women better off today than 20 years ago?” Everyone in hall answered -“Yes!” He again asked, “Has progress met our expectations?” And everyone answered “No!”

He then said, “We cannot accept that current rate of change. It may take more than 70 years for women to achieve equal pay status with men.”

What can we learn from this?

While saying “Count Us In” we can also say, “it is being counted”. The question is “if women are counted, if they are taken seriously, then why can’t we feel the results?” Therefore, this question is for me and everyone present here today. Especially for those who are always calculating! “How are we calculating? What is our goal and timeframe to reach the target? Women are counted – why can’t we achieve results!”

Therefore, it is not sufficient to say, “Count Us In”. We need commitment. For example the UN had a theme two years ago- “A promise is a promise: Time for Action to end violence against women!”

So has it been eliminated?

We all know violence against women is getting all the more rampant and violent in nature. Look back at the news articles of the past month: the incidents reported are spine-chilling. Remember the incident where a teacher pulled out the hair of a 7-year-old girl because she did not do her homework! Just think if that little girl were yours – how would you feel? How do we feel when we hear that a father/grandfather who is the epitome of love and compassion for a child rapes his daughter/granddaughter?! How can we express our emotions? If a girl is studying with hope and enthusiasm for the future is suddenly attacked by acid by a random frivolous boy, how do we feel, how should we feel?⁴

Today I think it is appropriate for me to stress that it is late for us to fight against the ugly violence marching towards us and rekindle the slowly dying empathetic society. The fact reveals that generally all women are victims of violence and gender-based discrimination. Approximately 35% of women in all age groups are victims of violence or sexual harassment. Even if we consider just the cases filed in police stations every day, on an average, there are three women or girls are being raped. We can imagine how many countless more are suppressed! And, the perpetrators of such heinous crimes include fathers and grandfathers too!

It is the responsibility of every man to end the series of violence committed against our mothers, sisters and daughters. Gone are the days where women were advised to grow long nails and carry chilli powder to protect themselves. Now it is the turn of every man not to cross the line and stay within limits. It is the responsibility of every man to chain the mayhem of “machismo” promoted by patriarchy.⁵

Commenting on male psychology Sheila Rowbotham said, “Men will often admit other women are oppressed but not you.” This perspective is reflective of the shallow understanding of gender oppression. Why are there still such attitudes?

I feel women need to be aide in this venture. We understand that patriarchy is not only domination by men but is a tendency which is manifested by both men and women. Like in some cases, women become an enemy of women. Madeline Albright said “There is a special place in hell for women who don’t help other women.” In order to increase women’s participation as GEFONT did, we should focus on ‘equal participation not mere representation’. Women’s participation needs to be inclusive and proportional.

I would like to refer to Lula again. On his first day in the Presidential Palace, he said to his wife, “Look, we have reached here. If it were somebody rich in our palace, then people would not bother with what s/he did. People do not have trust in them! However, if we have made a single drawback,

our people who voted for us won't leave us. They trust us; and as they trust us, we should not let down their trust".

As a group, women are historically oppressed by society. Therefore their drawbacks can be overlooked. But I alert all my male colleagues that our minor mistake will also be penalised. Mind your behaviour!

Last year on March 8, the UN said - Equality for Women is Progress for All. But the state has failed to implement the landmark Parliamentary Declaration of May 30, 2006. The Social Security Fund Act, which was formulated by a tripartite agreement to introduce Social Security, is also not promulgated. Forge, valuation of works done by women, their work is further devaluated. Series of violence and harassment at workplaces and human trafficking are all testimony to the current challenges we face. The list can go on.⁶

Who will initiate? How to begin?

First, let us prepare and commit to bear our share of the burden! From our end, for this, we have stressed the theme of this year – Make it happen. Make it happen: the question is 'make what happen'?

The answer is ready--

As the state has committed, there should be the implementation of 33% women representation in all the bodies. Number is strength; therefore, there should be an increase of at least 5% women membership in trade unions. We should end gender based violence. Balance work and life. We may not be able to bring the number of violence against women to zero but we can adopt zero tolerance on violence against women!

Make it happen--

Earlier, we used to say that women have a right over her body. Now we have a slogan about her right to property and lineage. Therefore, GEFONT is on the side of the women's movement in the on-going debate

in the Constituent Assembly and Legislature-Parliament regarding the identification of a child in reference to *father "and" mother* or *father "or" mother* in this context.⁷

Here I remember a satirical remark of a sister in a newspaper – When a procession begins, women are pushed in front with the saying that they are brave and can face brute police force. And before the police arrives, if the chance comes to address corner meetings, men would say that women couldn't climb walls in *sari*- so let men give speeches! I don't know if this did happen. If so, then it was very wrong. Now we can't let it happen. We have a lot of brave daughters in our society, each and everyone is creative and courageous. Today I salute them all. We should be helping them to progress.

I would like to end my address with the theme of the UN for this year – “Empowering Women – Empowering Humanity: Picture it!”

Wishing you a happy International Working Women's Day, 8 March!

Context and Intended Meaning:

1. **Lost revolutionaries:** Contribution of women in the Nepal's labour movement is exemplary. Such brave name includes Nanda Nepal who was also known as *Ansanni Bajyai* during the Jute Mills protests of 1948, in Biratnagar. She was one of the frontline protesters of the movement. Debi Paswan was another brave woman who was always at the front of strikes and protests. Lahani Chaudhary was another famous woman revolutionary who led the movement against landlords in Dang in 1959.
2. **Acid attack:** Jeewan BK, a youth, attacked Sangita Magar and Sima Basnet with acid on 23 February 2015 when they were taking tuition classes at Jhocche, Kathmandu. The acid fully burnt Sangita's face, hands and thighs. Sima sustained less injuries compared to Sangita. Similar incident was happened at Baneshwar, Kathmandu, over a property dispute three years back.
3. **Human rights activist on TV show:** *Satya Mewa Jayate* is a popular TV show of an Indian TV channel. The show host, popular Indian Actor Amir Khan, invites experts from different background and facilitates discussion on contextual themes. Kamala Bhasin, renowned women rights activist was invited to one of the episodes to discuss the issues of gender inequality.
4. **Punishment for no reason:** It was the incident of 25 February 2015. Ghanashyam Giri, teacher of Creative Academy, Salyan district pulled Samiksha Rai, 7, a student of Class 1, by her hair for no reason. After her mother came to know about it, she took the matter to the school administration and demanded action against the teacher. The teacher felt sorry and beg a pardon for his action against Samiksha.
5. **Dust of chilly and long nails:** Nepali Congress Leader Yog Prasad Upadhyaya was the Minister for Home Affairs in the cabinet led by Krishna Prasad Bhattarai in 1990. A team of women led a delegation to him demanding special measures to stop violence against women. The Minister advised the team to take self defence measures to end violence. His advice was to carry dust of chilly with them and keep their nails long for self defence.

6. **Declaration of Parliament:** The then UML Parliamentarian Bidhya Devi Bhandari tabled a 'resolution of commitment' in the Parliament demanding equality between men and women. Major issues raised were at least one-third participation of women in all state bodies including the political parties, provision to get citizenship certificates of the children in the reference of their mothers too, annulment of all discriminatory clauses of the laws against women and end of violence against women. The resolution was adopted by the Parliament and it made the one-third representation of women mandatory in all state bodies, within political parties and other organisations.

7. **'And' or 'Or':** A heated discussion took place in the Constituent Assembly when the writing of a new constitution was in the final stage. The draft constitution had the provision to issue the citizenship certificate also in the reference of mother. The draft had mentioned "...in the reference of mother and father..." in the Clause related to Citizenship. Then the discussion was concentrated on 'and' demanding to replace it with 'or' because some opined that 'and' disregards mother. Finally 'and' was replaced with 'or' and the constitutional provision was drafted as '... mother or father...'



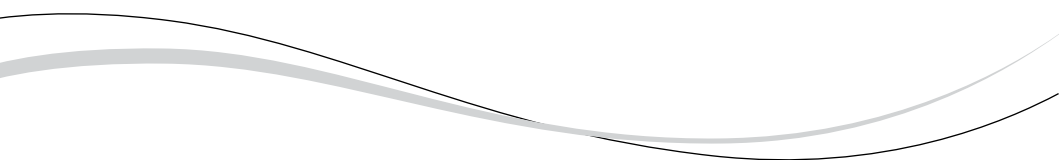
By and Large, Women are the Great 'Vacation-less' Class

Inaugural Address at the Fifth Working Women's Conference
Kathmandu Nepal, 08 March 2013

The heinous incidents of violence against women that took place in India in 2012 reflect the deeply rooted unequal gender behaviour of society.

The 'largest democracy' is mocked by the fact that a woman is raped every 14 minutes in India. A brave medical student who was gang-raped and abandoned by six culprits in a plying bus in Delhi is the latest inhumane and barbaric soot that has been smeared on the forehead of the largest democracy.

But, is our country more civilized in this matter? The news and reports loudly expose that even the complexion of Nepal is tainted with the blood of crimes and atrocities.



"If you want something said, ask man,
if you want something done, ask woman!"

I would like to present my opinion of the above statement of Margaret Thatcher, a female politician who has rarely impressed me. The conference, in ritual terms, is the continuation of the past but with the perspective of time, it is a remarkable step after the fourth National Women Workers' Conference. We had some enthusiasm and hope of getting the 'new constitution' during the Fourth National Conference but at present, we are skeptical about the role of the political parties in the days to come. At the Fourth National Congress, we had proposed an eleven-point agenda regarding the rights of women:

- Right of inheritance on the basis of identity
- Equal rights to citizenship
- Participation (33% to 50%): Equality and Inclusiveness
- Equality between sons and daughters for inheritance and parental properties
- Affirmative action for women's empowerment
- Reproductive rights
- Violence against women
- Women workers in National Women Commission
- Recognition of the informal work of women
- Social security
- Welfare state and social justice

We believe that the main message of the above points reflects the essence of the conference.

There is a saying, "By and large, mothers and housewives are the only workers who do not have regular time off. They are the great vacation-less class!"

Therefore, self-criticism is the main aspect of the Conference. We should evaluate our progress in the period. The achievement of the slogan of GEFONT on 'equality' should also be evaluated. We also should ponder over the ways we should move forward and be smarter than ever before. We also should be ready to review the gender policy being adopted by us, if needed. The drawbacks should be removed by realizing the necessity of the changed context.

"Given the fact that many thousands of female workers are active in history, it is vital for the trade unions to incorporate them into their movement." We still have to focus to evaluate the success of our work to materialise Clara Zetkin's statement of many years ago. GEFONT activists have been keeping an account of the success and failure of their work on International Women Workers' Day each year. For this, we have made a participatory gender audit in GEFONT. The Conference shall express its commitment to further incorporate the achievements of the examination and practically implement the suggestions. ¹

The second aspect is about 'Violence against Women'. The burning examples are the campaigns like 'Occupy Baluwataar' and 'Uprising one-thousand millions'. Let me elaborate an event in this context. ²

"It is in 1984 when I was only 22 that I was able to realise the zeal of a youth. I decided to adieu my parents to go abroad. My mom's doubt and her question, 'are you able to go abroad on your own?', still reverberates in my ears. I replied silently that I was not going to do something that nobody had ever done before. Then, I embarked to India for a month long visit.

At that time, E-mail and internet facilities were not enhanced like now. In other words, communication methods were not easily accessible. I travelled to various places in India with my friends using local buses and trains. India is large and diversified and I acquired so many experiences, some of which are really pungent, that are deeply rooted in my life. A youth woman like me was a 'Madam' for the Indians. In each and every journey by local bus or train, the men appeared to fondle my body intentionally

in an uncivilised manner. Though I could realise I was being abused, there was no situation to protest against it. Despite my knowledge of maltreatment, such incidents continued for months throughout my stay. In the beginning, I behaved as if I were did not know and was unaware of it. But gradually I adopted a habit that either I bowed down or turned my head in another direction when I see men, regardless of their age. The situation grew worse that even after I returned to Australia; I started turning my head down/other direction whenever I happened to see a man of Indian origin. Even today, if I suddenly meet any Indian man, my head either bows down or turns in another direction unknowingly."

This is the story of one of our friends, Alison Tate, who is also present in the Conference now. She is not only an ordinary Australian citizen but has also served for years as the foreign secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions and presently she is the Foreign Affairs Advisor to the Secretary General of the ITUC, which has 170.5 million members from 315 trade unions from 156 countries in the world. Academically, Tate is an economist, but has spent a long time contributing to the trade union movements to establish democracy in countries like Burma, Thailand and others. This anecdote shows that an oppressive system makes one a slave without caring for his/her strength and efficiency.

The heinous incidents of violence against women that took place in India in 2012 reflect the deeply rooted unequal gender behaviour of society. The 'largest democracy' is mocked by the fact that a woman is raped every 14 minutes in India. A brave medical student who was gang-raped and abandoned by six culprits in a plying bus in Delhi is the latest inhumane and barbaric soot that has been smeared on the forehead of the largest democracy.

But, is our country more civilized in this matter? The news and reports loudly expose that even the complexion of Nepal is tainted with the blood of crimes and atrocities. In the beginning of 2012, a crazy fanatic in Western Nepal hurled his two innocent daughters deep down the river at night and spread the rumor of his daughters being abducted. In the Central Region, a silly man slaughtered his three offspring mercilessly.

November of the year appeared as a curse. Twelve women were brutally killed in the course of 16 days of activism against gender-based violence campaign. One of the sisters who was forced to go abroad on her own for work as the country did not provide her with any work and food, was robbed, raped and insulted by the state itself when she returned home.

There is a long list of incidents that will cause us to shiver: “The father continually raped his own daughter, the lover butchered his own beloved, the husband sold his own wife, the son cruelly tortured and killed his own mother, the bride was brutally killed by the members of her own family, the parents immolated their daughter alive...” And so on.³

Therefore, the issue that the Conference wishes to stress is—how to curb violence against women in our society?

According to the statistics published by the UN Women this year, “about 50% of sexual violence in the world is targeted at girls under 16. The country where more than 600.3 million women exist does not yet consider domestic violence as a crime. More than 70% women have faced physical or sexual violence in one or the other way of their life. More than 60 million girls under 18 have to face early marriage (child marriage).”

Even the statistics of Nepal is quite alarming. The latest report published by the Office of the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers shows that about 35% of Nepali women have become the victim of violence. Yet, another report reveals that out of the total victims, 68 % of these women are of the working class. A public statistic shows that women are raped every 20 minutes in the last five months of 2012.

All these data help us to reach a conclusion that “Violence does not recognise caste, class, race, religion and nationality, but it does recognise gender.”

So, we shall formulate new a action plan in the favour of gender equality through this Conference and we shall form a Code of Conduct in order to protect working women from the potential violence within the world of work or within the family.

Gandhi Ji said, "Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacity; if by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior...if non violence is the law of our being, the future is with women."

Let me repeat the theme of the UN Women for this year- "A Promise Is a Promise: Time for Action to End Violence Against Women."

Wishing you the best on the International Women Workers' Day.

Thank you!

Context and Intended Meaning:

1. **Clara and 8 March:** Clara Zetkin is synonymous to 8 March. It was her who proposed to celebrate 8 March as International Workers Women's Day. She was a German Marxist theorist, activist, and advocate for women's rights. Until 1917, she was active in the Social Democratic Party of Germany, then she joined the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USPD) and its far-left wing, the Spartacist League; this later became the Communist Party of Germany (KPD), which she represented in the Reichstag during the Weimar Republic from 1920 to 1933. She had a strong belief in socialism and said it was only the socialist movement that would address the problem of women workers. She was deeply opposed to 'bourgeois feminism', which she claimed that it would divide the unity of working class; that feminism was the preserve of the upper and middle class!

2. **Uprising one-thousand millions:** The uprising one-thousand millions campaign was started from Nepal in October 2013 with the slogan 'Enough is enough; let's end violence!' The campaign aimed at mobilising one-thousand millions people worldwide. Altogether, 160 countries joined the campaign. Before it, an 'Occupy Baluwatar' campaign was also launched demanding an end to all kinds of violence against girls and women in Nepal. Baluwatar is the residential area of the Prime Minister of Nepal and the location was strategically selected for the campaign. Even the participants of Fifth Working Women's Conference organised by GEFONT extended their solidarity to it by joining the campaign.

3. **Increasing violence against women:** Violence against women was in the rise when 'Occupy Baluwatar' and other campaigns were taking place in Nepal. According WOREC, a local NGO, 174 women suffered violence in the month of January/February 2013. Of them, 75 were victims of domestic violence and 23 were the survivors of social violence. In the month of February alone, 41 cases of rape were reported where 7 women/girls suffered gang-rape. The number of rape cases was 37 in January.



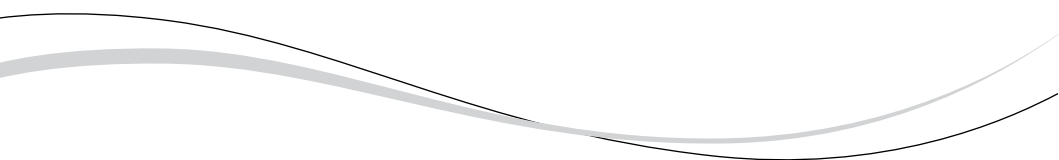
Youths must Join Politics

A Speech Delivered at the First Youth Worker Conference
National Assembly Hall, 25 February 2010

The main theme of the Fifth Congress of GEFONT was to transfer the baton of leadership to a new generation. The Congress had concluded that GEFONT had the involvement of three generations, and their unity would bring new life to the union movement. Direction by the elderly generation, leadership by the mature middle-aged and the mobility of the curious and enthusiastic young circle would be an exciting combination. To achieve this, a constitutional provision of a youth committee and its President being an ex-officio member of the National Executive Committee was made.

That was a time when the word 'youth' was seen as synonymous with YCL activists of the Maoists, notorious for violence, hooliganism, and unfair economic activities to be rich instantly.

Youths had to be educated against these absurdities, and prepared for national development. This speech was delivered taking these issues and contexts.



Dear Comrades,

Today, I feel like delivering a fiery speech. I feel like throwing fire and getting showered by your applauses and wow-wow. I feel like instructing you to set fire to factories and industries, and establish our own empire of terror that operates under our own rule.

Will I be giving you anything new by speaking violently? Haven't you listened to such fiery speeches a million times? Do fires help millions of our youths to realize their dreams? I doubt. Therefore, I would like to start with a mild tone and with the saga of historical milestones set by youths.

Youths have, historically, maintained a decisive role in each of Nepal's political transformations. Bhimsen Thapa was young when he led the patriotic struggle two hundred years ago. He was not just a leader; he was a second-to-none military commander. The founder of the humanist movement, Jayaprithvi Bahadur Sing, and the author of the well-known *Makaiko Kheti* (the cultivation of corn), Subba Krishna Lal, rose to prominence in their youth.

I went through the paper by UML Politburo Member Comrade Pradeep Gyawali: Youths in National Development: Realities, Challenges and Policies. He has brilliantly discussed these issues in the paper.

Gangalal Shrestha, one of the martyrs to fight the Rana regime, was just 22 when he was killed. BP Koirala was young when he founded Nepali Congress. So was Pushpalal when he established the Communist Party of Nepal in 1949. Thirbam Malla was a young martyr of 1950 revolution. When Shailaja Acharya waved a black flag before King Mahendra in 1961, she was young. So was Durgananda Jha when he was killed by the Panchayat regime. On 4 March 1973, Ram Nath Dahal, Netra Ghimire, Krishna Kuinkel, Narayan Shrestha and Biren Rajabanshi were murdered

by the dictatorial regime. All these martyrs were in their youth when killed.

Remember, all the founders of the then CPN (ML) were young. And it was the young population that led the movements of 1980 and 1990 to success. Youths were also the main force of the *Janaandolan* of 2006.

When Ratna Kumar Bantawa got martyrdom, he was young. Ram-Laxman were also killed young. The operators of the Maoist armed conflict were mainly youths.

Let's see internationally. The famous leaders of the day – Barack Obama, Tony Blair and Dmitry Medvedev – belong to the generation below fifty.

Since youths have successfully led all major political movements, they should be ready to take political leadership as well. Youths should not just dream to be doctors and engineers.

Let's look at our trade union movement. Man Mohan Adhikari and Girija Prasad Koirala were young when they led the movement of 1947. So were all leaders of trade union movements after 1950. The martyr of the 1973 Jute Mills movement – Khagendra Rai – was a youth. The founders of NIWU (Nepal Independent Workers Union) in 1979 and those of GEFONT (General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions) in 1989 were youths. In a word, all of us, the shakers and movers of change, are youths.

And, we still need youths today. Why?

It is because politics has to do with generations. The elderly generation brings the past to the present. It is the spokesperson of history that lives by a hoard of experience. The young generation is the present. It is you, the seed of the future of the movement, the generation of dreamers, a seedbed that nurturers our leaders and activists.

We are at a stage where the old structure has fallen apart, but the new one has yet to evolve. Transformation has at once raised sky-high expectations and has created a difficult dilemma: either transform the

expectations into reality overnight or let them be victims of frustration. This is wrong. Change should be seen as a process. We should make every effort to make sure the process is following a right direction.

Transformation is not possible overnight.

Nepali society is at the crossroads now, and our youths are at the receiving end. Instead of engaging them in critical thinking and logical reasoning, they are dragged into violence and use of force. There is a group of people bent on derailing the attention of youths. As such, youths are prevented from having access to knowledge, skills and capacity development schemes necessary for them to live a dignified life.

What comes in our mind when we speak of youths today? It is anything but a positive image, an image of a group of people engaged in hooliganism and violence.

The proletariat is our ideal class. However, the lumpenproletariat is a risk. Those hailing from the poor class but presenting in an unruly manner or the violent kids of the middle class belong to the lumpen lot. I urge you to stand for the dignity of the proletariat, and do not side with the lumpen lot even if you would get momentary benefits.

Do not even stare at them!

While approaching to the podium, I heard a young worker utter "dirty politics!" I would like to quote for you a dialogue from a famous Hindi film: *Nayak*. "If, like you, *Gandhijee* had preferred a government job, a bungalow and a beautiful wife to the politics, you middle class people would be cleaning the toilets of the British rulers even today."

I am not sure how perfect or correct this dialogue is, but I am sure you got my point.

I want to be very clear: If we do not want to be ruled by a fool, the young generation should join politics. I am aware our society has contradictions, and our dreams are divided along class lines. The dreams of those who have sufficient to eat are different from those who eat when food is available. The dream of former is to be a doctor and engineer, and go to Europe and America, whereas the dream of the latter involves foreign labour employment, cycle/rickshaw mending, plumbing and self-employment.¹

We are dividing our youths even in politics. We are either uttering a meaningless slogan of “youth participation” and promoting figurative leadership or engaging them in politics of violence.

Why aren't we talking about decent work and employment? Why aren't we debating the ways to generate employment within our country? Why aren't we empowering our youths with civic education? Why are we pushing our youths into the sink greed?

Who will answer these questions and who will explore solutions?

Martin Luther King (Jr) says, “Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle. And, so we must straighten our backs and work for our freedom. A man can't ride you unless your back is bent.”

Does change knock our doors every morning? It does not. As South Africans repeatedly say, socialism will not come on a plate. So are rights. We should grab them, using force, if needed. We should initiate and participate in making policies, rules and regulations for ourselves.

This youth worker conference is just the beginning to establish the labour-respecting young generation in our movement. And, GEFONT's Youth Committee is a new engine towards that motion.

I wish the conference a grand success!

Context and Intended Meaning:

1. In a society divided between the 'haves' and 'have-nots', psychology is formed based on the past of the elderly members of the family. The kids of a better off family develop a big dream. The dream of a child from a poor family centres around the capacity of their guardians. Just as they do not have access to income, property, power and opportunity, so they have a limited access to their dream. One cannot dream of something unfamiliar to them.

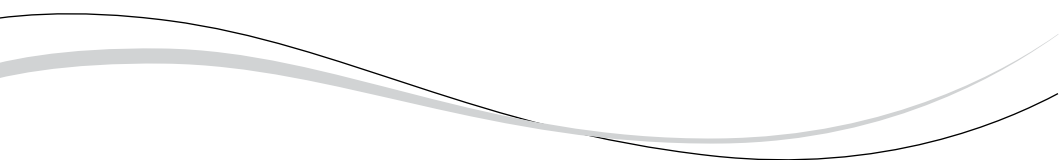


Foster Mothers in the Past are Now Compelled to Work as Surrogate Mums

Keynote Speech Delivered at the Fourth National Women Workers' Conference
Baneshwor, Kathmandu, 08 March 2010

In retrospect, our struggle was not easy and smooth. I feel that the fight against inherent wrongs is more challenging than the fight against a visible enemy. This is the essence of our struggle for about three decades now. In our understanding, those who hold power, be it political or in the community, never give it up easily and at their free will.

Change in power relations has never come through a smooth road. We must travel through a murky road to achieve change, and we must understand the fight between the groups of men and women for their rights in this context.



“The overthrow of mother’s right was the world historic defeat of the female sex. The man took command in the home also; the woman was degraded and reduced to servitude; she becomes the slave of his lust and a mere instrument for the production of children.”

I would like to share my thoughts on these feelings of famous philosopher Frederick Engels. On this auspicious occasion of the International Working Women’s Day, I sincerely denounce all forms of abomination imposed for whatever reasons upon women by men.

In the initial days of GEFONT, the presence of women in the policy making structures was almost zero. Realising the importance of women’s representation, we have ardently raised the agenda of women’s presence in all committees. We reviewed the history of the union movement in other countries, studied their experiences and practices, and discerned that women’s entry in the union was prohibited in some countries while in some others there were only women’s unions rather than of both men and women. The KWWU of Korea, KAD and practice of Denmark, SEWA of India etc are some examples in point.

Then we questioned ourselves: what are these all for? For the number! And, what are the numbers for? Is it for equal rights, decent work and a dignified life?

Then we developed our opinion: men-women partnership. But what is this partnership for?

Then we said it is for ‘equality’. But by ‘equality’ we do not mean that men and women are the same. What we mean is that women remain like women and men like men.

The role inherited by men should be exercised by men and here the women should support them to exercise their right. Likewise the role inherited by women is to be women and there, the men should support women to exercise their rights.

We thought that our workplaces are the tool for capital development where workers are exploited using all means available, foul or fair: we see class-based exploitation and gender-based social oppression!

Then we reached the conclusion that such customs are socially constructed and practised, and brought division between women as the oppressed and men as the oppressor, and we called it patriarchy. Those who say ' patriarchy reigns society' be they men or women, we called them 'feminists'!

The notion "we are male, you are female" creates division between men and women in workplace and weakens them to fight against economic exploitation. So we accentuate patriarchy as the common enemy of men and women.

We accept that just as capitalism propagates a class-based society through reinvention of production so does patriarchy in a male dominated society. This kind of power relation exists at home, in the family, society and the state, and the result is a discriminatory and repulsive society.

Admitting this fact, we for the first time formed a Central Women Workers Department (CWWD) in 1992 aiming to break the "culture of silence" of women who have been enduring oppression for centuries.

Paulo Freire has said, change is not possible without sitting the oppressed and the oppressor together and listening to each other. We therefore drafted a policy with a provision that there would be 25 percent women's participation in each men related programme and vice versa. We prioritised as number one the physical presence of women in

decision-making levels of the organisation and provisioned in the policy to invest in capacity building of women members.¹

We reemphasised that each man and woman member should not only be present in the committee but also actively participate in it. Then we coined a slogan: 'Not only representation, but equal participation!'

With the passing of days, we could materialise the slogan and the result is this conference. Today as I stand before you, I proudly admit that GEFONT is one of the organisations to ensure 33 percent women's representation in its structures. And this is the provision as set by the reinstated House of Representatives to ensure women's participation in all state structures.

We assertively claim that whatever we have achieved in the last two decades in the sector of women in general and women workers in particular, the contribution of our joint struggle has always remained significant. At a time when we were voicing women's issues, our labour market was completely atrocious in terms of gender equality. On the one hand, the income generating activities supposed to be under the control of women in developing and developed countries was completely controlled by men workers in our country, and on the other, informal sector works which was not recognised as income generating activities was like a sole responsibility of women. There was an incomparable gap between the men and women workers in terms of wages, opportunity and facility.

There was a gulf of discrimination between sons and daughters even in access to basic facilities like health and education. The sons were granted opportunities including right to inheritance and clan while the daughters were deprived of it. Even the participation of women in politics was zilch.

All these incidents may sound like a parable for us now. But they were reality some 20 years ago. At this moment, as I am speaking here in this conference, I recall *Swasti Bajracharya*, the first Coordinator of CWWD,

and would like to thank her. 'Comrade, the future generation will always bear in mind your contribution to our movement!'

I would like to express my gratitude to Honourable Defence Minister, *Bidhya Bhandari*, for her leading role as the Coordinator of CWWD even in such a critical situation when the whole nation was mourning the demise of People's Leader Madan Bhadari. 'Comrade, we owe you for your leadership role and mobilisation of women keeping hope alive in such a crucial period.'²

As I am giving a brief introduction about this conference, I must reemphasise that the National Women Workers' Conference is aimed at changing unequal and inhumane behaviour persistent in society, workplaces and at home within the 'realm of GEFONT'. We have already organised three such conferences in the past aiming at addressing labour issues, development and revision of labour policies, programmes and activities. These conferences have given abundant input and suggestions to the development of GEFONT's Gender Policy in implementation now.

In retrospect, our struggle was not easy and smooth. I feel that the fight against inherent wrongs is more challenging than the fight against a visible enemy. This is the essence of our struggle for about three decades now. In our understanding, those who hold power, be it political or in the community, never give it up easily and at their free will. Change in power relations has never come through a smooth road. We must travel through a murky road to achieve change, and we must understand the fight between the groups of men and women for their rights in this context.

As the President of GEFONT, I must make it clear that the wrongs yet to transform within us are the hurdles to equitable workplace and society. On this ground, we have said that our struggle continues.

If so, what will the focused agenda of our movement be? First, we must internalise the changing context and patterns of employment owing to the globalisation –

- Women have no control over their body even today. The women who used to care for the children of aristocrats as foster mothers in the past are now compelled to work as surrogate mums. They are compelled to bear the brunt of rearing children even of those unknown but are aligned to provide them love and affection. As Karl Marx said, this is the example of alienation of the century. We must also link domestic violence to this context and continue our struggle against this inhumane crime against women.
- Our homes and villages are going to be 'no men' places. All men are migrating to earn in foreign lands. As a result, the women are overburdened by double works both as bread-winners and as carers of the family. This way they are doubly victimised and are pushed to a further deteriorating condition.
- Our society is gradually deconstructing conventional social structures. The joint family is changing into a nuclear one. The women of this generation and culture are entering the labour markets. They are making their presence felt in unconventional jobs. To dump existing discriminations, we have to think from a new height - how can we bring balance between work and life!
- The representation of women has reached to 33 percent from zero. This is the time to think how to sustain it and how to contribute to increase their capacity. If there are more women in the committees and fewer members in the organisational structures, it may create a risk of imbalance within the organisation. So how can we organise women in the world of work under the union movement?

Our conference will dwell upon and discuss these pertinent issues until the next day. It will also revisit the existing Gender Policy of GEFONT to fit it with the current context.

The conference will seriously discuss how to institutionalise the achievements made to date, thereby making the slogan of 'equal rights,

decent work and dignified life' a reality. It will discuss the agenda to make the new constitution friendly to women workers.

As the President, I wish the conference a grand success and best wishes on the occasion of 100th International Working Women's Day to all those present here!

Context and Intended Meaning:

1. **Culture of silence:** Change is not only possible, but inevitable. As said by Paulo Freire, power, prestige and property of the oppressors rest on the oppressed. When the oppressed are organised and they revolt against the oppressors, they will make the oppressors bite the dust. Therefore, the oppressed need to be aware of, alert and organised to challenge the oppressors. As Freire puts, 'the oppressors cannot oppress the oppressed without the latter's support to the former. Human existence is not possible in silence; therefore, the oppressed must break the culture of silence! Oppressors will never transform by themselves. To transform them, the oppressed should continue their struggle based on their consciousness.' He says the people should find themselves in the leaders and the leaders should find themselves in people. This popular saying of Freire was used by GEFONT in its education programme in the middle of the nineties. To encourage women workers to speak up, GEFONT asked them to break the culture of silence and come fore to lead the struggle for freedom and justice!

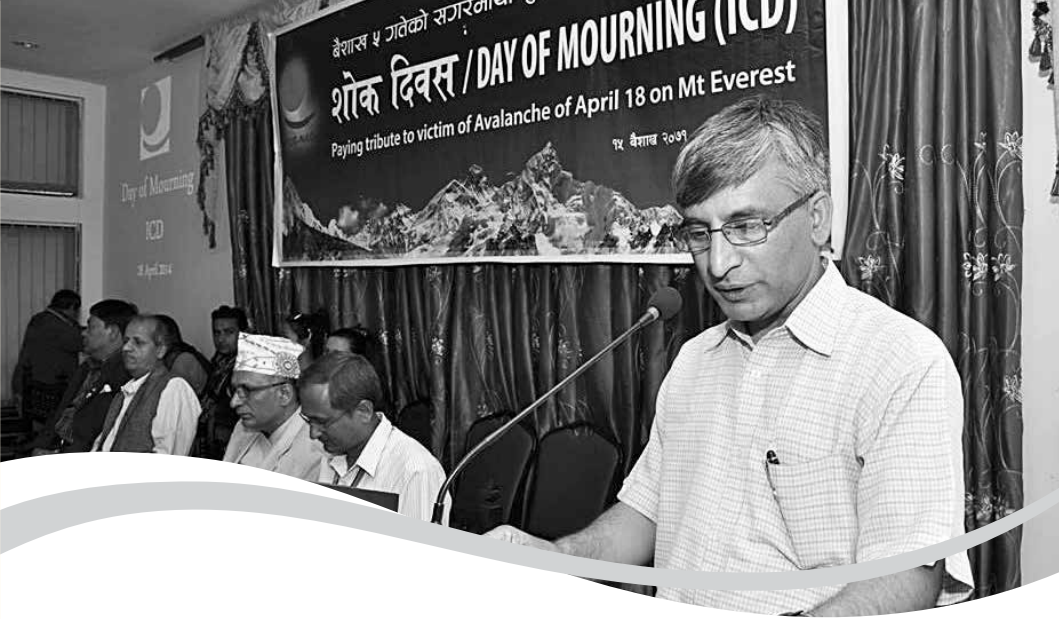
2. **CWWD: an organic special provision:** GEFONT realised that women committees formed by the trade unions in different countries were not able to generate heat to promote women's participation in the trade union movement. Therefore, GEFONT formed a Central Women Workers Department (CWWD) in 1992 to carry forward both the women's movement and the trade union movement to safeguard the women workers' rights. Shwasti Bajracharya was the founding Coordinator of the Department. Bidhya Devi Bhandari, the incumbent President of Nepal, was the Coordinator of the CWWD after Shwasti. Bina Shrestha succeeded Bidhya, and Goma Acharya is coordinating it now. At present, the CWWD has been renamed as the Central Women Committee, a special department of GEFONT.

POLITICS
AND POLICY ISSUES









April 28: Dedicated to Those Who Died and are Injured in Workplaces

Keynote Speech at the International Commemoration Day for the Dead and Injured
Hotel Hardik, Kathmandu, 28 April 2014

The Nepali trade union movement came to know the importance of 28th April very late. It took us for some time to make the trade union leaders and workers understand that 28th April was the Day to remember all workers who lost their lives and sustained injuries in accidents when they were on duties. Right before 28 April 2014, Nepal lost 16 renowned mountaineers in the avalanche of Mount Everest. GEFONT lost a committed trade union leader in the accident.

At a time when all trade unionists were in grief, GEFONT together with other ITUC affiliates in Nepal organised a Condolence Meeting on 28th April to remember the deceased ones and extend condolences to the bereaved families. The meeting was utilised as a forum also to sensitise the audience about the significance of the Day. The speech was delivered on the occasion.

Guests, Colleagues and Dear Audience,

Hundreds of thousands of workers have become victims of workplace accidents in the world. Thousands have died due to occupational diseases. To remember and pay homage to them, the world trade union movement observes the 28th of April as the International Workers Memorial Day.

We are deserting our village-communities for work. And in return, we get back three dead bodies on average per day. A family of a worker is always under stress and strain that their beloved might be the next to suffer. And the suffering can be a physical loss, psychological damage, sexual violence and cheating. ¹

Today, we mourn those who have died while serving our society. For years, we have been gathering and organizing events this day to raise awareness about occupational diseases and victims. At the mercy of the media, we are sharing our concerns and issues with the people at large.

Initially, our efforts were directed at the workers in the industrial world. When industries started to die and our colleagues began to emerge in the construction sector, our focus also expanded.

We then started to talk about those dying in the Gulf of parching heat, but were not that mindful of those toiling at home and leading a risky life due to cold and hazardous occupations.

We talked about those who have the possibility of returning home, but did not discuss those whose occupation requires them to consider that each meal with family members before they set out for work could be their 'last supper'. The neglected are the workers in the mountaineering occupation in the Himalayan region of our country. No, the '28th April'

to date has not spared a thought for them in a true sense. We probably thought we should cry for those who died due to mechanical faults at work, or those who perished under a pile of earth while digging a tunnel. However, we did not know what we should do when a worker is swept to death by an avalanche. We became deeply emotional when we saw burns or chemical injuries, but remained motionless when we saw frostbitten limbs.

If we look at the death toll from mountaineering accidents for the last 150 years, hundreds are found to have perished not because of their own fault, but because of the lust for money of those who make decisions. According to the International Labour Organization, everyday 850,000 workers sustain injuries at workplaces. Experts estimate this number could be over a million; and there are the silent deaths of more than 107,000 workers a year due to asbestos exposure.

We, Nepali, cry when we hear others dying, and publish our condolences. But we remain mum and careless when our own neighbours meet a fatal death.

- In 1985, there was the leakage of gas in Bhopal, India. Even the government statistics put the death toll at 3,785. We cried when we heard of the incident. We spoke up for their rights. But we did not show any concern at the happenings at the fatal Union Carbide subsidiary – Nepal Battery – at the border of the Balaju Industrial District in Kathmandu, which is close to our eyes. Not only were we unconcerned, we even scolded the workers for voicing their rights. Our government was seemingly worried about the factory moving out of the country. The life and death of its citizen were secondary.²
- After a year, Chernobyl burst. We were deeply shocked and worried about the Ukrainians. As for our people, however, we baton-charged them when they demanded that radiated milk should not be distributed.³

- A toy-producing factory - Kader - caught fire in Thailand claiming the lives of over 180 workers. In 2012, 289 persons died of at Ali Enterprise Garments in Karachi, Pakistan. Last year on April 24, 1,138 workers were killed when a Rana Plaza collapsed in Bangladesh, resulting also in more than 2,500 injured. We were sorry for these workers. But we remained emotionless when dozens of Nepalis were killed at a 'Crazy Cap' factory in Chakupat, Lalitpur a few years ago.
- Just two days ago, on 26th of April 2014, 16 of our colleagues were buried in a tunnel in the Upper Madi Hydro Project in Kaski. After 16 hours, 13 of them were rescued. But we failed to save the life of the remaining three - Sujan Gurung, Nagendra Tamang and Arjun Tamang.

Such cases abound. Many are yet to be named, and counted. They relate not only to one sector, but many. Those bent on money-making do not take workers health and security into consideration. They just focus on money. We are also biased. We blame drivers and assistants for road accidents that are a daily occurrence, but do not see the fault of greedy public transport-owners and operators who force a driver to drive continuously for 14/15 hours a day on bumpy roads to save a few thousand rupees.

It has been 92 years since record keeping began of accidents related to Mount Everest expeditions. A total of 104 Nepali high altitude workers have been killed on Mt Everest since 1922. According to a news article from the Nepali Times, percentage of deaths by nationality in avalanches between 1950 and 2009 is 46.4% Nepalis and 28.8% foreigners. The death rate for Nepali high altitude workers on Everest between 2004 and now is 12 times higher than the death rate for US military personnel deployed in Iraq from 2003 to 2007.

Still we are silent.

Our society is amazingly tight-lipped, senseless and insensitive. To break this silence and senselessness, this programme has been organised jointly by three Nepali National Centre of trade unions affiliated with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). We hope this event will move those pretending to remain unaware and force them to open their eyes.

We wish to dedicate this 28th April to those colleagues forced to take up the hazardous work in the high mountainous region; hence the discussion on “Workers in Difficult Professions”.

I know little about mountaineering, expeditions and related areas. What I am trying to say may thus be incomplete or not fully relevant to the core of the topic we are discussing.

According to Apa Sherpa, “Sherpa climbers are at risk from the moment they decide to go for an expedition. They fill up insurance forms with heavy hearts. Some of them literally weep while doing so not knowing whether they will return home alive. They put their lives at stake from that very moment.”⁴

Troubles have multiplied in recent years because of climate change effects as well. Earlier, icefalls would form into pyramid shape so the climbers would easily notice them. Now the icefalls remain flat shaped and they keep changing patterns, and even moving. Crevasses open and close now and then; sometimes burying whole stretches of climbing ropes and ladders (Interview, Republica: 2014/4/24).“

Yesterday, I saw some climbing footage filed by Dorje Khatri in the GEFONT archive. A worker colleague in the footage is heard singing a popular song-“where is this life taking me!” while readying heavy luggage for the climb. My body shook while listening to the line. Just above him is the Himalaya shining brightly, very attractive to see, but equally risky to touch! Some of our worker colleagues are seen to serve food to clients, others are seen to help them fix their belts and prepare ropes. There is a game-like scenario. Perhaps our colleagues are tossing

to decide who makes the first move towards the dangerous journey. Then, the colleagues are found to fix ropes, hang from the rope to make sure there is no risk and guide the clients toward the destination. Tired of difficult walk and panting, the colleagues take rest on the heaps of ice, at 6,300 meters. But their mind is still focused on the remaining bit of the journey. They do not think beyond their work.

I recognised the voice, and the speaker. It is Dorje Khatri, the Vice President of GEFONT affiliate, UNITRAV, who climbed Mount Everest nine times, carrying flags of different countries and agencies. He wished to bring the flag of workers as well – arguing that there would be no one except workers to carry their flags, and he would do so. He was permitted, and brought the flag of GEFONT, its affiliates, ITUC and GUFs atop Everest. It is through Dorje Khatri that our flags reached Mount Everest.

A day before his departure to Everest Summit of this spring session, he came to my office at GEFONT with his youngest daughter. I still remember what he said: “Comrade, this is my last trip to Mt Everest. Already living a second life (he nearly perished in an accident in one of his previous expedition last year in Mt Himlung), I wish to work with you for the rights of workers upon my return from this trip.”⁵

I had no doubt that Dorje would defeat all the difficulties and return safely as he did in the past. Unfortunately, he left us along with a dozen other colleagues with the highest level of competence in the climbing profession. What a coincidence! One of our colleagues died in the Spring avalanche of 1922 was Dorje Sherpa. He was killed at the height of 6,800 meters. This time, after 92 years, we lost another colleague Dorje Khatri at the height of 5,800 meters.

Dorje Khatri is not only known to us; he is known all over the world. Sister Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation, writes about the death of Dorje Khatri in a personal note to me: “We share your sadness. He was a beautiful human being and while he died on his beloved mountain it is tragic that you have lost him. ... Our thoughts are with you!”

Similarly, Noriyuki Suzuki, the General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation-Asia Pacific region, said the following about our Dorje: “He is our hero and we will remember him and his courage.” Frances O’Grady the General Secretary of TUC- UK adds: “We will remember his wonderful contribution.”

The whole world has been weeping at the loss of these heroes, not just their family members. What reverberates behind these accidents is the clarion call that our society should not just confine itself to the pain and misery of cities and industrial sectors. It should also open its eyes and ears to the pains of the communities in high mountain regions where people are forced to depend on the earning of three months to eke out a living for the rest of the year.

On behalf the entire worker forces and Nepali trade union movement, we wish to pay our deepest tributes to Mingma Nuru Sherpa, Dorje Sherpa, Ang Chhiri Sherpa, Nima Sherpa, Phurba Onglyang Sherpa, Lakpa Tenjing Sherpa, Chhiring Ongchhu Sherpa, Dorji Khatri Sherpa, Dorjee Sherpa, Phur Temba Sherpa, Pasang Karma Sherpa, Asman Tamang, and Ang Kaji Sherpa.

Our heartfelt sympathies are with you all, the family members left behind. We can show the importance of these heroes to the family members. We also express our deepest sympathies to the families of our three colleagues – Ash Bahadur Gurung, Pemba Tenji Sherpa and Tenjing Chhotar Sherpa – who are still missing in the snows.

Context and Intended Meaning:

1. **Story of Qatar:** The chronicle below makes clear how the migrant workers are living their lives in Qatar. This narrative is prepared based on the information collected during our visit to Salaiya Labour Camp in Doha, Qatar.

You have seen the workplace. It takes two hours to reach there from this camp if we go by bus. We, 18 workers, have to use the same toilet. Why we ran as soon as we got off the bus was to reach the toilet first so that we had not to wait in a queue for a long. We always have to wait in a queue to use toilet and to fetch water from tap. We, more than 100 workers, have to wait for our turns to prepare dinner in an open kitchen. How can it be a dinner; it's just a name. We get a small cup of rice, cook it and divide the same for dinner and lunch!

It will be 10 pm by the time we finish 'dinner' and go to bed. But often, we have to spend sleepless nights because of the disturbance of drunkards and out-of-tune midnight 'musicians'! We have to get up at 4 am. If we are late, we have to wait for toilet for a long and it may result for us in missing the bus to workplace. If we miss the bus, we miss the work and the wages of the day. Who knows if we miss the job forever if we are not on time there? Every day we have to reach the workplace at 8 am, do the same manual work by the same speed and drag our lives helplessly. Even our colleagues have to go through such pangs. Heard that they have to share the same bed in some camps and they can use it only when their turn comes.

2. **Terrible Bhopal Case:** on 2-3 December 1984, a big human casualty was reported because of chemical gas leakage at Union Carbide India Limited in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. Around 500,000 people were affected from it. The State Government made it public in 2006 that 3,787 people lost their lives and 558,125 sustained injuries in the accident. It was one of the worst largest industrial accidents in the world.

The Management of Nepal Battery Factory, a Nepal subsidiary of Union Carbide India Ltd, did not heed to the demand of workers for their health and safety. The Management did not seem serious about human safety and issues of equality at workplace. So the workers organised strike

continuously for 222 days. The Management was not ready to address the issues of discriminations between Nepali and Indian workers. As a result the factory was shut down for ever.

3. **Chernobyl and Milk Case:** Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant established near the city of Pripjat of Ukraine Republic of the then USSR was blasted on 26 April 1986 claiming the lives of 57 people on the spot and affecting many others. More than 4,000 people suffered permanent cancer and lost their lives; where 596,000 others were badly affected from the radiation it created. Nepal also affected from it. Ignoring the effect, the then government imported the dust milk full of radiation and if it was distributed, many Nepali would suffer the loss of lives. So workers and students protested against the import demanding a ban on it. But the government resorted to arrest the protesters and jail them.
4. **Super Sherpa Apa:** Apa Sherpa also known as Super Sherpa successfully caressed the Mount Everest for the first time on 10 May 1990. By the time May 2011, he successfully climbed the Everest for 21 times and made a record of successful mountaineer who climbed the Mount Everest for many times.
5. **Excellent Dorje Khatri, Excellent Fuku Lhamu:** An International Award has been established in the name of Dorje Khatri posthumously. The prize is named as Dorje Khatri Award. In 2014, the Award was provided to the family of Edwin Chota, an Asheninka indigenous person who was killed due to his work in the struggle for land rights and against illegal logging around the Peru/Brazil border. The 2015 Award was conferred on the ITUC Philippines affiliates TUCP, FFW, SENTRO, KMU for their extraordinary commitment to the twin objectives of climate action and workers' rights.

Phupu Lhamu Khatri, the youngest daughter of Dorje, followed the footprint of her father. She joined judo game with the aim to 'fulfill (her) father's dream'. She was the national player to participate in South Asian Games in 2016 and win the gold medal for the country.



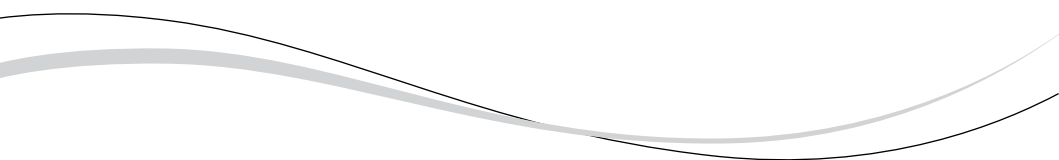
Respect the Rights of All Migrants and Promote Legal and Orderly Labour Migration

Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the General Assembly High-Level Dialogue on
International Migration and Development
UN Conference Centre, Bangkok, Thailand, 29 May 2013

GEFONT, as one of the leading trade union centres in the country, has initially started to address this issue beyond India from 1994 onwards. It started by cooperating with migrant workers in South Korea, who in those days were victims of industrial accidents, and of the Hundi (illegal money carriers).

Our first attempt was to establish a formal link with the unions in the country of destination, convincing them that we are not job snatchers! An agreement was reached where the migrant workers would be members of the union concerned and act as the members of the union. They will seek similar support and solidarity as the Korean members.

By establishing the GEFONT support group, we gear up the process!



*Mr Chair, Moderators, Co-panellists
Distinguished Delegates!*

“We are the global citizens!”

These days Nepalis proudly exchange such statements citing that in every corner of the world, one can encounter Nepali nationals! Considering Nepal's link to business through the Silk road (500 BCE), intellectuals claim that there is a long history of Nepali migration. However, many historians refer to 1815; the year Nepal made a pact with British-India, which facilitated Nepali recruitment in the Ghurkha Army nearly 200 years back as the start of the Nepali migrant worker experience. The continuation of this process has now meant that Nepali workers have reached countries from Afghanistan to Zambia as the approved destinations of labour by the Government of Nepal.

The uniqueness of Nepal is that it is a country of origin along with a destination for some of the neighbouring countries as well. Nepal sells its labour to as many as 108 countries and it has its opened door for importing labour from neighbouring countries, specially India.

More than 1/4th Nepali households are linked to out-country migration and they share remittances not less than 23% of GDP.

From an agro-based subsistence economy to the present day post-peasant nature, Nepal is a transitional economy, where big herds of workers have come out from the agriculture sector searching new jobs. However in the absence of regular employment in industry as of 20th century's Europe, a large number of workforces is at crossroads and generally trapped in precarious jobs.

Nepali labour market is largely mismatched. There is a scarcity of skilled human resources to run business as usual, but on-an-average 30% (considering all figures indicated as labour under utilisation) is unemployed.

Tracking the data of the last 10 months of the on-going fiscal year, the number of Nepali who migrated to various countries for employment is 357, 707! At its lowest, it was 25,167 in October and at its highest, it was 41,640 in March-April 2013. This is up by 14% compared to the same period of last year! A rough estimate is that every year, Nepal welcomes 400,000 job seekers; and this figure is equal to the total number of out-country migration.

Apart from India, official figures reveal that there are around three million Nepali emigrants in various countries. The major destinations are Malaysia and GCC countries (big numbers are in Qatar, Saudi Arabia). There are four categories of destination: India (for the extremely poor); Malaysia and Gulf countries (for those who have small collateral), South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong and Israel (for the educated who have high school and above qualifications) and Japan, Australia, Europe and North America (for the middle class and sufficiently educated).

Nepal has been forced to even to welcome refugees from Tibet, Bhutan and even some of the African countries.

Nepal's labour migration is terribly blurred with human trafficking. Misusing the open border with India, the traffickers are using Indian land for this crime. They are creating a lot of trouble providing fake Nepali passports to Indians, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, and Bhutanese Nationals!

Chair,

Till 1985, Nepal didn't have a foreign employment policy. This year, an act called the Foreign Employment Act is introduced aiming to control, manage and maintain Nepal's economic interest. It is the first legal document to address the migration of Nepalis beyond India. Entering

the democratic helm after 1990, and embracing a market-led economic policy, Nepali began to migrate various countries for employment. It encourages policy makers to introduce a number of legal instruments, with some are directly related to foreign employment and some others are indirect.

A summary of the instruments can be summarised as following:

Foreign Employment Acts	Other National Instruments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment Act 1985 • Foreign Employment (First Amendment) • Foreign Employment (Second Amendment) Act 1998 • Foreign Employment Rules 1999 • Foreign Employment Act 2007 • Foreign Employment Rules 2008 • Foreign Employment Policy 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Interim Constitution 2007 • Labour Act 1992 • National Labour Policy 1999 • Labour and Employment Policy 2005 • Trade Union Act 1992 • Children Act 1992 • Immigration Act 1992 • Passports Act 1967 • Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 2000 • Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act 2007 • Nepal Citizenship Act 2006 • Non-Resident Nepali Act 2008

The latest one is the Foreign Employment Act 2007; which is made to amend and consolidate laws relating to foreign employment. With the involvement of various actors and stakeholders, particularly the trade unions, this Act in many ways embraces a rights-based approach.

- **Obligation of the government:** it directs government to resolve any problems
- **Special priorities and reservation:** to women, Dalit, indigenous nationalities, oppressed groups, victims of natural calamities and people from remote areas
- **Prohibition:** minors under the age of 18 and the women below 30 years of age in GCC countries (though perhaps with

good intention, latter tends to be discriminatory through a gender-perspective)

- **Power to specify remuneration, service charge and promotional cost-** fixes minimum wage, visa fees, miscellaneous expenses made within and outside the country
- **Training:** compulsory pre-departure training through licensed training providing institutions
- **Insurance:** insurance equivalent to at least NRs 500,000 is made mandatory for recruiting agencies
- **Labour Desk:** directive to the Government to establish a labour desk at the international airport
- **Use of National Airport:** to avoid trafficking of women specially
- **Labour Attaché:** the provision to establish a labour attaché in the country where more than 5000 Nepalis are employed
- **Foreign employment welfare fund:** a welfare fund establishes under the foreign employment promotion board to ensure social security and welfare of workers and their families
- **Foreign employment tribunal:** aiming to settle cases other than those punishable by the Department
- **Foreign Employment Promotion Board:** to promote safe and dignified foreign employment

Bilateral instruments and regulating Nepal's labour migration

1. **India-** 31 July 1950- treaty
2. **Qatar-** 21 April 2005- Labour Agreement
3. **UAE-** 3 July, 2007- MOU
4. **South Korea-** 23 July, 2007- MOU
5. **Bahrain-** 29 April, 2008- MOU
6. **Japan-**2009- Letter of Exchange

These agreements and all MoU have covered recruitment, contracts, remittance, dispute settlement, and monitoring and implementation process. However, the MoU with Korea has added the sending fee, advertisement, Korean language training, process of selection of job seekers, and preliminary education as well.

The unfortunate part is that the major chunk of remittance (76%) earned by migrant labour is used on consumption of goods.

Chair,

GEFONT, as one of the leading trade union centres in the country, has initially started to address this issue beyond India from 1994 onwards. It started by cooperating with migrant workers in South Korea, who in those days were victims of industrial accidents, and of the Hundi (illegal money carriers). Our first attempt was to establish a formal link with the unions in the country of destination, convincing them that we are not job snatchers! An agreement was reached where the migrant workers would be members of the union concerned and act as the members of the union. They will seek similar support and solidarity as the Korean members. By establishing the GEFONT support group, we gear up the process!

In the country, we began our work by asking for a safe money transfer process through the formal financial channels. At a time when the word 'remittance' was unfamiliar in Nepal, GEFONT advocated it and challenged those policy makers who were arguing that was impossible. Asking for a foreign employment policy and devising possible ways to counter manipulations, we lobbied from the field to parliament and the planning commission.

Now we can proudly state that our efforts are bearing fruit. Let me summarise our efforts as following:

- **Korea** - MoU with KCTU. This Migrant Trade Union now covers all migrant workers, including Nepalis. One organiser from GEFONT is based in Seoul, supported by KCTU.

- **Malaysia** - MoU with MTUC, where one organiser from GEFONT is working, supported by GUFs specially **BWI, UNI, PSI**. The MTUC, GUFs, GEFONT and Indonesian Trade Union have signed an MOU to operate an SMS Help Centre for Nepali and all other migrant workers of different nationalities. The construction sector federations of GEFONT and MTUC have also reached an Agreement to work in cooperation.
- **Hong Kong** - With working relations with HKCTU, there are two workers federations of Nepali migrant workers in action. They have been working as affiliates of HKCTU- one is the federation of Nepali women domestic workers and the other is Nepali construction workers.
- **Lebanon – The** Agreement among **KAFA** Lebanon, **ASI** London and GEFONT for Nepali domestic migrant workers has been in place from 2011.
- **GCC country** - GEFONT has made an MOU with **KTUF** in Kuwait and **GFBTU** in Bahrain. We are also the part of the Qatar campaign with ITUC and GUF.

Through the Multi Actor Coordination cooperation, we are witnessing positive results on the issues such as

- Minimising deception
- Timely and effectively rescues
- Reduction of incidents of forced labour traps and Bondage traps
- Minimisation of mental disorders, unexpected deaths due to working and living conditions and suicides

Key message

- **Implement rights-based and gender-sensitive policies and programmes:** Governments, in consultation with migrants, trade unions, and diverse CBOs, should develop and implement a rights-based and gender-sensitive policies and programmes ensuring

the right to self organisation and collective bargaining, equal pay, access to social security, compensation for work related accidents and injuries, employment opportunities, and promoting equal treatment and non-discrimination. Governments should sign and implement transparent and accessible bilateral agreements that build on international standards for the protection of the rights of all migrant workers, with strict monitoring and implementation mechanisms. Such bilateral agreements should include provisions for the portability of pensions and the full range of social protection mechanisms.

- **Focus to promote Decent Work Agenda:** The High Level Dialogues (HLD) must focus on promoting decent work for migrant and local workers alike. This is the only way to create shared prosperity, reduce inequalities, and dampen xenophobia. The decent work agenda must underpin all migration policies and programmes. It should be made part of the employment contract.
- **Labour inspection and monitoring system** is needed in order to make agreements legally eligible to be challenged in Courts of both countries. It will be helpful in making the recruitment system transparent and ethically binding with an agreed code of conduct. It will further address the issue of detention and standard migrants and help us find alternatives to this. The HLD must give the UN organisations, especially the ILO and OHCHR, key roles in the governance architecture and place migration debates, policies and programmes within the UN Framework. The GFMD should be put under the ambit of the UN so that it becomes more accountable and transparent, and adheres to and builds on the existing human rights frameworks and obligations.

Thank you!

२०६९ कार्तिक २७ गते

युक्त ट्रेड यूनियन समन्वय केन्द्र

JTUCC

राष्ट्रिय सभा गृह, काठमाण्डौ



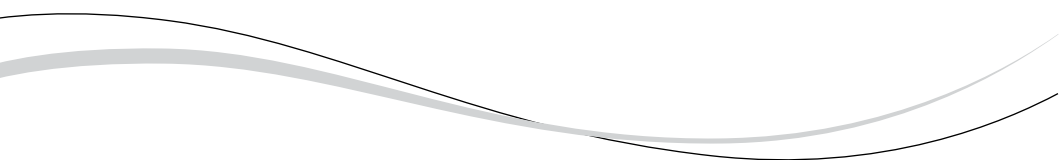
A Call to Supremos of Major Political Parties

Keynote Speech at Trade Union Dialogue with the Major Political Parties
City Hall, Kathmandu, 12 November 2012

We are worried whether we are also being pushed towards the 'journey of a failed state!' Nepalis, struggling in the cradle of Himalaya, used to be shocked to hear the news of misunderstandings among the struggling forces in the Middle East, Afghanistan or African countries a few years ago. We used to criticise them.

Maybe, the whole world that celebrated our success of the 2006 movement is shocked at present and is criticising us, 'Who the hell the Nepali leaders think they are?! They have spoiled a beautiful country!'

You are our own leaders. Perhaps you are more visionary than us and you deserve the capacity of having a long-lasting vision too. How do you address our concerns? How can we convince the millions of members working in the world of work?



Respected Leaders,

We have got an opportunity to welcome the senior leaders of four¹ major political parties at a same time in this Dialogue Programme. JTUCC² would like to express its greetings to all the respected leaders for attending the programme expressing solidarity with the Nepali Workers.

Nepal has its own specific identity. There are innumerable numbers of political parties and Trade Union Centres ideologically affiliated to their respective political parties are also dozens in number. However, we have been walking hand-in-hand in a consensual spirit under a single organisation - JTUCC. We are in a process to run our programmes as per the 'mandate' of the entire Nepali Working Class. But, it is sad to see that there is no understanding among the political parties that lead us ideologically.

"Let us determine at least the common national commitment. Let us fix the goal of a transformed Nepal. Let us end such an uncertain series of political deadlocks." As a representative organisation of the working people, you have been invited to this programme in order to reflect this expectation and the increasing despair and pain being inflicted on the people.

During the end of the Dashain festival this year, there was a ray of hope felt by the Nepalis who were used to hearing the hopeless news of misunderstandings among the parties. The senior leaders participated in the Tea Reception organised by Nepali Congress (NC) party and delivered the message that the existing political stalemate would end as soon as possible. The very next day, CPN-UML organised the Tea Reception where the Chairman of the UCPN-M's expressed that, '[t]he campaign of ending the deadlock which began from the Tea Reception Programme organised by NC would end before the Tea Reception to be

organised by the UCPN-M at the end of the Tihar festival and the country would see this political impasse broken'. This made the general public and the representatives of the working class euphoric and enthusiastic.

Whether it is the transitional phase of a Multi-Party Democracy after the Autocratic Monarchy or following the astonishing uprising of 2006, we distributed the dream of 'Nepal to be Singapore and Switzerland' to the common people. Believing our commitment to 'go hand-in-hand for decades', the people may have given the mandate through the dissolved CA election that no party would be able to impose its monopoly. However, we failed to come to a consensus and the people could not feel the real change.

Time and Tide waits for none. With the passing of time, you have also unknowingly reduced a day of your life after a single day passes without consensus. Why does this happen? Can't we do anything in reality? Are we not in a position to go hand-in-hand at all?

Respected leaders,

We know that the country will not become a failure in itself. Because of the arrogance and misunderstanding among the leaders of the competitive political parties, the structures of the state, happened to be destroyed one after another. Let us view our situation:

1. The Constitutional Commissions are going to be vacant
2. The Supreme Court is going to be sans the Justices
3. There is no People's representative body
4. Economic activities are almost paralysed
5. There is no regular budget, even one-third of the budget is going to be over but still there is a big debate regarding the nature and process for the remaining budget.

We are worried whether we are also being pushed towards the 'journey of a failed state!' Nepal is, struggling in the cradle of Himalaya, used to be shocked to hear the news of misunderstandings among the struggling

forces in the Middle East, Afghanistan or African countries a few years ago. We used to criticise them. Maybe, the whole world that celebrated our success of the 2006 movement is shocked at present and is criticising us, 'Who the hell the Nepali leaders think they are?! They have spoiled a beautiful country!'

You are our own leaders. Perhaps you are more visionary than us and you deserve the capacity of having a long-lasting vision too. How do you address our concerns? How can we convince the millions of members working in the world of work?

Senior leaders,

You have been urging us to blame and praise according to the faults and qualities of the leaders respectively. You don't like to be accused in general. We also agree with your opinion. The criticisms or appreciations must be on the basis of 'quality and fault'. Whether you failed to convince the competitive leaders of your quality or could not come up with your own assumption to obtain the appropriate 'understanding', still there is misunderstanding in politics. Therefore, can we claim that you are solely responsible for the present deadlock as the leaders of the major political parties?

Our common interest is to end the deadlock by finding a solution to the problems. We believed that our leadership must have known better than us and the economic and infrastructure development could not commence its smooth path as expected due to the prolonged political transition. Even the existing industries are being closed one after another. Because of impunity, crimes are being institutionalised economically, socially and politically too. The rocketing price hikes have caused workers' life to be more complicated than ever before. How could we assume that our leadership is unaware of the fact that millions of Nepali youth have been forced to find their destiny in the deserts of gulf countries due to unemployment inside the country?

The representatives of the workers present here in the programme have requested us to ask you, 'Are the trade unions the cause of the closure of various industries including public corporations?' The voices of the workers also seem to be raised against the expression of some senior leadership of the parties who sometime even declare, 'The trade union is too much'. What we believe is that the world of work in Nepal is the most 'constructive' in South Asia. Had the Agreements and legal provisions been effectively implemented, Nepali workers would be more disciplined and productive too. The World Bank has recently published the global report Doing Business in 2012. It listed 14 points as the basic or obstacles to business. In our country, 'the unstable government and ad-hoc policy, poor infrastructure, inefficient administration and corruption including others' have been depicted as the main obstacles for business environment. The Doing Business report states that labour problems have reduced from 7% to 6.6% in the 12-year period. We think the leaders of the political parties should realise this fact.

We are also committed to the ideal that there should be no obstacles in the world of work. We also want businesses and industries to run smoothly along with promotion of 'employment-service-production'. We tried our level best to uphold these objectives. This is why, instead of a social security system based on 'permanent employment' we agreed to a social security system based on contribution. Which country's trade union would tacitly agree to the 1% tax on the workers' wage imposed by the government through the budget at a time when there are neither rules nor decision about the contribution of the state and employers? However, we agreed to such a provision even without caring for the position of the parties of the government or opposition. Isn't this a constructive contribution of the Nepali trade unions?

Through the frequent meetings held with employers from March 2011 to October 2011, the understanding was reached to implement the social security system. The understanding has the provision that the Social Security Fund would be established by including a 20% contribution from the employer and 11% from the worker. The workers have been

depositing this amount in the government's account even by cutting their basic needs for four years now. Even the agreement was made to allow the employers themselves to keep the share of the daily-based workers' wages, to be included in the Fund, with them. We agreed on the Draft of the Social Security Fund Bill with the sincere intent that there would be no unrest in the world of work and we could contribute to the economic revolution, a slogan of the political parties. Unfortunately, the Bill drafted under the tripartite agreement of the workers-employers-government is collecting dust without implementation.

Not only this, we also proposed to settle grievances through a Labour Commission with a view to reducing or ending the strikes. Learning from the experience of the developed countries, we not only have been frequently raising our voices for the constitutional provision of the Labour Commission with quasi judicial rights, but have also almost prepared its operating procedures involving the concerned Ministry too. We also agreed with the employers' organisations for completing the labour market reform process commenced a few years ago for strict implementation of the law so that no labour dispute would be created.

However, we need a mechanism that would play the role of the Legislative Parliament in order to address these 'agenda' of the world of work at the earliest possible time. The present political impasse has become an obstacle to this. Therefore, trade unions need to see an immediate end to the political deadlock.

Once again, we would like to reinforce that we, the trade unions, have been displaying our role as the active engines of the each and every movement carried out under your leadership. The world of work is sad with the attitude that 'when there was poor showing in the street, we are urged to be in the frontline of the movements, leaving everything aside. But when the good days are here, we have been limited to obey what the leadership says'. We expect a balanced attitude and behaviour from the parties, and between the employers and the workers. Therefore, once again we would like to remind you of the issue of the 10% representation of workers in each elected body of the state. This was also agreed to by all

the senior leaders when the CA was alive. We would also like to clarify our common belief that the agenda proposed by the JTUCC as the agenda of the Nepali world of work in three categories: Rights and Protection, Representation and Suggestions on Commission; are scripted in the new constitution, it would be labour friendly.

The end of this political deadlock is essential for addressing the abovementioned issues. Let us briefly discuss the contentious issues:

1. We have heard that an understanding has been reached among the political parties on Forms of Governance, Election System, Judiciary, Size and Level of Legislature Parliament, types of Government (Local-Provincial- and Central). Is it true? If so, why don't you conclude these issues firmly? If understanding is still to reach on these issues, let us particularly know the issues which are contentious and interrelated. What is your proposal to address these issues?
2. 'Federalism' is the common commitment of all Nepalis. We believe that a democratic system of governance, federalism with capability and identity and the constitution with guarantee of federal structure, is the common minimum understanding of all the four political forces presented here in the programme. As far as we believe, the dispute is focused on Nationhood vs. statehood. The type of the name - for example whether is based on single ethnic, or multiple or be it two-nation state or multi nation-states. If the number of the provinces and method of demarcation are the only issues of dispute, why can't we end the present deadlock through a Referendum or Technical Commission or Provincial Assembly to be formed in the future? Apart from these, what is the common proposal left with us to come out of the present indecisiveness? We would like to ask on the behalf of all the working people, what is the bottom-line of the four major parties to agree on these issues?
3. The main aspect of the present dispute is regarding the process to end the deadlock after the CA was unexpectedly demised.

In this situation, four political parties have their own stand and assumptions. At the same time, they also have a common understanding in so many issues. If the publicised opinions are to be accumulated together, they are as follows:

- To take fresh mandate. To write a new Constitution through a new structure
- To revive the CA for a short period and declare the agreed issues. The remaining contentious issues will be considered as a responsibility to be completed in the future.
- To find out the common understanding of the impasse by organising a Round Table Conference
- To discuss any of the above alternatives only after the resignation of the government
- To change the government only after an understanding is reached in a package
- To promulgate the Constitution by striking a consensus on the fundamental issues of the Constitution and go ahead by forming a national consensual government after ousting the present one. Or, if the fundamental issues of the Constitution cannot be agreed, the present government will be changed into a form of national consensual body for holding fresh elections
- To form a new government under the leadership of a 'neutral' figure for holding fresh elections etc.

So many other proposals are entangled even inside these proposals. For example:

- If holding fresh election, which election is to be held?
- What will the size of the new Constituent Assembly be? How would the First-Past-the-Post and Proportional Representation number be fixed? How would the constitutional complexity

regarding voters be finalised? How to appoint the Chief Commissioner and Commissioners of the Election Commission? How to form the national consensual government?

- If the CA is to be revived, what process should be adopted? How to ensure its legitimacy?
- For the alternative to the Round Table Conference, how to select the participant parties concerns? How to verify its legitimacy?
- How to determine the basis, procedures and legitimacy so that the neutral figure shall face the existing challenges?

It is obvious that there are enormous challenges whatever the alternative chosen by the parties. Is there any package in front of our leadership to cross these challenges? What are the issues to be comprised in this Package?

Whoever can rescue the country from this crisis, he/she will definitely create history. The capacity of the political leadership is also tested in crisis. The country is expecting such an efficient leadership at present. The World of Work expects the senior leaders participating in today's programme to be able to end the current political impasse quickly.

Context and Intended Meaning:

1. **Four major political parties** were - SLMM, CPN UML, Nepali Congress, UCPN-M. However, Vijaya Gachchhadar, the coordinator of SLMM had declined to participate.
2. **The Joint Trade Union Coordination Centre (JTUCC)** was created by a national meeting of trade unions held on 26-27 Oct 2008 in Kathmandu. It was established as an umbrella organization of the then active seven confederations: NTUC-I, GEFONT, ANTUF, CoNEP, NTUF, FENEPT, NDCONT-I. Recently another four trade union organisations recognised by the Ministry of Labour are in the process of affiliation with JTUCC.



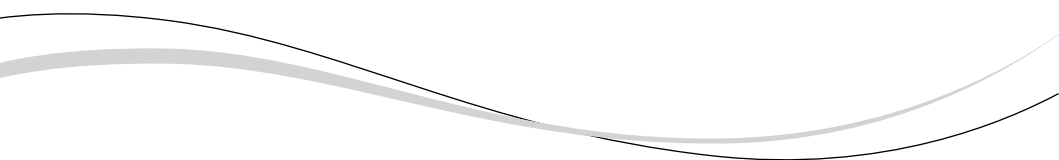
State of Labour Relations and Non-Economic Barriers to Private Sector Growth

Address to the National Business Initiative Seminar
Tripureshowar, Kathmandu, 01 December 2011

It is just natural my dear friend!

Where there is business, there is always a conflict of interest. I do compare enterprises with a Magnet, which necessarily bears a 'North' and 'South' pole. These two poles never attract each other; however, in One's absence, the next will no longer remain.

If any Nonsense tries to eliminate ONE, the magnetic substance converts into a non-magnetic one, which does not have any sales value as a magnet. There is unity in opposites, which generates conflict and ultimately produces productivity!



Panellists, and the Audience,

Without addressing the dignitaries here in the podium, permit me to address the subject matter. As we are discussing the non-economic barriers for development with a particular reference of Labour Relations, I would mention the present State of Labour Relations as the following:

The state of labour relations is reflected in many ways in the contemporary world of work in Nepal. Basically, the four points I would like to mention are:

- **Transitional behaviour** - the ad-hocism demonstrated in labour relations is due to changes in the political context. In my opinion, it is quite natural. The “new players” who surfaced after the 2006 peoples uprising in our world of work strongly denied the existing rules of the game. Thus, we have abandoned the ‘Old practice’. However, ‘the New’ has yet to be introduced. Further, the mindset of the key players in the world of work has not been matched to the reality. Our employer has not transformed, which they should have. As a ‘capitalist’; they are still continuing their old-time feudal legacy! And our workers equally have not internalised the core values of industrial workers - they are bearing the agrarian tenants legacy.
- **Attitudinal problem** - we are portraying the image of trade unions as Trouble Creators; the worker as a sinister being who is largely destroying our society! And the employers as the rescuers, the merciful ‘master’ who is unilaterally supplying bread and butter to the poor worker as charity! If there were no unions and workers, Nepal would have been a place like heaven, the dreamland, Shangri-La! This is just an exaggeration. Our business world, the media and even the critical masses do not

bother to understand what is and what is not a trade union. No doubt, trade unions have a political mission. However, they run according to the rules of the game set through existing labour legislation. One should understand that they are not merely a branch of a political party.

Further, we are very reactive and generally prefer to communicate negative messages. Here, I would make a note that our mass media and opinion makers should be a bit more careful. Let me comment on one small example. At the beginning of this seminar, our moderator, Ranjit Acharya, mentioned the closure of Surya Nepal’s Garment unit. He stressed that it happened just because of a labour problem. With due respect, it is an ill-intentioned conclusion as far as I understand. As a unionist, I have a lot of information that Surya Nepal was incurring losses in its business cycle and it realised that there was no way to revive by selling ready-made garments. Thus they were interested to close it and to start ‘something new’ for better profit. The “unrest” due to labour discontent was just an excuse. In a private talk with us, this fact was revealed by the company itself. The way we are denouncing unions over this issue is a smart ploy towards union busting. This is totally unacceptable for the working community.

- **Mutual distrust** – A tendency of mutual distrust is deep rooted in our society. It is reflected in our politics as well. One fine morning, we sign a deal and immediately the concerned parties try foul, aiming to make a fool each other. I do not hesitate to mention that this story is, to some extent, related to the players of the world of work as well.
- **Interest Clash** – Can we eliminate the ‘Interest-clash’ between employer and employee? In my opinion, labour relations reflect these conflicts. We can summarise it as follows in our context:

Employers Emphasis is on-	Workers Emphasis is on-
Discipline	Motivation
Productivity	Incentives

Benefits based on Demand and Supply	Implementation of Labour Standards
Work	Decent Work
Individual Claims	Collective Action
Blame workers as Lazy	Blame employers as Exploiters

How do we handle this interest clash? Generally, negotiations between the employers and workers are managed in four ways. The first way is - a tough war. Sometimes it is wrongly portrayed as a "class war!" The workers and employers are considered to be two 'groups', that is the "Tiger and Goat". And the solution is total warfare, which would be over by negating the opposite party. There is no room for negotiations. The second is the relations between workers and employers as oppressed and oppressors, where the liberation of workers is not possible without removing the fear from the mind of the oppressed employees, where oppressors should come to compromise and negotiate with oppressed. The third is the assumption of support for each other - the employers and workers, as labour investors and capital investors - to be understood as the concept of co-determination in German Industrial relations. The fourth is the submissive method; where instigated workers by the employers create the problem and the solution will be an outcome of bribing the workers mafia on the one hand and suppressing exploited workers on the other.

In my opinion, there should not be any room for the First and Fourth "way" in industrial relations. The second and third or something in between would be the viable option.

For this, I would urge all to be proactive; not reactive. At the beginning, Ranjit Acharya said "I was so surprised when this morning I checked 'strike in a company of Nepal' in the Google search engine. There were over 6,000 hits!" I have a question, ladies and gentlemen "did you try in Google this morning for similar stories of other countries of the world?" I was not surprised when I checked 'Strike in UK 2011' in Goggle. There were about 564,000,000 hits! You can see such stories from Greece to Italy

or Tunisia to the GCC world. We are encountering this in the everyday news of USA - known as "Occupy Wall Street!"

Thus, it is just natural my dear friend! Where there is business, there is always a conflict of interest. I do compare enterprises with a Magnet, which necessarily bears a 'North' and 'South' pole. These two poles never attract each other; however, in One's absence, the next will no longer remain. If any Nonsense tries to eliminate ONE, the magnetic substance converts into a non-magnetic one, which does not have any sales value as a magnet. There is unity in opposites, which generates conflict and ultimately produces productivity!

Let me conclude with a solution for the conflict transformation in our World of Work. I am proud to mention our 11-point bilateral agreement sealed on March 24th of this year between unions and the apex bodies of the employers. However, it was heavily attacked by some quarters. I will not talk about the increased 1,600 rupees or increased daily wage or the proposed plan of social security system. I would basically mention what non-economic agendas we had agreed. Those points are as follows:

- By fulfilling the criteria of existing labour legislation, in a condition of inefficiency- any company if it wants to close down the whole part or some part or retrench their employees, unions will cooperate (Point 4).
- Accepting the necessity of a minimum common agenda, in order to establish harmonious and fair labour relations, both parties commit to and declare Industrial Peace Year for 4 years. The Rules of the game will be
 - No strike or shutdown will be organised without fulfilling legal procedures at least in this period! No payment will be made for illegal strikes.
 - Permanent bipartite mechanism between unions and the employers' council will be established centrally to monitor its effective implementation. Local bipartite mechanism

shall be established as per necessity. At the enterprise level, a labour relations committee will be activated. (Point-5)

- A joint request is made to the MoLTM for immediate completion of on-going process of labour market reform. The Rules of Game will be:
 - Amendment to the Labour Act for better employment relations; amendment to the Trade Union Act for sound social dialogue; introduction of bills related to social security administration and the unemployment insurance scheme for workers protection; and introduction of a National Labour Commission for quick and effective balanced justice
 - Request to organise an Employment Summit to address both side's difficulties to chart employment led growth strategy (Point-6)
- Recommendation is made to the Government of Nepal for the permanent tripartite wage board. The intention of this clause is to increase, or not increase, wages of the employees as per the Consumer Price Index (CPI) published by the agreed authority (Point 7).
- The Responsibility of an enterprise to identify as an enterprise with fair labour practices if it has
 - Trade union functioning
 - Implementation of minimum wage
 - Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) to address collective grievance
 - Provision to make its employee permanent
 - Contributing to Social Security Fund after enactment of the Social Security legislation
 - Proper Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) management (Point-8)

- Union's Commitment to make employee dutiful and productive:
 - Facilitating its members to follow the company's house rules which are made as per the Labour Act
 - Helping enterprises by encouraging workers to be disciplined, productive and follow legal procedures (Point-9)
 - Helping the company to minimise the effects of load shedding by cooperating to manage work-shifts as per the power cut schedule (Point-10)
 - The company will fix any day as weekly leave as necessary
 - No absentee is accepted besides the leave agreed by CBA, and as per the labour act, regulation and by-laws of the company
 - No walk-out is accepted during duty time (Point-11)

Thank you for inviting me!



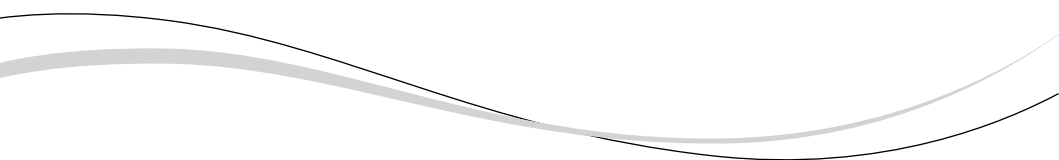
Social Security: What We are Struggling For

Presentation to the FES Seminar on Social Protection and Informal Workers
BRAC Inn Centre, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 19 October 2011

The world of work has been divided as “organised and unorganised, formal and informal, national and trans-national” in terms of the production process.

There are further divisions of labour as ‘regular’ (permanent or temporary) and ‘irregular’ (contract-based, daily-waged, seasonal, part-time, home-based outsourced etc). With these divisions, the terms of conditions of labour have led to more informal set-ups of workers, ultimately shattering the universal principle of workers’ collectivism that “An injury to one is an injury to all!”

The workers are pushed to fight each other for their daily survival. Hence the four rights namely: right to work, right to wages, right to equality and right to freedom, have become to some ‘an attainable object’, whereas to the majority of the working masses, it is limited to ‘a day-dream!’



Colleagues!

“The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways;
the point is to change it!”

These days I feel that this famous quote of the great thinker, Karl Marx, is applicable to the working class people in the informal economy as well. We have described ‘the informal’ in many ways and are putting ‘stones’ on their fate. We, the opinion makers, the trade unionists, politicians, Brand-A scholars and so on relating to the World of Work, have left no stone unturned by defining them, analysing their nature and suggesting various ‘prescriptions’.

As the end, what results did we achieve? The Wage - that is less than Minimum; The Job - that is beyond Protection; The Work- that is in no way Decent; and the Workplace – full of Risks and is Precarious!

Guy Standing has described the precarious jobholder, the working poor as the ‘Precariate¹! This notion is a combination of two terminologies: one identifying the precarious nature of their job and the other is the widely used word to identify the lowest strata of the working class, the proletariat. In his recently published book **The ‘Precariate: The New Dangerous Class**, Standing mentioned the following:

“Broadly speaking, while the old classes persist in parts of the world, we can identify seven groups. At the top is an ‘elite’, consisting of a tiny number of absurdly rich global citizens lording it over the universe, with their billions of dollars, listed in Forbes as among the great and the good, able to influence governments everywhere and to indulge in munificent philanthropic gestures. Below that elite comes the ‘salaried’, still in stable full-time employment, some hoping to move into the elite, the majority just enjoying the trappings of their kind, with their pensions,

paid holidays and enterprise benefits, often subsidised by the state. The salariat is concentrated in large corporations, government agencies and public administration, including the civil service.

Alongside the salariat, in more senses than one, is a (so far) smaller group of **'proficians'**. This term combines the traditional ideas of 'professional' and 'technician' but covers those with bundles of skills that they can market, earning high incomes on contract, as consultants or independent own-account workers. The proficians are the equivalent of the yeomen, knights and squires of the Middle Ages. They live with the expectation and desire to move around, without an impulse for long-term, full-time employment in a single enterprise. The 'standard employment relationship' is not for them.

Below the proficians, in terms of income, is a shrinking 'core' of manual employees, the essence of the old **'working class'**. The welfare states were built with them in mind, as were the systems of labour regulation. But the battalions of industrial labourers who formed the labour movements have shrivelled and lost their sense of social solidarity.

Underneath those four groups, there is the growing **'Precariate'**, flanked by an army of unemployed and a detached group of socially ill misfits living off the dregs of society (Standing: 2011).

Agreeing with Standing, I would argue that the workers of the informal economy are the Precariate, a **class-in-the-making**, unlike a **class-for-itself**, in the Marxian sense widely discussed in the 19th and entire 20th centuries!

It drags us to a domain that whatever "solution" we do prescribe to the Informal, may not fit those working in the formal economy. Hence, I strongly feel that the methods of a social security system developed for the formal workplace need to be carefully analysed while applying it to the workers in various strata of the Informal Economy.

Why we need to talk of informal?

Trade unions are basically struggling for Four Rights for the workers, namely: right to work, right to wages, right to equality and right to freedom. All these rights are interdependent and universal for all kinds of workers. However, after the implementation of the policy of the economic liberalisation since 1990s, our world of work is witnessing a rights deficit in many ways among the workers in the name of “flexibility”.

The world of work has been divided as “organised and unorganised, formal and informal, national and trans-national” in terms of the production process. There are further divisions of labour as ‘regular’ (permanent or temporary) and ‘irregular’ (contract-based, daily-waged, seasonal, part-time, home-based outsourced etc). With these divisions, the terms of conditions of labour have led to more informal set-ups of workers, ultimately shattering the universal principle of workers’ collectivism that “An injury to one is an injury to all!” The workers are pushed to fight each other for their daily survival. Hence the four rights have become to some ‘an attainable object’, whereas to the majority of the working masses, it is limited to ‘a day-dream!’

According to Standing, the Precariate experiences the Four-**A**’s – anger, anomie, anxiety and alienation instead of enjoying the four Rights. Thus, the Precariate lacks the seven forms of labour-related security, which had been pursued for the working class by pro-labour parties and trade unions after the Second World War. Standing classifies these as Labour market security; Employment security; Work security; Skill reproduction security, Income security and Representation security.

“There are varieties of Precariate; they are far from being homogeneous. The teenager who flits in and out of the Internet Café, while surviving on fleeting jobs is not the same as the migrant who uses his wits to survive networking feverishly while worrying about the police. Neither is similar to the single mother fretting where the money for next week’s food bill is coming from or the man in his 60s who takes casual jobs to help pay

medical bills. But they all share a sense that their labour is instrumental (to live), opportunistic (taking what comes) and precarious (insecure)".²

There are wide ranges of needs and demands for Informal workers in the Nepali world of work who are distinguished based on their employment relationship. Be it formal or informal, Nepal's labour market is extremely exploitative. There are some nominal rights of workers ensured in the formal sector. The workers in the informal sector are, however, completely deprived of even minimum fundamental rights. Still, Nepal maintains the labour practice in which workers are condemned to work in a situation akin to slavery, and child labour is in existence while adults are deprived of employment.

Of Nepal's informal sector, the single largest sector is agriculture. In agriculture, there are two main divisions. The worker who works on yearly wages or who cultivates a small piece of land as a tenant or is somehow a self-employed agricultural worker all come under the first category. Mainly wage labourers in agriculture, who perform their work for daily wages, or monthly or yearly basis, fall within the second category. The word *Hali* (those who plough the land), *Gothala* (the cattle herders) and *Khetala* (daily wage labourers) denote such workers in this connection. Apart from the peasants and the non-waged agricultural workers, there are two categories of agricultural wage labourers. The first covers those wage labourers whose means of survival is only their wage; whereas the second category covers those whose means of livelihood is their wage and their self-employment.

The non-agricultural rural informal sector includes various establishments of traditional and non-traditional cottage industries³. Because of the phenomenon of labour-underutilisation⁴, agricultural workers normally work in non-agricultural sectors too.

Due to Nepal's geo-political condition, the urban informal sector is not so large. It includes mainly non-agricultural activities. A major portion of the labour force in this sector is active as "self-employed". In summary,

based on the nature of work, the informal sector in Nepal can be classified as rural and urban, which can be specified as follows:

- Farm and farm related: self employed, very small land holders, landless farm workers, tillers, cattle herders, former *Kamaiyas*, *Haliyas*, daily wage workers, exchange labour under *parma*⁵ tradition and non registered large segment of economic activities concerning livestock, poultry, kitchen –gardening’ dairy, fisheries, sericulture, bee farming
- Trading: Street Vendors, Hawkers related to different products including very small traders
- Craft-workers: Related to clay, metal, bamboo, wood and others
- Construction: Normally daily wage-workers related to building, wood work, road, stone quarrying, brick kiln
- Transport: Porters, cleaners, *Khalasi*, loader, Rickshaw pullers, auto-mechanics and helpers
- Micro enterprises: Family based enterprises workers in various types of production and services
- Other services: Barbers, cobblers, tailors, blacksmith, traditional entertainers

Let me elaborate our efforts and what we see are the gaps in practice.

Nearly five years back GEFONT launched a survey to identify what were the demands (issues) that workers placed as top priority. By analysing the collective demands and agreement of 750 enterprises, it was found that 17 issues were core and the crux of contention. They were: Increment in existing Grade; Increment in existing wage, Permanency, Medical treatment cost, Clothing/Uniform, House Rent, Dashain Allowance/ Transportation cost, Bonus/Dearness allowance/ Provident Fund, Union office, Overtime, Life insurance, Educational support to kids, Home leave/ Loan facilities, Compassionate leave, Sick leave/ Other leave, Night-shift

allowance/Physical management of union office and Job Classification. Almost all these entitlements are payable to the regular workers only as per the existing legislation.

We considered that these issues were one way or another connected to the 9 categories of entitlements prescribed in the ILO Convention Number 102 relating to social security. Thus, Nepal's trade union movement made Social Security for All workers as the flagship and issued a demand aiming to address contentious issues mentioned above. As these were the issues for relatively secure workers, no doubt these are the demands of the workers in the informal economy as well.

Does it fit with informal workers?

In the past 250 years, modern Nepal had remained largely isolated. A total of 104 years of Rana oligarchy rule, and the remaining under the regime of absolute monarchy for 30 plus years have pushed Nepali society to pursue traditional community-based protection activities. These activities are known as *Guthis*⁶, *Dhikur* or *Dhikutis*⁷, *Dharam Bhakari*⁸, Mutual Aid Arrangements⁹, *Paincho*¹⁰, *Parma*¹¹, *Saghau*¹² and various traditional cultural and religious arrangements in local levels and caste/ethnicity based arrangements like Marwadi/ Jain/ Agrawal/ Tamu / Langhali/ Sherpa/ Thakali service trusts.

With exposure to the global economy, existing traditional practices have started to diminish quickly. However, in order to protect vulnerable sections of society, a "new safety-net" has yet to be woven! Some initiatives of social assistance aiming to alleviate the anxiety caused by diminishing traditional community-based assistance have been taken on by the government through its own mechanisms. Though it is too scattered, these initiatives, such as the following are helpful to keep the optimism of the general population alive:

- Senior Citizen and Helpless Widow Allowance
- Small Farmers Development Programme
- Intensive Banking Programme

- Production Credit for Rural Women
- Banking for the Poor
- Rural Development Bank programmes
- Baal Mandirs (orphanage)
- Livestock Insurance and Crop Insurance
- Programme for the Disabled
- Health services in government Hospitals and Health Posts
- Social Assistance through Centre and Local governments
- Rehabilitation and relief works

Besides this, similar initiatives, which are charity type work including some income generation, education support, and health support programmes, have been carried out by various NGO/INGOs.

Realising that such “piecemeal” efforts will be insufficient to address increasing demands for social security of the working people, the trade union movement in Nepal has initiated a campaign of Social Security for All Workers for nearly 15. Before 2000, the movement was somehow scattered. However since July 2000, it was jointly promoted by GEFONT along with other recognised trade union confederations. To counter employers’ rhetoric of ‘hire and fire’ and ‘labour flexibility’, the process of tripartite-engagement began under the slogan of labour market reform. The trade union proposed a contribution ratio of worker-employer-government at the rate of 1:2.5:2.5 respectively in order to establish a contributory social security system.

The momentum of the campaign gained ground following the beginning of the democratic republic. Trade unions demanded a Contributory Social Security Scheme by establishing an Integrated Social Security Fund which took visible shape during the tenure of the Non-Maoist coalition Government under the premiership of UML’s senior leader, MK Nepal. Through a Budget statement, the Government of Nepal levied a 1% social security tax to all workers on a regular payroll, no matter under what terms and conditions and workplaces they are labouring.

March 24, 2011 is another milestone in this regard. The apex bodies of employers agreed to contribute an additional 20% of the basic salary (whether it be monthly, weekly or daily) of their employees for the social security fund. It is noteworthy that the workers are already deducting 1% from their purse (10% extra for their Provident Fund).

An office of the Fund along with a 29-member secretariat has been established and a tripartite Social Security Board as the ad-hoc Social Security Administration has been constituted. Based on the collection of contributions, the Government has proposed 4 sets of schemes (Unemployment benefits, maternity protection, sickness benefits and workplace injury benefits) to be implemented by this fiscal year.

These are encouraging steps in our context. However, the gap of benefits between the Formal and Informal sector is serious. At the moment, the proposed social security schemes are basically targeting the formal sector, whereas the needy informal workers who are waiting for a comprehensive social security package are a bit far from being covered.

There are further legislative lapses. Irregular workers in the formal sector are not enjoying the social security benefits agreed to by union-employer negotiations. The agreement will not come into effect till the legislation relating to social security is endorsed by the legislature parliament. It further pushes the possibility of social security coverage to the workers in the Informal economy further away. In addition to initiatives of Social Security, currently the National Planning Commission of the Government is in an intensive exercise of designing a National Social Protection Framework with a broad-based objective.

What will the work ahead be then?

Based on the above-mentioned discussion, we have come to the conclusion that the following steps should be taken as immediate tasks to bring in a logical conclusion of our decade long campaign of social security for all.

- To declare the Social Security Act (there are two drafts- social security administration act and unemployment benefits act) including other related labour legislation (there are altogether six laws in the package) from the continued session of the legislature parliament
- To ensure a Government contribution for the newly established Social security Fund
- To provide Social Security ID cards to all contributors
- To design practical schemes for unemployment insurance, maternity protection, sickness benefits and compensation for accidents as proposed by the Government of Nepal
- To prepare phase-wise the schemes to bring all possible informal sector workers under the integrated social security fund.
- To develop a social protection network for those who are out of the coverage of the Social Security Fund.

Context and Intended Meaning:

- 1 **The Precariate:** The New Dangerous Class; Guy Standing (February 2011)
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 The traditional cottage industries in Nepal are: hand loom, pedal loom, semi-automatic loom, wrapping, dyeing, printing, sewing, knitting, local carpet, woollen-carpet, *pashmina*, woollen garment, carpentry, wooden handicraft, bamboo and cane goods, materials made from natural fibres, handmade paper, gold, silver, brass, copper work and ornaments, image making, precious and semi-precious stones, honey, big cardamom processing, pottery, leather cutting, drying and village tanning and leather works, jute, *babio choya* and goods from cotton thread, leather goods, artistic goods from bones and horns, stone carving, stone studded metal goods, painting, *pauwa*, batik, materials made from handmade paper, dolls, toys and stone studded metal filigree commodities.
- 4 This terminology is used in second NLFS. Labour underutilisation (30%) is collective figure of complete Unemployment, Time-related underemployment, Inadequate earnings and Skill mismatch.
- 5 Exchange labour system in Nepal.
- 6 A kind of family held or community held welfare trust basically associated with religious institutions/ temples.
- 7 Collection of mutually agreed amount in a group and provision of credit turn by turn through lottery working automatically as a rotational financing system.
- 8 A grain bank of villagers in local level, where villagers of the small locality deposit for future use of the village households.
- 9 Cooperatives and self help organisations as well as small welfare fund arrangements.
- 10 A loan in kind not in cash for a short duration which is common in all Nepali households in every community and caste/ethnicity.
- 11 Exchange of labour in village among households and families during peak farming season which ensures labour supply without any payment.
- 12 Helping in kind and labour to each other in the Magar community.



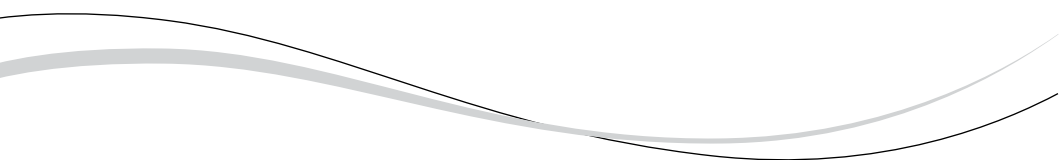
Trade Union Debate around Climate Change

Address to the Seminar on Trade Union Debate around Climate Change
Hotel Summit, Lalitpur, Nepal, 01 September 2009

Gone are those days now. You cannot see a single tap stand as such as explained now in Kathmandu. The Aryagaht has lost its purity and Bagmati has been dumped with garbage and waste from drains these days.

I always used to cover myself with a blanket while sleeping during all seasons in Kathmandu. Mosquitoes never dared to enter the city. A saying that the "Green dark forest is the wealth of Nation" was so popular.

What has happened these days? Why is Kathmandu incomparably hot in summer or why is it unbelievably cold in winter? Why is summer not like summer and why have we been compelled to welcome an unwanted monsoon in winter?



Colleagues,

Some days back I read the news in a broadsheet national daily that hundreds of kilograms of garbage have been collected from the Mt. Everest area. We are witnessing similar stories day by day.

Last year during winter in Kathmandu, we saw snowfall. Many people said it has happened after more than 6 decades.

Some 32 years back, I came to the Kathmandu valley for my education. I rejoiced and thrived while drinking tap water in Kathmandu's artistic Dhunge Dharas, (the stone carved tap). The major two rivers in Kathmandu - the Bagmati and Bishnumati were too clean. I had a good argument with some companions from Eastern and Western Nepal on "whose river was largest?" Looking at the deep flowing fierce local rivers; and not knowing how big the other famous rivers in Nepal are, I tried to compare the rivers from my native place - Trishuli, and Bagmati and Bishnumati at Kathmandu with the incomparable big rivers like Koshi-Gandaki and the Karnali.

Gone are those days now. You cannot see a single tap stand as such as explained above now in Kathmandu. The *Aryagaht* has lost its purity and Bagmati has been dumped with garbage and waste from drains these days.

I always used to cover myself with a blanket while sleeping during all seasons in Kathmandu. Mosquitoes never dared to enter the city. A saying that the "Green dark forest is the wealth of Nation" was so popular.

What has happened these days? Why is Kathmandu incomparably hot in summer or why is it unbelievably cold in winter? Why is summer not like

summer and why have we been compelled to welcome an unwanted monsoon in winter?

My comrades in the expedition profession have informed me that the icy-range of our Himalayas is shrinking; and subsequently the altitude of base camps is ascending. Even one of the famous climbers in Nepal sadly explained after his record breaking summit attempt that Mt. Everest has no snow at all in its top- it is now grey!

I am not much familiar with natural science. However I have heard many words such as global warming, ozone layers, green house emissions and carbon discharge etc.

All these stories, as I understand, are related to climate change - the issues that we are going to talk about now.

Interestingly, these weeks in Nepal, we are witnessing a number of events; and everyone from school children to the prime minister is getting involved. From today onwards, we unionists have also lined up in this campaign. Though it might be a token initiative; however, I think it is an initiative in the right direction.

Climate change represents one of the greatest environmental, social and economic threats facing the planet. Though we Nepalis are the least responsible, however, we are among the most vulnerable.

Climate change is also a part of the broader political context. And as trade unionists, we have to face up to the effects of climate change now.

“We should look at the structure of society to find solutions.”

I agree with this statement of other colleagues in the international trade union movement who also argue for the necessity to be proactive to deal with the consequences of climate change. Thus, for this, we are ready to work with others, especially environmental organisations.

Some are arguing that climate change offers many possibilities: new green jobs, less market competition etc.

The ITUC General Secretary, Brother Guy Ryder, and the ILO Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia, in a joint statement have said:

“Meeting the challenge of climate change will require a new development model that combines reduced emissions with a better future for the vast majority of people and the opportunity to earn a living in a decent job.”

They refer to the role played by green jobs as being “vital in reducing the environmental footprint of economies and promoting sustainable production and consumption patterns.”

If this is the case, let us act now to seize these changes and let us make this a positive step for workers.

To conclude this brief address, I would like to share the special resolution which reflects GEFONT’s position adopted in its 5th National Congress held this year:

“Different forms of pollution, imbalance of human beings with nature caused by high population growth and climate change, are serious problems of the world community. The trade union movement and trade union organisations cannot be indifferent to these problems which affect adversely the lives of the working population.

Deforestation, drinking water problems, floods, global warming, climate change and various epidemics victimise the working people first.”

The Congress urged the working class to be careful and aware of increasing adversities on their lives, employment and health caused by the environmental crisis; and urged the state and political parties to launch research on environmental problems and climate change, and initiate the necessary steps in time to minimise the ill-effects.

I thank the organisers, and especially thank LO Denmark and Sustain Labour for the invitation and organising this seminar.

Let me wish you all a successful and fruitful Seminar!

**INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCES/SEMINARS**





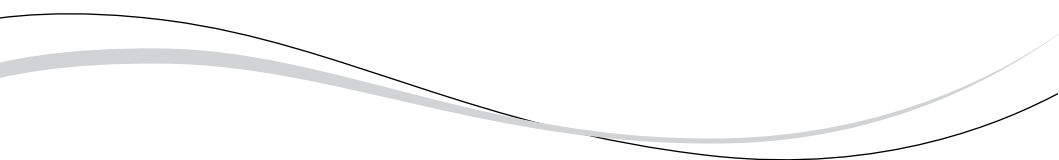




Without the Right to Strike, We All are Slaves

Address to the 104th Session of the International Labour Conference
UN Building, Geneva, Switzerland, 09 June 2015

I had to participate in the 104th General Assembly of the ILO in Geneva about a month after the devastating earthquake hit Nepal. It was the first international forum where I was invited to present the country's agenda. It was quite challenging for me to talk about the damage caused by the earthquake and, in the same time, to give a message to the international community that Nepal was safe to visit. Also, I had to talk about the workers' agenda including the right of workers to call strikes. All these had to cover in five minutes time and this was the speech delivered in the Assembly.



*Madam President, Fellow Delegates,
Observers, Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen!*

Four years back on the 9th of June, I had the privilege to address the 100th Session of the International Labour Conference. I was congratulating the ILO, with high hopes, dreams and to some extent, a proud message of good initiatives that had just begun in our country for the betterment of Nepalis' world of work.

Today, exactly four years later, I am here to express to this august Assembly with a heavy heart, an inconsolable grief and immeasurable anguish of the Nepali people who have lost all of sudden nearly 9,000 their dear ones by a killer earthquake which hit my country terribly; first on April 25 and then again and again many times! Injuring nearly 22 thousand people, the devastating quake damaged the lives and dreams; cities and villages of entire Nepal. The deep trauma within the young and adults, children and aged persons is unimaginably serious. These days, most Nepalis feel that the ground below them is dancing and moving. A small cracking sound is enough to make them afraid, their nightmare is unashamedly loaded with mass-funeral pyres, cracked and perished hills and flattened houses!

It seems to me that many of you have visited my country. I assume there are Himalayas and the hills; UNESCO preserved old-heritage and tourist villages in your sweet memory! Unfortunately, I am here to tell you that much of our heritage has been levelled to the ground; tourist villages are wiped from existence. This year, Mt. Everest is forced to deny welcoming thousands of her summiteers and is crying over the death of many climbers from the avalanche.

Standing before you, Madam President, I am here to share our pain and to convey our gratitude to the generous solidarity of the international

community on behalf of the entire Nepali working class, the JTUCC, and my own National Centre, the GEFONT.

The aftermath of the devastating earthquake has caused several adverse effects in my country:

- Half of the population is affected; many of them forced to live under open skies.
- Some 590 heritage sites faced damage along with several temples, and nearly 1,000 monasteries
- Hospitals and over 7,000 public schools are damaged. Our children are looking sadly to tattered huts as their newly built schools
- The total loss is 25-50 per cent of our GDP

I recall the opening remarks of the Director General, where he referred to the latest World Employment and Social Outlook Report. The report says that global unemployment reached 201 million in 2014, over 30 million higher than before the start of the global crisis in 2008.

In our country, we hardly provide jobs to 100,000 out of 400,000 job seekers every year who enter the world of work, and the remainder were silently pushed to the market in Malaysia, Korea and GCC countries. This killer quake has created further serious questions of existing available jobs in my country.

Ensuring wages, working time, maternity protection and occupational safety and health is at the heart of the ILO's mandate. I believe the ILO is fully aware of such elements of labour protection, which do not currently cover many types of employees.

The Director General has mentioned that "[t]he issues of jobs, equity, sustainability, human security, labour mobility, social dialogue, which need to be tackled in a future of work initiative, are almost by definition the key policy issues of our time!"

There is nothing to disagree!

As workers we feel that without the right to strike, we all are slaves! However, the unnecessarily prolonged debate in the ILO GB about it has frustrated us very much! Whatever argument there may be, how can we compromise on such a fundamental right?

I am keen to learn how the expected high-level commission to the ILO's Centenary Conference in 2019 would prepare its report on the future of work initiatives: "work and society; the organisation of work and production; decent jobs for all; and the governance of work".

Like a phoenix bird, emerging from the ashes, we Nepalis have great optimism - "We will no doubt Rise!" For this, we are discussing the 5-R strategy: namely Rescue, Relief, Rehabilitation, Resettlement, and Reconstruction. There is a saying in Nepali- सकिएको हैन - भत्किएको मात्रै हो (it is not destroyed- just damaged!)

Thus, we trade unions have fixed the theme of *Reconstruction: By creating decent jobs!*

- We have the motivation that *with international support and our own plan; let the State lead and every Nepali rally around!*
- In crisis, there used to be emotional blackmailing. While creating jobs, let ILO help ensure decent working conditions!
- We need solidarity from every corner to rebuild our ancient and naturally beautiful country. Let me tell you that over 80% of our tourist destinations are still safe. The more you visit our country; the faster it will help to heal the wounds of our all season smiling people! Visit us!

Let me wish everyone a grand success of the 104th session of the International Labour Conference!

Thank you!



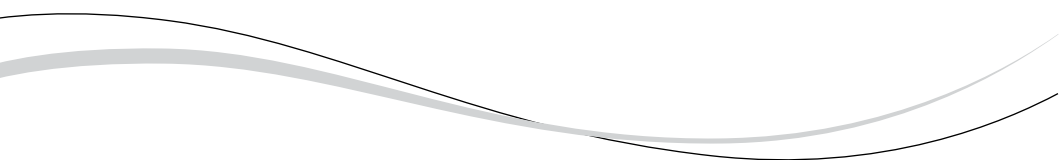
BRICS: Does It Balance between Capital and Labour?

Address to the International Forum on Economic Globalisation and Trade Unions
Beijing, China, 24 September 2014

Nowadays, we in Nepal are discussing the transformation of our socio-political landscape. We are aiming at concluding the on-going political transition by promulgating the new constitution.

In contrast to the European or Chinese model of revolution, we have chosen our own path for radical change. Our change is the outcome of collaborative efforts of two competing Classes – the class of the Haves and that of the Have-nots! It brought about a historical political change, but it is yet to trigger a socio-economic and cultural transformation.

The movement concluded with the establishment of rights, but is yet to create an environment in which the rights can be realised. Most importantly, the hegemony of the anti-working class is yet to end.



*Distinguished Chairperson,
Fellow Delegates, Comrades!*

We are participating in the International Forum on Economic Globalisation and Trade Unions; marking its 10th episode. I recall that this forum was established in 2004 and had set an aim to promote mutual understanding and cooperation between the world's trade unions in the context of economic globalisation.

While revisiting its footsteps in October 11, 2004, I found a quote published in the China Daily's online edition of Comrade Wang Zhaoguo; the then Chairman of the ACFTU-

"All trade unions and international trade union organizations should respect every country's model for the operation of their trade unions and the national development policy based on their national reality.

To this end, the trade union movement should overcome differences in ideology, culture and religion and international affiliation, and promote exchanges and dialogues between trade unions, seek common ground while putting aside differences, strengthen solidarity, enhance friendship and promote co-operation!"

A decade later, while addressing this forum, I find the quote of Chinese comrade still relevant.

The same headline of the China Daily "Trade unions launch Beijing Consensus" caught my attention.

I assume it must be the common position of our solidarity and departure point of our common journey. The 'Consensus' in my understanding is, "putting working class in the centre, realising fundamental rights of

workers and caring more for their interests. We have to practice our own model of unionism in order to expand the working class hegemony over the prevalent socio and political economy.”

Let me congratulate the ACFTU for organising this forum of trade unions from a large diverse family. Here in Beijing, let me ask a humble question to you, delegates, within and beyond the People’s Republic of China (PRC): “Colleagues, how far have we been able to materialise the Beijing Consensus of 2004?” Let us think.

No doubt the ACFTU has given much more importance to make it successful and meaningful. As I recalled, on two occasions of 2006 and 2008, the then CPC General Secretary and then President of the PRC Hu Jintao addressed the Forum and met all delegates. If I am not wrong, on one occasion, the present President Xi Jinping who was then Vice President of the PRC had addressed the Forum. I have seen a wide range of senior officials of the PRC along with high profile scholars participating in the Forum.

It signifies the importance given by your side. Congratulations, comrades!

Over a period of a decade, we in Nepal are following the interesting discussion under this broad theme of ‘Globalisation and Trade Unions’. We are witnessing a beautiful contour of themes, which were chosen year by year. I would begin with the departure point:

2004- “Beijing Consensus”

2005- “Strategy and Measures to Raise Unionization Rate” and
“Trade Unions and Poverty Eradication in the Contest of Globalization”

2006- “Building Harmonious Labour Relations for Common Development”

2008- “Sustainable Development, Decent Work and Role of the Trade Unions”

- 2009- "Scientific Development, Decent Work and Workers' Rights & Interests"
- 2010- "International Financial Crisis and Role of Trade Unions"
- 2011- ...
- 2012- "Respecting Labour, Safeguarding Rights"
- 2013- "Equal Opportunities, Common Development"
- 2014- "Reform Development Dream"

In all these endeavours, my own union is lucky to have participated in three episodes: in 2010, the then Secretary General had addressed the Forum. I was a participant last year and again this year. I would like to note that we from GEFONT give high priority to your initiatives.

Comrades, we are closely watching an interesting development taking place in the world economic regime. Four large economies of the world initiated a consolidation. In 2009, BRIC was founded reaching a consensus on promoting the reform of the global financial institution, which by 2010, converted into BRICS. It is expected that China would be the largest economy of the world by 2018; while the remaining BRICS members are also equally progressing. Following the establishment of BRICS Development Bank and BRICS Business Council, we saw your efforts to set up a BRICS trade union. As a unionist, it is a noticeable phenomenon for me.

The formation of BRICS and its financial institutions have encouraged me to compare it with the Washington Consensus and Bretton Woods system. It further encourages me to make a point - do we consider BRICS as the process to answer the Bretton Woods's world? If it is the case, let me put another point as food for thought - how does it bring down inequality, which we are confronting now? How does it value the dignity of the working people? How does it balance between Capital and Labour?

China is the northern neighbour of our country and Nepal lies in the western south of your country. We are small; almost 65 times smaller than entire China.

However, we have travelled through many ups and downs for the betterment of the working class. Even in our lifetime, my generation of unionists have participated in three larger popular movements. In 1979, our movement effected little change, but in 1990 it brought an absolute monarchy into the limits of a constitutional framework. The inequality and political instability instigated yet another cycle of upheaval and in April 2006 an uprising addressed it by abolishing the century long Shah Dynasty. Nepal is now a Federal Democratic Republic!

Nowadays, we in Nepal are discussing the transformation of our socio-political landscape. We are aiming at concluding the on-going political transition by promulgating the new constitution. In contrast to the European or Chinese model of revolution, we have chosen our own path for radical change. Our change is the outcome of collaborative efforts of two competing Classes – the class of the Haves and that of the Have-nots! It brought about a historical political change, but it is yet to trigger a socio-economic and cultural transformation. The movement concluded with the establishment of rights, but is yet to create an environment in which the rights can be realised. Most importantly, the hegemony of the anti-working class is yet to end.

Thus, we have drawn a conclusion that the transformation of our society can be attained by Building Workers' Power.

Again with the BRICS Union set-up, I saw long list of your engagement: almost four times in a year! Shall we consider it as the new tool for South-South Cooperation?

Compared to various trade union blocks: TUAC of OECD to the pan-European's ETUC; and sometimes the Common Wealth Nation's union groups to the *Platform of NIC countries*, the entire Africas and Americas

union groups, we are keen to learn in what ways the BRICS unions would contribute to the global trade union movement.

Comrades, maybe it would be a bit early to tag it as a question; however I feel this is pertinent.

Large economies may have their say here and there. Isn't it time to assure smaller but associated economies peripheral to the larger economies such as China and India? At least, is there any scope of engagement with BRICS unions from our end?

In South Asia, we are clubbing inside SARTUC, inviting all trade unions who wish to be its part.

Reform, Development and Dream - it can be strengthened through South-to-South cooperation!

I thank you for your cordial invitation to us!



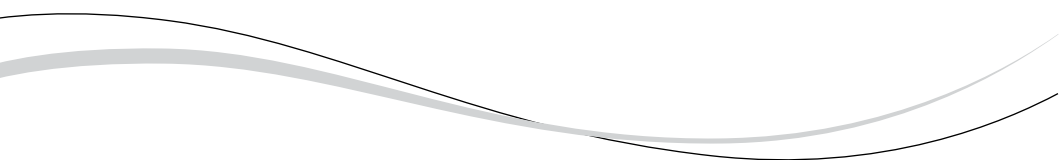
Labour should not to be Left at the Mercy of the Market

Speech Delivered at the Inaugural Session of the Third World Congress of ITUC
Berlin, Germany, 20 May 2014

Building workers' power is a key for the transformation. And, the issue, which I am mentioning here, is the key to build workers' power.

As a vibrant union movement in our part of world, we in GEFONT are urging our transitional state to balance between labour and capital, if not worker friendly, at least to be neutral with the assurance of minimum wages, social protection and welfare measures. It is a pity to have to mention that of the two investors in our world of work, most of the state machinery including ours, have always stood in favour of one, while abusing the latter!

It must be checked and brought into balance.



Dear Comrades, Sisters, Brothers, Colleagues and Friends,

Let me salute you from the country of the high Himalayas and share with you the greetings which I carried from the workers who are creating wealth for societies ranging from Afghanistan to Zambia, and from cold north to the extremely hot gulf states!

Berlin and Germany - we remember you in various ways!

- We learnt about you from the great Karl Marx and Engels to Karl Kautsky and Bernstein! The Red Rosa Luxemburg to the moderate Willy Brant!
- We remember you under the dark shadow of the devastating World War I, World War II - you with your extreme pains, dividing your own people by creating the long wall in Berlin!
- We remember you again, as the unifying element when you dismantled the Berlin Wall over 25 years back!

We salute you today as the host of this august assembly. Thank you DGB, thank you Berlin!

Listening to the ITUC General Secretary, Comrade Sharan Burrow, I have no issue left to contradict her, but offer a few supplementary points.

We are thankful to the ITUC for recognising the tireless effort of Nepali Sherpas, in campaigning to save the climate and our beautiful planet. Establishing the award in the name of a fallen Nepali comrade- Dorjee Khatri, who was killed just one month back by an avalanche in Mt Everest, is an honour to our heroes and their sacrifice for the common cause!

In bullet points, let me second the report of the General Secretary:

- Does GEFONT support the 'Count Us In' campaign for gender parity in our union movement? Yes, undoubtedly!
- Are we ready to join a campaign to end modern day slavery against migrant workers in Gulf States and plus? Yes, we do!
- Do we agree with the campaign of union growth? Yes, of course, Yes!
- Do we fight for ensuring human dignity? Yes, we are fired up!
- Do we favour the climate campaign? Absolutely, yes! We echo the slogan: Jobs and Jobs! There are no jobs in a dead planet!

How to forward these tasks then?

I would just say it in a sentence- it can be attained by Building Workers' Power!

Just two months back GEFONT convened its sixth national congress and we echoed the ITUC theme, Build Workers Power! Our theme says- Transformation: By Building Workers' Power!

What do we mean by transformation and the building of workers' power?

- Establishment of a state that would be free from the clutches of the over-voiced and bring itself down to the voiceless
- Building a society in which the weak and marginalised would not be further weakened but would have an opportunity to climb up the ladder of progress; a society that would open doors to a dignified, prosperous and creative life for the workers.

As workers, our dreams are very simple:

- Some savings from our earnings after the fulfilment of daily needs to address emergencies, which are actually the state's responsibility but it doesn't fulfil them

- A piece of encouraging news about the redress for such issues as pregnancy related deaths in rural Nepal or dowry deaths in the southern plains, not just the news of VIPs being taken aboard for treatment in an air-ambulance.

Thirty persons per hundred are unemployed and some 30 percent of the total population is poor in my country. We want to tell the world that we wish to see the progress of our society measured against the income of the working class, not against the names of those billionaires listed in the Forbes magazine!

We want the concerned ones to be reminded once again that an unequal society stunted under the shadow of high-rise buildings is not what we are struggling for. And we do not accept any show of progress built on the deprivation of the weak.

Thus we are demanding a balance between those who get sick because they consume more, much more than they need; and those who get sick because they lack even the minimum, which they desperately need to survive!

If we emphasise Growth, we think it is insufficient. Equal distribution is a must to make our society healthier. We need to transform our society - the society, which has just made its departure from an agrarian character to a new track of possibilities.

Comrades,

Building workers' power is a key for the transformation. And, the issue which I am mentioning here is the key to build workers' power.

As a vibrant union movement in our part of world, we in GEFONT are urging our transitional state to balance between labour and capital, if not worker friendly, at least to be neutral with the assurance of minimum wages, social protection and welfare measures. It is a pity to have to mention that of the two investors in our world of work, most of the state

machinery including ours, have always stood in favour of one, while abusing the latter!

It must be checked and brought into balance.

Colleagues,

Our society is at the crossroads! Where to go now? One leads us to the hell of market fundamentalism and the other definitely guides us toward at least coordination between the two forces. We want at least the state to stand as a fair regulatory mechanism between two investors in the world of work- capital and the labour.

Capital should not be left unchecked, and labour should not to be left at the mercy of the market!

The fight for a better Nepal will continue simultaneously with the fight for a better world. Let's move ahead together in solidarity with determined efforts.

Thank you very much!

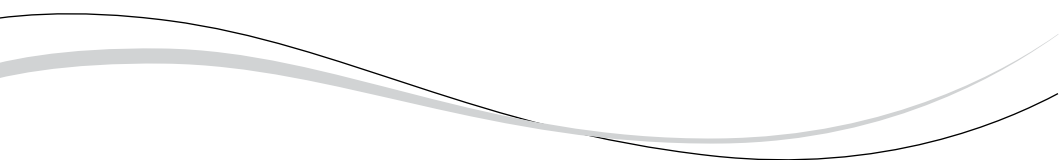


Solidarity to Confédération Générale du Travail

Solidarity Speech to the Fiftieth Congress of Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT)
France, 13 March 2013

As you did in the history, we are trying our best to insert our rights in the yet to be completed new constitution. We have as well defined that the “Right to work, Right to a wage, Right to equality and Right to freedom” as the four core rights of the working class.

We are of the opinion that decent employment and social protection is the key manifestation of these rights. However, we also need a fifth ‘R’ which refers to the ‘Representation!’ Representation of working class people is vital in dialogue and decision making in order to attain the ‘four’ rights.



Dear Comrades,

It was an immense pleasure receiving your cordial invitation to participate in the 50th Congress! On behalf of the 1,177 million Nepali labour forces, let me salute you and your Congress delegates from the country of the world's highest peak, Mt. Everest!

The fine tradition of struggling unionism was the key to keep our attention on the CGT movement. Your experience transmitted much inspiration to us. Be it the heroic struggle of the communard of Paris or the sensational ups and downs of the French Revolution, all have guided our socio-political movement towards liberty, fraternity and equality. We salute your brave predecessors who contributed to build workers' power.

The building of workers' power didn't limit itself within the boundary of the French Republic. It escalated further beyond! Your experience is one of the most quoted one in our speeches, addresses and in documentation.

We, as one of the young but promising progressive union movement, are closely watching your every step and contribution in the international trade union movement, whether you were at the driving seat of the WFTU or beyond. After your departure from the WFTU, let us remember we had exchanged our mutual concepts on how to engineer a new breed of an international union body. To this end, I personally would like to recall the moment when GEFONT and CGT both had been involved in the consultation of the Contact Group composed of the General Secretaries of the then ICFTU and WCL together with dozens of representatives plus other independent national centres worldwide. The creation of ITUC in November 2006 is, no doubt, a wise step forward to unify unionism globally. It is a creation of an umbrella body of world trade unions with multiple identities and progressive in character! The role played by CGT

and GEFONT, from Europe and South Asia respectively, in the initiation to this end would no way be underestimated. Rather we have to feel proud of it!

The experience and the contributions of GEFONT and CGT are not comparable. You have over a century long rich history, and GEFONT is carrying a young experience of only a quarter of a century!

As mentioned in your history-

“21st century unions and unionism are the heirs to over one hundred and fifty years of industrial action which has proved the validity of this concept: to unite in order to resist, and, beyond, to unite to promote social progress”

We definitely are the heirs of one of the varieties of the global working class movement active in our part of world - the new breed which is young and vibrant!

The socio-economic and political agenda coined during your first republic- “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity” to your rights asserted in the constitution of your fourth republic-

“Everyone has the right to work and to secure a job;

Everyone may defend their rights and interests through trade union action and belong to the union of their choice;

Every worker participates, through his/her representatives, in collectively determining working condition and in company management”

- are a source of inspiration for our unionism as well as the socio-political movement.

As you know, Nepal has a history of thousands of years of monarchical regime. Nepali people have been suppressed for 104 years by the tyranny of the Rana oligarchy followed by the oppression of the 250 years long Shah Dynasty. Keeping aside our grandparents' struggle, my generation of unionists has bravely fought in three major political movements (1979, 1990, and 2006) to abolish the feudal system and establish a republic for genuine social transformation. We succeeded to overthrow all kinds of hereditary successor systems from May 28, 2008 in our political life.

As you did in the history, we are trying our best to insert our rights in the yet to be completed new constitution. We have as well defined that the "Right to work, Right to a wage, Right to equality and Right to freedom" as the four core rights of the working class. We are of the opinion that decent employment and social protection is the key manifestation of these rights. However, we also need a fifth 'R' which refers to the 'Representation!' Representation of working class people is vital in dialogue and decision making in order to attain the four rights.

We know you are carrying out your struggle to develop and stabilise your types of socialism. You are truly confronting the economic crisis, which would endanger your social values. We note that the income inequalities have risen in your country as well. Citing an analysis made by *Observatoire des inégalités* we learn that in the last ten years the average annual income of the poorest 10% has risen by €610 between 1999 and 2009, while the richest 10% rose by €8,190.

We are sure your Congress will be able to find a practical solution to address such issues.

Here in Nepal, we are confronting various odds as well. Our newly born Republic is still in a vulnerable situation. The prolonged political transition is contributing to unwanted side effects. The gap between the haves and the have-nots is widening. We are experiencing the ramifications and effects of the decade-long insurgency now. Violence is dangerously being socialised and impunity is reigning.

Exploiting the opportunity of your 50th Congress, we are expecting to share more our struggles, sorrows and achievements and to learn much more from your members. However, due to unwanted technical difficulties, we failed to participate in your august ceremony.

We note here an apology for our inability to join you and extend heartfelt thanks for the invitation.

Let us wish you all a grand success of your congress!

Long live CGT- GEFONT's solidarity!!

Thank you!!!



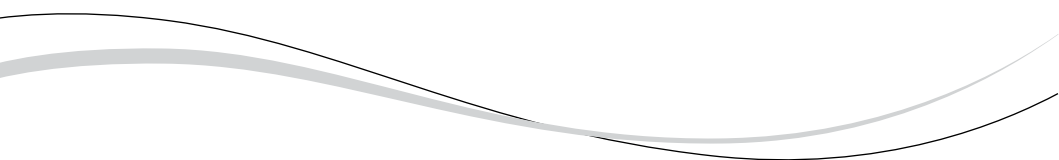
If You Desire Peace, Cultivate Justice

Address to the 100th Session of the International Labour Conference
UN Building, Geneva, Switzerland, 09 June 2011

In the inaugural speech, ambassador Somavia mentioned, "As we celebrate our 100th session, our world of work is certainly in turmoil!" He shared some figures such as 3,500 million people could not have the same income as 61 million people.

His conclusion is that unfair globalization has systematically increased inequality almost everywhere in the last 30 years, and this is definitely reflected in this figure as well. I do firmly second his point.

Brother Somavia, on your question "Can we, will we, do we want to make a difference?" I have a mixed response - Yes and No!



Chairperson,

In the cricket world, the number '100' has a significant meaning. The players receive a wide range of congratulations and inspiration by their well-wishers through them saying, "Guys, you did it! Congrats for hitting a century score!"

Today, let me extend my congratulations to the ILO for reaching a score of a century; the score of ILC sessions - the 100th session - on behalf of the entire Nepali working class, the unions combined into our unique platform known as the Joint Trade Union Coordination Centre (JTUCC) and my own National Centre, the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT)!

No doubt, the ILO was established in a stormy period of world history. And, it was a journey that started aiming to address differently the on-going fierce class-fighting between the two; the Haves and the Have-nots. The ILO is completing its benchmark of nearly a century. In this period, the World of Work has changed tremendously. Also with an interesting change that shifted the focus of the world labour movement visibly from the developed world to the world of Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The global south is a house of an overwhelming mass of working populations composed of largely the young and youth. The youth survive on a great dream, a future with decent work and if they feel their dream is shattered, they dare to revolt anywhere and in any way!

In the inaugural speech, ambassador Somavia mentioned, "As we celebrate our 100th session, our world of work is certainly in turmoil!" He shared some figures such as 3,500 million people could not have the same income as 61 million people. His conclusion is that unfair globalisation has systematically increased inequality almost everywhere

in the last 30 years, and this is definitely reflected in this figure as well. I do firmly second his point.

Brother Somavia, on your question “Can we, will we, do we want to make a difference?” I have a mixed response - Yes and No!

Honestly, Chair, I doubt this, looking here at the slow delivery of this specialised UN Body!

“Can we address the frustration of our working population caused by social injustice; the injustice, which is even against the values of the ILO?” Here I echo the ILO Century Project’s theme, “If you desire peace, cultivate justice”

Let us think how to sync our programmes, the actions and the very structure of our own ILO to accommodate the change, and the change which is looming in the near future!

Chair,

As a workers’ delegate from one of the least developed countries, we have also similar issues in our menu. This year, the ILC is discussing social protection, extending rights to working domestic workers, issues of undervalued labour administration and labour inspection, and discrimination.

We too are discussing the modality and scheme to run a newly initiated social security system for all workers. We have reached a landmark agreement with the employers’ organisations despite some hue and cry from some quarters of the business community. Let me convey our sincere thanks to the ILO for its cooperation in our exercise for labour legislations’ reform.

Chair, still we Nepalis are struggling hard to bid goodbye to our prolonged political transition. A Herculean job from institutionalisation of the first republic of this century to the declaration of a new constitution, which is friendly to the world of work, is in progress but slow!

As the international community knows better, the decade long insurgency has shown the road to Nepali youth to the international job market. We are heavily affected by unsafe jobs. The majority of our people work in precarious jobs. A sizeable number is limited only to domestic work.

Thus, for us, domestic work means a job waiting for Nepali workers at home and abroad. That's why we know what exploitation means in this particular sector! That's the reason why I urge the conference to mark this 100th session by adopting a new convention for domestic workers without hesitation!

With regards to fighting discrimination, I would like to mention proudly here about our perfectly inclusive legislature-parliament that consists of one-third women's representation. Theoretically, there is no single void left against equality. However, we are sorry to record that we are much weaker in effective implementation! We have also lost the balance between policy and action, male and female, over-powered and marginalised sections of our society.

Here, I acknowledge another agenda of this conference, labour administration. It makes sense in our case as well since we have been demanding an all-powerful National Labour Commission for quick monitoring and delivery of justice.

Chair,

I have asked by the entire Nepali working masses and their trade unions to extend sincere thanks on their behalf. The workers Electoral College has entrusted my national centre and elected my comrade to the ILO Governing Body as one of the Deputies. Let me thank you, colleagues. I swear we will not disappoint you! We will try our best!

Let me wish you a grand success of the 100th session of the International Labour Conference!

Thank you!



How Far have We been Able to Come Forward after the Creation of ITUC?

Address to the Second World Congress of ITUC
Vancouver, Canada, 23 June 2010

We thought our engine, the global trade union body, won't be as effective as it is to cope with the looming crisis in the near future. Thus, we have created our own ITUC claiming that it is neither a mere merger of two international trade union bodies nor is it the "United Nations" of all trade unions! It is a new trade union movement, which will garner solidarity for the comrades in difficulty and mobilise a strong peoples' movement challenging all odds everywhere from east to west and north to south.

Four years down the road since we have founded the ITUC, we have travelled through many ups and downs. If my way of thinking makes any sense, Comrades, I propose to revisit our young past and assess how far we have been able to come after we have formed this institution.



*President, General Secretary,
Comrades, Colleagues, Friends, Sisters and Brothers!*

I have brought a message of solidarity from the 11.18 millions workforce of my country which is popularly known as the country of Mt Everest! The birthplace of the world famous ambassador of peace, our very own Gautama Buddha!

Since the last decade, however, such a precious identity was overshadowed by a cycle of violence. A new signature, a country of rebellion, has been imposed over our beloved peace-loving country.

I am from the same country where about 700 Nepalis, out of the 36.7% unemployed, leave Nepal everyday in search of a better job; while, at home, their relatives receive seven dead bodies on an average each day.

“Now the people...” I relate to this very theme, brother General Secretary, remembering those families whose dearest ones have lost lives already and many those who may lose their precious life anytime now in the process of producing wealth for those filthy dudes who always consume a lot but work never!

My country is passing through a painful process of transition now. Transformation to a new horizon is seemingly possible with equal proximity of anarchy and regression. On top of the global crisis, we are surviving with a deadly local crisis and struggling hard to find every possible way towards social justice.

And, our mantra for social justice is - “Workers friendly Constitution; Social Security for all workers and full-fledged democracy”.

In this light, I endorse the resolution of this Congress, **'Now the People, from the crisis to global justice'** and congratulate Comrade General Secretary for this excellent work. Brother Guy, GEFONT will remember your wonderful efforts to unify the world trade union movement forever!

Colleagues,

When we were launching ITUC, we realised that the centralised economic model of the Soviet Era didn't work and that so-called globalisation would fall short of addressing workers issues. We have to change the tide of the present day Casino Capitalism, which is just a symbolic economy and not the real one. It has widened the gap between those who toil and those who only consume.

We thought our engine, the global trade union body, won't be as effective as it is to cope with the looming crisis in the near future. Thus, we have created our own ITUC claiming that it is neither a mere merger of two international trade union bodies nor is it the "United Nations" of all trade unions! It is a new trade union movement, which will garner solidarity for the comrades in difficulty and mobilise a strong peoples' movement challenging all odds everywhere from east to west and north to south. It will give a call to force out Rascals and create a new History by freeing ourselves from the legacy of cold-war era. We declared that a new history has begun as a new dawn in the labour movement, where there will be sufficient access of the working people to the decision making bodies from the developing world too!

Four years down the road since we have founded the ITUC, we have travelled through many ups and downs. If my way of thinking makes any sense, Comrades, I propose to revisit our young past and assess how far we have been able to come after we have formed this institution.

I have no doubt in our efforts. But still my worry is how can we believe and sustain the movement that hardly reciprocates our challenge!

There is a famous quote in my country that is *taaja prasnako baasi uttar* or a stale answer for a fresh question! No doubt we are facing a series of fresh challenges and if we try to respond to them with out-dated traditional rhetoric, it will never work, I am sure!

Our leadership composition, documents and policies, and our activities and outcomes are the complete package of solution to the problem. If all these are frozen at status-quo, then it is too hard to prove that we have had Change!

Colleagues,

We have to dare to change our course now! A young but experienced leadership is the call of the day. Let's respect our old guards by learning from their experience and seeking necessary advice.

Is it possible, Comrades? If it is possible, transformation from the crisis to global justice is not only inevitable; is it very much possible!

The time has come now, so let's chart out a strategy as per the need of the day!

Finally,

Prior to the Copenhagen Summit on Climate Change, the Government of Nepal had organised a Cabinet meeting at the base of the Mt. Everest to draw the attention of the world. Inspired by it, I put forward a proposal here in this forum, President, and that is to hoist the ITUC flag at the highest peak of the world. With no cost, my union- GEFONT is ready to shoulder this responsibility. We will carry the ITUC flag to the top of the Mt. Everest in March 2011, if this Congress agrees! ¹

Colleagues, I have brought the sincere thanks with a token of love to Brother Guy Ryder for his successful tenure. Brother Guy, GEFONT will always remember your wonderful efforts to unify the world trade union movement!

Since there is no competing candidate for the post of General Secretary for the next tenure, let me congratulate in advance Sister Sharan Burrow and give my token of love to her. Sister Sharan, GEFONT will follow your new leadership to make our ITUC more dynamic.

Thank you all for listening to me!

Context and Intended Meaning:

1. **Trade Union in Mount Everest:** As proposed by the GEFONT President, the Second World Congress of ITUC decided to hoist its flag on the top of the Mount Everest to draw attention of the world to the issue of climate change. To meet the objective, then President of ITUC Sharan Burrow and General Secretary Guy Ryder handed over the ITUC flag to GEFONT President. The flag was given to Dorje Khatri, UNITRAV-GEFONT leader, amidst a function on 10 January 2011. Dorje caressed the Mount Everest in May and hoisted the flag on the top.

VVI

MISCELLANEOUS





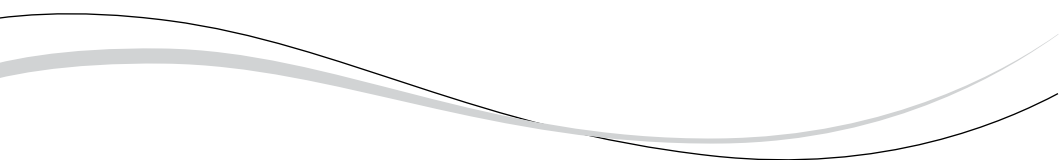




Congratulation to the Right Honourable President

Man Mohan Labour Building
Putalisadak, Kathmandu, 29 October 2015

The Legislature-Parliament elected Bidhya Devi Bhandari the President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal on 29 October 2015. She is the first woman President in the history of Nepal. This statement was issued to congratulate her on the occasion.



History has taken a turn. Or, let's say, history has set a new course. After the promulgation of the New Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, the country has got her **First President**, the **first ever woman** president in her history. And, the President is Bidhya Devi Bhandari.

On May 30, 2006 the reinstated dissolved Parliament, the House of Representatives, unanimously adopted a **resolution of commitment** with the provision of 33% women representation in all State bodies including the political parties. It also provisioned to provide citizenship to children also in the names of their mothers. The resolution outlawed all discriminatory laws against woman and committed to end violence against women. Many of us had hardly assumed that it would be possible in reality. But what was impossible some years back has become possible now! The first Constituent Assembly elections of 2009 upheld the provision of 33% representation of women by electing them to the Assembly. The discriminatory laws began to be repealed or are amended. Everybody hailed such a positive change through the parliamentary **resolution of commitment**. And, we are proud to share that the resolution of commitment was tabled in the Parliament by the then UML lawmaker Comrade Bidhya Devi Bhandari.

And, it's the comrade who has been elected as the first President after the promulgation of the new constitution and first ever woman president of the country. She is taking an oath of office and secrecy today!

I, on behalf GEFONT and its nearly 400,000 members, would like to congratulate President-elect Right Honourable Bidhya Devi Bhandari on this occasion. We congratulate and thank her party the CPN UML and parties in the ruling coalition for her election to the country's highest position.

GEFONT is proud to note that Right Honourable Bhandari was the Head of GEFONT's Central Women Workers' Department from May 1993 to April 2000. Her role in the position for seven years contributed a lot to promote gender equality within the organisation and mainstream it in the trade unions. It will always remain remarkable in the trade unions' history. Her role to promote trade union leadership through the TRUE Campaign was undoubtedly inspiring. We believe that her election to the position is an indication that no one will undermine a trade union background. The entire Nepali working class is feeling honoured and proud of the election of Comrade Bhandari to the presidential position. I, as the president of JTUCC and its more than two million members, heartily congratulate her once again.

We believe that the new president will be able to executive the new constitution effectively cementing national harmony and unity and respecting, and protecting sovereignty and national integrity in today's challenging context.

I wish her every success!



A Tribute to Nelson Mandela

Condolence Message Posted on the African National Congress Live Page
Opened during the Death of Legendry Hero Nelson Mandela, Former President of South Africa
08 December2013

The sad moment I am witnessing is part of the jubilant ups and dismaying down of our political heroes. The wonderful moment to me is your untiring and never-stopping journey towards the highest peak.

Despite your call not to make you a mystical and mythical hero, the world is considering you as an eternal source of inspiration.



Dear Mandela,

You are the first President of the world to whom I have sent congratulations for the first time in my life in the capacity of General Secretary of the Nepali national trade union centre- GEFONT! Despite my deep desire to meet you in person, I never had the chance. Though I could not meet you, you are in my feelings and your untiring struggle for justice has been a reference for me to get inspired and stride ahead to accomplish the mission of the trade union movement in Nepal. To keep the flame of rebellion against every injustice alive in my heart, I have chosen you as the source of inspiration. And you are my inspiration!

I have painted many such slogans in your name as “Free Nelson Mandela! Down with Apartheid Regime!” Those were in my young days when I was struggling against the partyless system imposed by the absolute monarchy; and I was fighting for freedom and democracy in my country!

We often like to compare South Africa with our country Nepal. Both the countries achieved political freedom in 1990. With the freedom, you showed your statesmanship and led your nation towards a stable democracy, successfully concluding the political transition. But we failed, Madiba, to manage our political change and were forced to enter the new cycle of terrible violent conflict. Since 2006, we have entered the phase of peace building and it is still to reap results. We have been referring to you and your path of success in building peace and leading the country to prosperity. Our struggle is yet to reach the destination.

Madiba,

The sad moment I am witnessing is part of the jubilant ups and dismaying down of our political heroes. The wonderful moment to me is your untiring and never-stopping journey towards the highest peak.

Despite your call not to make you a mystical and mythical hero, the world is considering you as an eternal source of inspiration.

Today, the whole world is sadly missing you. I am one of the millions who is eager to pay extreme homage. Long live Madiba! My heartfelt tribute to you! Mandela is not only a person but also a movement. The world has terribly missed you and will be missing you ever.

Let me share my deep condolence to the entire South African sisters and brothers and bereaved family.

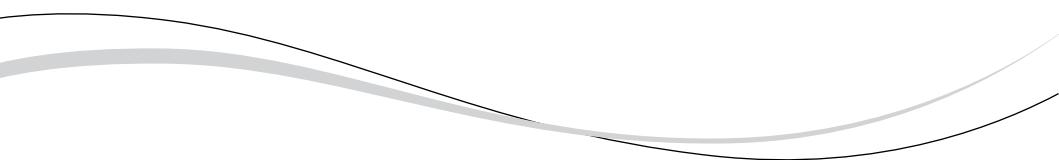


Sudden Departure of a 'Veteran' Unionist

Obituary Delivered in Memory of Late Madhav Neupane
Lagankhel, Lalitpur, 10 November 2011

“Ask not my name
Nor if you know me
The dreams I have had
Will grow without me
Alive no more
I will go where my dreams have shown me.
Those who carry on the fight
Will plant other roses
All will remember me...”

*- Poem by and found in the pocket a deceased
unknown El Salvadorean freedom fighter guerrilla
Dedicated to Comrade Madhav Neupane*



Family Members of Comrade Madhav and Colleagues,

His life always took sudden turns - time and again his life came across many unexpected phases. But this year, the incident of October 29 was not only unexpected but it was shocking and painful as well. That day, not only GEFONT, but the whole Nepali trade union movement was shocked. GEFONT lost one of its founders and the Nepali trade union lost a tireless fighter.

He is none other than our very own Comrade Madhav Neupane, who took his last breath on October 29, at 7:30 am in *Blue Cross Hospital, Tripureshor* and he left us forever.

While I was talking to Dr. Shilpakar on October 28, I remembered the sudden decision of October 25. Along with our ex-chair Comrade Mukunda, Comrade Umesh, Comrade Uddhav and Comrade Lamsal, I had visited Neupane's home that day. He was resting and was obviously happy with our presence.

"How are you now, comrade?" we asked.

"Yes!!" he replied. It seemed he didn't get our question. We were to learn later that due to his illness, he was unable to understand most things.

We decided not to have tea but he told his daughter to serve us cold drinks. He again said something to her. This time she came with medical records and test reports and gave it to me.

I was touched. Most of my colleagues from GEFONT think that I know 'everything' due to their "over confidence" in me. I guess Neupane, too, did think like that.

"How can I check this?"

I am a zero regarding medical knowledge but still, I picked up the reports and checked it out. 'Tuber Coloma..... Brain... second stage..... fair condition at discharge! Something like that was written. Comrade Umesh looked at it once and we said to him, "Everything will be fine, don't worry. Tuberculosis is nothing in the 21st century. This is not even communicable."

Poor us! We didn't know that meeting would be our last meeting with him. Comrade Mukunda who is a bit more knowledgeable about health, medications, yoga etc, shared a lot of things. We too added our experience on the matter, things we had seen and felt around us.

We returned but we didn't even guess in our wildest dreams that Neupane was in the last stage of his life. We felt he will be alright. We had even told him that within three months, he will be healthy enough to go back to work. Therefore, on that very day, we spoke with the UML Health Department Chief, Comrade Krishna Gopal, about various aspects like possible medications and financial help. We decided to help Neupane through a government fund that is provided to victims of specific diseases such as tuberculosis, cancer, heart and kidney ailment. Comrade Umesh even assigned this responsibility to the NIHWU President.

But the process couldn't even get started. That same night, his condition worsened. Given the packed emergency services in most of the Hospitals and Nursing Homes, his family members finally admitted him after great difficulty in *Hames* hospital and his treatment started. After one day, he was taken back to his first hospital, *Blue Cross*.

However, all this was of no use. His daughter remembers, "On the 29th, dad was very serious. At around 8 pm, he told mom to go home. Before he was taken to the ventilator, he told me, 'Dad is going now!'. After that, he was taken to the ventilator and never returned."

The start of a veteran unionist...

He used to say – “I came into the labour movement without any plans.”

In the middle of 1979, there was a vacancy for trainees in different posts in Hotel Soaltee. As soon as he came to know it, he decided to join the hotel. After a series of interviews, he got the job of 'Steward' for two hundred rupees per month.

The training was not at all easy. He remembered that “[they] were given heavy trays to carry on [their] left hand and had to walk through the grounds for more than 20 minutes. In the initial days, [he] felt [he] didn't want to take this job.”

Even his co-workers were very supportive in those days. The deep memories of Comrade Neupane revealed the bitter experiences of the initial phase of his career. “This boy won't survive in this job,” they kept on saying and they even stopped him from approaching the guests. So he sometimes felt like running from the Garden Terrace Restaurant, his first job ever.

But Soaltee Hotel was waiting for a veteran unionist, and this might be the reason Comrade Neupane decided to stay and survive in the job and handled all the difficulties. After that, not only was Soaltee Hotel blessed with an honest staff, but the trade union movement of Nepal also got one of its finest leaders.

Spontaneous involvement in the movement....

The same year, the workers of Soaltee Hotel started a labour action. The then general manager, D.S. Dilli, had misbehaved with a trainee manager, *Dharmaraj Kafle*, and the case was taken seriously by the workers. Comrade Neupane remembered that “[they] were all gathered in the premises of the hotel and leaving after [their] duty. Madan Amatya led the action, who was a trainee along with [him] but as Captain. The news was all over the hotel, and all the workers, even those who were

off-duty joined in [their] movement. And a struggle committee was established then and there, which was led by the then student leader *Jaganath Thapaliya* working at the hotel.”

The movement continued for five days and after that the police stepped in. Many of the leaders were arrested and they were locked up in Mahendra Police Club, *Baggikhana* and Tripureshor Police Club. This was the first time he ever went to ‘experience’ the lock-up.

“After that incident, I knew that unity is the biggest strength we all can have. If we are united, we will never lose”. These are the words of Comrade Neupane. “The day after, the management and government decided to take charge of the case. They promised to punish the guilty general manager and meet the other demands of the workers, including the 10% service charge which was also taken seriously. This was the first movement in history where all the workers participated actively and was a historically successful event.”

Live witness of all the ups and downs of union building...

It is so obvious that ups and downs come with the life of leaders in the process of establishing a union. Some of them are bribed and sold out to bosses, and many of them dedicated themselves to the movement without caring even for the bread and butter of their family members. Comrade Neupane has seen and experienced several such ups and downs in the movement in his lifetime.

It was in the month of October and the year was 1980 when all the leaders with different ideologies from Yak and Yeti Hotel, Crystal Hotel, Soaltee Hotel and Everest Hotel got together to form a Nepal National Independent Hotel Workers Union and it established the first national conference organising committee. But before it started working, the co-coordinator of the committee, Narayan Kafle, sold out and he became inactive in the process. Another member, Dinesh Jha, was also sent to

Delhi for training for the post of manager. Neupane said, "As what I have heard, they had promised to be dedicated to the workers' cause. But they turned into renegades. After that, the committee was reorganised under the leadership of Hari Prasad Sharma."

Continuing with the movement....

He used to remember this incident frequently, and shared it in many places and even written about it in his own way.

"That incident had taken place in November 27, 1981. Many labourers were called to Baneshwor between 10 am to 12 pm. I reached there on time. We were taken to Minbhawan Campus. Then I got to know that I had already become the delegate of the national conference. We raised funds and got ready to start the conference. And the next day, the first national conference of NIHWU was inaugurated. A nine member central committee was announced under the leadership of Hari Prasad Sharma. The conference was in a threatened environment due to the presence of police but it was largely successful."

Comrade Neupane said, "After that conference, [he] got to know that if we move on by establishing our committee, we can be stronger and more active. [He] got into the union movement in an unexpected way."

And very soon, their efforts began to show results. Comrade Neupane then didn't look back. From there, he got higher posts and of course, his responsibilities were added as well. In the year 1984, he was elected as the central treasurer of the NIHWU at its Second National Conference.

After he was involved in union activities, he was punished for the first time by management in 1983. On that day, Soaltee Hotel took action when Mohan Aryal, a house-keeping worker at the airport restaurant, was accused of stealing some dollars and was kidnapped. The workers went on strike and the management declared that the demands were

fulfilled. However, *Hari Prasad Sharma* and *Madan Amatya* were fired from their jobs and Neupane was given a last warning.

Troubled Union, troubled Neupane

Even after the second national conference, NIHWU didn't have proper leadership. Many of the members went abroad and some of them left their jobs. Some changed their profession and some stayed out of contact. Soon, many important posts of the Union were vacant. Just Neupane and his 'senior', Sharma, were left in the central committee.

But the trade union movement took a happy turn. Workers at Everest Hotel, Yak and Yeti Hotel, and Blue Star Hotel, staged weeklong strikes under NIHWU's leadership. Again Soaltee Hotel was embroiled in a controversy. The management of the hotel decided to increase the costs of the cafeteria without any increment in the food allowance. None of the workers stepped into the cafeteria and the management blamed Neupane for this and honoured him with a termination letter.

It was a great shock in his life. He said, "[He] was against the injustice that management had carried out to the workers. Their salary was just Rs. 400 and the food cost was more than Rs. 240. I wasn't wrong anywhere but my fight was of no use. I lost my job in return".

Then he started the job of searching for a job. After a long process of three months, he got a job at *Van Van* restaurant. Even though the place was not comparable, the salary and other facilities were as good as Soaltee Hotel. He was jobless again after one year and in 1987, he joined *Kathmandu Hotel*. It was at his final workplace, *Hotel d' la Annapurna* where he worked till the last stage of his life.

Even in this difficult situation, Comrade Neupane was given the major responsibility of handling NIHWU. He didn't turn back and from the third national conference, he was elected as the President of NIHWU. He continued to be in the leadership position until he himself decided to quit. If he had not done so, no other person wanted to take his place.

GEFONT and its co-founder Neupane

After a decade of establishment of a central union of the manufacturing industries, NIWU, a total of four central unions including the manufacturing and general industries (NIWU), hotel (NIHWU), tourism (TWAN) and transport (ITWAN) were active. The industrial unions had gained sufficient ground, and could make visible impact on the then political movement. To get all the unions together, the need for a new “umbrella” organisation was visualised. Thus, in 20th July 1989, the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT) was established. Comrade Neupane was given the responsibility of coordinating the hotel sector’s union as a founder member.

Comrade Neupane was involved in different activities of GEFONT, from its establishment to his last days. He spent a total 21 years in the service of the Confederation. He was one of the nine GEFONT founders and one of the twelve selected union educators. He represented GEFONT in different forums both at the national and international level. He was one of the four leaders of the newly launched GEFONT Veterans Network and has contributed a total 31 years of his life to cultivate the Nepali union movement.

How can we remember him?

“Neither any grievances; Nor any comments;
Let you be all right, I pray always!”

After his death, when we look back at his life, these lines perhaps mirror his image. He was the gentle and humble character who never thought about himself. His way of living is guided by a simple policy - don't care what others think about you, and don't think wrong about anyone. He never used to share his problems with anyone. It makes us feel that it is one of the reasons that a minor disease like Tuberculosis took him away so easily!

But it doesn't mean that he was an introvert. He was a straightforward man and was always optimistic. He was not at all ambitious. He didn't have the lust of position and monetary wealth. He never thought of achieving "big" and was very strong about his determination. He was happy with what he earned and was highly satisfied. Many of his competitors envy this habit of his.

Life was not easy for him. On December 3, 2006, he was humiliated by a gang of hooligans who identified themselves as "the leaders" of the then Maoist party. They accused him of some baseless matter and made false allegations. They showed how an honest and dedicated leader is envied by those who never can do something good by themselves. GEFONT stood against this incident. All the major trade unions, including NTUC, took the charge against this incident. The next day, a public forum was organised in the same place by the national trade union centres. The perpetrators apologised for the crime they had committed there; and it was promised that the people who were involved in it would be punished.

But Comrade Neupane didn't make it a personal issue. He never referred to the topic in the internal meeting of the union. Rather, he interpreted the incident as an act against the pride of unionism and the Nepali working class. He, without any unnecessary aggressiveness, asked for punishment for the accused and published it through the Hotel's notice board.

His contribution to the Nepali Trade Union movement is always worthy and memorable. He was equally active in the popular movement of 1979, 1990 and 2006.

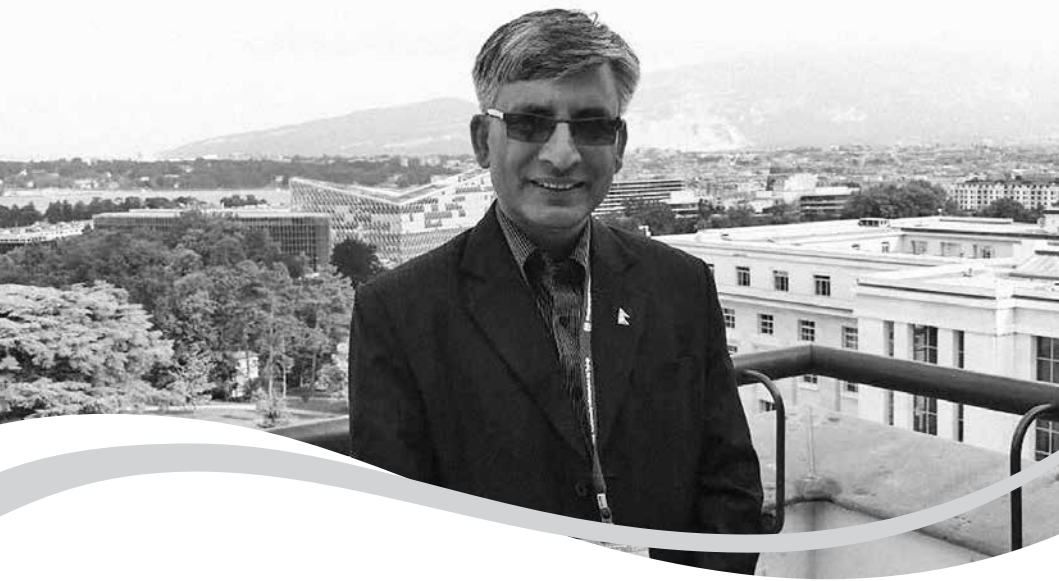
Born at *Thokarpa VDC-7, Sindhupalchok* in 21 June 1959, Neupane graduated in humanities. He resided in Imadol, Lalitpur, and was highly appreciated by CPN (UML) and was a party member from 1988. He always followed the ethics of the party and always loved NIHWU as his second home.

I pay my heartfelt tribute to the tireless GEFONT Veteran, Comrade Madhav Neupane.

We sincerely express our condolence to his wife Sharada, daughter Manisha, son Manish, father Bhuminanda, mother Sudha and the entire family. Let me clarify here that your contribution to make Madhav into Comrade Madhav is incomparable. The Nepali union movement is indebted to your great contribution!! We are equally aware of the vacuum left behind, and difficulties of the family after the sudden demise of Comrade Neupane. We will always stand with your family.

Long Live Comrade Madhav Neupane!

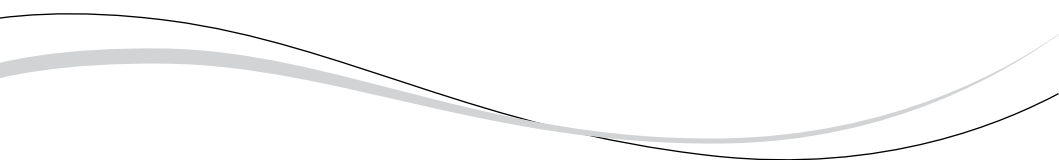
Thank you, comrades!!



Five Things That have Impacted My Work and Life

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In 1990, I together with uncles was in the middle of the movement with my comrades who ended absolute monarchy and restored liberal democracy. In 2006, our fathers and uncles were closely watching us and we were driving the fierce movement. We were proud of the movement, which fulfilled twin responsibilities - ending centuries long hereditary system of rule, and bringing violent force to the peaceful domain. In my capacity as a member of the Constituent Assembly, I personally was so proud of having the day to get a chance to say YES and vote for a Republic!



1 My ideal, my source of inspiration

There are two types of people in our world: those who have nothing, thus are their lives are wasting away in the absence of basic things to consume day by day! This category of people has a larger presence in our society and often has been ignored! And some, who have it all are destroying themselves by consuming too much, in bigger quantities than the basic! It has made our entire society sick. In economic terms, it is inequality; and in socio-political terms, it is injustice! Thinking about it and assimilating myself in the fight to make society 'healthier' has become my ideal. Every incident in my childhood which I experienced and I have seen in my way, such as moving to challenge the 'norms' of my traditional Brahmin family to feel sorry for the agony of domestic maids in feudal families of that time. It was a source of my inspiration to come to join this front!

2 The inequality that encourages me to be involved

At the age of 16 when I joined the Institute of Engineering for my higher education, I was already embraced by the great message of Change! Unknowingly, I let myself be a part of the on-going 'chaos' inside the campuses. Soon, together with unknown seniors, I dared to challenge the almighty regime of the time, making such demands of which I had hardly any knowledge. My path was to learn the state of two categories of class in society: primarily the Haves and the Have Nots. The words 'inequality' and 'fight against it' was the Mantra that I had swallowed! I didn't have much knowledge of the various ways to define equity and equality such as 'unequal equality', 'absolute equality' and 'relative equality'. I believed in a fallacy - 'why not put everything in a pot and distribute it equally to all?!' Later, I knew it was related to absolute equality, which generally distributes poverty not prosperity! Some were

uttering the words 'trickle-down'. My seniors reminded me that it was an ideology of 'unequal equality'. This philosophy paves the way for the rich to be much richer and pushes down the poor by making them poorer! And I heard the phrase again and again - "to each according to his/her work" from the great thinker Karl Marx. It was, no doubt, associated with 'relative equality'. Rich and poor both pay the State; but the rich contributes more, and the state compensates the poor. This was my departure point and it became part of my world. This background, time and again, reminds me what I am active for.

3 It's the movement in which I could trust

Trekking to the world of work, I got involved with the working poor. Besides sycophants of the then regime, there was no institution allowed to raise the collective voice of the commoner, the working people. I had learnt that transformation of society is a one-point task to end all the 'sins' of our time. Workers are the dynamic force, and work is a manifestation of economic activities and the economy is the foundation. Politics is the driving engine and freedom of organisation is the means to develop productive forces, and the building of workers' power. This education strengthened my zeal to launch a trade union movement which was materialised before the 1990 popular movement. "Get involved, organise, educate and agitate" became the daily routine. It was a common cause which brought not hundreds, but in many thousands, of the toiling mass together! Be it in the world of work inside a country or abroad, fighting for rights and lending solidarity to the needy has become a part of my life.

4 The team is the mystery behind our success

Many people perhaps have the misconception that once you are entrusted with the top job, it will be a business as usual! The post directs subordinates and work follows the person automatically. My experience reveals that this is not accurate. Regardless of who is in the team, if you fail to drive them collectively, there will no or nominal result. Each and every institution is based on teamwork, and such teamwork is born

through mutual understanding. There shouldn't be any room for your teammates to point a finger to ask, 'hey, what's the logic to make such assignments?' As in the assembly line of production, the continuous flow of work of the team to achieve expected results depends on their approval. Throughout my career in my organisation, it is the team of leaders which facilitated our every success.

5 The dream yet to materialise

"I have a Dream!" This famous statement of Martin Luther King was the vision for many. Similarly, I also have a dream - a dream of a transformed Nepali society! The ideals, the movement, the zeal, the organisation and the team – all are to materialise the dream, which is continuously affecting my work and life!

"Long years ago, we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. ... A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance."

I am still waiting for such a wonderful moment as described by the Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, in his famous address - **Tryst with Destiny**.

To bid farewell to the injustice, inequality, and state of underdevelopment of the country, I have participated in three major political movements in my short life time. Each time, I jumped into the movement accepting all repression without any regrets, cultivating within a dream of a shiny destiny. In 1979, I followed my dad and our uncles in the movement, which was just successful to question the almighty power at the time. In 1990, I together with uncles was in the middle of the movement with my comrades who ended absolute monarchy and restored liberal democracy. In 2006, our fathers and uncles were closely watching us and we were driving the fierce movement. We were proud of the movement, which fulfilled twin responsibilities - ending centuries long hereditary

system of rule, and bringing violent force to the peaceful domain. In my capacity as a member of the Constituent Assembly, I personally was so proud of having the day to get a chance to say YES and vote for a Republic! I was thinking, *'the moment has come, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends...'*. However, what we did was a job to be continued, an incomplete victory! Thus, my dream is still far from realisation; and I am waiting for the moment to celebrate. This has sufficiently impacted my work and life.

ACRONYMS

3F	Fagligt Fælles Forbund (Danish United Trade union Federation)
ACFTU	All China Federation of Trade Unions
ACTRAV	Bureau for Workers' Activities (of ILO)
ANTUF	All Nepal Federation of Trade Unions
AP	Asia Pacific Regional Organisation
ASI	Anti-Slavery International
BRICS	A group of 5 countries- Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
BWI	Building and Wood Workers' International
CA	Constituent Assembly
CBA	Collective Bargaining Agreement
CBO	Community Based Organisations
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics, Government of Nepal
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CGT	Confédération Générale du Travail
CONEP	Confederation of Nepalese Professionals
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPI	Consumer's Price Index
CPN (UML)	Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist)
CTEVT	Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training
CUPPEC	Central Union of Painters, Plumbers, Electro and Construction Workers
DGB	Confederation of German Trade Unions (<i>Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund</i>)
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
FENEPT	Federation of Nepalese Progressive Trade Unions
FES	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Germany
FNCCI	Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries
FNV	Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging (The Netherlands Trade Union Confederation)
GCC	Countries of Golf Cooperation Council

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEFONT	General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions
GFBTU	General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions
GFMD	Global Forum on Migration and Development
GON	Government of Nepal
GUF	Global Union Federations
HE	His Excellency
HKCTU	Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions
HLD	High Level Dialogue
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ICU	Intensive Care Unit
ID Card	Identity Card
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ILO GB	Governing Body of ILO
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
ITUC-AP	International Trade Union Confederation-Asia Pacific
ITUC-NAC	Nepal Affiliates' Council of International Trade Union Confederation
ITWAN	Independent Transport Workers' Association of Nepal
JTUCC	Joint Trade Union Coordination Centre
KAD	Kvindeligt Arbejderforbund i Danmark (Danish Woman Workers Union)
KAFA	KAFA (enough) Violence & Exploitation, Lebanon based NGO
KCTU	Korean Confederation of Trade Unions
KTUF	Kuwait Trade Union Federation
KWWU	Korean Woman Workers United
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
LO Denmark	The Danish Confederation of Trade Unions
LO-FTF	The Danish Trade Union Council for International Development Co-operation
LO/TCO	Secretariat of International Trade Union Development Cooperation (LO-TCO Biståndsnämnd), Sweden
ML	Marxist-Leninist (Communist Party of Nepal)

MOLTM	Ministry of Labour and Transport Management
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTU	Migrant Trade Union
MTUC	Malaysian Trade Union Congress
NC	Nepali Congress Party
NDCONT-I	National Democratic Confederation of Nepalese Trade Unions- Independent
NGO	Non- Governmental Organisation
NIC	Newly Independent Countries
NIHWU	Nepal Independent Hotel Workers' Union
NIWU	Nepal Independent Workers Union
NLFS	National Labour Force Survey
NPR	Nepali Rupee
NTUC	Nepal Trade Union Congress
NTUC –I	Nepal Trade Union Congress- Independent
NTUF	Nepal Trade Union Federation
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PRC	People's Republic of China
PSI	Public Sectors' International
SARTUC	South Asian Regional Trade Unions Council
SASK	Trade Union Solidarity Centre of Finland
SEWA	Self Employed Woman Association, India
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
SLMM	Samyukta Loktantrik Madhesi Morch (Joint Democratic Madhesi Front)
SMS	Short Message Service
SN\$	Singaporean Dollars
TUAC	Trade Union Advisory Committee of OECD
TUPI	Trade Union Policy Institute of GEFONT
TWAN	Trekking Workers' Association of Nepal

UCPNM	Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
UML	Unified Marxist-Leninist
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNI-APRO	Union Network Internationals, Asia Pacific Regional Organisation
UNITRAV	Union of Trekking, Travel, Rafting and Airline Workers
VDC	Village Development Committee
WCL	World Confederation of Labour
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
YCL	Young Communist League

With the Workers For the Workers

This book is a very good window through which to view the trade union movement in Nepal. It is of national and international significance because it captures the hopes and aspirations of the working class at key moments in Nepal's recent history. Bishnu Rimal's commitment to the struggle for workers' rights to decent work, and their place in nation building is undeniable. At times poignant, enlightening and sometimes humorous, his speeches demonstrate why the spirit of trade unionism is relevant in this day and age. Anyone interested in labour studies, trade unions and nation building will find this book a great read and resource.

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