

**Statement by Honorable Minister of Land Reform and Management,
Government of Nepal at the GEO Ministerial Summit,
30 November 2007 in Cape Town, South Africa**

Respected Chairperson,
Honorable Ministers,
Heads of delegations,
Ladies and gentlemen

First of all, on behalf of the Government and the people of Nepal, I would like to extend my warm greetings to Your Excellencies and the distinguished delegates assembled here. I would also like to express our appreciations to the Government and the people of the Republic of South Africa and the GEO Secretariat for making excellent arrangements for this Summit. I would also take this opportunity to express my respect to the world leaders who met at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, and paved way for the establishment of Group on Earth Observation GEO.

Nepal today faces many natural and human problems. Poverty, unemployment and landlessness are some of them. Encroachment on public and private lands, degradation of forests, rural to urban migration, growth of slums are some of the consequences. We face natural disasters like flood, drought, land-slides in different parts of the country. This has resulted to further degradation of land and its productivity. The result is, we have some setback to our development goals. The economic growth rate is not as impressive as planned. This is in this background that we value the importance of the Group on Earth Observations GEO which aims at disseminating earth observation data and geographic information necessary for objective decision-making.

After the popular uprising of April 2006, Nepal has entered into a new era. A peace process has started. We are determined to hold Constituency Assembly election very soon which will end the political problem in the country and pave way for a New Nepal. We are convinced that a New Nepal can not be established with the political wishes alone. Our experts need to have sufficient information in order to advise or to take appropriate decisions. Our scientists and engineers need earth observation data to analyze the causes and consequences to make appropriate interventions. Government of Nepal gives high importance to geographic information infrastructure as a basic infrastructure for development. We express our support to the goals and objectives of GEO.

I would also like to mention, while we recognize the importance of the technology and results of earth observation systems, developing and least developed countries like Nepal can afford limited resources only to utilize them. We have not been able to maximize the advantages so far. GEO is now a large community with 73 member countries and more than 50 intergovernmental, international or regional organizations participating. I would like to express our appreciation to the developed countries and the donor organizations for providing the support so-far and urge them to continue this support in the future as well.

I express my confidence and offer our full cooperation on behalf of our delegation and the Government of Nepal for the success and fruitful results of this Summit.

I thank you for your kind attention. Thank you!