NGO Federation of Nepal Convened
23rd Annual General Meeting and
National Civil Society Conference 2017

Transforming our world:
Initiatives for localizing the SDGs

Coordination and Courtesy with
the Federation of Nepali Journalists

Successfully Accomplished 5th GALA
Training in Pokhara, Nepal
Civil Society Rally on the occasion of 23rd Annual General Meeting of NFN.

A glimpse of Blood Donation Program on the occasion of the 23rd Annual General Meeting.

Representatives of Civil Society Conference during the closing session.

NFN Executive Committee Members during close session.
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Civil society is regarded as the third sector, other than the state and the market. The role of civil society is uncritically recognized in democratic polity; the cornerstone of durable peace and sustainable development. The citizenry rights of people are fortified provided that civil society operates vibrantly to check and balance the state and the market; monitor whether the basic human rights of people have been fulfilled or not; and advocate on behalf of people for equality and just society. Thus, it is imperative to promote the operational space for civil society in any democracy aspiring to peace and development.

Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) as Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are the integral part of civil society. Ideally, the emergence of NGOs across the globe is meant for promoting good governance of the state and the market by ensuring transparency, accountability, effectiveness, and responsiveness in the works they do. The empirical evidences suggest that NGOs have evolved as increasingly important actors instigating positive influence for democratization of the state. In addition, they have served as the major providers of essential services; influential advocates for marginalized groups and knowledgeable advisors on public policy. In this sense, NGOs are regarded mainly as the watchdogs of the state, key development partners and not merely the supporting hands for the state.

A host of international legal and policy instruments have recognized the space for CSOs, and have also guaranteed their roles in promoting democratic governance. The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), a founding UN Charter body established in 1946, offers special consultative status of NGOs as CSOs. Article-22 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) envisages guaranteeing the rights to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of his or her interests. Similarly, various policy apparatuses and mechanisms such as UN mechanisms, Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, Accra Agenda for Action, Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, Open Government Partnership, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries among others, have embraced policy provisions for promoting CSO enabling environment worldwide.

In the domestic arena, Article 17 (2) of the Constitution of Nepal (2015) has incorporated the provision on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and right to form associations, which is in line with the spirit of democratic regime. The Associations Registration Act of 1977 and the Social Welfare Act of 1992 are two major policy frameworks governing the registration and operation of NGOs in the country. There are additional laws and policies namely Local Self-Governance Act 1999, the National Directive Act 1961, among others, that are pertinent to the operation, regulation and management of CSOs. The 14th National Plan Approach Paper has recognized NGOs/CSOs as essential development partners.

Despite these policy provisions in place, active role of civil society has been constrained across the globe. The civic space in the international arena has shrunk owing to the rise of authoritarian regimes that believe on the minimalist role of the civil society. Thus CSOs and non-government sector have to stand for its rightful space for sustainable development and roles to create conducive environment. It is also the duty of democratic government to create enabling environment for CSOs to play effective roles efficiently. In this changing context let’s Nepalese CSOs together work for ensuring the civil society initiatives as a campaign towards expanding the role and space of CSOs in the country.

Let’s make Civic Space for Sustainable Development
This Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. It also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom. We recognize that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. All countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan. We are resolved to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to heal and secure our planet. We are determined to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path. As we embark on this collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets which we are announcing today demonstrate the scale and ambition of this new universal Agenda. They seek to build on the Millennium Development Goals and complete what these did not achieve. They seek to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. They are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental.

The goals and targets will stimulate action over the next fifteen years in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet:

**People**
We are determined to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment.

**Planet**
We are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations.

**Prosperity**
We are determined to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature.

**Peace**
We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.

**Partnership**
We are determined to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalized Global Partnership for Sustain-
Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people.

The interlinkages and integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals are of crucial importance in ensuring that the purpose of the new Agenda is realized. If we realize our ambitions across the full extent of the Agenda, the lives of all will be profoundly improved and our world will be transformed for the better.

The new Agenda
We are announcing today 17 Sustainable Development Goals with 169 associated targets which are integrated and indivisible. Never before have had world leaders pledged

### Sustainable Development Goals

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries

Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*

Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development
common action and endeavor across such a broad and universal policy agenda. We are setting out together on the path towards sustainable development, devoting ourselves collectively to the pursuit of global development and of “win-win” cooperation which can bring huge gains to all countries and all parts of the world. We reaffirm that every State has, and shall freely exercise, full permanent sovereignty over all its wealth, natural resources and economic activity. We will implement the Agenda for the full benefit of all, for today’s generation and for future generations. In doing so, we reaffirm our commitment to international law and emphasize that the Agenda is to be implemented in a manner that is consistent with the rights and obligations of states under international law.

**Multi-Stakeholder Partnership & Voluntary Commitments**

The achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals will require all hands on deck. It will require different sectors and actors working together in an integrated manner by pooling financial resources, knowledge and expertise. In our new development era with 17 intertwined Sustainable Development Goals and 169 associated targets as a blue-print for achieving the sustainable Future We Want, cross sectorial and innovative multi-stakeholder partnerships will play a crucial role for getting us to where we need by the year 2030.

Partnerships for sustainable development are multi-stakeholder initiatives voluntarily undertaken by Governments, intergovernmental organizations, major groups and others stakeholders, which efforts are contributing to the implementation of inter-governmentally agreed development goals and commitments, as included in Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Millennium Declaration, the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) entitled “The Future We Want”, the Third International Conference on Small island Developing States, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Sustainable Development Goal 17, which reads “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development”, recognizes multi-stakeholder partnerships as important vehicles for mobilizing and sharing knowledge, expertise, technologies and financial resources to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, particularly developing countries. Goal 17 further seek to encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.

**SDGs Implementation in Nepal**

When the world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on September 25 in the United Nations Summit to turn these demands into actions.Having achieved most of the targets set by MDGs in the last fifteen years, Nepal has already embarked on meeting the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Nepal has identified
the goals and it is in the process of implementation of SDGs from This year. National Planning Commission and Nepal SDG Forum behalf of CSO Networking are working smoothly.

Despite the prolonged political instability, with a dozen of governments coming and going in the last two years, MDGs guided Nepal’s development. As in the past, Nepal is likely to repeat its success in following the SDGs, which will guide development for the next fifteen years. SDGs offer a chance to countries like Nepal to meet the citizen’s aspirations for a more peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable future. Unlike in MDGs, SDGs include 17 Global Goals for development and they can also be used in the local context.

Sustainable development in the 21st century is not something which happens to somebody else, somewhere else. We all have a stake in it -- and every country has work to do to progress towards it. With male literacy at 75.1 percent, female literacy 42.8 percent, life expectancy birth 68.41, GDP per capita 712 and human development index 145, Nepal needs to accelerate its development activities.

Fifteen years ago, Nepal’s human indicators were very poor. It did not have money, knowledge and technology. There is more wealth, more knowledge, and more technology at its disposal now than ever before. Ours is the last generation which can head off the worst effects of climate change, and the first generation with the wealth and knowledge to eradicate poverty. For this, fearless leadership from us all is needed. If the global community is collectively prepared to step up to the challenge of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, then there’s a chance of achieving sustainable development – and with it better prospects for people and our planet.

Despite making progress in MDGs, Nepal is still facing poverty, inequality and climate change. This is likely to be addressed by SDGs. The 2030 Agenda comprises 17 new Global Goals, which will guide policy and funding for the next 15 years, beginning with a historic pledge to end poverty. The concept of the SDGs was born at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, in 2012. The objective was to produce a set of universally applicable goals that balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: environmental, social, and economic. The Global Goals replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which in September 2000 rallied the world around a common 15-year agenda to tackle the indignity of poverty. Although Nepal has made a tremendous progress in many sectors, it still has a long way to go in ending hunger, achieving full gender equality, improving health services and getting every child into school.

This new development agenda applies to all countries, promotes peaceful and inclusive societies, creates better jobs and tackles the environmental challenges of our time—particularly climate change. The world leaders are likely to reached a global agreement on climate change at the Paris Climate Conference. The 2030 Agenda guides policy and
funding for 15 years beginning with a historic pledge to end poverty. The Summit adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that consists of 17 goals and 169 targets to be attained by 2030.

Agenda was both universal in scope and transformative in nature and manifested our collective pledge for the world’s sustainable development. Good national policies, priorities, capacities and robust global partnerships should be in place for realizing the Agenda in all its dimensions. First of all, the process of formulating and implementing a development strategy should be people-centered and accord policy priority to achieving balanced development that encompasses the economy, society, and the environment.

In addition, given how the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represents both an investment in our future and a driving force for social change, countries should fully mobilize every resource at their disposal to implement them, while developing implementation strategies and plans that are in accord with their national circumstances. The provision of health and education services to future generations, including girls, is the surest investment to securing a sustainable future.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a new direction for the global community, integrating environmental sustainability with eliminating poverty and inequality wherever it is found. The change agenda crucially now has a strong universal theme, meaning that every country needs to work towards achieving these goals and no-one should be left behind and how the SDGs fit within the wider development narrative, both in the post-2015 agenda but also how the concept of development has evolved over the decades.

The work should focus on the intersection of climate change, environment and development agenda and what that means for the INGOs, governments and implementing bodies tasked with taking this forward after the summit. How will this impact real people, especially the poorest and most vulnerable? What are the priorities and concerns for Least Developed Countries in this process? Nepal has already prepared a report about the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs. In the making since 2013, two years ahead of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) deadline, the SDGs offer a lofty vision of including every last person in progress, while simultaneously ensuring that the planet is protected. They are being adopted in a complex global context where the immediate pressures of various current crises (economic strains, natural disasters, refugees) compete with long-term challenges (inequality, exclusion, ill health, environmental destruction). So as world leaders gather this Year HLPF in New York to officially present the VNR Report of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, a few questions come to mind. SDGs are a set of 17 goals and 169 targets. Numbers aside, they bring together the poverty-disparities discourse and the environment-climate change discourse, two separate strands in global development negotiations, into an integrated agenda; and
they apply to poor and rich countries alike.

This was not easy to achieve, and required leaders and lobbies to explicitly confront the possible tradeoffs of pursuing economic growth at the cost of everything else. The SDGs articulate a shared vision for the world 15 years from 2016.

All assessments of the MDGs point to enormous material progress on average, and a decline in the share of extreme poor people by more than half worldwide since the MDGs were adopted in 2000. In fact, this progress is led by Asia, home to more than half of humanity. However, the MDGs agenda remains unfinished, as disparities are evident and serious challenges to people’s quality of life persist, while new challenges have emerged.

NPC finalized the draft of the new goals and targets and indicators in national context. However, Our country is going to finalized country indicators on the basis of SDG goal and indicators which we can actually monitor this process. Although countries around the world are celebrating it as a panacea, it’s too early to say anything for sure. As in the past, the SDGs are just a political commitment, the goals are not legally binding. As said by political leaders, social activists and development practitioners, they are not easy to communicate beyond the development crowd. Brief Report on Multistakeholder Dialogue Workshop.

NGO Federation of Nepal organized a multistakeholder dialogue workshop titled “Managing Non-Government Sector in the Federal Set Up” on 1st August 2017, in Kathmandu. The workshop facilitated an open discussion on the legal and operational challenges being encountered by NGOs/CSOs since quite earlier and in the changed context as well so that certain consensus could be forged to develop and undertake specific action points towards building an enabling environment for CSOs in the country.

The workshop was conducted as chaired by Mr. Gopal Lamsal, President of NGO Federation of Nepal. Honorable Asha Koirala – Minister for Women, Children and Social Welfare attended the event as chief guest. There were altogether 100 participants (male 71, female 28 and LGBTIQ 1) representing wider array of stakeholders at national level such as different CSOs; networks, coalitions, alliances, federations, campaigns, and forums of CSOs; media, international NGOs, lawmakers, bureaucrats, NFN’s advisors, NFN’s district chapters (Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur), among others, present in the event.

A two and half hour long workshop provided with ample opportunities to have serious discussions among the stakeholders on the problems experienced by CSOs and way-forward strategies for protecting and expanding civic space in the changed context of restructuring of the state. This includes an exhaustive list of concerns, issues, challenges, problems, complaints, comments, suggestions and feedback of CSOs, including other stakeholders, on the key agenda of the workshop that NFN has taken notes of and recorded for the purpose of incorpo-
rating in the national advocacy instruments such as position papers, advocacy plan, and CSOs related bills etc. The discussion has led CSOs to build common understanding and consensus on how to plan and strategize CSOs movement immediately ahead and in the long run for carrying out advocacy interventions towards ensuring citizenry rights to freedom of association, opinions and expressions in the country.

Some of the action points suggested in the workshop were:

• To form a small task force (core group) to draft an alternate social development bill or else
• To generate collective resources for initiating joint campaigns of CSOs
• To have immediate dialogue with senior media persons (for e.g. editors, news room chiefs, journalists/columnists, and media entrepreneurs), and continue to have series of such dialogues ahead
• To influence parliamentarians to raise the issue of civic space favoring CSOs in different thematic committees and in the parliament as well.
• To develop a national paper (call for action) towards building common position of CSOs on the issues and way-forward strategies
• To review key laws and acts being drafted by different ministries, and Nepal Law Commission, particularly in relation to the operation of local level governments, and consolidate the findings for further advocacy purposes
• To have dialogue with the Finance Ministry and Office of the Prime Minister on the agenda of foreign aid and its mobilization seeking specific role of CSOs in the finance and development policy of the Government of Nepal
• To release a rejection statement against the Kantipur’s editorial news, including other media offenses to NGOs/CSOs
• To organize concerted efforts of lobby, advocacy, campaigns, and non-confrontational activities for protecting CSOs space in democracy

In the mean time, Ms. Minister opined that she was aware of the conflicting relationships between CSOs and Government of Nepal. CSOs, in one hand, are appreciated for their roles in empowering communities and raising mass awareness; at the same time, they are charged of being reckless, and ignoring national development priorities envisaged by the governments. So, time has come to forge effective functional relationships between CSOs and bureaucracies – she opined. Furthermore, she assured that she would succeed to sort out the issues of conflicts and interests and address the demands of CSOs during her tenure.

At the end of the programme, Mr. Chair – President of NFN reiterated the operational, policy-related as well as practical issues, challenges, and problems faced by CSOs/NGOs – all through, as discussed in the workshop; and appealed to the Minister to act towards addressing CSOs concerns during her tenure.
Coordination and Courtesy Meeting with the Federation of Nepali Journalists

NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN) accomplished coordination and courtesy meeting with the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) on 4th September 2017, at its office premises located at Buddhaagar, Kathmandu. The bilateral meeting was attended by newly elected executives of the FNJ, NFN advisors and central executive committee members, including some media persons favoring civil society organizations and their mission activities. Altogether 30 participants (male – 22, female – 8) were present in the event.

NFN organized the meeting with an aim to establishing and fostering effective functional relationships between CSOs and media as part of its campaign for building CSOs enabling environment in Nepal. As planned, the event was a success in identifying, discussing and agreeing on the possible areas of future collaborations and partnerships between NFN, and FNJ – the two leading coalitions of NGOs and working journalists in the country.

The meeting, despite being conducted in an informal manner, was chaired by Mr. Gopal Lamsal - NFN President, and moderated by Mr. Milan Shrestha - Secretary General of the organization. The proceedings of the event began with the welcoming remarks and highlights on the objectives as delivered shortly by the moderator himself. Meanwhile, NFN Chair and Advisors together, by wrapping shawls, felicitated the executives of the FNJ central committee recently elected through its 25th Annual General Convention and wished them the best for their successful tenure that will last for 3 consecutive years to come.

Following the felicitation moment, Mr. Subodh Raj Pyakurel – NFN Advisor, and Mr. Govinda Acharya – President of the FNJ, delivered their key-note remarks. Mr. Pyakurel outlined his speech highlighting on the protracted situation of tensions among CSOs, media and the Government of Nepal, and the need to build effective working relationships between CSOs and media in the changed political landscape for the sake of strengthening and institutionalizing democracy in the country. He opined that the country was experiencing functional anarchism, policy corruptions, and bureaucratic inefficacy owing to the excessive hegemony of the Executive. “The principle of separation of powers has been put into question as the Judiciary and Legislative Mechanisms too are under the shadow of the Executive. So, in such a circumstance, the intent of the Nepalese state, for sure, is to harass the CSOs first, and the media then, putting them at risk to operate freely, as observed in the oppressive political regimes elsewhere globally”, he added. On top of this, Mr. Pyakurel called for an action to advance collaboration be-
tween NFN and FNJ, including entire media community, towards expanding CSOs space in the country in this most critical juncture of the historical time-structure. Further, he emphasized, it should start from restructuring of the Social Welfare Council that is almost defunct and repressive to CSOs in contrary to its roles and mandates.

Then, Mr. Govinda Acharya – President of the FNJ, opined that the first and foremost agenda of his organization was ever to fight for democracy. The spirit of democracy and the second utmost priority of the FNJ as he interpreted included freedom of press, safety and security of the journalists as well as engagement in civic movements. “As I had an opportunity to work with the Government (as press advisor to the Prime Minister) earlier, I came to know that the political leaders, parliamentarians, and bureaucrats were not very much positive to the media and CSOs” he said. Yet, he indicatively argued that it was partly because of the drawbacks of media and CSOs too, that provided breeding ground for building negative public image towards them. Mr. Acharya further said, NFN and FNJ being federated organizations representing two different sectors, they certainly had limitations to come to a common platform each time, yet there were numerous issues and areas of constructive engagement between them. On this note, he expressed the consensus and appealed to NFN to start with and foster a long-term collaborative approach for building CSOs enabling environment.

At the end, Mr. Gopal Lamsal – President of NF, as part of his concluding remarks opined that there were quite a number of issues and areas where NFN and FNJ, including entire media community, could work together especially in the changed political milieu of the country. These included joint advocacy, lobby and constructive engagement with the Government, capacity building of civil society organizations, media and local government representatives, awareness raising campaigns, cultural campaigns on evil practices, planning discussions with local government bodies, among many other efforts related development, civic rights and campaigns. Mr. President highlighted on the need to think on how NFN and FNJ could work in collaboration for the longer period of time ahead.

The meeting was adjourned as the duo organizations broadly agreed to have persistent collaborations in the future. However, it was discussed and decided to have similar meetings in near future to discuss on how such collaborations would be initiated and prolonged.
On 21 and 22 February 2017, NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN) convened a two-day planning workshop on building CSO enabling environment in Nepal at Dhulikhel, Kavre. A total of 35 CSO leaders (4 females and males 31) from a wider group of non-government stakeholders such as forums, federations, coalitions, networks and alliances, including the member organizations of NFN working both at national and community level attended the workshop. Dr. Netra Prasad Timilsina, a development expert and former Chair of NFN, accompanied by Mr. Milan Dharel, a central committee member at NFN facilitated the sessions during the workshop.

The event was essentially aimed at assessing and analyzing the situation of CSOs operation in the country vis-à-vis national and international legal and policy standards aligned with the values of democracy and liberalism. It then, intended to formulate advocacy plan and strategies towards broadening civic space in the changed political, legal and socio-economic milieus of the country. Overall, the idea was to figure out pertinent issues and aspects related to CSOs space in democratic polity; build on common understanding among the stakeholders; and strategize civil society movement immediately further as well as in the long run. The discussion followed a participatory approach – both in the groups and open floor discussions. Individual participants contributed to the discussions by providing their insights on CSO enabling environment based on their knowledge and experiences.

The workshop proceeded in order of the three consecutive sessions: opening or start-up session, main technical session, and closing session. The opening and closing sessions
were conducted formally as attended by the senior CSO leaders and human rights activists namely Mr. Charan Prasai, Mr. Gauri Pradhan, Mr. Taranath Dahal, and Mr. Subash Khatiwada. Mr. Gopal Lamsal, Chair of NFN, presided over the sessions. The technical part of the workshop comprised of sessions on (1) situation analysis, (2) stakeholders mapping, and (3) developing advocacy action plan for enabling CSO-friendly environment in Nepal. Each of these sessions followed a nuanced discussion on global and national scenario regarding CSOs status and operation. The immediate outcomes of the workshop included the following:

It was conversed and apprehended that the civic space across the globe was shrinking in practice in the most recent time despite strong legal and policy provisions in place. A host of international policy instruments such as UDHR, ICCPR, ICESCR, Accra Action Agenda, Busan Partnership Document, Paris Declaration, Ababa Action Agenda, 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development, Istanbul Plan of Action, and UN Charter and mechanisms have guaranteed a broader space for civil society globally. Yet, in practice, the role of civil society has been shrunk due to sustained economic recessions, religious uprisings, authoritarianism, and the protracted situation of geo-politics.

In the domestic arena, the overall operational environment for civil society was believed to be restrictive; particularly, as an effect of the latest legal developments including new social welfare and development act. The political, legal, and operational environments were considered to be too fragile to promote a sustained space for civil society organizations in line with the spirit of democratic regime.

The workshop entailed a session on stakeholders mapping and analysis. A wider group of government, non-government and private-sector stakeholders as well as support organizations have been identified for initiating partnership and collaboration for enabling civil society environment. A draft advocacy plan has also been formulated.

A five-member working group has been formed in the lead of NFN Senior Vice-President Mr. Krishna Gautam. The other members in the team include Ms. Shanta Laxmi Shreshtha, Ms. Tika Dahal, Mr. Pranav Bhattarai, and Mr. Sanjeev Ghimire. The working group will have organized regular meetings, build on advocacy plan and take moves ahead towards widening the operational space for civil society in the country.

The workshop concluded with a mission to initiate a campaign for expanding civil society space in the country; in coordination and collaboration with a wider group of stakeholders; so as to check and balance the state governance and ultimately serve the interest of people.
NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN) has accomplished a pre-consultation meeting on NGO/CSO roadmap, to be adopted in the changed political landscape following aftermath of local-level restructuring of the state. The meeting took place on 31 March 2017, at Aryal International Hotel, located in Kathmandu.

The purpose of the meeting was to review and discuss on the prevailing legal and operational contexts for NGOs/CSOs in the country; and to identify issues and way-forward strategies towards fostering NGOs/CSOs working environment, taking into account the emergence of powerful local-level governance mechanism. Overall, it aimed at contributing to building NGOs/CSOs enabling environment for promoting and sustaining democratic governance in the country.

Accordingly, the agenda(s) discussed in the meeting included:

- Sharing review of Social Welfare and Development Bill
- Pre-consultation on NGO/CSO Roadmap
- Discussion on Advocacy Plan on CSO Enabling Environment

Mr. Hari Phuyal, Ex-Attorney General of Nepal, as an independent consultant, facilitated the session on sharing review of Social Welfare and Development Bill from legal standpoints. Similarly, Mr. Gauri Pradhan, Ex-Commissioner of National Human Rights Commission, and Ex-President of NFN, facilitated the succeeding session on NGO/
CSO roadmap that encompassed issues pertaining to NGOs/CSOs operation beyond legal context. Prominent NGOs/CSOs leaders (27 persons, male 23, female 4) representing different spectrum of civil society, attended the meeting and discussed on the pertinent issues affecting NGOs/CSOs, and their operation in the country.

The proceedings of the meeting followed informal discussion as chaired by NFN’s National President Mr. Gopal Lamsal. Mr. President briefly highlighted on the existing contexts – changed scenario of local-level restructuring; restructuring of national ministries; NGOs/CSOs demand for the establishment of Social Development Ministry, and the need to develop a roadmap that would envision guiding NGOs/CSOs to work together for better results.

On this backdrop, and following the presentations by the facilitators, the participating NGOs/CSOs leaders put forth their views, in turn, suggesting how NGOs/CSOs movement could be fortified; what needs to be done to expand the NGOs/CSOs space; and how NGOs/CSOs could be more effective in rendering their services through collaborated approach, among others. The key points of discussion throughout the meeting included the following:

- NGOs/CSOs should be categorized according to the nature of works they do. Accordingly, there should be separate laws governing registration, operation, mobilization and facilitation of NGOs/CSOs, giving their distinct identity and affiliation status.
- An intensive research should be carried out to explore what particular kinds of laws governing NGOs/CSOs exist in Nepal; and how such laws should be reviewed and amended to facilitate the operation of NGOs/CSOs once their distinct categories are identified.
- Such a research should ground on national needs and priorities; the spirit of the constitution; international standards; and universal norms and values with regards to creating an enabling environment for NGOs/CSOs. Consultation with wider groups of stakeholders is needed in due course of the research.
- Social Welfare Council should be established as an independent and autonomous body. It should not function as an administrative and semi-judicial entity.
- There should be separate Budget Act in the country. Otherwise, there are chances for controlling NGOs/CSOs through budget revisions by the government.
- We need Social Development Act, not Social Welfare Act.
- The draft Social Welfare and Development Bill is full of lacunas in many ways. These drawbacks should be duly improved. In addition, provisions in line with the international standards and the spirit of the constitution should be incorporated.
- The existing Social Welfare and Development Bill contradicts with many other existing laws and policies.
- Social Welfare Council should be completely restructured as it is the legacy of the autocratic Panchayat regime at pres-
The government can regulate NGOs/INGOs who receive direct foreign funding, by endorsing a separate code of conduct.

There should be separate regulatory mechanisms for NGOs and INGOs. The Ministry of Finance should regulate INGOs directly.

There should be federal laws introduced for NGOs/CSOs. Otherwise, the provincial and local governments may bring new laws governing NGOs/CSOs that might be even more problematic.

There is need of endorsing a separate private bill. The government bills and mere amendment of Social Development Act would not be sufficient enough for building CSOs-friendly environment in the country.

It is sarcastically interesting that NGOs are registered under Associations Registration Act, whereas the Federation of NGOs has been registered under National Directive Act.

One of the new avenues for sustainability of NGOs/CSOs would be to receive funding from the corporate sector. Unfortunately, the corporate entrepreneurs have opened up their own NGOs.

Let’s think more on the need to develop a private bill; or alternatively, to develop a bottom-line of the civil society. We may develop and register a private bill, but it is likely to be discarded and may take even years for endorsement.

One way of categorization of NGOs/CSOs can be on the basis of funding. The next can be on the basis of thematic criteria.

The non-government sector should engage in dialogue and discussion on the foreign aid policy. Without influencing the foreign aid policy, we cannot ensure space for NGOs/CSOs just by reforming SWC’s acts.

The meeting remained really insightful in the sense that it provided with an opportunity to listen to and record diverse and differing viewpoints of the participants. All these perceptions need to be scrutinized and aligned to build a unanimous voice of NGOs/CSOs, with regards to building an enabling operational environment for the entire civil society.

In addition, the meeting has decided to form a high-level professional team of the NGOs/CSOs leaders for the purpose of drafting a concept paper on NGO/CSO roadmap in the changed context. It was agreed to look at both pros and cons of the existing situations and review the role of NGOs/CSOs critically taking into account the geo-political situation of the country. The concept paper, once drafted, will be shared among wider groups of stakeholders, including government officials and political parties, at district and national level as part of the consultation. Once inputs and feedback are received through consultations at layers of the state structure, this NGO/CSO roadmap will be finalized in the lead of NGO Federation, as backed up by CS:MAP coalition partners and other CSOs.
NGO Federation of Nepal, in collaboration with Water Aid had conducted orientation program on SDGs at Siraha District in 16th October 2017.

The Orientation program was designed as per the necessity and importance of SDGs for the local development regarding the local issues and resources. Mayors, deputy Mayors of municipalities Chairpersons and Vice Chairpersons of rural municipalities and Chairpersons and members from ward committees were oriented on localization of SDGs. From the entire district, 17 local units participated during the program. This program was held just after the completion of 3rd phase election and newly elected local level leaders were actively participated in the full session with enthusiasm.

The first Session was held as an introduction session. Every participants from different local units had actively introduced themselves. The session was led by the Chief District Officer of Siraha District Mr. Shree Krishna Shrestha. Likewise, all the participants were shortly introduced themselves. This session was performed by District committee Chairperson of NGO Federation of Nepal Mr. Govinda Bista. He highlighted the objectives and the key points about SDGs orientation and why it is important for local level. He has minutely described the role and importance of issues based activities related to the local Government. He also mentioned the key roles of local leaders to proper implementation of SDGs in Siraha District. Different perspectives and dimensions of SDGs have been also interpreted by him during his speech.

The Central Committee member of NGO Federation of Nepal Mr. Dillu Prasad Ghimire has presented the slides on SDGs and its localization. He has given the presentation as a resource person from Central level. He in-
introduced the SDGs and its all Goals, targets, indicators based on Nepalese context and its implication in local level. He gradually came over to the point that how the local resource should be mobilized for the local development using the local skills and manpower. He also intensively pointed out the role and responsibility of newly elected leaders on SDGs implementation and its connectivity with the local people. Mr. Ghimire also cited the various aspects of SDGs and its value in worldwide talking about its attachment with local community. He also urged to the civil society organizations to stay alert for proper implementation of SDGs in their community by utilizing their own local resources might be appropriate or not. He has also interpreted the index and updated data of human development report based on National Planning Commission. He has also shared the efforts, activities and campaigns conducted by the Nepal Government and Nepal SDGs Forum on behalf of Nepalese Civil Society Organizations. During his presentation, he had also stated about the latest allocated budget for local government especially for Siraha District concerning their view and its potential utilization by the local government. The National Voluntary Review report of NPC also been redefined during the session. Finally, he has clearly provided the tips to the local leaders how to address the issues of SDGs pertaining to the local needs and also openly shown the incoming challenges beside the opportunities.

During the discussion Session; most of the participants from the newly elected candidates had put their different views, experiences and queries based on the presentation. They all were internalized the issues of development that must be needed in local enhancement. Most of the participants exposed their inquisitiveness about SDGs and its implementation process. They all are shown their keen interest to be accepted thematic issues of SDGs as their own way and prepared themselves to work together with development sectors for the collaborative approach of implementation of SDGs. On behalf of all participated Mayors, Dhangadhi Municipality Mayor Mr. Hari Narayan Chaudhary has delivered his speech. He assured that his team is ready to work together with the Civil Society Organizations and NGOs in the local level for the implementation of
SDGs. He has also expressed his attention on sustainable and productive development. He also committed among all the local leaders that for the prosperous development of whole entire district, they will be ready to collaborate each other as an inter-municipality collaborative approach. In the same way, the deputy Mayor of the Lahan Municipality, Ms. Sariyar Chaudhary has toughly delivered her speech that women solidarity will be most powerful tool for the implementation of SDGs in the local Level. For the same purpose she has committed that her role and responsibility will be more participatory and effective for the localization of SDGs. She also expressed her confidence on so many positive and creative things of changing her community. Particularly, she focused the challenges and problems of women related issues and committed to fulfillment them via SDGs.

The closing remarks have been given by the Chief District Officer (CDO) and Local Development Officer (LDO). Chief District Officer Mr. Shree Krishna Shrestha concluded his remarks by giving the thanks to all newly elected local level leaders. He proposed them to fulfill the dreams and genuine interests of the people as soon as possible. He also said that he is feeling stress-free after the fulfillment of local units and his responsibility seems easier than before. Being a Chief District Officer, he has many roles and responsibilities on his head but after the restoration of local units, he said that he is feeling more comfortable to work with the people. At the end of the program, the chairperson of entire program and local Development Officer Mr. Suresh Raut informed about the services and beneficiaries about local units representatives respectively. He also assured them to provide support from the secretariat immediately to kick off the development tasks as per necessary. He was also expressed his hopefulness to solve the problems in local level by newly elected people’s representatives will be able to handle any kind of challenges which occurs in the future. Mr. Arun Shah, Chief of Social Development Section has played a role of Master of Ceremony and Mr. Anil Upadhayay, facilitator from NGO Federation of Nepal also assist the whole sessions.
Municipal Level Orientation on SDGs
at Goalbazar, Siraha

NGO Federation of Nepal in collaboration with Water Aid has been jointly organized an orientation program at Goalbazar Municipality, Siraha District on 16th October 2017.

The Municipality level Orientation program was designed as per the necessity and importance of SDGs in the local development to localize the issues of Sustainable development Goals. Mayors, Deputy Mayors, Ward Chairpersons and members had actively participated in the program. The beginning session was held as an introduction session. It was conducted by Mr. Bhairav Gelal, Secretary of NFN District Chapter Siraha. Every participants from different organizations briefly introduced themselves during this session. This role was performed by the vice-chairperson of NFN District Committee Mr. Nab Raj Lama. He highlighted the objectives and notion of the program. Mr. Lama also briefed the importance of the orientation program basically for the representatives of local units. He has minutely described the role and responsibility of local units and people representatives too.

The Central Committee member of NGO Federation of Nepal Mr. Dillu Prasad Ghimire and Umesh Bishowkarma one by one given the presentation on the different dimensions of proper implementation of SDGs in local level. Mr. Ghimire was focused his presentation on overall concept of SDGs and its essence in the local level. He has presented the contents as per the perception level of participants. He also introduced the new modality concept of development giving the references of Nepal Government especially based on National Planning Commission’s
latest strategies. Likewise, Mr. Umesh Bis- showkarma, Central Committee member of NFN interpreted the national level issues in the context of local level. He has delivered the key points that how the local resources will be converted as potential indicators of development. He also point out the local resources in the local level to improve the community based development approach through the equal involvement of all marginalized people. The serious concerns raised between the session by the representatives of local units that how the SDGs should be localized and make it understandable for all level of people. Those different perceptions and queries were addressed by the both resource persons at the end of the presentation session.

In the closing session of the orientation, especially representatives from Goalbazar Municipality, Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Ward Chairpersons and members shared their own view, experiences, plans, confusions and queries in front of resource persons. Dev Nath Shah, Mayor of the Goalbazar Municipality shown his interest as well as curiosity on SDGs and expressed the inner thirst to develop his community. He also put the quires that, Can SDGs really change the living style and quality of life of marginalized peoples? If it will be implemented properly? Also he did the commitment for coming days on his direct involvement on SDGs to the real implementation as per the need of local peoples. He also committed on that, being a newly elected Local unit’s Chief he has the so many development mandates giv- en by the people that he want to fulfill within the deadline. He tried to make assured all the representatives of local units and the local participants in the program that having the tie up with SDGs Forum in the district, his newly elected team will be prioritized the things as per the local people needs so that they will speedily receive the achievement as per their pre-planned. Similarly, Deputy Mayor Ms. Roshan Kumari Thapa focused to the women empowerment during her speech. She pledged that based on the theme of the SDGs her attention will be more focused on the issues of rural women and their basic needs what they are facing day to day. She also conveyed her plan and vision in the mass for the improvement of the daily life of uneducated, marginalized and single women will be given first priority.

The orientation program was wrapped up with small formal program and it was conducted by the NFN District Committee Secretary Mr. Bhairav Gelal. At the end of the program Mr. Dillu Prasad Ghimire, Central Committee Member and the resource person of the program addressed all the quires, confusions and expectations raised from the floor. Likewise the Chairperson of the program Mr. Govinda Bista has given his concluding remarks with equally addressing the common interests of municipality representatives and other participants. He has also given vote of thanks to all the participants and resource persons too. Representatives of Goalbazar and representatives from different organizations there, 50 persons actively participated in the program.
Online Banking

1. Background
In today’s busy world, everyone wants to finish their important assignments at the earliest so that, they can start new one or have some free time. Unfortunately, there are many jobs that can never be avoided. Moreover, some tasks including the financial responsibilities are harder to delegate to other persons. For an example: A huge pile of cheques to be signed, verified and deposited into bank accounts of different parties maintained at different banks is a daily irritation for almost all of us who are in Account/Finance section. Be a person from finance background or not, we are always in connection with some financial transactions that involve a hectic procedure of getting monies even after the payable/reimbursements are approved. When we go to the Finance Section, we get answers like cheques are drawn and they are in the waiting line for signs from the signatories.

To avoid such difficulties, Online Banking was introduced in early 1980’s. A few services by some of American banks were provided to their customers online. However, due to lack of Smartphones and internet friendly customers, the services could barely reach the break even point and most of the services were not functional at that time.

2. Definition
Online Banking is a system handled by a financial service provider (viz Banks and other Financial Institutions) to enable their customers to get the services provided via the Internet, Email or other types of User Interface. It is also known as Internet Banking,
Virtual Banking & e-Banking. It is useful for customers who don’t want to spend much time waiting in the queue of banks for their daily transactions.

Since these services can be executed via a remote online user interface, the time consumed for travelling & waiting in the queue is reduced to a great extent allowing the customers to grow their efficiency in work and also reduces the workload and saves time of the employees in the financial institution.

Such interface is embedded in a secure website and hosted at trustworthy server maintained by the bank or an authorized third party. The communication between the Client and Servers are encrypted so that the misuse of the information is checked. The bank is liable for the security of the system provided by them. However, any losses arisen to the customers due to the negligence of customers such as sharing of password or devices to unauthorized person are not reimbursed by the banks.

3. Safety Measures
The Service Providers use firewall systems and software for the detection of intrusion to restrict the unauthorized access to their system. Other common safety measures taken by the service providers are:

- Training to employees for the Awareness in security;
- Strong Authentication Controls abiding the guidance provided by the Central Bank;
- Encryption of Communication to and from the Servers to avoid the intrusion;
- National & International Guidelines regarding the security of banking & financial communication are abided;
- The Website should be completely hosted over HTTPs without leaving any part to be loaded over HTTP for the security against unauthorized Surveillance, Tracking & other kinds of misuse of data.

4. Some Common Services Offered
The list of services that are commonly offered are:

1. Transfer funds to other accounts,
2. Payee management - add the payee details for future use,
3. Bill payments - utility payments & purchases,
4. Recharge - recharge your mobile phone without scratching the cards,
5. Transaction status - status of your recent transactions,
6. View statements - detailed or short bank statement when you need,
7. Handling demat accounts,
8. Invest online at different platforms,
9. Insure online - pay your premium online,
10. Link your accounts - link to different accounts for your ease,
11. Manage credit cards - manage & pay your credit card,
12. Manage loan accounts - handle your loan accounts via online interface,
13. Service requests - request for bank statements, debit/credit cards and get notified when they are ready.
5. Advantages
Some of the advantages of online banking are listed below:

A. Convenience
You don’t need to run or take a taxi to pay or get paid, your transactions are just a few clicks away from you. They are available 24/7, no holidays or off hours for the services. Customer Support Services are also generally provided 24/7.

B. Better Rates
Banks incur huge infrastructure & overhead costs for the manual banking system. As it costs lesser to them, they provide customers better rates while using online banking systems.

C. Easier to Update & Maintain Accounts
As you can always access & request your bank to update your information, it is far easier and less time-consuming.

D. Mobility
You can always check your account balance from wherever you are if you have an internet connection. No worries for your schedule of trips. You can do the banking jobs while you are having five minutes break in between a seminar.

E. Easy to use Interface
Due to increasing competition, the banks are now focusing on user friendly interface where you can use the banking services like using your favorite social media websites.

F. Trail of Transactions
One of the benefits of online banking is the detailed trail of your transactions are always Available.

G. Environment Friendly
You can avoid the use of excessive papers & fuel used for travelling to and from the banks by using the online banking system.

6. Limitations
Everything has its own pros and cons. Online Banking also has some limitations:

• Lack of familiarity in Information Technology
Not all people are familiar with the Information Technology, some people still hesitate to use smartphone or computers for their financial needs rather prefer standing in long queues. Many of such people do not only hesitate to use the online services but also believe that they are pretty much vulnerable to theft, phishing and intrusions.

• Bank Relationship
There can be a few advantages that are given only to the customers having a keen relationship with the staffs/managers. More favorable terms & conditions in loan agreement & some kind of flexibility in other transactions are possible when you are a regular customer of traditional banking.

However, if most of the transactions are done via online banking lesser pressure are seen at counters, it would be easier for you to get relationship with the staffs / managers even after fewer visits.

• Security
Although banks give their utmost pri-
ority to abide the terms and conditions imposed by the central banks and for the safety & security of the data handled by them, there is always a chance of intrusion or phishing. However, loss due such intrusion/phishing won’t affect the deposit made by the depositors.

7. Precautions
- Maintaining up-to-date securities including anti spywares, antivirus, firewall & anti-phishing are mandatory;
- Operating system and softwares used should be set on to ‘automatic update’,
- While accessing information over an unsecured public network, always be suspicious about emails or messages from unknown addresses,
- Never share your password anywhere you have suspicion,
- Be aware of emails or messages or pop-ups that require your personal information,
- Never share login address or password via emails or messages. No authorized parties ask you such information via emails or messages.

8. Future Perspectives
At earlier days, many streets of developed nations were having telephone booths with facility to call your family members or other persons when you are traveling. After the overwhelming integration of mobile phones into our daily lives, most of them have disappeared from the streets, some of them being transformed into public hotspot. Likewise, the bank in future shall be somehow modified than currently is. The number of counters in banks for the deposit and withdrawal of cash shall be almost zero in near future.

Let’s hope, the banking in future shall be totally free from queues, complete with a few clicks and highly secure.
NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN), a common platform of civil society organizations actively working in the forefront towards promoting advocacy, social mobilization, citizens’ empowerment and civic participation for socio-economic transformation, development and national unity, has accomplished its 23rd Annual General Meeting (AGM) alongside the National Civil Society Conference 2017 on 7-8 November 2017, in Kathmandu.

Conference starts with the inauguration opening ceremony. Mr. Kalyan Shrestha, former Chief Justice of Supreme Court of Nepal presided as a chief guest of the Conference. NFN district chapters, NFN CSOs member from all over countries, federations, alliances, networks, INGOs, embassies including government officers and prominent leaders of civil society movements and human rights campaigns in Nepal, attended the AGM and Conference.

Mr. Krishna Gautam, Senior Vice President of NGO Federation of Nepal gave welcome speech in the inaugural session. His speech covered some insights in washing away social evils through NGOs’ initiatives and expressed his commitment to do the same in coming days. He stated that strengthening democracy is a major challenge for NGOs and will strive for it with suitable expediencies. NGOs advocated for an act on disaster management, many NGOs are working in disaster prone areas and similarly NGOs are aiding for sustainable development. Despite huge contribution of NGOs, problems are still prevailing due to policies not being NGO-friendly.

Former Chief Justice of Supreme Court of Nepal, Mr. Kalyan Shrestha opined that belittling NGOs’ role in democratic campaign in Nepal amounts injustice to overall democratic activism. NGOs must act as tripod for
citizens and lobby on behalf of citizens, he added. Expressing his dismay over the unpleasant political culture despite long democratic transition and upheavals in Nepal, he expected the Civil Conference shall be a better start for the job. Mr. Shrestha, concluded his speech with appeal that NGOs should not align with any political party rather work for the best interests of people and country.

President of NGO Federation of Nepal, Mr. Gopal Lamsal emphasized that the civil society should have representation at Social Welfare Council. The Social Welfare Council needs to be restructured and established at every province. He advised that the arrangements to be made so that central Social Welfare Council shall administer National and international NGOs and provincial Social Welfare Council to monitor NGOs. The absence of local government due to political transition led proliferation of NGOs’ number and there’s been lack of harmonization between the newly formed local governments. Despite the formation of local bodies, government should not undermine the NGOs. Mr. Lamsal noted that the NGO Federation of Nepal is whole-heartedly set to co-operate every level of governments and its mechanisms.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mr. Nilmani Baral, vice-chairman of Social Welfare Council noted that the issues in the AGM have been reiterated as it were in the former. He stated that efficacy of coordination between Council and Federation is a must to work in ground-level and accepted the fact partly that the Council has not been able to function with full efficaciousness due to change in government.

Former President and Advisor of NGO Federation of Nepal, Mr. Gauri Pradhan urged that NGOs must play pivotal role in strengthening federal Nepal. Remembering the important involvements of Federation in every post 1990 political movements, he stressed that NGOs should continuously strive for solving issues related with social, political, economic, cultural, gender, etc. Glossing the Civil Conference is a campaign for circumspection and collaboration, he added that role of civil society is decisive in matters pertaining to national prosperity.

Acting President of Federation of Nepali Journalists Mr. Bipul Pokhrel said that the federation is gleefully ready to cooper-
ate with the NFN. He claimed that NGOs have been a major stakeholder of development and impending programs should be maintained as per necessity and people’s aspirations.

NGO Federation Nepal’s advisor Mr. Kapil Shrestha stated that NGOs is a dignified organization having its members from different sections and classes. Aama Samuha was only social organization during Panchayat while other organizations were confined merely in a bag and were covert in nature and hitherto this situation has drastically changed. This is indeed a matter of achievement. Mr. Shrestha suggested every NGO worker must work in fostering national development and implementing new constitution.

Representing an INGO, Chairperson of AIN, Mr. Shibesh Chandra Regmi said a total of 38 Arab rupees via INGO has entered Nepal in this current Fiscal Year. Some INGOs are set to return from Nepal due to lack of favorable working conditions which deems a loss to Nepal. He praised the work of NGOs during internal armed conflict; while citizens from each corner could not access benefits from government, NGOs played role of guardianship and worked effectively. He was concerned on the issue that the INGOs and NGOs have been defied in formation of Social Act which is supposed to foster developmental endeavors.

Chief Information Commissioner of National Information Commission, Mr. Krishna Hari Baskota, stressed on the importance of Right to Information (RTI) under ICCPR and current constitution. He further opined for effective implementation of RTI, it is necessary to provide knowledge regarding RTI to local level and asked the NGO activists to work on the same. He further claimed that information rendered by NGOs to local level has been significant strengthening democracy and enhancing development.

A Prominent Women Activist, Ms. Renu Adhikari said that it is the duty of NGO workers under NFN to work for the betterment of people and eliminate conflicts. She stated that NGOs must act as a foundation of social change. She expressed her discontentment with the government’s attempt to ban national NGOs.

Some speakers on the program were critical about the role of NGOs. Criticisms included; NGOs not being specialized for particular issues, projects formulated on the vested interests of donors, weakened NGO movements due to parallel federation, etc. Suggestions included classification of social institutions
be made to achieve sustainable goals and one door policy be maintained by government.

In the inauguration session the best NGOs of seven provinces were also honored. The best working districts awarded in ceremony were; Sunsari district from province 1, Mahottari district from province 2, Lalitpur district from province 3, Parbat district from province 4, Rolpa district from province 5, Surkhet district from province 6 and Doti district from province 7.

Alone with inauguration ceremony, Blood Donation program was also conducted. The opening of blood donation program was done NFN President Mr. Gopal Lamsal, alone with him 35 people donated the blood.

After the inauguration of the program, three parallel thematic sessions were organized. The sessions were: i) Ensuring Access to WASH for Sustainable Development (Goal 6), ii) Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace Justice and Strong Institution) and iii) Dialogue on Enabling CSOs in Changing Political Context.

The Thematic Sessions (in brief)

**Session 1: Ensuring Access to WASH for Sustainable Development (Goal 6),** moderation of this session was done by Mr. Shanttalal Mulmi, Advisor and Founding member of NFN. The main speaker of the session were Mr. Bhupendra Aryal, Executive Director of Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Fund Development Board, Ms. Tripti Rai, National Director of Water Aid Nepal, Mr. Uddhab Bhattarai, WASH Progaram Manager of Lumanti Nepal, Mr. Rajendra Aryal, President of Federation of Drinking Water and Sanitation Users of Nepal and Mr. Anil Bhadra Khanal, Joint-Secretary of Ministry of Water Supply and Sanitation. Several dimensions of the current situation, policy status and future needs were assessed in the session. The roles and responsibilities of donor agencies, government of Nepal, CSOs and other stakeholders were analyzed and the session emphasized on “capacity building” and “collectivity” on working modalities. The session ends with the suggestions like; the issue of climate change and natural hazards must be tackled, exploitation of water resources and wetlands must be checked and natural environment should be preserved,
evil market forces needs to be scrutinized by state and coordination of CSOs with local government is a must in dealing with the issue.

**Session 2:** Challenges on effective implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institution) with solutions, Mr. Ram Prasad Subedi of NFN facilitated the session on the chaired of Ms. Sarmila Karki, former president of NFN. The main speakers of the session were Ms. Sumnima Tuladhar, Director of CWIN Nepal, Mr. Ram Dayal Rakesh, Vice-Chairperson of Transparency International Nepal, Advocate Mr. Rabin Subedi, Mr. Krishnahaari Baskota, Chief Information Commissioner of National Information Commission (NIC) and Dr. Hari Sharma, Director of Alliance for Social Dialogue. The main focus of this session was peace, stability, human rights and effective governance, based on rule of law which is important conduits for sustainable development. Current challenges of Nepal are political instability and the structural changes in the province level. Now focus should be on the division of responsibility and effective implementation of national development plan. The session also focused on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aims like; significantly reduce all forms of violence, and work with governments and communities to find lasting solutions to conflict and insecurity. The session come up with the point that if we want to achieve SDG 16 we should work on strengthening the rule of
law and promoting human rights, reducing the flow of illicit arms and strengthening the institutions of global (global and local) governance.

**Session 3:** Dialogue on Enabling CSOs in Changing Political Context, Ms. Bishnu Thakali secretary of NFN was the moderator of the session and Mr. Netra Prasad Timilsina chaired the session. The speakers of the session were Dr. Padam Prasad Khatiwada (Human Rights Alliance), Mr. Sibes Chandra Regmi (Chairman- Association of International NGOs in Nepal), Mr. Bharat Raj Sharma (Under Secretary- Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare) and Mr. Nilmani Baral (Vice Chairman- Social Welfare Council). The issues addressed in this session revolved around the new role, responsibility and authority of NGOs in changing political environment in Nepal. The key issues included in the session were, structure and role of Social Welfare Council (SWC) in coming future, need for clear policies, legal frameworks for NGOs at national to local levels in Constitution, importance of coordination between SWC, various ministries, NGOs, INGOs and other stakeholders, effective collaboration and management of NGOs and INGOs to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), importance and benefits of information management at various levels and targeted at different stakeholders and awareness campaigns and concern about INGOs leaving Nepal in coming future and what can we do to prevent this? Session was interactive between speaker and participants. They come up with some recommendations like; government should appreciate the contribution of NGOs and facilitate them to operate more easily in new federal system, political influence in NGO sector should not exist and Social Welfare Council should be restructured and it should represent CSOs.

The second day of the conference starts with the rally from New Baneshwor Chowk to Babarmahal where the rally members raised annotations written “Able and Progressive Civil Society for democracy and prosperity”, “Unite for Civil Organizations’ friendly environment”, and many more.
Closed sessions followed after rally where NFN’s secretary presented progress report while NFN’s treasurer presented finance report. After vigorous interactions the report was approved which later was discussed by the representatives.

During discussions, the representatives echoed that the Organization Registration Act 2034 has been unfavorable to them. Representative of Saptari, Laxmi Narayan suggested that NGOs to be re-structured as in federal system and central committee to coordinate in building federation offices. Many representatives stated that central committee should aid to local bodies in coordinating with NGOs. Some raised issue that the report was silent on upcoming plans and roles of federation. Some were concerned regarding the structure of NGOs under federal system which the report didn’t include. Similarly, the question of registering NGOs under PAN or VAT came into much focus which the representatives were not satisfied with federation’s concrete answer.

Some collective queries were raised from the representatives. For e.g. whether any organization registered at District Development Committee shall function under the newly constituted local bodies or under the former one. Similarly, the report was criticized that it didn’t include issues of sexual minorities, children, differently able people, etc.

Representatives suggested that the perception towards NGOs must be brought positive and some change is indeed necessary. Some suggested that conference to be held for dialogue between political groups and civil society and their distinctive roles.

Altogether there were 700 representatives and over 6000 NGOs from across the country. Both two days sessions were conducted by Secretary General of NGO Federation of Nepal Mr. Milan Kumar Shrestha under the chairmanship of NFN President Mr. Gopal Lamsal.

At the end of the National Civil Society Conference NFN endorse 16 points DECLARATION. The declaration expressing its gratitude for overwhelming success of local polls urged that the Federation and organizations associated with Federation are looking forward to work with local governments together.
Declaration Endorsed by the 23rd Annual General Meeting of the NGO Federation of Nepal and National Civil Society Conference 2017
7-8 November 2017
Kathmandu

NGO Federation of Nepal, a common platform of civil society organizations actively working in the forefront towards promoting advocacy, social mobilization, citizens’ empowerment and civic participation for socio-economic transformation, development and national unity, has accomplished its 23rd Annual General Meeting (AGM) alongside the National Civil Society Conference 2017 on 7-8 November 2017, in Kathmandu. We, more than 700 delegates representing over 6,000 CSOs from across the country, including prominent leaders of civil society movements and human rights campaigns in Nepal, attending the AGM and Conference hereby endorse this DECLARATION to call for and reaffirm our commitments and concerns to the full-fledged implementation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal as well as to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by means of active and strong civic engagement, as hereunder:

1. We, the representatives of CSOs, would like to express our happiness about the happening of local level polls in peaceful, impartial and exhilarating manners as anticipat-ed prior. We hereby affirm that the CSOs of Nepal are fully committed to collaborating, coordinating and working in partnerships with the local governments towards enabling their functional effectiveness; facilitating in the processes of development; and attaining and enduring transformative, just, uniform and sustainable kind of development and prosperity. NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN) feels revered to witness some of its social championers being elected as the people’s representatives at local levels, who in the past, served into various kinds of leadership roles at different layers of the organization. This convention congratulates to all of them – the former activists associated with the NFN; now elected as local level representatives, and wishes them a very successful tenure ahead.

2. NFN has been persistently advocating for the formulation of Social Development Act for a decade at least. However, it’s a pity to state that the successive Governments...
formed in the aftermath of the entire restructuring of the state have not paid adequate attention to the voices of CSOs and have even not prioritized the ‘Act’. In the absence of Social Development Act that envisions a clear, CSOs-friendly, and pro-partnerships modality for development; CSOs have been experiencing practical difficulties in terms of participation, pro-active-ness, and involvement in the development activities. On the whole, it is felt that the activities triggering off deterrent and shrinking roles of CSOs are being embarked on by the state and other actors. The policies and practices, in whatever forms, that contradict to the spirit of fundamental rights of the Constitution; envision restricting the space and participation of CSOs; and create hurdles through state-imposed tax regimes and administrative regulations are not acceptable to CSOs at all. We call for the immediate action to endorse Social Development Act at federal level that envisages effective decentralized restructuring of the Social Welfare Council, in adequate consultations with the NGO Federation of Nepal.

3. The prevailing policy, as of yet, demands CSOs to get registered into the VAT system for initiating partnerships with the government funded development projects. We urge the government to nullify the policy of mandatory VAT registration for CSOs without any delay which is principally against the spirit of not-for-profit and voluntary kind of engagement of CSOs in development efforts and interventions.

4. Given the current circumstances – that the Government of Nepal has failed to set aside adequate budget for the development sector, and there is wider complaints of stakeholders that the development efforts undertaken by the government mechanisms are not being efficacious; we appeal to the federal government, including the provincial and local governments to be formed ahead, to embrace CSOs as the development partners and facilitate them to engage in development, social mobilization and citizens empowerment programs.

5. Time and again, NFN has been raising voices emphasizing on the need – to foster partnerships with the grassroots CSOs; to support and enable them evolve as autonomous and powerful institutions; and to promote the practice of facilitative roles of the international non-government organizations for the effective implementation of development budget and foreign grants to Nepal. However, we have yet not experienced any such improvements in this regards. It is evident
that the practices of awarding grants to the international NGOs from the development financing allocated for Nepal; allowing INGOs to operate projects directly at the local levels; and encroaching upon the freedom, independence and autonomy of domestic CSOs, prevail rampantly. International NGOs are the essential partners of development campaign worldwide. We appeal to the International NGOs and donor agencies to instigate and foster partnerships with the national CSOs; and to instill a culture of independent, shared, healthy and transparent partnership for the development of Nepal.

6. We call for the establishment of a special parliamentary committee which would help to create an enabling environment for facilitating dialogues and discourses on national and provincial-level development issues with the people’s representatives in the federal and provincial assemblies. We hope such a committee would serve as a platform where CSOs perceptions, experiences, concerns and demands are put forth and discussed face-to-face with the elected representatives.

7. Albeit political transformations and peace processes in Nepal have reached nearly at the end phases; the conflict victims and families of the disappeared still have not been able to realize justice to them. We urge the Government of Nepal to foster environment for justice and reconciliation within this year by helping to boost up the functional pro-activeness of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

8. As the Government has moved ahead with the processes of holding parliamentary and provincial elections as part of the implementation the Constitution, we appeal to all the concerned actors and stakeholders not to act or incite others to act towards creating room for doubts or disrupting the upcoming elections. At the same time, we urge the political parties, election commission and Government of Nepal to be responsible for holding the elections in fair, free, peaceful, just, and frugal manners. We proclaim for the effective citizens monitoring of the electoral processes towards advocating for the fair, free and inclusive polls.

9. It’s a matter of indignity that the Political Parties, contrary to the spirit and mandate of the Constitution, have failed to nominate candidates from women, Dalit, Janajati, and other historically left out social groups in inclusive ways for the first-past-the-post elections of the upcoming federal and provincial houses of representatives. We urge the Political Parties of Nepal
to augment the active, meaningful and leading participation of women, Dalit, Janajati and Madhesi communities in civic and political campaigns in the country. NFN hopes that the union and provincial parliaments and governments to be elected and formed through the forthcoming elections would be able to foster national unity and prosperity by addressing the contractions, discriminations and dissatisfactions that are the entrenched challenges of national politics in Nepal.

10. Alarming price hikes of the commodities and rampant and intensified use of small arms has threatened to the entire civil society. We urge the government to take active and effective initiatives to adequately monitor the market activities; regulate price hikes; and control illicit trade and use of small arms so that social harmony, peace, security, and civic safety and wellbeing would be guaranteed in the country.

11. NFN regrets that the Government of Nepal has been too slow and dawdling in offering help to the communities affected by the massive earthquake, flood and landslide, and other kinds of natural disasters that occurred in the past; and that the victims of these calamities as yet have not been able to get relief, reconstruction and other supports on timely manner. We call for the immediate action by the government towards ensuring accomplishment of the reconstruction processes within a year to come and distribute relief packages, including other services to all those affected by the devastating earthquake, flood, and landslide on time. We also appeal to the local governments and Nepal Reconstruction Authority to facilitate and simplify the processes of participation and partnerships for CSOs in reconstruction activities.

12. Despite the advancement and expansion of road networks and transportation system in the country, we have been witnessing severe incidences of road accidents almost every day. In order to make sure that people have their journeys in safer, easier and decent ways; we urge the Government of Nepal to take immediate actions towards endorsing Road Safety Act; regulating transport entrepreneurship; and managing for the operation of public transport system in safer way.

13. It is inevitable to ensure active participation, mobilization and partnerships of CSOs for managing statistics and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For the sake of water and sanitation management; enhanced international partnerships and collaborations; promoting social cohesion; protecting women, children
and disabled persons to help them live dignified lives; and more so for creating an unrestricted and active space for CSOs; we call for ensuring the representation of NFN and CSOs in the mechanisms of development and public service delivery erected at all layers of the state.

14. Rampant corruption, commission-cracy and monopolistic control of the market have instigated hardships in daily lives of people. We therefore cordially appeal to the concerned mechanisms of the Government of Nepal to take apt steps towards ending corruption, controlling commission-cracy, and promoting governance by advancing the state of right to information, development justice and collective and balanced control of the market.

15. NFN is the organization actively working for the global and regional development campaign. Regional development and cooperation can only contribute to establishing the SDGs and sustained peace across the globe. We suggest the SAARC member nations to concentrate and deliberate on fostering mutual cooperation and regional development through dialogues for convening the SAARC SUMMIT, which was postponed previously, at the earliest.

16. NFN works for promoting citizens’ empowerment, civic space, partnerships, coordination and collaborations among diverse groups of actors and stakeholders. As it envisages, NFN will launch a nation-wide campaign for the promotion of absolute human rights, sustainable development, justice, national unity, and prosperity in the country in a year to come. We will extend collaborations and go hand-in-hand with other civic and professional organizations, including private sector organizations, in this campaign. We appeal to all our district chapters and member organizations to join hands and cooperate with us in this mission; to accomplish the campaign successfully towards reinforcing civic space and roles and stimulate for people’s participation in the national development processes.

Thank you
Introduction
The 5th Glocal Advocacy Leadership in Asia (GALA) Academy – South Asia is a joint initiative by Asia Development Alliance (ADA) and Asia Democracy Network (ADN) with the aim of strengthening advocacy capacity of CSOs for defending and promoting civic and democratic space and human rights through strategic “glocal (global and local)” actions on the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development known as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

It was organized in Pokhara, Nepal on November 2017 in partnership with the International Forum of National NGO Platforms (IFP), Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network and Asia Partnership for Sustainable Development (APSD) with the NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN) as a local host.

As being a local host of the 5th GALA Academy NFN has managed all the pre and post preparatory activities of the training. NFN has managed all the necessary resources for program including accommodation, and transportation arrangement of participants from Kathmandu International airport to Pokhara and Pokhara to Kathmandu. NFN gave full time/priority to conduct training successfully.

Objectives
The training helped CSOs of South Asia to learn about SDGs as well as how to engage with the government and others stakeholders for the implementation of SDGs including monitoring and coalition-building among CSOs across the sectors.
The general objective of the GALAA South Asia 2017 was to enhance capacity and shared understanding of the next generation of CSO leaders in Asia, who shall play a crucial and constructive role in the national, regional and international advocacy on human rights, development and democracy.

**Participants**
There were 16 participants from 7 different South Asian Countries including Nepal. Six participants of Leadership Development Program (LDP) organized by International Forum of National NGO Platforms (IFP) also participated in this training. So, altogether there were 22 participants and 3 resource person from ADA.

**Activities**
The main agenda of the training was to help CSOs in South Asia to learn about SDGs itself as well as how to engage with the government and other stakeholder for the implementation of SDGs including monitoring and coalition building among CSOs across the sectors.

Training starts from the overview of the UN 2030 agenda (history, contents, structure and storytelling) focusing on its main agenda. Mr. Anselmo Lee, Co-convener of Asia Development Alliance (ADA) was the resource person for one and half day. He continues his presentation on SDGs and CSO engagement and strategies (key goals and targets for CSO engagement – cross-cutting issues and goal 17, 12 targets of SDG 16 and indicators (global and national), and he also share about the useful websites/links allied to SDGs.

Ms. Beckie Malay - Global Call to Action Against Poverty (AAP) and Ms. Jyotsna Mohan Singh from ADA facilitated the whole session after Mr. Anselmo Lee. Ms. Beckie Malay presented on SDG 10 (reduce inequality within and among countries) and achieving the 2030 (Agenda across Global, (SUB) Regional, and National level). Continuing the presentation, Ms. Joyce SOARES from IFP presented on capacity building of CSOs globally and action plans on SDG 16 and 17, SDGs and CSOs (role of CSOs in SDGs implementation).

The training also focused on how to engage in the Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF)
and SDG 10 (inequality) and 16 (peace and justice) which are global thematic priorities of HLPF 2019 and SDG Target 17.2 (ODA) and 17.17 (partnership). Group was divided into three (Nepal, India and Bangladesh) to discuss on VNR and its process. After group discussion Nepal, India and Bangladesh also share the outcomes of group discussion and about the VNR report prepared by their country and the action plans made by government to implement SDGs 2030 agenda.

Another group work was on four clusters of SDG 16. Participants were divided into four groups; violence against children (16.2), rule of law and access to justice (16.3), anti corruption (16.5), and right to information (16.10). In this, group has prepared indicators of given clusters and shared it with all participants.

Last group work of the training was to prepare national strategic action plan for the implementation of SDGs, where each country should make effective implementation plans focusing CSOs, grassroots communities, journalists / media, school / university, Policy-makers (national and/or local government), parliament (national assembly), and others (Private Sector). Presentation was done by each group after group discussion.

CONCLUSION
The training objective was accomplished successfully. The weeklong training, has been very specific on necessary knowledge about SDGs and its implementation process and mechanisms, practical understanding about issues related to sustainable development, inequality (Goal 10), peace and justice (Goal 16), Official Development Assistance (ODA) and multi-stakeholder partnership (Goal 17) and better strategies and action plans on SDG implementation at national and sub-national as well as international levels.