Video Statement by Hon. Hridayesh Tripathi, Minister of Health and Population of Nepal at the 74th Session of the World Health Assembly, under Agenda Item 3: General Discussion
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Namaskar!

Mr. President of the Assembly,
Mr. Director-General of the WHO,
Excellencies

The world is confronting the harshest of times in human history due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The leadership of WHO in addressing the global crisis has been commendable at all levels. I take this opportunity on behalf of the Government and people of Nepal, to express our deepest condolences and most sincere sympathy to the Governments and people of the world who have lost their loved ones to the pandemic. I also would like to convey my regards and sincere appreciation to the frontline workers who have been working round the clock to save the lives, in this adverse situation.

While the world is now recovering gradually from the pandemic, the countries in South Asia, particularly Nepal is witnessing an alarming surge in COVID-19 cases. The unprecedented rise in the caseload has strained our health infrastructure as well as medical supplies and equipment. At this moment, I thank our neighboring countries and development partners for providing support during this crisis.

Mr. President,

Nepal is struggling hard to overcome this grave situation. While we have put in place appropriate preventive measures including restriction on movement and awareness campaigns as well as increased testing, tracing and treatment facilities, the ultimate way out of this crisis is expansion of vaccination.

It is disheartening to note that high- and upper-middle income countries have received 83% of the world's vaccines while low- and lower-middle countries have

received just 17% of the world's vaccines. On behalf of the government of Nepal, I, therefore, would like to appeal global community to ensure equitable distribution of vaccines and prioritize the most vulnerable first.

The COVID-19 pandemic taught us that strong and resilient health systems are crucial to contain the crisis and ensure continuity of essential health services. To make this happen health systems and emergency health programs should work together, and strong health security program is needed to bring together leaders, scientists, experts and people of the world for effective preparedness and response.

Against this backdrop, I would like to recall the theme of 13th General Program of Work that we endorsed jointly, "promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable". I am hopeful that the considerations will be made by the global community for ensuring equitable access to the health technologies including vaccines as we accept the fact that 'No one is safe until everyone is safe'.

Thank you.