Statement by Honorable Narayankaji Shrestha, Deputy Prime Minister and
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal, at High-Level Meeting on Nuclear
Safety and Security

New York, 22 September 2011

Mr. Chairman,

I thank His Excellency Mr. Ban ki-Moon for hosting this high-level meeting on nuclear safety and security.

I join the previous speakers in expressing my deepest sympathy and solidarity with the people and the government of Japan in the wake of the earthquake and tsunami that caused tragic accident at the Fukushima Dai-Ichi Nuclear Plant in March this year. We appreciate the extraordinary resilience exhibited by the Japanese people in overcoming the tragedy.

Invention of nuclear technology has been both a boon and a bane. It could generate power not only in a cost-effective way but also in a cleaner way which can help reduce the emission of greenhouse gases substantially and reduce the negative impacts on the environment. On the other hand, it could also be a weapon to take the lives of people while affecting the entire ecosystems. In 1945, for the first time in human history, the world witnessed the deadly impact of the nuclear technology when used for the purpose of war. One can only imagine how catastrophic it could be if nuclear technology were to be at the hands of terrorist outfits today.

In view of the colossal damage that the explosion of or the leakage from the nuclear plant could inflict upon people and property, the highest consideration must be given to the selection of an appropriate site, design of the plant, operating procedures and the emergency preparedness of nuclear installations to avoid catastrophic effects.

The highest possible standard of nuclear safety and security must be ensured in each and every nuclear power plant operating around the world. In case of
nuclear accident, radiological effects do not respect national boundaries. Available data show that there are over four hundred commercial nuclear power reactors in operation generating about 15 percent of the world’s electricity. An increasing number of reactors, around 50 of them, are known to have been either under construction or being considered in over a dozen countries.

Instead of using nuclear technology for armaments, it must be harnessed for the welfare and benefit of the entire humanity. The Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), while calling for nuclear disarmament, also guarantees the inalienable right of all State Parties to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. In this connection, IAEA should play an important role in furthering the best scientific knowledge and technology to ensure safe and secure use of nuclear materials and radioactive sources. International cooperation could contribute to sharing the knowledge and expertise in the field of nuclear safety and security.

The uses of nuclear technology in the field of medical and agricultural sciences must be made accessible for the benefit of the people around the world. It is an imperative for the countries that possess such knowledge and expertise to facilitate the transfer of the same to the countries who are in need of such knowledge in medical and agricultural sectors.

Nepal attaches great importance to a multilateral approach to the nuclear safety and security. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), being the sole inter-governmental organization within the UN system, should be utilized fully in developing standard norms and guidelines in the field of nuclear safety and security. The IAEA could play a central role in assisting the Member States for their capacity building.

As a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency and also a member of the Least Developed Countries, Nepal wishes to take the enormous advantage of nuclear technology particularly in the medical and agricultural sectors. Government of Nepal is fully committed to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and has already adopted a nuclear energy policy keeping the welfare and wellbeing of the people at the uppermost. We are ready and eager to work with IAEA for furthering our knowledge and developing
necessary human resource as well as infrastructure to harness the benefits of nuclear technology for the development and prosperity of our people.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.