

**Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Early Childhood and 3rd High Level
Policy Forum on Early Childhood Care and Education**

**Vote of thanks Speech by Honorable Education, Science & Technology
Minister Mr. Giriraj Mani Pokharel**

Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister,

Honorable Ministers from the Asia Pacific countries

Honorable Ministers of Government of Nepal

Distinguished delegates

Representatives from the UN and International Organisations

Media Persons

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. First of all, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister for his time to inaugurate the conference and for his valuable remarks. I would also like to thank ARNEC, UNICEF, UNESCO and other organizations for supporting us to organize this important conference in Nepal.
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3. I feel honored to speak and hear different perspectives and practices from different countries in the area of Early Childhood Development. I take this conference as an opportunity not only for sharing Nepal's Early Childhood Development practices but also to learn more from the experiences of other countries in this area.

Distinguished delegates

4. Since Nepal has entered into the new era of stability and development with the recent successful holding of elections to various tiers of Governments, the Government has set high priority to strengthen the foundation of children in their early childhood.

5. As a Minister of Education, I feel that education plays critical role for ensuring basic right of children for holistic early childhood development. The constitution of Nepal has guaranteed child rights as fundamental rights. As early childhood starts from the phase of conception, we have prioritized parental education as a significant form of early childhood development. In addition, we have initiated several interventions on health, nutrition and protection of children as well.
6. Recognizing the contribution of early childhood education to entire education system of the country, we have included one year pre-primary education in school structure. As a result, about a million children are receiving early childhood education opportunities across the contry. It has also contributed to increase the net enrollment rate and dramatically reduced the dropout rate in the school system.
7. I would like to recall that we have integrated health and nutrition components into the early childhood education through ECD strategy developed by Ministry of Education. This strategy has focused on regular health checkups and mid-day meals to children in ECD centers. Our current education sector plan- School Sector Development Plan has envisioned access to quality early childhood education and development for all children inline with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen

8. Education development vision paper of ten points of the Ministry of Education Science and Technology has been recently made public with a high priority on ECD programmes. The vision paper highlights a regorous mapping of ECD centers in order to reach to the unreached and also articulates quality management of ECD centres. In addition the vision paper has given importance to the enrollment of all children into the school. Based on that the special enrollment campiagn has been run by the government and got the significant achievement. We are also planning to bring all schooll age children to the school with in this year.

9. Since we have been facing some challenges to enhance the quality services provided by both governmental and non governmental sectors, a strong coordination mechanism needs to be developed to address the issues raising on ECD sector.

10. I am happy that the conference is timely organized in Nepal to exchange the best practices across the region. I believe, participants will also be privileged by sharing the cross-country knowledge and best practices in the areas of Early Childhood Development.

11. Before I conclude, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to Right Honourable Prime Minister for kind presence and valuable remarks to the conference. I would also like to express my sincere thank to the ministers of Government of Nepal for providing your valuable time to us and the chair of the board of Directors of ARNEC, Regional directors of UNESCO and UNICEF for your support and valuable remarks. Similarly I would like to thank both national and international supporting organizations.

12. Finally, I wish distinguished delegates have a productive and joyful stay in Nepal.

Thank you