



# Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA)

## गैरआवासीय नेपाली संघ



### Conclusion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> NRN Global Knowledge Convention

Encouraged by the success of the first convention and the enthusiastic support received from the Government of Nepal, NRNA organized the 2<sup>nd</sup> NRN Global Knowledge Convention from 09-11 October 2020. Similar to the first one, this convention was co-organized with the Government of Nepal. Prime Minister of Nepal the Rt. Honorable KP Oli inaugurated the convention on 09 October 2020. The Honorable Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali and other dignitaries addressed the inauguration session. In the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the entire convention was organized in all online formats.

Unlike the location of the first convention, we had decided to move the 2nd Convention venue from the expensive five-star hotel to premises of educational institution. We had received unconditional support from the Kathmandu University to organize the 2nd Convention at their facility. Although we are not able to take full advantage of this offer due to COVID-19 pandemic, our commitment to partner with educational institutions in Nepal will continue in the future. In addition to this, unlike the 1st Convention, we expanded the scope of this Convention and its horizon through direct collaboration with crucial stakeholders of Nepal such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, National Planning Commission of Nepal, Nepal Academy of Science and Technology, Educational Institutions, Private Sectors and Innovators. This direct collaboration is expected to reduce the barrier for implementing the recommendation of the 2nd Convention.

Unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic hit us in the middle of the preparation for this convention. Due to the resilience, relentless efforts and courage of the scientific steering committee, we collectively rise to the occasion and move forward to organize the event. The challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic and opportunities associated with it was made one of the central themes of the Convention. The convention also used Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations and the 15th five-year plan of National Planning Commission of Nepal to shape its objectives and goals.

The focus of the convention was guided by four overarching themes:

- In-house Innovation for Societal Changes
- Science, Technology & Innovation Policy
- Startups and Commercialization
- Digitalized Economy

The convention was organized in four plenary sessions, fifteen symposium sessions and three special sessions. A total of 210 papers were presented and 90 experts commented on the papers. The presentations were delivered over 80 hours. Twenty-Five experts from the international scientific community from sixteen countries and diaspora experts from thirty countries presented their papers. Experts from several ministries of Nepal, such as, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Science, Education and Technology, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Women, Children & Senior Citizen, Ministry of Health and Population, Ministry of Agriculture & Livestock Development, Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation, Ministry of Forest and Environment, and Ministry of Urban Development contributed to the convention. Similarly, experts from the World Health Organization, International Labor Organization, Asian Development Bank and World Food Program also contributed to this convention.



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Prior to the 2ndNRN Global Knowledge Convention, four regional knowledge conferences were organized in Oceania, Asia Pacific, Europe and Americas regions.

The detailed reports of the global knowledge convention and regional conferences will be submitted to the Government of Nepal within a month, and archived on the Convention webpage. A quick review, summary, and recommendations of the convention are presented as follows.

1. With Covid19, the ability of the government of Nepal to spend has been reduced and there is a real likelihood that many people will be pushed into extreme poverty. It has become imperative to mobilize local, diaspora, and foreign investments to meet our Sustainable Development Goals.
2. Covid19 crisis may bring opportunities in the long run via raised awareness, technical improvement including in Information Communication Technology sector, decentralization and reverse brain gain, among others. A research environment friendly to the returnee diaspora professionals will help speed up the brain reversing process.
3. Covid-19 has highlighted various gaps in the health care system, especially regarding surveillance, quarantine, contact tracing, coordination and capacity of healthcare facilities. Restructuring of the health care system with the formation of Public Health Department at the Federal and Provincial levels is recommended.
4. The Covid-19 pandemic exposed that Nepal is not prepared to deal with the magnitude of the problems and the suffering that migrant Nepalis face, including the GCC countries. A disaster preparedness framework needs to be drawn up and preparations made in relation to foreign labour migration, so that there is no confusion when disasters such as the COVID pandemic strike. Risk reduction strategies need to be incorporated into migration planning, such as diversifying destinations, improving the skills of migrants so that they are not unemployed and have the possibility of self-employment on return to Nepal. Enhancing the position of local government by equipping them with resources and capacities in responding to challenges faced by the migrants including facilitating their mobility.
5. NRNA is responding to mitigate the pandemic crisis through the formation of a High-Level Committee on Coronavirus Pandemic Mitigation Response. It is recommended to form a permanent high-level disaster management structure and mitigation funds to fight against current and future disasters.
6. Rapid Medical Team within the Health Committee of NRNA has played a critical role in several previous disasters and is ready to be deployed in future disaster areas within 24 hours.
7. Patenting innovation is a very important tool for sustainable development especially for least developed countries and young entrepreneurs. Nepali innovators are recommended to start collaborating with diaspora and international experts who have successfully registered patents to get guidance in this direction.
8. Resident Nepali entrepreneurs and returnee professionals are looking for opportunities to establish startups and commercialize their inventions. There is a strong need that Government and NRNA set up funds to promote innovation and commercialization. NRNA should also collaborate with private sectors for for-profit innovation and commercialization endeavors.



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9. Food security is one of the serious challenges facing Nepal. Agriculture policies need to promote cost-effective technologies to increase yield. Returnee migrants should be encouraged to play a crucial role in food production. Underutilized and indigenous species of crops, livestock, and fruit needs to be conserved using community seed banks and dry chain technologies.

10. Digitalization helps developing countries like Nepal to achieve sustainable development goals. However, Cybercrime has become a serious issue. The Nepal Government should form an integrated national research and action center to counter cybercrime. Diaspora IT professional can help enhance cyber breach counter measures in Nepal. Since the process of digitalization is inescapable, Nepal Government should introduce ICT-based national development curriculum in school education.

11. The internet cost is much higher for the people living in Nepal's remote areas. Return on investment for private sector involvement is not encouraging. The government and NRNA need to invest in this sector to decrease the digital divide.

12. The 7th goal of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals emphasizes on ensuring access to affordable, reliable and sustainable energy for all by 2030. To achieve this goal, Nepal too is taking initiatives for power generation by switching to clean energies. Though the emphasis is on renewable energies, dependence on biomass and imported petroleum fuels is not reduced. There is an urgent need to focus on increasing per capita electricity consumption in various service sectors. Nepal currently faces massive energy losses that can be addressed by using Smart Grids. For a successful smart-grid program, initiatives must be prioritized at the policy, regulatory, industry, institutional, and standardization level. Innovative business models using a public-private partnership should be explored. Nepal should also develop capability on Information Technology applications and system integration.

13. Nepal faces unique challenges in designing science-based sustainable stewardship of natural resources. Nepal needs to adopt an integrated development planning approach to replace the current sectoral development planning to leverage the synergy generated by available natural resources. A rapid high economic growth at the cost of environmental degradation and resource depletion will be suicidal in the long run. This necessitates the integration of environmental ethics into the development framework to achieve the United Nations' sustainable development goals. Environmental education and community awareness program at schools and community level is critically important to motivate citizens participation in environmental management.

14. Domestic investment alone is not enough to regain the pre-COVID economic growth and to realize the aspired double-digit growth rate in Nepal. Foreign and diaspora investment needs to be immediately channelized to refuel Nepal's economy. Nepal needs to revise its financial policies to catch up with the pace of FinTech development and adoption in other economies.

15. Due to COVID-19, economic growth is estimated to contract in the Fiscal Year 2020-21. A belief in science is the only solution to today's impacts on poverty levels. Nepal's revised Science, Technology and Innovation Policy has envisioned scientific and technological interventions necessary in different sectors. Rapid implementation of this policy can help to fulfill the sustainable development goals.

16. Biomedical science and technology are advancing the delivery of high-quality healthcare. Unfortunately, most of the research and innovation in this area is pursued in a developed economy, and the resulting technologies are very expensive. There is a unique opportunity for emerging economies like that of Nepal in



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doing research and innovation in the local market so that the cost will be lower and increase the affordability.

17. The current urban growth in Nepal is mostly happening without adequate infrastructure capacity. Good governance, planning tools and mechanisms must be developed to achieve sustainable urban development. Community involvement should be strengthened. International best practices in urban governance can be reviewed for possible application in Nepal. Elements of smart city approaches should be adopted by the Nepali cities.

18. Resident Nepali and Non-Resident Nepali Experts need to come together for networking, knowledge-sharing, and collaboration in a regular basis. Such Knowledge sharing can facilitate the aspiration of Nepali citizens for knowledge-based economic development.

19. NRNA should take initiative to the development of end-of-life (palliative) care in Nepal as a continuation of Briddha Ashram (Abode for Elderly) Program initiative which was started in the beginning years of NRNA activities.

20. Expanding education opportunities to technical and vocational education and training schools will support citizens in continuous learning, elevate productivity through training, and bring light to the transformative potentials of our human and natural endowments. When countries seek to redefine their education, the idea of community colleges offers a powerful connective solution to building a strong community, industry, and national economies. The future is wide open for Nepali education, and we must seize it.

21. NRNA will immediately start collaborating with National Planning Commission, Nepal Academy of Science and Technology, Labor Bank and Brain Grain Center. A Memorandum of Understanding will be signed with the Policy Research Institute of Nepal to conduct research on evidence-based policy formation.

22. The outcome of the convention and its recommendations need to be integrated into the planning, policy-making, networking, research, education, innovation, and commercialization. NRNA needs a well thought out mechanism to do so. We recommend NRNA to use Skill, Knowledge, and Technology Transfer Department to take a lead in collating the enthusiasm of Diaspora experts and feed that into different levels of government, institutions, and private sectors.

23. Nepal should officially recognize the need for and benefits of plurality in HEI education and research, i.e. the coexistence of different types of institutions, both public and private. Increasing political interference has had a very deleterious effect on public universities. Mechanisms need to be developed that will enable universities to become fully autonomous bodies able to control their own appointments at the departmental level. There should be two national research councils, one for natural science and the other for social science and the humanities.

24. Tremendous amount of knowledge was created through the regional conferences. NRNA commits to continue knowledge exchange at the regional levels.

The convention was the outcome of an estimated minimum of 5000 hours of voluntary work of the scientific steering committee. We sincerely hope that NRNA and the Government of Nepal will take the recommendations seriously and try to implement them in the times to come.



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