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*“Be careful what you water your dreams with. Water them with worry and fear and you will produce weeds that choke the life from your dream. Water them with optimism and solutions and you will cultivate success. Always be on the lookout for ways to turn a problem into an opportunity for success. Always be on the lookout for ways to nurture your dream.”*

*LAO TZU, ancient Chinese philosopher*

The Water and Energy Commission Secretariat (WECS) of Nepal has been in the process of preparing its Nepal's Dream-Vision for 2050 for the Water and Energy Sectors. The objective of WECS' study program is to generate ideas and plans to fulfill the water and energy needs of Nepalese people in the most optimal manner. Currently, the program is slated for completion in December 2013. WECS has partnered with the consulting firm of M/s. Consolidated Management Services (CMS) to complete the study, assembling a team of professional experts from various sub-sectors related to water and energy.

The study covers multiple issues related to water and energy, including irrigation, hydropower, water supply and sanitation, water transport, recreation and tourism. In addition, the program will address industrial sub-sectors of water resources and associated energy concerns such as commercial energy, traditional energy and renewable energy -sub sectors of energy. In its final form, the report will also provide recommendations for institutional, policy and legal frameworks, as well as the macro-economic frameworks for the accomplishment of vision goals.

The Vision 2050 document will reflect the people's aspiration in the water and energy sectors, and it was compiled after gathering views and ideas from general stakeholders: water and energy professionals, academics, civil society members, and the state-level decision makers from the central level and all five development regions of the country. Stakeholder input was collected through consultative workshops at national and regional levels in all the five development regions. The workshops used questionnaires and group discussions to collect several elements that will be incorporated in the final report. These elements included current views on the existing and perceived constraints and challenges, suggestions on the possible means and ways to attain the perceived vision goals. Overall the workshops concluded that Nepalis have a shared desire to develop sustainably while also meeting the water and energy needs of the people for economic prosperity. A second consensus expression from the workshops addressed people's desire to have water and energy developed for Nepalis by Nepalis. In other words, respondents felt Nepal should reduce its reliance on foreign investment and prioritize domestic consumption of hydropower and water.

The inputs from the consultative national and regional workshops will provide the basis for formulating the vision, mission and goals for Nepal in 2050. Using

the input provided through workshops, the Vision 2050 team analysed the information within three different economic growth scenarios: low (average GDP growth at 4.4%; business as usual), medium (average GDP growth at 5.6%; reference case) and high (average GDP growth at 6.5%). For each economic scenario the study team prepared targets for each sub-sector in the short term (2020 AD), medium term (2030 AD) and long term (2050 AD). Various strategic policies that will be required to meet those targets and realize the vision were also devised.

Following this initial collection of information and drafting of policies, the Vision 2050 committee held a national workshop on July 30, 2013 in order to seek feedback and suggestions on the study findings from the stakeholders. Some highlights of the feedback received during this session included:

- Availability of water in future could decrease due to climate change effects. The document should take into account this possibility in its vision strategy.
- Water of Nepal will have strategic value; and therefore, electricity should not dominate the agenda for water.
- While a long-term vision is necessary, WECS also needs to keep its focus on practical solutions to the present crisis and problems of load shedding and drinking water supply.
- The economic growth rate scenarios offered by the Study team should be ambitious enough to challenge the policy makers while at the same time it should be achievable.

During the open floor discussion at the national workshop, the study team explained that the economic growth rate scenarios projected in the study were based on Nepal's economic performance in the past decade. It argued the reference case growth scenarios would be possible to realize dependent on political stability and political commitment. To insure flexibility and range in their vision, the study team developed the short term, medium term and long term targets for realizing the vision goals based on the medium economic growth scenario as the reference case.

According to the study team, the vision targets and goals cannot be achieved under a business as usual (low) economic growth scenario; but most of the vision goals and targets could be achieved with a medium economic growth rate in the country. High economic growth rate would make it much easier to achieve the vision goals,

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but that scenario was judged more optimistic given the prevailing political climate of the country.

In the past, Nepal's policy makers in the water and energy sector had not correctly assessed the external factors. For example, with the huge hydro-electric potential of the country, policy makers used to visualize very large electricity, market across the border. However, in reality, the electricity market across the border in India is not open to Nepal. At present, there is an export tax of 0.005% on Nepal's electricity (e.g., see the MOUs for Upper Karnali and Arun-III); whereas the import tax in India is IRs.2.0 per unit (a difference by a factor of 10.000). Whether Nepalese like it or not, large scale water resource development in Nepal to some extent may require good will from India. India has many alternatives sources for electricity generation, but there is no alternative to water. Water will be a more scarce resource in

coming decades due to the climate change. Furthermore, there has been no good progress towards the implementation of 6,720 MW Pancheshwor multipurpose project even 17 years after Nepal and India signed and ratified the MOU. It is hoped that the Study Term will take these factors into account while formulating the long term vision for the water and energy sector of Nepal.

It is hoped that this Vision 2050 report will offer politicians, policy makers, planner's implementers and all Nepalese the proper direction for developing Nepal's water and energy resources and utilizing these resources for the sustainability and prosperity of all in the country. The quote from Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu in the beginning of this write up may be good guide for the study team.

*(Based on the interview with Dr. Dibya Ratna Kansakaer)*