Mr. Chairman,
Delegate Members of world mountaineering and climbing federation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Very Good Morning and Namaste,

On behalf of Nepal delegation and myself, I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation for giving me this opportunity to address this prestigious gathering at the UIAA General Assembly here in Pontresina, Switzerland. My address is focused on questions raised during yesterday’s international conference on "Mountaineering and Climate Change". During the conference many questions were raised to our attention such as the Everest incident in Spring 2013, commercial and non-commercial mountaineering and adventure tourism, traffic on Everest, fixing of ladder at the Hillary step, garbage on Everest, impact of Climate Change and Global Warming in high Himalayan regions and the threat of catastrophic glacial lake outburst floods etc. The following are our views:

1. Everest Incident: This was a very unfortunate incident, not only for Nepal but for the entire mountaineering community. As soon as this incident happened, the Government of Nepal formed an investigation committee and both sides in the conflict admitted their mistakes and submitted in writing their errors in the presence of representatives of the Government and other expeditions. We hope that this single incident will not ruin and tarnish the image of the country and century long reputation of all Sherpa's hard work, dedication, deliberation, honesty, courage and sacrifices for the sake of putting so many climbers on the top of Mt. Everest and other Himalayan peaks.
2. **Commercial and non-commercial mountaineering and adventure tourism:** The mountaineering and adventure tourism in developed countries and underdeveloped countries are completely different situations. In developed countries, mountaineering is perceived as a sport, adventure, leisure activity, and a source of additional income. Where as in less developed countries, it is a fundamental source of livelihood where many are surviving on a hand to mouth basis. Of course, mountaineering is as much a philosophical exercise as it is a physical. So, I request that when a global organization that is the UIAA makes any decisions; please look at the local circumstances before passing judgment on appropriate climbing styles. It is also important to note that climbing may be actively discouraged in our host countries if the economic needs of the local communities are not fulfilled and yet the seemingly indulgent desires of international climbers are seen to be fulfilled.

3. **Fixing of ladder at Hillary step:** During our time at the Conference, we heard many rumors and criticisms that the Nepalese authorities were going to fix a ladder at the Hillary Step. Nepal has not made any such decision. I cannot understand why without discussions and consultation with us, especially the Nepalese authorities who were present at the conference, these rumors and criticisms were allowed to be voiced on the stage during the conference. Furthermore, we are very upset that we were not given the opportunity to express our views on that matter at the time of discussions.

It is true that many suggestions and ideas are received by the Nepalese authorities, which includes the idea to fix a ladder at the Hillary step, just like at the second step on the China Side. Mt. Everest is an international icon and a natural world heritage site, so of course it goes without saying that we are very conscious and concerned about the impacts of our actions. It is our intention to protect our mountains and that does mean that we have listen to new ideas, deliberate on their consequence and make informed and democratic decisions.
4. Traffic on Mt. Everest: In the last few years a lot of criticism has been circulating on the issue of traffic jams on Mt. Everest that there are traffic jams on her slopes. This criticism came to its apex in 2012 when pictures were published showing a long line of climbers snaking up the normal route. Unfortunately, these pictures gave a very misleading impression to the world. From the beginning, it is important to note what the circumstances were that led to such a situation and how it can be avoided in the future. Nepal learnt from the previous years and took corrective action this year, and as a result there wasn't a single report of traffic jam this year (2013).

To explain in more detail, the pictures from 2012 were taken towards the end of the month of May as the monsoon was soon to arrive. Rope fixing efforts were delayed due to dangerous conditions on the mountain, injuries and a lack of strong coordination and leadership of the rope fixing team. This delay resulted in many weather windows being missed and climbers getting anxious for their success as the monsoon was coming in soon. When finally the rope was fixed to the summit on third week of May, all climbers went at the same time in fear that this may be their last chance for a success. As a result it led to overcrowding of the route. So the problem was not that there are too many climbers on the mountain, but rather that they were all attempting to summit at the same time.

This year, the Nepal Government authorized the Expedition Operators Association to coordinate the rope fixing efforts officially. This led to a strong rope fixing team being assembled, good quality equipment used, double ropes were fixed at bottle necks and the ropes were fixed to the summit in the first week of May. This resulted in climbers going for the summit at different times of the many remaining days of May, bottlenecks were easily passed through and the rope was clearly identifiable due to its uniform color and quality. This all led to a safer and more secure climbing season with no reports of traffic jams. These improvements will continue in the future.

5. Garbage on Mt. Everest: It is a common misconception that Mt. Everest is a dirty mountain. In fact, if you speak with many international mountaineers, they will testify that Mt. Everest is amongst the cleanest of the popular peaks. the reputation of Mt. Everest being a dirty mountain started in the 1980s when international publications featured it as a "garbage dump." Since then great efforts have taken place and government policies have been implemented to clean up the mountain with a great deal of success. For example, my son, Dawa Steven's own efforts on the Eco Everest Expedition has collected over 15,000Kgs of previous expedition garbage from the slopes of Mt. Everest under the Asian Trekking's "Cash for Trash" program. Also more than 800kgs of human waste produced by our own expedition teams and 5 dead bodies brought down from the slope of Mt. Everest for dignified burial and funeral.

Unfortunately, it is cleaning expeditions like our own that also give continuation to the myth that Everest is a dirty mountain. When a layperson hears that so much garbage has been collected from Mt. Everest, they also automatically assume that each year an equal amount of garbage is being dumped on the mountain. This is very far from the truth. In our experience most of the garbage is very old as new expeditions take great efforts not to leave behind garbage. Furthermore, the government of Nepal can levy a huge fine an expedition which is found to be leaving behind garbage. Currently, the Government of Nepal is also in the process of creating a fund to finance cleaning and environmental educational programs. It is impossible to say how much old garbage remains buried and hidden under the glacier ice but each year as the ice melts and the glacier moves, any garbage that is uncovered on the surface is quickly collected and disposed. So, it is safe to say that each year, Mt. Everest is becoming cleaner and cleaner.
6. Impact of Global Warming, Climate Change and Glacial Lake Outburst Floods: We had very interesting presentation from Professor Dr. Bruno Messerly about the impact of climate change and global warming and glacial lake outburst floods in the Himalayan region. The impacts of climate changes are highly visible and noticeable in high Himalayan Region. The rise of temperature in high Himalayan region is double the global average temperature rise. Therefore the white snow peaks and glaciers are melting fast and transforming into huge glacial lakes which are a great threat to the people living downstream.

Our knowledge of mountain geography and ecosystems allows us to be highly influential witnesses to climate change in our time and to extend that influence beyond the mountain community to everyone around us.

Our mountains are our heritage, glory, identity, prestige and the future of our nation. The mountain region needs conservation and sustainable development for the present and for posterity. And with this very goal, we the mountaineering fraternities should play very vital role by creating awareness for the conservation of this gifts of Mother Nature and carry out various developmental activities at the local level with the participation of local people.

Saving our Himalayas means saving ourselves, our future generations because the Himalayas are the Water Towers for three billion people in Asia. As per some scientists and environmentalists that by the end of the century, all the white snow peaks and glaciers will melt away and the glacial lakes will drain out. If the Water Tower for world’s almost half population are empty, it will not only create environmental problems but it will create humanitarian crisis and political problem on a scale never seen before.

So let's think sustainably, work together and act now, what we can do today should not wait for tomorrow to save our Himalayas for us and for our future generation.

Thanks for your kind attention.

Ang Tshering Sherpa
Honorary Member of UIAA (World Mountaineering and Climbing Federation)

Related Links: http://blogs.dw.de/adventuresports/no-decision-yet-on-new-8000ers/
http://mltboards.blogspot.com/2013/10/this-is-address-from-ang-tshering.html