

# Official Correspondence in English

Lakshuman Khanal  
Undersecretary, MoFA



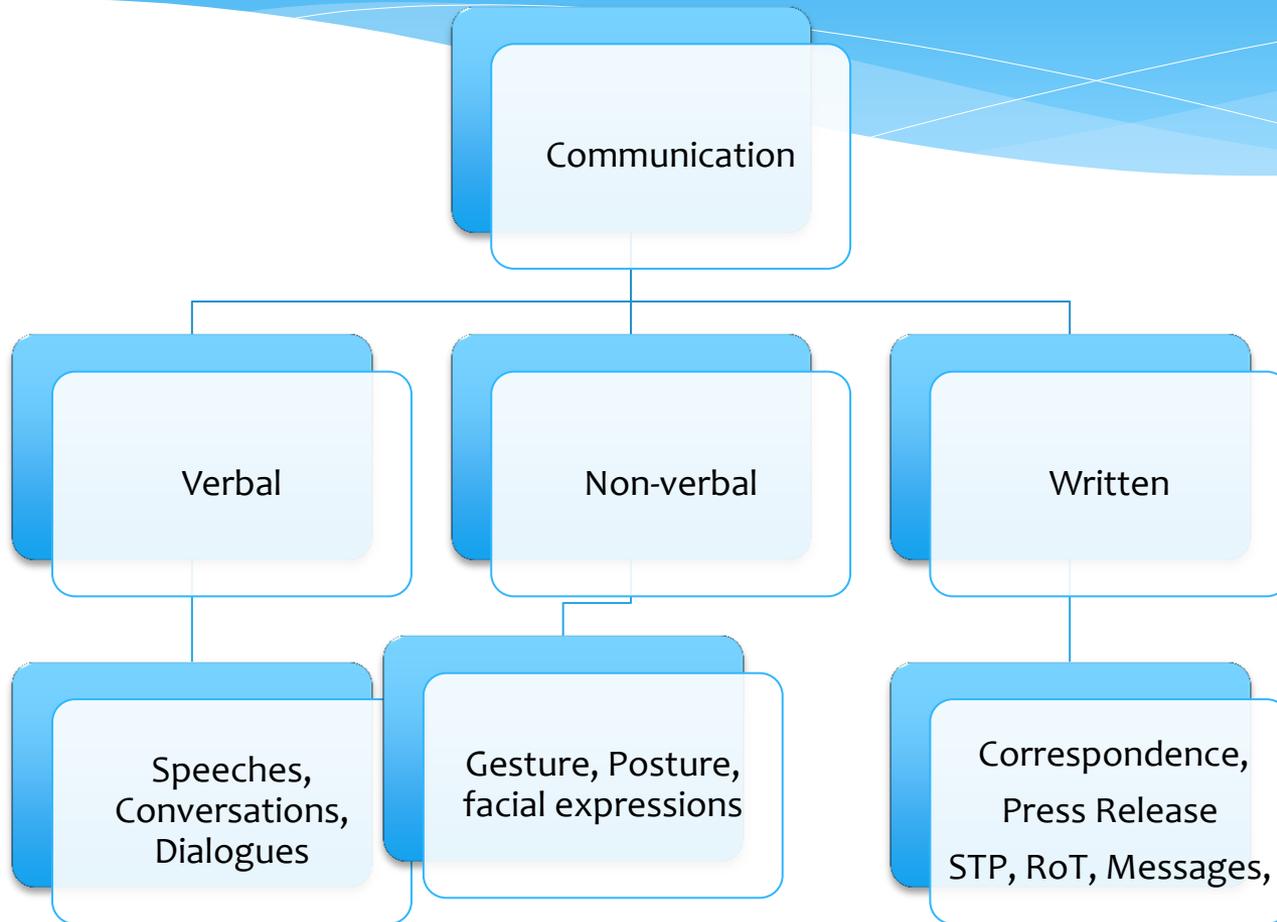
# Session One



# Why official Communication?

- \* To deliver the intended message
- \* To get things done
- \* To state one's position
- \* To disseminate information
- \* To express one's emotions
- \* To maintain goodwill and relationships
- \* To win support
- \* To record as evidence
- \* To maintain record

# Types of communication

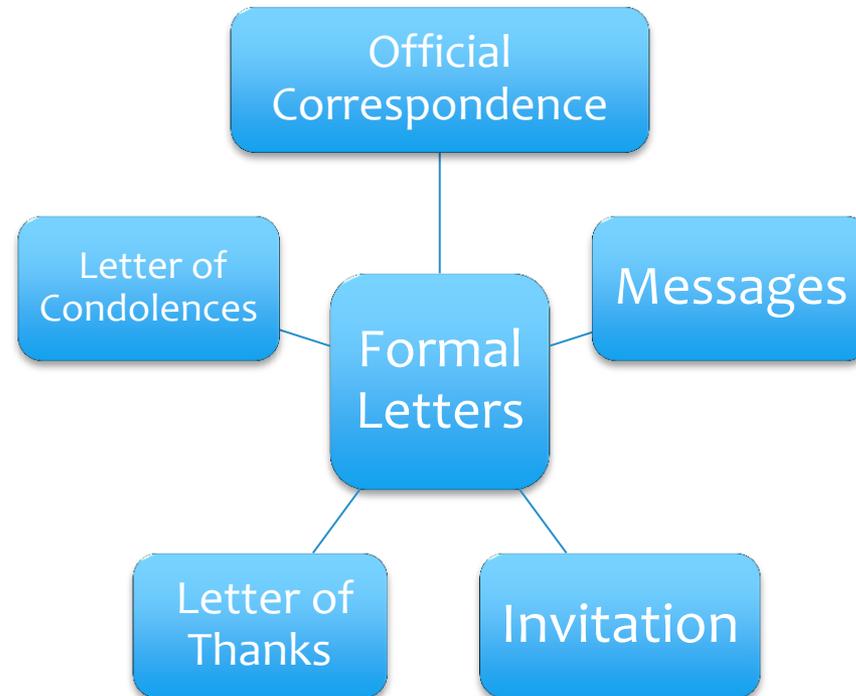




# Writing for office...

- \* Formal letters
- \* Email correspondence
- \* Internal documents
- \* Information for public consumption
- \* Use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp)
- \* Regular publications

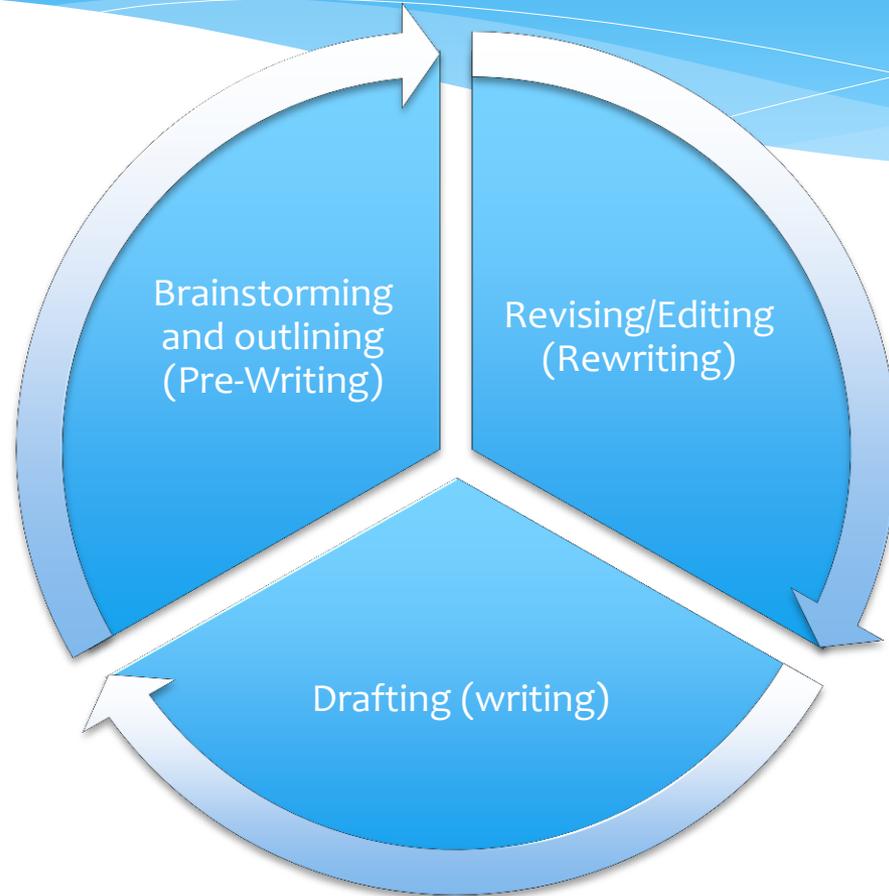
# Writing for office...



# The Writing Process

- \* A good writer is also a good reader.
- \* Enough/as much information on the topic.
- \* Sketching an order of content.
- \* Drafting the first version (zero draft)
- \* Editing and re-editing brutally. (*It is perfectly ok to write garbage – as long as you edit brilliantly*)
- \* Getting opinions of colleagues/supervisors.
- \* Proofreading and fact-checking. (*Use of ICT*)
- \* Giving a reader's view.

# 3 Golden Rules of Drafting



Think before you speak  
&  
Plan before you write



# Basics of official writing



# Purpose

- \* Understand your message
- \* Frame your situation objectively
- \* Break it into pieces
- \* State in most direct but courteous way
- \* Call to action-essence of official communication
- \* Knowing the recipient/audience

# Content

- Gather as much information on the topic
- Go through official files/records
- Search literature/information from other sources when necessary (including internet)
- Consult with relevant (past) officials
- Understand the context
- Figure out the stakeholders' perspectives
- Look for relevant legal instruments
- Consult supervisors

# Language

- Vocabulary
- Grammar
- Syntax
- Sentence structures
- Consistency
- Appropriateness
- Stylistic

# Language: keep it short and simple= KISS

- Formality of language
- Short and simple sentences
- Variety of structure
- Use of linking words
- Absence of redundancy (*Always avoid unnecessary words in a sentence and avoid unnecessary sentences in a paragraph*)
- Diplomatic touch

# Short and simple sentences (a case)

- \* **First Draft**

According to the research found in business-related literature, many companies and firms cite cost savings and reducing spending as their most important goals in preparation for a more economically viable future. Company executives and managers demand their employees cut back on excessive spending and waste so that the company can become more competitive in the world of business.

- \* **Revised Draft**

According to the literature, many companies cite cost savings as their primary goal. Employees are urged to reduce waste so companies can increase competitiveness.

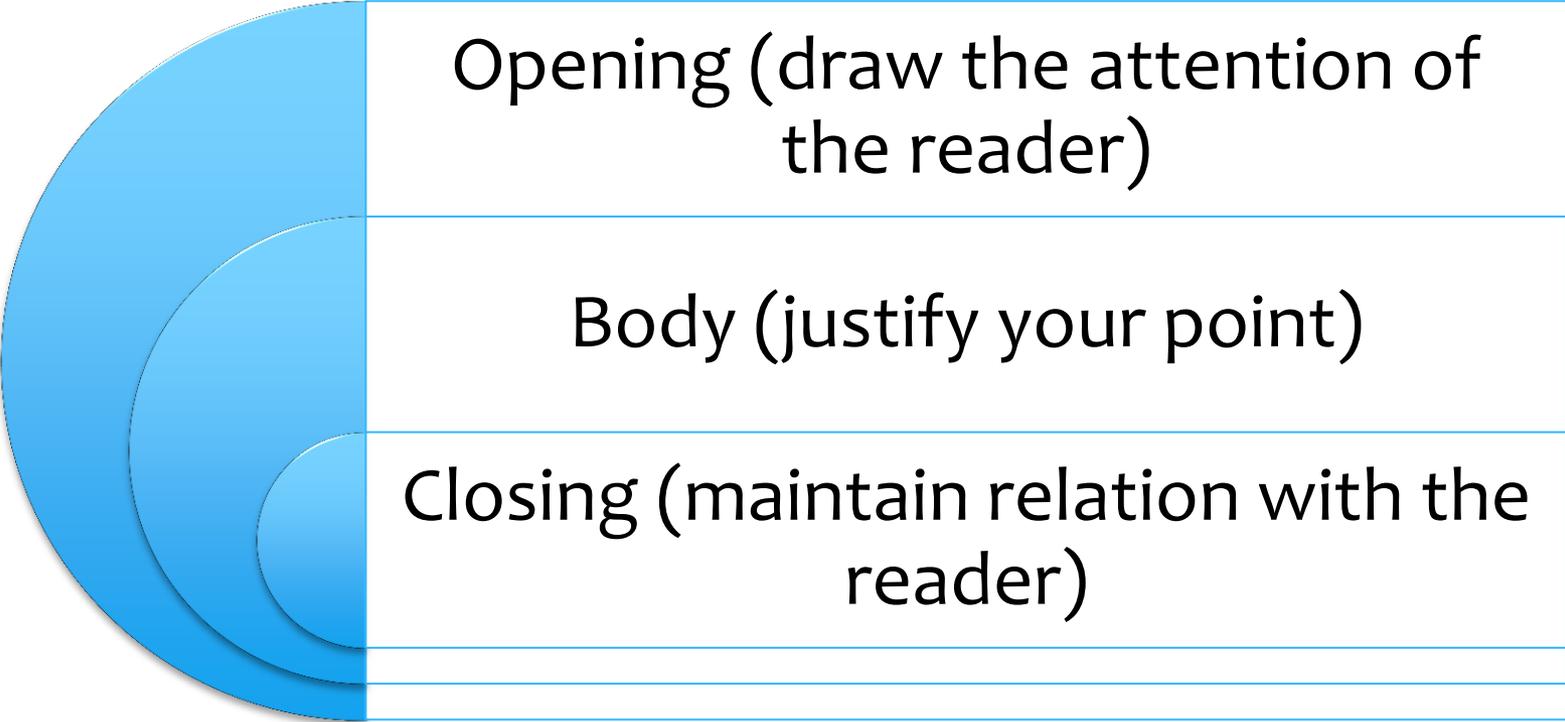
# Examples of redundant phrases

- \* “small in size” or “large in size”
- \* “true facts”
- \* “basic fundamentals”
- \* “past history”
- \* “smiled happily”
- \* “evolve over time”
- \* “consensus of opinion”

# Diplomatic Touch

- \* **1) Use of modal verbs (could, would, may)**
  - \* Could we infer that your office is interested in hosting the event?
- \* **2) Use of passive voice (to avoid blame/responsibility)**
  - \* The MoU was signed two years ago to facilitate cultural exchanges.
- \* **3) Choice of positive expressions**
  - \* Although last year's project was not a success (for although last year's project was a failure)
- \* **4) Rephrasing**
  - \* We are consulting relevant stakeholders and hope to reach a conclusion soon (instead of we don't know how long it will take)
- \* **5) Using minimizers (slight, small, a few, a little)**
  - \* There has been a slight delay in the communication.

# Form: OBC of writing



Opening (draw the attention of the reader)

Body (justify your point)

Closing (maintain relation with the reader)

# Gandhi's Letter to Hitler

23 July 1939

\* Dear friend,

Friends have been urging me to write to you for the sake of humanity. But I have resisted their request, because of the feeling that any letter from me would be an impertinence. Something tells me that I must not calculate and that I must make my appeal for whatever it may be worth.

It is quite clear that you are today the one person in the world who can prevent a war which may reduce humanity to the savage state. Must you pay the price for an object however worthy it may appear to you to be? Will you listen to the appeal of one who has deliberately shunned the method of war not without considerable success? Any way I anticipate your forgiveness, if I have erred in writing to you.

\*

Herr Hitler  
**Berlin**  
**Germany**

**I remain,**  
**Your sincere friend**  
**(signed)**

\*

# Form: Organization of the text

- Chronological
- Problem/Solution
- Order of importance
- Space management
- Neat paragraphing

# Design and Lay out (a case)

2 January 2018

Dear Ms. Steiner,

I thank you for your letter dated 20 December 2017 covering your brief stay in Kathmandu and indicating future engagements and cooperation.

I take this opportunity to offer my sincere and cordial greetings for a happy, prosperous and fruitful New Year 2018. I hope you have had memorable festive season after your brief visit to Kathmandu last month.

It was my honour and privilege to welcome you as the first South African State Secretary visiting Nepal. I must thank you for availing your otherwise hectic schedule to visit Kathmandu on the eve of the historical elections for the federal and provincial parliaments.

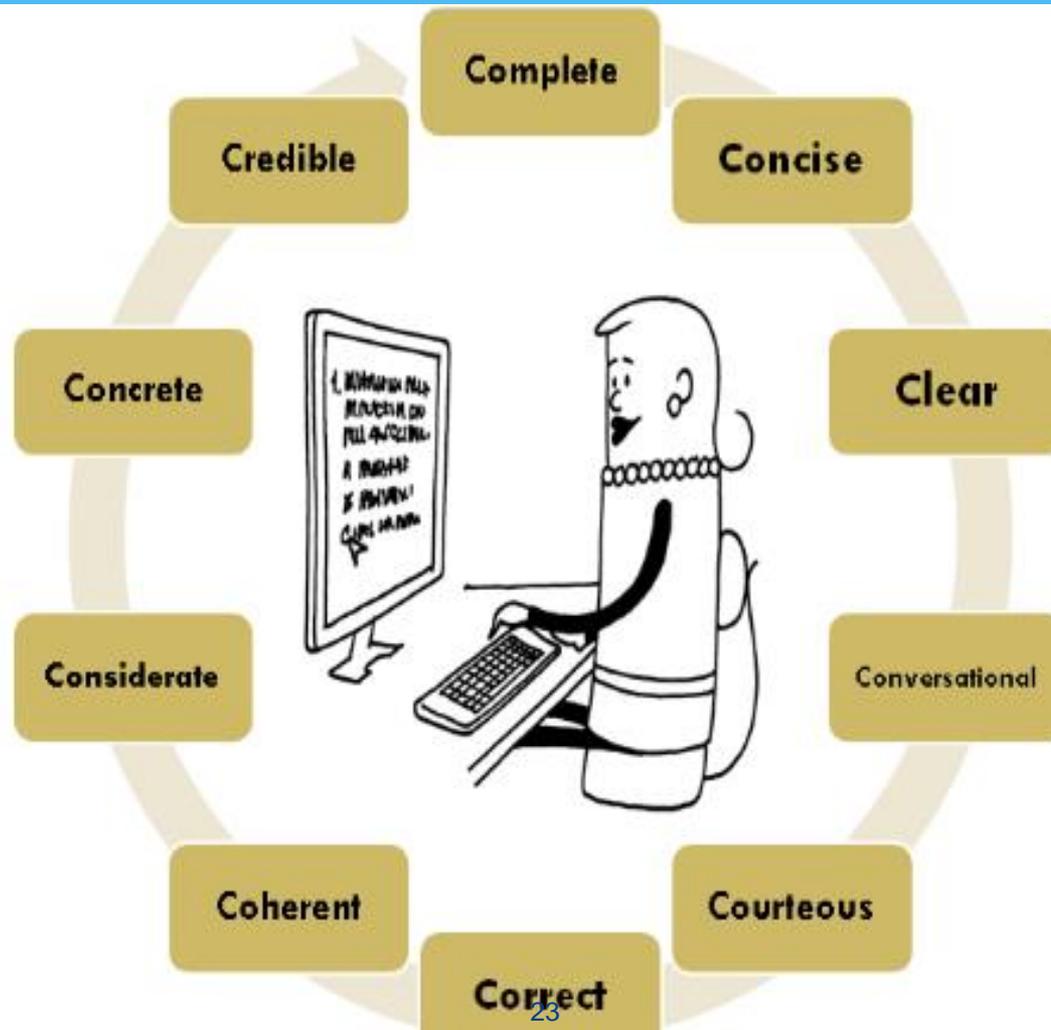
I am confident that the mutual discussions we had during our meeting on 6 December 2017 will give impetus to taking forward our existing bilateral relations towards deeper level of cooperation and higher level of engagements. Our frank discussions on multilateral issues of mutual concern also reflect more avenues of cooperation at the multilateral front.

Please accept, Your Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(signed)  
Shankar D. Bairagi

H.E. Ms. Elisabeth Steiner  
State Secretary  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
South Africa

# 4 in 1: The Final Product





Read and study in general

Study files/ records

Focus on the message

Appropriate language

Editing and Revising

Consultation/approval of the supervisor

Last moment proofreading

# Session Two

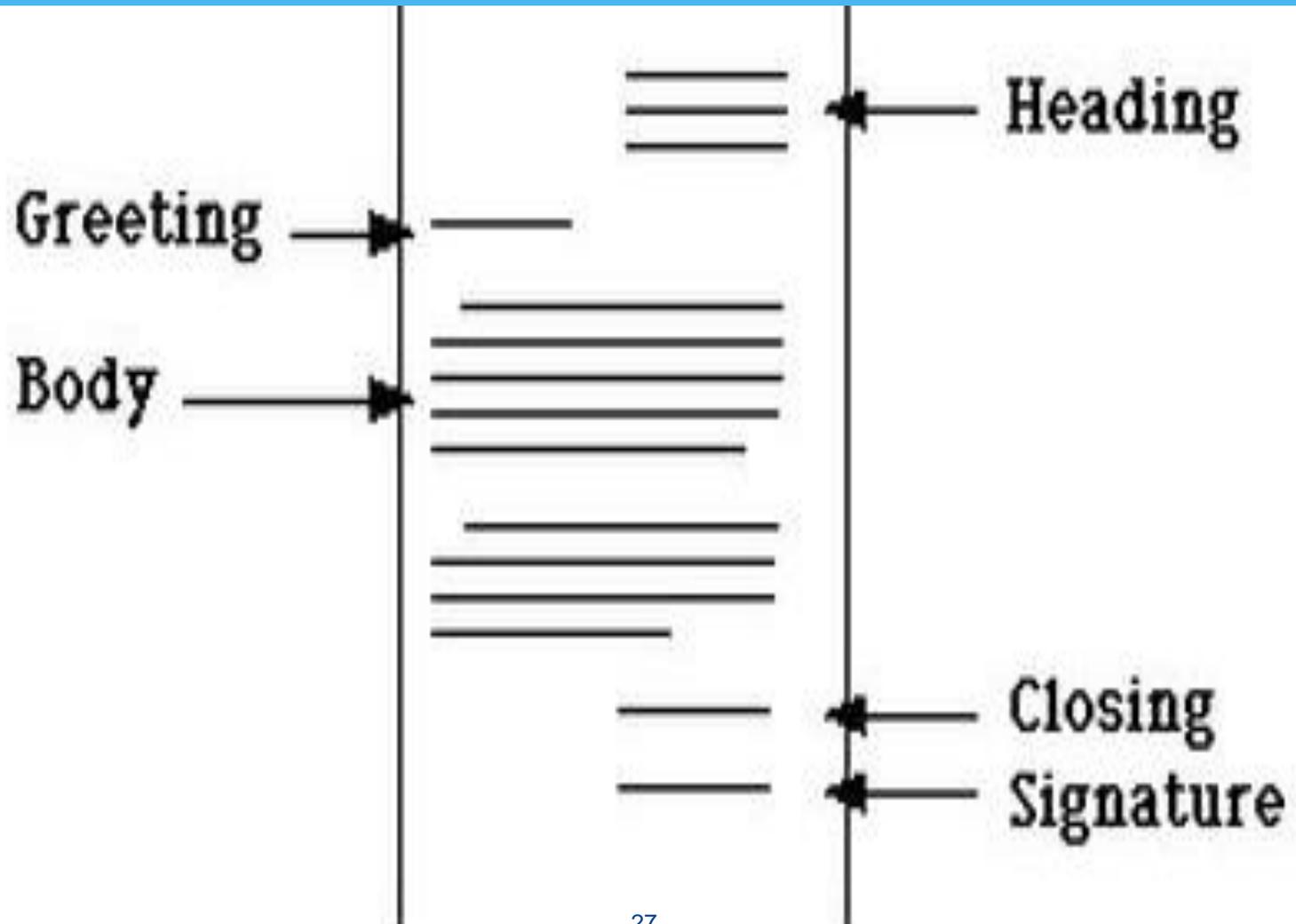
## **How to Write a Formal/Official Letter**



# Types of Correspondence

- \* Notes
- \* Letters
- \* Messages
- \* Press Release
- \* Email
- \* Others (Minutes, aid-memoire, non-paper, STPs, Briefs, RoTs etc.)
- \* Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp)

# Parts of a letter



# Third Person Note

- Regular channel of diplomatic correspondence- most widely used
- Contains only third person pronouns - he, she, it, they, them
- Has formulaic opening and closing
- Is printed in letterhead, initialed and stamped over the initial
- Title -‘Note Verbale’ may carry; usually no title
- Place of issue and date on the bottom right
- Addressee: bottom left
- Enclosure: if any

# Third Person Note- NV

## 1) Beginning:

The Ministry of ... presents its compliments to the Embassy of ... and has the honour to ... that

## 2) Substance:

The main message

## 3) Closing:

The Ministry avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Embassy the assurances of its highest consideration.

# Third person note: sample

No: Tr/2018/18

The Embassy of the Federal Republic of Barios presents its compliments to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Nepal, has the honor to request for the nomination of three participants for a Regional Workshop on “LLDCs and Law of the Sea: The Way Ahead” organized by Barios Institute of Law in Pakiza, Barios from 09 to 13 July 2011.

The nominated participants are requested to prepare a country paper on the problems of landlockedness and ways of overcoming them.

The selected participants will be offered two way tickets, accomodation and a subsistence allowance. The nomination of appropriate candidates should reached the Barios Institute of Law by June 22, 2001 by email. Kindly find enclosed a nomination form for each candidates.

The Embassy of the Federal Republic of Barios avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Nepal, the assurance of its highest consideration.

Kathmandu, 10 January 2011  
(stamp, initial signature)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Kathmandu

Encl: Nomination form

# Letters: First Person

Written by head of the offices/Ministries, head of the states or heads of the governments to their counterpart on various occasions including:

- Highlighting the concern/issue at the highest level
- Extending invitation
- Conveying messages
- Conveying congratulations
- Expressing condolences etc.

# First Person Letter

- \* Beginning- letter head, date, salutations
- \* Body- substance/message
- \* Closing- Formulaic closing, Name and signature of the sender and details of addressee
- Salutation may vary- depending upon context of communication and degree of closeness
- Your Excellency, Excellency (US) Sir, Dear Sir, Dear Mr. (Full Name) My Dear ... (British) followed by “I have the honour...” and ends with closing phrase “I avail myself of the opportunity to assure Your Excellency of my highest consideration.
- Name and signature of the sender on the bottom right and details of the addressee on the bottom left of the paper
- No stamping is required (usually for HoS/HoG/FM).

# Meeting Request- First Person Letter

27 February 2018

Dear Mr. ....

I take this opportunity to inform you that I have recently assumed my office as Immigration Chief of Rasuwagadhi Border Point. I am pleased to learn that our two sides have been enjoying excellent working relations thereby making business of this border point smooth and effective.

The exchange of meeting that have been taking place between our two offices have contributed such efficient operations on both the sides. Such meetings have provided us with the opportunity to share our views on varieties of issues especially of recent issues of challenges we face in course of discharging our duties.

In this context, I would like extend an invitation to you for a bilateral official meeting on 4 March 2018.

I look forward to welcoming you and your delegation.

Yours sincerely

Mr. ....

Immigration Chief

Rasuwagadhi Immigration Office

People's Republic of China

# First Person- Invitation for meeting

12 June 2017

Excellency,

It is my pleasure to inform you that the Government of Nepal is hosting the Third BIMSTEC Energy Ministers' Meeting in Kathmandu on 9 August 2018.

BIMSTEC region is endowed with huge energy potentials such as hydropower/water, wind, bio-gas and solar sources which, if harnessed properly and shared in the region, can be a propeller of development and means of poverty reduction in the region. Since the second Meeting of BIMSTEC Energy Ministers held in Thailand in 2010, considerable progress has been made in the energy sector.

We all agreed in our previous meeting to accelerate the efforts to develop a comprehensive plan for energy cooperation with a view to augmenting interconnectivity and promoting regional energy trade.

In this connection, I have the honour to extend a cordial invitation to Your Excellency to participate in the Third BIMSTEC Energy Ministers' Meeting in Kathmandu.

I am confident that in view of our excellent bilateral relations and our common commitment to regional energy cooperation, you will attend this Meeting and contribute towards its meaningful outcome with your invaluable experience and wisdom.

I look forward to welcoming Your Excellency in Kathmandu.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(signed)  
Kamal Thapa

H.E. ....  
Minister of Energy  
Government of ...

# Message

Formal way of expressing closeness in diverse occasions to:

- Congratulate
- Express condolences
- Felicitate
- Show close relations

Messages are usually first person letters by high officials to their counterparts.  
Messages are meant to:

- \* Establish official relations
- \* Cultivate relationship
- \* Immense importance in diplomacy
- \* Convey direct/subtle meanings
- \* Demonstrate close association

# Congratulatory Message

- National day
- Election of new government
- Important national events- mega events, scientific breakthrough, achievements
- Important political development- promulgation of new constitution, success of people's movement
- Birthday of HoS/G/FM to show personal care - Xi's message to President Bhandari

# Congratulatory Message- Election

January 05, 2018

Excellency,

On behalf of the Government and people of Nepal as well as on my own, I would like to extend to Your Excellency my sincere congratulations and best wishes on your assumption of the high office of the Chief Minister of the State of Utter Pradesh India.

I am confident that the friendly relations so happily subsisting between our two counties and states will be further strengthened during your Excellency's tenure.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Shanker Pokharel

Her Excellency  
Shri Yogi Aditya Nath  
Chief Minister of Utter Pardesh  
the Republic of India

# Congratulatory Message- Appointment

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

25 January 2017

Excellency

I am pleased to extend my warm congratulations on your appointment as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Barrios.

I am confident that the cordial and friendly relations so happily existing between our two countries will be further strengthened during the tenure of your office.

I look forward to working closely with you on issues of mutual concern at the international forums.

Please accept, Excellency, my best wishes for a successful tenure.

(signed)  
SUJATA KOIRALA

H.E. Marino Dilano  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
The Federal Republic of Barrios  
Pakiza

# Session Three



# Condolences Message

- \* To express sorrow and sympathy usually on demise of national figures, natural calamities and loss of human lives and property by various reasons
- \* To show association in the effort of international community against some acts such as terrorism, extremism, aggression

# Condolences Message - demise

The Prime Minister

Excellency,

I am saddened to learn of the untimely passing away of Mr. Pierre Werner, former Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Barios on 4 June 2017.

At this hour of tragedy, I wish to extend my heartfelt condolences and sympathies to Your Excellency and through you to the bereaved family members and the people and the government of Barios.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Sher Bahadur Deuba

H.E. Mr. Xavier Strolton  
Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Barios  
Pakiza

# Condolences Message – natural calamity

The President

Excellency,

We are deeply saddened to learn of the heavy loss of lives and extensive damages caused to properties as a result of massive floods in the western parts of the Federal Republic of Barrios in recent days.

In this hour of grief, on behalf of the Government and people of Nepal, I would like to extend deepest condolences and sympathies to Your Excellency, and through you to the government and the friendly people of the Federal Republic of Barrios and the bereaved families.

The people of Nepal join me in wishing an early recovery from the flood situation and resumption of normal life in the flood affected areas.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

- Ram Baran Yadav

H. E. Ms. Pascale Sheron  
President of the Federal Republic of Barrios  
Pakiza, Barrios

# Briefs: Sample

## \* Nepal-Serbia Relations

### **Bilateral Relations**

- \* Nepal and Serbia (former Yugoslavia) established diplomatic relations on 7 October 1959. Both Nepal and Serbia are landlocked developing countries. The relations between the two countries have always remained close and cordial ever since. The Ambassador of Nepal in Germany is concurrently accredited to Serbia and Serbian Ambassador in New Delhi, India is concurrently accredited to Nepal.

\*

### **Exchange of Visits**

- \* Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia Mr. Vuc Jeremic visited Nepal in October 2011. High level officials of the two countries frequently meet at the sidelines of the UN and other international forums.

\*

### **Development Cooperation**

#### **Trade/Investment**

- \* Nepal and Serbia have concluded the following three agreements:

\*

- \* Trade Agreement signed on 05 September 1965

- \* Agreement on Agricultural and Technical Cooperation signed on 05 September 1965, and

- \* Agreement on Cooperation in Science and Technology signed on 14 September 1975

\*

- \* The trade between Nepal and Serbia is at the nascent phase. In 2012, the value of trade amounted to US\$ 38,000 (Nepal exported US\$ 37,000 worth of goods to Serbia and imported US\$ 1,000 worth of goods). The disaggregated data of the trade between the two countries after that is not available.

\*

### **Scholarships**

\*

- \* Serbia has been providing scholarships to Nepalese students for higher studies under "The World in Serbia" program. The program is devised for the students from Member and Observer States of the Non-Aligned Movement.

\*

### **Europe-America Division**

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

**November 2017**

# Suggested Talking Points (STPs)

- \* A brief prepared for higher authority for any meeting
- \* Current status of the issue is briefly reflected.
- \* Suggestion is made on the issues to be discussed or taken upon during the discussion/meeting.
- \* Agenda-wise or issue-wise presentation of information and suggestion
- \* Relevant concrete details/information can be included for reference.

# Suggested Talking Points for Prime Minister Rt. Hon. Mr. K.P. Sharma Oli During the Courtesy Call on by the Deputy Mayor of Pakiza, Hon. Mr. Luis Carlos Cueto and his delegation Tuesday, 27 February, Kathmandu

## Rt. Hon. Prime Minister may wish to:

- 
- **Welcome the Deputy Mayor and his delegation** to Nepal and to his office.
- 

## Bilateral Relations

- 
- Express **satisfaction over the cordial and friendly relations** so happily existing between Nepal and Barrios ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1968.
- 
- State that the **five decade long relationship** between the two countries are based on mutual respect, understanding and cooperation.
- 
- Recall the State visits from both the countries in the past and express that **there is need to continue high level visits in the years ahead** as well.
- 
- Express happiness that **Nepal has established its residential Embassy in Pakiza**. Express confidence that **Barrios will consider establishing its residential Embassy in Kathmandu**.
- 
- **Appreciate the current visit of the Deputy Mayor to Nepal**. State that such visits will further consolidate the existing relations.
- 

## Development Cooperation

- \*
- \* Appreciate **the role of Barrios in supporting Nepal's efforts** towards socio-economic development by extending economic cooperation.
- \*
- \* Point to the **need of an enhanced level of investment, trade and tourism** exchange between the two countries. *(The two way trade volume between the two countries is around Rs 1 billion whereas around 15,000 tourists from Barrios visited Nepal before the earthquakes)*

# Continued.....

## Sister-City Relationship between Kathmandu and Pakiza

- \*
- \* Express **happiness over the signing of the MoU between Kathmandu and Pakiza** cities to establish sister city relationship. Express confidence that the MoU will open avenues for deeper relationship between the two countries at municipal and people-to-people levels.
- \*
- \* Express **confidence that the two capital cities will enhance cooperation and deepen collaboration in the areas of mutual interest**, including in waste management, water management, heritage protection and promotion, cultural exchanges, knowledge sharing, capacity development among others.
- \*

## Current Political Situation and the Priorities of the Government

- \*
- \* Refer to the recent **formation of new government after the historic and successful local, provincial and federal elections** held in 2017. The elections were a milestone on Nepal's journey to an inclusive federal democratic republic system.
- \*
- \* State that the successful conclusion of the elections and the subsequent formation of new government have now **paved way for more focused pursuit of economic development**. This will also be instrumental in institutionalizing federalism at the grassroots level.
- \*
- \* State that since there is so much of good-will and support from the international community to Nepal, it is our earnest expectation that friendly countries like Spain will continue and enhance **their valuable support and cooperation** to Nepal's economic aspirations so that the historical and forward-looking political achievements are sustained over the long course.
- \*
- \*

**24 February 2018**  
**Africa Division**  
**Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

# Record of Talks (RoTs)

- \* It is official record keeping of the discussions held between the participants of a bilateral meeting.
- \* The main issues of discussion and points of agreement, if any, are included in the record.
- \* The perspectives expressed by both the sides are also recorded.
- \* This is for internal consumption of an office, hence, sensitive/classified information, if any, is also recorded.
- \* The RoTs are shared with relevant agencies/authorities.

# Press Release

- It is usually issued on the occasion such as visit, meeting, any incident, reaction to some events.
- A way of disseminating information to the wider public on important matters.
- It is sometimes a means to state official position towards an issue.
- It is a way of showcasing an institution's performance.
- It may carry a specific title or just 'Press Release'
- Issued on official letterhead and stamped.

# Press Release

## Press Release

The Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan His Excellency Mr. Shahid Khaqan Abbasi is paying an official visit to Nepal from 5 to 6 March 2018.

During the visit, the Prime Minister of Pakistan will call on The Rt. Hon. Bidya Devi Bhandari, President of Nepal.

The Rt. Hon. Prime Minister Mr. K. P. Sharma Oli will hold bilateral meeting with the visiting Prime Minister of Pakistan and exchange views on matters of mutual interest. He will also host a dinner in honour of the visiting dignitary.

Upon completion of the visit, the Prime Minister of Pakistan will leave for Islamabad on 6 March 2018.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Government of Nepal  
04 March 2018

# E-Mails

- Modern and widely used means of official correspondence
- Easy, instant and efficient mode of communication
- Subject: clear and short
- Message:
- Salutation-less formal but need to maintain appropriate courtesy
- Body- to the point with expected action
- Closing and signature essential

# Sample Email

Dear Sirs,

An official of Barios Embassy came for meeting this morning. Main matter was that a delegation from Barios wants to visit Nepal on Feb 15-20 to 'discuss about Export 2025' (note attached).

The delegation will be led by a deputy minister (they will send more info shortly) and will want to call on Hon. Foreign Minister/Foreign Secretary.

I informed them about the impending process of new government formation. On learning this, the Azerbaijan official said his deputy minister's delegation will be happy to conduct the entire discussion with the Foreign Secretary.

Early response on the visit request will be appreciated.

Regards,

ABC  
(Designation)  
(Office)

# Sample Email..... continued

Dear Sir,

I am writing with regard to the recent exchange of communications between the Embassy of Barios and the Embassy of Nepal in New Delhi concerning the visit of a delegation from the Secretariat of the First Vice-President of Barios to Kathmandu.

I wish to express my gratitude for your prompt positive response on the readiness of H.E. Foreign Secretary of the Nepalese MFA to receive the Bariose delegation on 20 February at 11 am. In light of unforeseen circumstances, which require our presence in Pakiza on that date, we would like to seek your indulgence and request to reschedule the meeting for either **Friday 23 February** or **Tuesday 27 February** at any time.

As was mentioned before, the composition of the Bariose delegation will be as follows:

- H.E. Mr. Tariq Azabev– Deputy Chief of the Secretariat of the First Vice-President of Barios (ministerial status),
- Mr. Nechin Suneli- Senior Adviser in the Secretariat of the First Vice-President of the Republic of Barios.

I do apologize for any inconvenience that this request may cause to you. At the same time, we are looking forward to having a meaningful meeting and dialogue with the leadership of the Nepalese MFA.

Sincerely,

**Nechin Suneli (Mr.)**

Senior Adviser  
Secretariat of the First Vice-President of the Republic of Barios  
Administration of the President of the Republic of Barios

# Social Media: Twitter

Extremely shocked by unfortunate crash of US – Bangla Aircraft carrying 67 passengers and 4 crew members. Express deep sorrow on loss of lives and condole to bereaved families and also wish for early recovery of injured persons. Govt will investigate the incident immediately (The Rt. Hon. Mr. K. P. Sharma Oli)

Deeply anguished by the loss of lives due to the plane crash in Kathmandu. My thoughts are with the families of the deceased and I pray that those injured recover at the earliest. (Prime Minister of India)

EAM [@SushmaSwaraj](#) spoke to [#BangladeshForeignMinister](#) & expressed deepest condolences & sympathies for the loss of lives in the crash of [#USBangla](#) Airlines in [#Kathmandu](#) today. EAM offered any assistance required in Kathmandu, and shared thoughts and prayers for those injured. (Spokesperson of MEA India)

Shocked by the crash of US Bangla Airline's passenger plane in Kathmandu today. Deep condolences and sympathies to those killed and wish for speedy recovery of the injured. (MoFA Nepal)

*Thank  
you*





LET'S

TALK



**Discussion**  
**Questions**