

**OHCHR urges the prompt establishment of a witness and victim protection mechanism in Nepal**

*Kathmandu* - Following the conclusion of a South Asian Regional seminar and a national consultation on witness and victim protection, attended by representatives from the South Asian countries as well as Nepal, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Nepal, calls on the Government to promptly establish an effective mechanism to ensure protection for all victims of, and witnesses to, human rights violations and abuses. This includes the passing of comprehensive legislation and further requires the key actors to pay particular attention to the specific protection needs of women and children.

The Government of Nepal has already committed to safeguarding the rights of victims and witnesses, including their protection, through the ratification of a number of international human rights treaties including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). In light of the future establishment of the transitional justice mechanisms, it is now time for Nepal to adopt the specific measures to make such protection a practical reality.

“OHCHR-Nepal welcomes the steps taken by the Government of Nepal to date regarding the formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Commission on Inquiry of Disappearance, and certain policies and guidelines which have offered interim relief to conflict victims,” said Andrew Palmer, Officer-in-Charge of OHCHR-Nepal. “However, the rights to justice and reparation have not been properly emphasised so far and these measures have yet to address issues related to the protection of witness and victims, measures essential for these commissions to undertake their tasks in the best interests of conflict victims and witnesses.”

Participants at the national consultation identified the current challenges, gaps and the responsibilities of different actors and stakeholders in establishing a witness and victim protection mechanism. In particular it was agreed that Nepal had a unique opportunity to establish a protection framework to last for many years through the new Constitution and the passage of the new criminal legislation. By taking this opportunity Nepal’s legislation can include built-in permanent protections of all victims and witnesses of human rights violations and serious crimes.