



**Remarks by Richard Bennett**

**Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal  
At the Programme, *Strict Observance of Human Rights: Basis of Democracy*  
Organised by the United Nations Assoc. of Nepal to mark Human Rights Day  
and the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)  
9 December 2008, Kathmandu**

Hon. Astha Laxmi Shakya, Minister for Industry, Government of Nepal; Assoc. Prof. Dambar B Thapa, President, UN Assoc. of Nepal; Colleagues; Members of the media; Friends:

Thank you for inviting me to be here with you today to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of an extraordinary document, the UDHR. Over the past six decades, the Declaration has inspired more than 60 human rights ‘instruments’ that, together, have created an international standard of human rights. It has been translated into more than 330 languages. Yet, I think its greatest success is that it ‘speaks’ to people everywhere – women and men, old and young, poor and rich, the educated and even the illiterate (thanks to projects like a ‘UDHR Song’, launched in Kathmandu last weekend). Equality, fairness and justice, the principles underlying the UDHR, appeal to all of us, and I suspect they will continue to do so for many many years to come.

As the High Commissioner for Human Rights will say in her statement tomorrow, we are still a very long way from achieving the goals laid down in the UDHR, and States’ political will to fulfill their obligations lags lamentably behind their pledges. Nepal has witnessed great changes since the ceasefires of 2006. For one, representation of women and members of marginalised communities has improved dramatically since the Constituent Assembly was set up earlier this year. In addition, the Supreme Court has made a number of decisions calling upon the Government to ensure respect for the rights of members of these groups, victims of the conflict, and others; commissioners have been named to the National Human Rights Commission, and they have taken major steps to ensure that the NHRC fulfils its mandate as a constitutional body.

Moving the peace process forward will require other equally sizeable achievements, among them the writing of a new Constitution. However, ordinary Nepalis will judge progress by improvements on the ground. From a human rights perspective that means strengthening the rule of law so that individuals can live in peace and security, confident in the knowledge that those who violate human rights will be swiftly held accountable, according to accepted laws and norms. It also means greater representation of hitherto marginalised groups from all organs of the State, including the army and police, and at all levels of these organisations.

These are huge challenges, which have proven difficult to surmount over the past two years. Yet, I believe that achieving respect for these human rights is possible. In September, Prime Minister Prachanda laid out for the UN General Assembly his vision for the country's future, in which respect for human rights is a central pillar. I would like to take this opportunity of the anniversary of the UDHR to again encourage the government to turn to my Office for support in achieving this vision in order to account for the past, end the culture of impunity, and advance further toward permanent peace in Nepal.

Thank you.

For further information contact Marty Logan at OHCHR-Nepal:  
Tel.: 428 0164 (Ext.321); Mobile 98510.16922 or [mlogan@ohchr.org](mailto:mlogan@ohchr.org)  
Website: <http://nepal.ohchr.org>

