



**Statement by Richard Bennett  
Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal  
Delivered at the event *Celebrating Diversity*,  
Organized by Blue Diamond Society**

12 September 2007, Kathmandu, Nepal

Members of the Blue Diamond Society, distinguished guests, friends.

Thank you very much for inviting me to this unique event today. Your programme suggests giving words of support and encouragement. I would like to follow that lead and congratulate Blue Diamond Society for your continuing efforts to ensure that the human rights of minorities – especially lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and *metis* (transgender people) – are respected and protected in Nepal, and that they are able to participate fully in the ongoing project to reshape Nepalese society.

Nepal's Interim Constitution, consistent with the provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 21 November 2006, sets out a framework for abolishing discrimination and addressing the problems in Nepalese society related to oppressed and neglected minorities. It also specifically outlaws discrimination on the basis of "sex". This is an essential first step towards ensuring that the dignity of sexual minorities will be assured in Nepal. However, as you are all too aware, legal provisions alone will not ensure that discrimination and ill-treatment of LGBT people will end immediately. That will require a major social transformation.

That is why events such as yours here today are so important – they shine the spotlight on the treatment of minorities in Nepal, and fuel the gradual process of enlightening legislators, judges, police, local leaders, families and the general public about the need to respect and protect the rights of LGBT persons. This knowledge will be important for those who will be drafting a new Constitution, the main task of the upcoming Constituent Assembly. As the High Commissioner, Louise Arbour said at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender conference in Montreal, Canada – 26<sup>th</sup> July 2006: "At the national level, it is largely through your legal advocacy that laws which discriminate against LGBT persons will be repealed and laws that offer better protection of their rights will be put in place. It is through your social organizing and education that stereotypes will be dispelled and attitudes changed."

As the new Representative of OHCHR-Nepal, I assure you that the Office will continue its work to help ensure respect for the rights of all minorities. This includes investigating incidents of discrimination and ill-treatment, reporting our findings, and advocating for minority rights with the Government, other opinion makers and the general public.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the Kathmandu Declaration, released yesterday. In this respect, OHCHR-Nepal undertakes to continue monitoring the implementation of the international conventions to which Nepal is a signatory, and to support

and encourage the drafting of a new Constitution that meets the highest standards of human rights, including those relating to sexual and gender minorities. Like you, we are committed to a more tolerant and inclusive Nepalese society, and look forward to working with Blue Diamond Society to achieve it.

Thank you.