



**Statement by Richard Bennett
Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal
Delivered at the Felicitation Ceremony for Newly Appointed Officials of NHRC**

Kathmandu, 2 November 2007

Dear Mr. Speaker, Organizers, who represent numerous groups dedicated to human rights, Members of the media, Colleagues and Friends:

I would like first of all to congratulate the organizers for coming together to make this felicitation ceremony possible today. You represent a wide range of the Nepalese population – Indigenous peoples, Dalits, disabled peoples, users of community forests and drinking and irrigation water, and others – and the fact that you undertook this event indicates the broad and deep support that exists in this country for human rights.

As many of you already know, OHCHR's mandate includes supporting the NHRC to discharge its own mandate, including promotion, protection and reporting on human rights. That is why my Office was quick to welcome the appointment of new NHRC commissioners as an important development for human rights in this country. A strong and independent national human rights institution that upholds national and international standards is crucial for the promotion and protection of human rights and for the success of the peace process in Nepal.

OHCHR believes that a key indicator of the success of its own presence in Nepal will be the blossoming of the NHRC into a permanent, robust constitutional body that is respected by all Nepalese. In order to meet that goal, we stand ready to enhance our partnership with the NHRC in appropriate ways in the days ahead.

Thank you.