



**Statement by Richard Bennett  
Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal  
Delivered at the Closing Ceremony of OHCHR-Nepal's Capacity-building  
Program *Human Rights for Journalists*  
27 March 2008, Janakpur**

Mr Shiva Gaunle, vice-president of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists, Mr Buddha Narayan Sahani, Head of Janakpur Office, National Human Rights Commission and Mr Bhanubhakta Acharya, Promotion Officer, NHRC; resource people, participants from the media, and colleagues:

I am very happy to be able to participate in this closing ceremony today. Our capacity-building and PIO teams put a lot of effort into organizing this workshop in recent months and it is good to see it finally happen. You might not know that the workshop was scheduled for last month but had to be postponed, which is why it occurred now, a little closer to the election date than we had wanted. For that reason, I would like to congratulate all of our participants for resisting the temptation of rushing out to report all the juicy stories that I'm sure you've been hearing about via telephone from your colleagues while you've been sitting here this week.

I would like to humbly suggest that the learning you've done here in the past four days will enable you to better report on the coming few weeks before the historic election – as well as the very important days that will immediately follow. Of course, this knowledge of human rights should be a benefit to your reporting, editing, and producing for years to come. I also hope it has whet your appetite to learn more about human rights.

I know that you have had a chance to discuss the rights that we usually associate with journalists, such as freedom of expression. I would like to make the point now that like all freedoms, this one is not absolute, and that journalists, like everyone else, have a responsibility to exercise this right responsibly. Some of you know from personal experience the very real immediate impact that your words can have in a tense situation, be it during a conflict or in the sometimes fragile post-conflict environment that we have been living through in recent years, particularly in parts of the Terai.

You have also learned more about the role that OHCHR-Nepal, and other international and national human rights organizations, are playing in your country. Much of our resources go into monitoring the human rights environment and investigating allegations of violations, some of them sadly against media workers. We understand that some of you in this room have had to experience difficult, perhaps dangerous, situations, and that others of you might have to face up to such challenges in the future. I hope that the sessions in the training on how to stay safe during these times have provided you with very practical knowledge and how to avoid risk, and how to stay safe at times when you cannot.

Finally, this is the first of a series of workshops on human rights for journalists that OHCHR-Nepal is planning. Thus, we would appreciate very much your honest feedback about these past four days: what worked, what didn't, and how we could improve the experience for the media colleagues who will follow you. I note that we have representatives here – either as resource people or participants – from organizations such as the NHRC and INSEC. I hope that in the future we can work even more closely with them and other groups devoted to training the media so that all of your colleagues across Nepal can benefit from learning more about human rights and how to incorporate it into their reporting 'beat'.

Thank you.