



**Statement by Richard Bennett
Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal
Delivered at the Inauguration of the Opening Shot of the film *Maina*
1 May 2008, Kathmandu**

Thank you for inviting me here today to share a few thoughts. Ending impunity bringing about accountability for past and ongoing human rights violations has been, and will continue to be, central to OHCHR's efforts, in partnership with others in the community - including victims and their families - to support and encourage the Government to improve respect for human rights in Nepal. The case of Maina Sunuwar is important in its own right and also because it stands as emblematic of broader concerns.

As you know more than most, achieving justice can be a long and difficult process requiring determination and persistence. Success is not assured. In the case of Maina Sunuwar, there have been some developments. The Supreme Court ordered the Nepal Police to conduct an investigation into the death of Maina Sunuwar in September 2007. That happened, and a prosecutor then went on to submit in the District Court a charge sheet accusing four Nepalese Army officers of her murder. Summonses to appear in court were also issued for the accused. Justice should now be allowed to run its course in this case, and I encourage full cooperation with the investigation and prosecution.

As you may know, in its decision of 1 June 2007 the Supreme Court also ordered the Government to establish a commission of inquiry on disappearances and to enact legislation making enforced disappearance a crime. OHCHR-Nepal has consistently supported these directives, and continues to urge the Government to ensure that the commission of inquiry and the draft law meet international standards. I would also like to again encourage policy makers to make public all draft legislation so that concerned national and international interlocutors can submit their comments.

I have noted growing public calls for ending impunity in recent months. They have come from many different sources and in various guises, including cross-country bicycle campaigns and television advertisements. A film based on the story of Maina Sunuwar and her family, which will make the general public more aware of human rights violations committed during the conflict can be another effective tool in the struggle to help end Nepal's culture of impunity. In that regard, I would like to congratulate the makers of *Maina* for their work to date. I look forward to seeing your final product in a local cinema in some months.

The peace process in Nepal has taken a major step forward with the holding of the election. Among the responsibilities facing the new administration and the Constituent Assembly is the strengthening of respect for human rights including creating an environment in which the people of Nepal have confidence that their institutions have the capacity and the will to uphold the rule of law and to hold accountable those responsible for violations, whether committed in the past or the present.

Thank you again for inviting me to be present and to speak today.