



**Statement by Annette Lyth
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**Delivered at a mass gathering on Sustainable Peace
and Realization of Human Rights for All**
Public Youth School, Siraha
1 October 2007

Friends, members of the National Alliance of Women Human Rights Defenders, esteemed colleagues:

I am extremely happy to be here today representing the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights at this mass gathering to support sustainable peace and the realization of human rights for all Nepalese.

As is written in the invitation letter, there is a strong belief at the community level, among people like yourselves, that elections to a Constituent Assembly would be an important step towards bringing women and members of historically marginalized communities into the political and social mainstream, which is a pre-requisite for creating sustainable peace in Nepal.

The Women's Charter for Equality and Just Peace describes well the situation of women in Nepal: "Women are sidelined and (permitted) to perform limited roles (among) women due to class, caste, religion, sexual orientation, geography, language and physical disability".

Despite the obstacles they are facing, many women are raising their voices against prejudices, marginalization and stereotyping. One such group is represented here today by the participants in this meeting – women human rights defenders. You are a key agent when it comes to changing the situation for women in Nepal and while OHCHR is dedicated to building the capacities of all human rights defenders in order to do this work more safely and more effectively, women human rights defenders are special because you are working in a society where women are largely expected to play subordinate roles.

This work is not without its risks, Women human rights defenders have been attacked for their work. Last year, Rikma BK was beaten here in Siraha as a result of her activities. Many more incidents go unreported. OHCHR-Nepal unequivocally condemns such attacks, and pledges to continue supporting human rights defenders across Nepal to carry out their essential work.

Thank you.