



**Remarks by Richard Bennett
Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal
At the Inauguration of the *UDHR60 in Kathmandu* Film Festival
1 December 2008, Kathmandu**

Mr Jean Romnicanu, Charge d'affaires of the Embassy of France in Nepal; Commissioner K.B Rokaya of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Debi Sunuwar, members of the media, friends and colleagues:

It gives me great pleasure to be here today at the launch of this week-long series of activities known as *UDHR60 in Kathmandu*. I would also like to note that many activities are being organized outside of the capital to mark the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; I would like to send the best wishes of my Office to the organisers of those activities.

I am particularly happy to be participating in an event that has been organised by a number of partners, UN and non-UN agencies alike, which have come together in a great spirit of cooperation and worked very hard. This is the sort of partnership that will be required in the months ahead in order for Nepal to effectively tackle the human rights challenges and other issues that are integral to this country's remarkable peace process.

As you may already be aware, this Film Festival is organised around a number of themes, with each day being devoted to films screened by one of the partner organisations. Thus, there will be a day of films devoted to women's rights, another to children's rights, to those who have been forcibly displaced, and the last day (Friday) is organised around the theme of impunity. I hope that all of you will have a chance to watch some of the interesting films on offer this week, beginning with the showing of *Maina* after this opening ceremony.

It was almost 60 years ago, on December 10 1948, that the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, after an intense and remarkably swift – by today's standards – period of drafting and debating. So why is it that this particular UN document, one of thousands drafted by the world body in the past six decades, has not only stood the test of time but has grown in stature to become one of the best-known charters ever of the aspirations of humankind?

I believe that the UDHR has become a beacon for those of us who aspire to a world where every woman, man and child is treated equally, with dignity and according to, at least, minimum standards. The Declaration contains universal goals and principles, which are able to inspire people worldwide, from individuals who have only barely heard of it to people whose lives have been devoted to translating this document's messages into reality on the ground.

The films we will see here this week will remind us of the importance of the principles of the UDHR for our common humanity. At their best, the movies will both illuminate the promise of the UDHR and the progress made in human rights in 60 years, as well as remind us of how far there is still to go before respect for the human rights of all people is ensured and the aspirations of the Declaration are realised. I hope the films will motivate us to personally re-dedicate ourselves to the task of creating a world in which human rights are realised for every person, a world where violations are not tolerated and are responded to swiftly and comprehensively by governments and others with the obligation to protect human rights.

Promotional activities such as this Film Festival, and other activities organised to mark the 60th anniversary of the UDHR – by the NHRC and other national institutions, the Government and civil society – can play an important role in strengthening Nepal’s human rights protection system, which is a core objective of many international organisations including OHCHR. By further raising the awareness of the general public, individuals will be empowered to demand respect for their human rights; by strengthening human rights defenders, these individuals and groups will be better able to promote and protect human rights.

One of the themes chosen by the High Commissioner to mark this year’s Human Rights Day is ending impunity. This has also been a theme for OHCHR-Nepal since soon after the Office was established in this country in May 2005, and attaining this goal remains as important an objective as it was three years ago. I was heartened to hear the speech of Prime Minister Prachanda to the UN General Assembly on 26 September, where he re-affirmed the government’s commitments to human rights and declared, “The Government is committed to end the environment of impunity.” As always, OHCHR-Nepal is committed to working with the Government to fulfil that pledge in order to strengthen promotion and protection of human rights for all Nepalese.

I hope that you are able to see some of this week’s films and I am myself looking forward to this opportunity. I expect they will be edifying and at times shocking. But I also hope that we will enjoy some of them, because they show not only the problems but the remarkable achievements made by many dedicated people to overcome human rights challenges.

Thank you.

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