



**Remarks by Richard Bennett
Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal
At the Launch of the School of Child Rights,
Organized to Mark Human Rights Day and the 60th Anniversary of the UDHR
9 December 2008, Kathmandu**

Mr. Gauri Pradhan, Commissioner of the National Human Rights Commission; Mr. Douglas Maclagan, Child Welfare Scheme, UK; Dr. Yuba Raj Sangraula; Krishna Subedi, Chairperson, and Jagat Bahadur Maharjan, Chief Coordinator, Child Nepal; Colleagues; Members of the Media; and Friends:

I am very enthusiastic to be here: it is truly special to be asked to participate in the opening of a school.

The 60th anniversary of the UDHR has certainly fired the collective imagination of Nepal's human rights community, and their supporters. On Sunday I was at the launch of a 'UDHR Song', on Saturday I was at an entire concert devoted to human rights, and I am very happy to report that an illustrated poster of the UDHR developed by OHCHR-Nepal and NHRC is swiftly being transformed into a bilingual brochure by a local NGO.

There are few documents in the world that can motivate such energy: the UDHR is one of them. Its simple – but at the same time profound – messages of justice, fairness and equality are based on universal principles that echo in the hearts of men, women and children everywhere, whether they have only a vague notion of the UDHR or have dedicated their lives to translating its list of human rights into practice on the ground.

This school is a fine example of translating the UDHR into action, and I would like to congratulate Child Nepal for bringing to fruition the idea for this very ambitious project. I am especially impressed that you are aiming to build the capacity of both students and of those who work on the ground for the promotion and protection of the rights of children.

As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General said at the close of her mission to Nepal last week, this country's children continue to feel the impact of the decade-long conflict in many ways. One obvious result is that some minors continue to live in cantonments, but there are countless others: many children lost years of education that they will never recover: some of them were forced to take on work unsuitable for minors; the destruction and closure of facilities mean that some children and their families no longer have reasonable access to health care; other minors are living with the anguish of having witnessed horrifying violence, including in some cases the killings of their loved ones.

Mending these wounds and losses will take years of effort, and I am impressed that your curriculum is based on a human rights-based approach to development. This means that children will not be forgotten when plans are drawn up and work begins to tackle the formidable challenges that remain to continue driving forward this country's swift-moving peace process.

One important step in that process will be the discharge of children from the cantonments in coming months, as pledged by the Prime Minister to the Special Representative. Another of course will be the completion of the new Constitution. OHCHR-Nepal is working with the Government, the NHRC, other national institutions and civil society to see that the language of the Constitution clearly ensures the promotion and protection of the human rights of all Nepalis – female and male; elderly and young; and those from historically marginalized communities and 'mainstream' communities alike.

No doubt the knowledge that you will impart to students at the School of Child Rights will be instrumental in ensuring that the rights of children will be respected in the 'new Nepal'. If there is anything that my Office can do to support this essential work, do not hesitate to call upon us.

Thank you.