



OHCHR-Nepal

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in Nepal**

**Speech at the
First National Gathering of Trafficking Survivors,
Organised by Shakti Samuha Kathmandu, Nepal
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Friends, participants, and colleagues,

I am delighted to say a few words at the First National Gathering of Trafficking Survivors organized by Shakti Samuha. I am aware that you have all been working hard during the last three days of closed consultations and am grateful for the opportunity to be here with you for today's open sessions.

You, above all people, are aware that human trafficking is one of the serious global human rights challenges today. Trafficking represents the denial of the rights that enable us to enjoy life with dignity, including the right to mobility, freedom from violence and abuse, security, health, education, family life and a decent livelihood.

From the reports and new research coming to us from various quarters, we at OHCHR understand that the pool of those vulnerable to trafficking in most parts of the world, including South Asia, may be actually growing rather than declining. This is because of widespread inequalities among people, insecurity of food and livelihoods, violence, conflict, discrimination, and a general uprooting of populations resulting in large-scale migrations.

A critical issue is to expose the connection between trafficking, migration, human rights and social exclusion. It is not a coincidence that those who are the victims of the worst forms of trafficking and other human rights violations also belong to the most socially excluded and discriminated groups. While this may be quite obvious, exactly how this process works is complicated. And certainly, strategies to tackle these problems can be neither simplistic nor straightforward.

Many of you here today have been active in fighting against trafficking – What more can you, and we, do? What is it that we are not doing right? How do we assess the impact of our own anti-trafficking work?

OHCHR's approach to trafficking is based on two fundamental principles:

- First: human rights must be at the core of any credible anti-trafficking strategy;
- Second: we must work from the perspective of those who most need their human rights protected and promoted, that means from the viewpoint of victims of trafficking and those who are vulnerable to it.

What does it mean to make human rights the core of anti-trafficking work?

The nature of this crime is such that the trafficked person realizes that she, or he, is a victim only after it has occurred, once they have been placed in a situation of forced labour or sexual exploitation in the country of destination. For that reason, a human rights approach puts added responsibility on the governments of these countries. This means that they should establish labour standards that outlaw forced work, which must be enforceable. It also means offenders must be prosecuted to the full extent of the law and that those prosecutions must be fully carried out. Above all, a human rights approach entails extending full support and assistance to trafficked persons.

A human rights approach means we must ensure that all anti-trafficking measures will empower trafficked persons to recover their personhood and rights by recognising their human agency, and not further affect them adversely by curtailing their mobility, denying them the right to make decisions or victimizing and stigmatizing them.

Making such a human rights approach succeed will require:

Better cooperation between countries of origin and destination in order to address the root causes of trafficking, enhance prevention activities, and ensure the sustainable reintegration of the trafficked person into society, be it in the country of origin or destination.

More cooperation and coordination at the national level – among policy makers, law enforcement and border officials, prosecutors and judges, local authorities, employers, trade unions, NGOs and international organizations.

Integration of human rights into all parts of the national anti-trafficking system. This is the only way to retain a focus on the trafficked person, to ensure that this crime is not simply reduced to a problem of public order, or law enforcement.

In summary, I want to say that the problem we are grappling with, the crime of trafficking in persons, is a very daunting one. It is connected to larger structural issues, among them the reduction of poverty and more equitable redistribution of resources. Greater efforts and greater coordination among the many anti-trafficking stakeholders is needed. For us at OHCHR, this gathering is an excellent example of the types of efforts that are possible – it is heartening to see you working to develop and strengthen prevention and empowerment strategies. You are the agents of change, and we stand alongside you.