



**Statement by Marty Logan
Spokesperson, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal
Delivered at a Program on Tackling Violence Against Sexual and Gender Minorities,
Organized by Blue Diamond Society
Human Rights Day, 10 December 2007, Kathmandu**

Hon Deputy Speaker Madam Chitralekha Yadav, Members of the Blue Diamond Society, Distinguished guests, Colleagues and Friends:

Thank you for inviting me to speak here today, Human Rights Day. The theme of this year's Day is *Dignity and Justice for all of us*.

I have been asked to speak about how OHCHR-Nepal promotes and protects the rights of sexual and gender minorities, including in collaboration with civil society and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). The first point I would like to make is that OHCHR-Nepal recognizes and appreciates the enormous amount of work done by the Blue Diamond Society and other national human rights defenders in Nepal, often under unsafe conditions. Without your efforts, our work would be far more difficult. I encourage you to continue providing our Office with information about alleged abuses and violations of human rights and to file reports about incidents with police where possible.

Besides investigating such reports, OHCHR-Nepal works at various levels to end discrimination and long-standing marginalization. For example, on 26 November we organized a panel discussion on ending impunity for acts of sexual violence, which was broadcast on television last week. Our Office also made submissions to the legislature on measures to ensure the participation of women and historically marginalized groups in the Constituent Assembly elections. Globally, OHCHR helps to set the standards for the promotion and protection of human rights of sexual and gender minorities, for example, the Human Rights Committee decision in the Toonen case that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation infringed the ICCPR.

An area in which OHCHR-Nepal can support the work of civil society to promote and protect the rights of sexual and gender minorities is through increasing the capacities of human rights defenders, and others. For example, our capacity-building section has done extensive work with civil society organizations to create a common vocabulary in Nepali for reporting about human rights abuses and violations. In another project, early next year OHCHR-Nepal will begin working with journalists on how to report more accurately about human rights, while being mindful of the particular sensitivities of working in a conflict or post-conflict environment. Our Office is open to suggestions about possible capacity-building activities with organizations like Blue Diamond Society.

As regards the NHRC, OHCHR-Nepal has increased its support to this constitutional body since Commissioners were appointed a couple of months ago. This includes, just last week, agreeing to set up a task force at both organizations that would look into ways we could work more closely together in three areas: 1. monitoring human rights conditions in prisons; 2. ensuring accountability for human rights violations, past, present and future, and; 3. working to end long-standing discrimination and marginalization. We see this as only a small step in building what we envisage will be a long and fruitful relationship with the NHRC, which is a major pillar in the national human rights protection system.

To end, I would like to quote from the statement released today by the UN special procedures mandate holders. "Discrimination infects societies in every region of the world and is a root cause of many human rights violations... The year ahead marks the 60th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and it is fitting to recall that Articles 1 and 2 of the Declaration establish that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms in the Declaration without distinction of any kind. The principles of equality and non-discrimination are also guaranteed in the core human rights treaties which form the basis of international human rights law. Equality and non-discrimination are fundamental rights in themselves, yet they are often neglected as such."

Thank you.