

Honorable Chair, Chief Guest Rt. Honorable Prime Minister of Nepal, Distinguished Commissioners, Excellency's, Esteemed Colleagues, and Respected Guests,

It is my immense pleasure to stand before you and welcome you all today at this pivotal Gender Inclusion Conference with Asia-Pacific National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs).

We gather here not only as advocates and professionals but as champions of human rights, united by a shared commitment to ensuring that every individual—regardless of gender—can live with dignity, equality, and freedom.

Gender inclusion is not merely a matter of policy; it is a fundamental human right. It speaks to the heart of our shared humanity and underscores the principles upon which all of our human rights work is based.

The Asia Pacific Region stands at a pivotal moment in its journey towards gender equality and human rights, with unprecedented opportunities to create lasting positive change.

Our collective commitment to fostering inclusive societies where every individual's rights are respected and protected is stronger than ever before.

In Nepal, women's representation in governance has increased significantly, with women holding 33% of seats in the federal parliament and 40% at the local level.

These achievements reflect our collective dedication to gender equality.

Within a short span of time, Nepal have successfully amended 56 discriminatory legal provisions related to gender equality.

The National Human Rights Commission of Nepal has played a critical role in these legal reforms. Yet, despite this progress, significant challenges remain.

However, In the Asia-Pacific region, including Nepal, the impact of gender inequality remains deeply entrenched.

Women and gender minorities often face systemic barriers that limit their access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and political participation.

Women in Nepal continue to face high rates of gender-based violence, limited access to resources, and deeply entrenched social norms that hinder their full participation in society.

Across the Asia-Pacific region, people are increasingly vulnerable due to internal conflicts and deeply rooted gender inequalities.

In some countries, shocking human rights violations persist, including lowering the legal age of marriage to as young as nine—a stark reminder of the urgent need for action.

In this context, National human rights institutions must take a proactive role. We must work to strengthen legal protections, enforce international human rights standards, and collaborate closely with civil society to challenge harmful practices.

In this regard, National Human Rights Commission, Nepal, initiated together with you all to hold the conference on Gender Inclusion.

This conference aims to enhance National Human Rights Institutions' compliance with the Paris Principles, particularly focusing on strengthening pluralism through gender inclusion.

It also involves evaluating NHRIs' progress in implementing the Amman Declaration - 2012 and identifying intersecting factors that influence gender equality outcomes within these institutions.

The conference will examine both internal and external barriers to gender inclusion in NHRIs' work.

Additionally, it seeks to stimulate discussion on NHRIs' role in addressing the interrelated challenges of climate change and gender justice.

By focusing on these objectives, the conference aims to reinforce NHRIs' capacity to promote and protect human rights effectively, with a specific emphasis on gender equality and environmental justice.

The paper presentation on Pluralism and Gender Equality and a Gender Baseline Assessment of National Human Rights Institutions in the Asia-Pacific Region are key focus areas.

The conference concludes by adopting the Kathmandu Declaration as its outcome document, which serves as a roadmap for implementing gender mainstreaming strategies and actions within National Human Rights Institutions of Asia Pacific Region.

This conference is more than just a gathering of experts; it is a catalyst for change. It provides a platform for dialogue, collaboration, and innovation.

As we engage in discussions, we must remember that our work here has the potential to shape policies, influence public opinion, and drive meaningful progress toward gender inclusion.

The panels and sessions that will take place today and in the coming days are designed to be productive and solution-oriented.

They will address critical issues such as the intersectionality of gender with other forms of discrimination, particularly in the context of climate change and its impact on gender equality.

I am confident that each session will provide an opportunity to exchange ideas, share best practices, and develop actionable strategies that we can take back to our respective institutions.

Many of you may have heard a story of a little girl who was once asked by her teacher what she wanted to be when she grew up. Without missing a beat, she proudly declared, "When I grow up, I want to be a man!" because, men seemed to have all the freedom, and they did not have to face early marriage.

While we may smile at the innocence of her response, this true story reveals a stark reality. It reminds us that **women's and minorities' rights are human rights**, and these rights must be upheld.

Thinking the little girl response, how can we mitigate violence and discrimination, often justified in the name of culture and religion, while still respecting our cultural diversity?

Let us reaffirm our commitment to gender inclusion as a core principle of human rights.

Let us remember that the work we do today will have a lasting impact on future generations.

Together, we can create a world where human rights are truly universal, and where the promise of gender inclusion is fulfilled for all.

In conclusion, On behalf of the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the Rt. Honorable Prime Minister for joining us today. Your presence reaffirms our nation's dedication to gender equality.

Once again, I warmly welcome our Chief Guest, the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of Nepal, along with the Honorable Minister, representatives of the Government of Nepal, the UN Special Rapporteur on Racism, members of diplomatic missions, development partners, Chairpersons and Commissioners of National Human Rights Institutions, representatives of the Asia Pacific Forum, OHCHR, media, Civil Society Organizations, human rights experts, UN agencies, and academicians, We are honored to have you all here,

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our international delegates who have traveled from various countries to be here. Your presence underscores the importance of this event.

We would also like to acknowledge the vital contributions of the APF, UNDP, UNFPA and UN women in making this conference in reality.

To all our national and international delegates and participants, your expertise and insights will be instrumental as we work together to advance gender inclusion within National Human Rights Institutions. Thank you