



**National Human Rights Commission, Nepal**  
**International Conference Identifying Challenges, Assessing Progress, Moving Forward: Addressing Impunity and Realizing Human Rights in South Asia**  
**9-11 April, 2018, Kathmandu**



*Rt. Hon. President of Nepal Ms. Bidya Devi Bhandari  
Hon. Chairpersons and members of NHRIs present here,  
Chairperson of the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions,  
Representative from Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions,  
Former Chairperson of National Human Rights Commission, of Nepal  
Government officials,  
Heads of security bodies,  
Excellences and Representatives of diplomatic missions,  
Human rights activists, civil society members,  
Distinguished guests, Media persons,  
Ladies and Gentleman,*

I am delighted to welcome you all here in Kathmandu today. As the Chair of the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal, it is my privilege to welcome you to this conference on vital issues of human rights. I hope, among other human rights issues, this event will contribute to our on-going efforts at the national level to complete the historic peace process of Nepal. Your presence here in this conference encourages us to continue our works and demonstrate that there is no boarder on human rights issues our solidarity against impunity can enhance peace and social justice.

Ladies and Gentleman,

This is a regional conference but as the host NHRI to the event, let me indulge and allow briefly to talk about the human rights situation in Nepal as we have been observing and monitoring for more than one and half decade. Since the signing of the comprehensive peace agreement in November 2006, an interim and then a new constitution have been promulgated and now we have to make it work in practice. We must find the optimum ways to put the aspirations in the constitution into practice and make sure that it is a document that truly captures the aspirations of all people, irrespective of gender, region, ethnicity, caste and religion. Nepal is a highly diverse nation in terms of geography, linguistic and ethnicity which have made us stronger in nationality and identity. Such type of diversity can be found in all South Asian Nations.

None of us has forgotten the reality of the decade-long conflict of Nepal from mid-nineties that we all suffered in different ways and degrees. Many People say that we are living in the post-conflict period, but in my view, it would be more accurate to say that we are living in a post-peace accord period and that much still has to be done to deliver the accord, including by addressing impunity.

Addressing impunity is integrally linked to promoting rule of law and development. It is clear that no Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations can be achieved without addressing impunity in this region. Freedom of expression and the voice of the voiceless and marginalized people should be heard properly to respect human rights. As we look back, we can clearly see that the roots of the conflict lie in the denial of the enjoyment of human rights. Your presence here today inspires us to follow that path to create a Respectful Society in South Asia.

It is now almost 12 years since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement put an end to the decade long armed conflict but the victims of the conflict still yearn for justice. The next step will be for our new government to implement the Supreme Court's ruling on the twin Truth Commissions. It is a priority for us to modernize our legislation and bring it fully in line with the many human rights treaties ratified, for example, by criminalizing both torture and enforced disappearance. I am personally confident that the newly elected government of Nepal will provide the

necessary legal instruments and resources for both Truth and Reconciliation and Commission on Disappeared People.

Distinguished Guests,

Nepal, as a newly elected member of the Human Rights Council must be seen to be a responsible member state of the United Nations to which we contribute much for the Common People. We must take advantage of our hard-earned peace to root out and eliminate discrimination wherever we find. As you know, the NHRC alone cannot perform this, but we are constantly seeking ways in which we can be a true partner to our people as they strive for this vision of a better society for all. We have a duty by the constitution, to provide leadership as we accompany our people. We have to learn how to be a loyal duty bearer to our people and we look forward to benefitting from the experiences of our Colleagues and experts whose presence here encourages me very much.

This conference may provide a place for NHRIs to come together to identify challenges for the respect and protection of human rights. The purpose of the conference is to create a foundation for strengthening the work of all the NHRIs in our South Asian region. The conference conveners will provide a space for the commissioners from NHRIs as well as activists and Human Rights practitioners to discuss shared challenges. Commissioners and other human rights stakeholders will learn about best practices in the protection and promotion of human rights at the national, regional and global levels.

We also anticipate that Commissioners and other stakeholders across the region will develop a more robust relationship among us and our own civil society groups. To do this we must build a partnership with the marginalized groups and victims of human rights violations and abuses: many issues of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights are similar in this region. We can collaborate to combat with such fundamental issues of human rights.

In this context, National Human Rights Commission of Nepal is honored to host the international human rights conference, with the support of the United Nations, Asia Pacific Forum, Government of Nepal and Governance Facility. We sincerely hope that the conference will make a contribution to increasing regional cooperation in the protection and promotion of the basic human rights in this region.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Absence and denial of rule of law is the major obstacle to combating impunity. The independence of the judiciary, the justice and administrative system and other instituting are very important as a whole. History has shown us that without rule of law, no country has been able to prosper and develop its economy to the optimum. Central to this aspiration is an end to the scourge of caste and gender-based violence in an integrated approach.

Ladies and Gentleman, as you know, we are living in complex times. Our challenge is to find the way in which we can best contribute to the well-being of our people. We have a historic opportunity but history will judge us harshly if we fail to grasp that opportunity with sincerity and intelligence.

For me, to open a conference like this is a fulfillment of many of my own personal goals. It fills me with pride to see you all gathered here in my country to find ways together of carrying out our honorable duty. In order to do that, we have to find the ways to explain to our people the true meaning of human rights, to find the words that every man; woman and child can understand our purpose, our calling. We are proud of our peace process, but we are not too arrogant to realize that more still needs to be done to complete that process. As an NHRI we bear a heavy responsibility, but it is a task which honors us all.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to extend our gratitude to the Government of Nepal for providing necessary technical assistance to the commission for promotion and protection of human rights including monitoring and investigation works. I would also like to thank all the working organizations for supporting the commission to perform more actively and responsibly.

**Thank You!**