

Inaugural Speech for Hon. Chairperson of NHRCN

Rt. Honorable Prime Minister of Nepal, K.P. Sharma Oli,

Hon. Minister Nawal Kishor Sah Sudi, Minister for Women, Children and Senior Citizens,

Hon. Kamala Parajuli, Chairperson, National Women Commission,

Hon. Prakash Sharma, Chairperson, Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission, Fiji,

Hon. Mariyam Muna, President, Human Rights Commission of Maldives,

Hon. Prof. Rashid Hamad Humaid Albalushi, Chairperson, Oman Human Rights Commission,

Hon. Mrs. Vijaya Bharathi Sayani, Acting Chair, National Human Rights Commission, India,

Ms. Kyoko Yokosuka, UNDP Nepal Resident Representative,

Distinguished Delegates

Civil Society and Media Personnel,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my immense pleasure to welcome all the distinguished Chairpersons and Commissioners from National Human Rights Institutions of Asia Pacific Region, heads and representatives from government organizations, diplomatic missions, UN agencies, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Asia Pacific Forum for NHRIs, civil society, experts, scholars and media representatives to this International Conference on Gender Inclusion in National Human Rights Institutions. The participation of so many esteemed guests from across the region underscores the vital importance we all place on advancing gender equality in our societies.

We are gathered here with a common aim to reflect on our journey toward gender equality and to chart a path forward that ensures the rights of all individuals are respected and upheld. This conference comes at a time when the challenges we face are both persistent and evolving. We all are impacted by the climate crisis disproportionately particularly the women and girls in the marginalized communities all over the world.

Rt. Hon. Prime Minister and Distinguished Delegates

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women is an international legal instrument that requires countries to eliminate discrimination against women and girls in all areas and promotes women's and girls' equal rights. Twelve years ago, at the 11th International Conference of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions held in Jordan, NHRIs adopted the Amman Declaration, which called the NHRIs to prioritize the human rights of women and girls in every aspect of their work. As we assess the progress, we must acknowledge the achievements made, but also confront the great challenges that remain. Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but also a cornerstone of just, inclusive, and prosperous societies.

The Paris Principles, which is the backbone of our institutional framework, emphasize pluralism and representation. However, they fall short in explicitly addressing gender equality, leading to uneven progress. The absence of specific guidance on gender within the Paris Principles is a gap we must urgently address. But the Sub-Committee on Accreditation further emphasises that the principle of pluralism includes ensuring the meaningful participation of women in the National Institution.

This conference presents a critical opportunity to refine our approaches, ensuring that gender inclusion is embedded in the core of our institution's operations and ethos.

The empowerment of women and girls living in rural areas has become an increasing concern of the international community. The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action mentions economic underdevelopment, poverty, social marginalization and environmental health hazards amongst the barriers that particularly affect women and girls in rural areas.

NHRIs have a pivotal role in integrating gender perspectives into all aspects of their work—whether it be through legislative review, human rights education, or engagement with international bodies. The development of human rights indicators that promote gender equality and the advocacy for comprehensive national gender strategies are just some of the ways we can ensure our works translate into tangible outcomes for women and girls.

NHRC Nepal conducted a comprehensive GESI audit in 2021 to assess the extent to which gender is considered across its functions. The Commission made

amendment in the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy formulated in 2021 in accordance with the GESI audit which provides guidance to integrate gender equality within its organisational structure, other policy formulation process, programme development, budget allocation and programme implementation. Through this, the Commission can enhance its efforts for eliminating all kinds of discrimination including all forms of harmful practices against women and girls.

Sub -Committee on Accreditation of GANHRI during the October session of 2023 reviewed NHRC Nepal and was maintained its 'A-status' accreditation. We have also recently sent the proposed NHRC Act to the Government of Nepal to table it in the parliament by addressing the SCA recommendations and demonstrating Paris Principles compliance. The 'existence of independent NHRIs in compliance with the Paris Principles' is a global indicator for the achievement of SDG 16.

As we navigate the complexities of our global challenges, it is imperative that we do so with a gender lens. Climate change, for example, is not just an environmental issue, it is a gender issue too. Women and girls disproportionately bear the brunt of climate-induced hardships, from food insecurity to displacement. A report launched at COP28 by UN Women indicating that by 2050, climate change could push millions more women and girls into poverty, are alarming and demand our urgent action. Therefore, we must advocate for climate justice with the same vigor as we do for gender equality, recognizing that these issues are deeply intertwined.

Advancing Sustainable Development Goals is decisive for promoting gender equality. NHRIs must recognize that gender equality is not just a standalone goal but a cross-cutting issue that impacts all aspects of sustainable development. This rights-based approach ensures that women and girls have equal access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and decision-making processes. NHRIs should advocate for gender-responsive policies, collect sex-disaggregated data, and hold governments accountable for their commitments to gender equality across all Sustainable Development Goals. By doing so, we can create a more equitable world where every individual's human rights are respected and fulfilled, regardless of gender.

NHRIs must champion a rights-based approach to climate action as a powerful agent of change. This involves ensuring women's meaningful participation in climate decision-making processes, promoting gender-responsive climate policies, and addressing the specific vulnerabilities and needs of women in climate

adaptation and mitigation strategies. States should integrate a gender perspective into national policies on climate change in line with the CEDAW Committee's general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change.

Our discussions over the next three days will culminate in the Kathmandu Declaration, a document that I hope will serve as a transformative roadmap for implementing gender mainstreaming strategies and actions within NHRIs. This declaration will reinforce our commitment to gender inclusion by advocating for bold and proactive measure, also acting as a guiding framework to address our challenges.

Distinguished delegates, I encourage each of you to bring forward your experiences, challenges, and solutions **in a discourse**. Let us foster a collaborative spirit that transcends borders and institutions, recognizing that our collective efforts are crucial in advancing gender equality on a global scale.

Finally, May I take this opportunity to extend my deepest gratitude to our Chief Guest, Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of Nepal, K.P. Sharma Oli, for your inspiring words and gracing us with your presence today. **Rt. Honourable's** commitment to gender inclusion and equality in Nepal is truly commendable and we deeply appreciate your continued support and encouragement.

A sincere and special appreciation to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Global Alliance of NHRIs and Asia Pacific Forum of NHRIs for their invaluable collaboration with the National Human Rights Commission, Nepal on this ongoing International Conference. **These esteemed organizations'** support has been wonderful in driving the success of this important event.

Similarly, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the Hon. Chairpersons, Commissioners and representatives of NHRIs from various nations. We are equally thankful to the Government of Nepal and UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women for necessary support for the conference.

My cordial thanks to all the distinguished guests present here today for your dedication, expertise and unwavering commitment to this vital event. Together, we can make gender inclusion not just an aspiration, but a reality for all.

Thank you.