

**Speech delivered by Honorable Mr. Anup Raj Sharma,
Chairperson of National Human Rights Commission on the
inauguration of Regional Conference on Equal Access to
Justice for All: Using Law to dismantle Caste-based
Discrimination in South Asia**

Chair of the program, honorable justice Sapana Pradhan Malla, Hon. Niru Jairu, honorable Enamul Hoque Chowdhury, NHRC, Bangladesh, Durga Sob of Feminist Dalit Organization, Paul Diwakar, Chairperson of Asian Dalit Rights Forum, and Distinguish Delegates, Media representatives, Rights Activists and participants

I am delighted to be here to inaugurate this Regional conference on **Equal Access to Justice for All: Using Law to dismantle Caste based Discrimination in South Asia** organized by the Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO) in collaboration with National Human rights Commission, Nepal (NHRC). I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Feminist Dalit Organization on its initiation of organizing the conference.

Caste-based discrimination is a common issue in most of the South Asian region. People are deprived of exercising their basic human rights; they are hindered from political, economic, social, cultural rights and public life by so called upper caste. Because of discriminatory treatment on the basis of race, color and caste, women and children from the marginalized community are facing multiple human rights violation which is a major obstacle to achieving gender equality, sustainable development, peaceful and prosperous nation too.

As we all know that, Nepal had suffered a decade long conflict. After the comprehensive peace agreement between the rebellion CPN Maoist and the State in 2007, Nepal succeeded to promulgate constitution in 2015 through Constitutional Assembly with aspiration of sustainable peace, good governance, development and prosperity through the federal, democratic, republican, system of governance.

The constitution of Nepal, 2015 has aimed to ending all forms of discrimination and oppression. Constitution has expressed state commitment on eliminating discrimination based on class, caste,

region, language, religion and gender and all forms of caste-based untouchability, and committed to socialism based on democratic norms and values.

The Constitution of Nepal, 2015 protects the fundamental rights of every Nepalese citizen, including equality, freedom of speech, expression, assembly, association, movement, education, equality of opportunity in matters of public employment without discrimination on grounds of race, religion, caste or gender. The Constitution also includes specific affirmative measures by setting up the thematic constitutional bodies for the protection and promotion of human rights of marginalized people.

Caste Based Discrimination and Untouchability (Offence and Punishment) Act, 2011 has criminalized and penalized the caste based discrimination. Fourth National Plan of Actions on Human Rights (NHRAP) of Nepal Government has also identified and priorities the different thematic areas including dalit, gender and sexual minorities, Indigenous people, peoples of ethnic

communities and marginalized groups for the protection and promotion of human rights .

National Human Rights Commission, (NHRC) Nepal has broad constitutional mandate to respect, protect and promote human rights and ensure effective enforcement. NHRC, Nepal is collaborating, coordinating with the National Dalit Commission, National Women Commissions and other thematic commissions too for the protection and promotion of human rights. The strategic plan of National Human Rights Commission, (NHRC) 2015-2020 has identified the strategic objectives to ensure the rights of deprived, marginalized and vulnerable groups and identified the protection of the rights of deprived, marginalized and vulnerable communities, Protection of the rights of children, women, senior citizens, dalits, helpless and people living with disability as the priority issues.

Nepal has ratified several International Human rights treaties and conventions including International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD). Being the the party of these international treaties, Nepal has its international obligation. We all recognize that most of the countries in these regions are party of these international treaties, have same state responsibility, same challenges on implementing those international provisions and to comply those provisions within domestic legal framework.

National Human Rights Commission recently had hosted the International Conference Identifying Challenges, Assessing Progress, and Moving Forward: Addressing Impunity and Realizing Human Rights in South Asia at Kathmandu just before 4 months ago. We made Kathmandu Declaration on Addressing Impunity and Realizing Human Rights in South Asia.

I hope this three day regional conference will support to recognize the barrier of equal access to justice for all. This conference may facilitate to share our best practices, strategies applied within us. This conference may provide a place for Government Officials, Lawyers, Researchers, Journalists, Human

Rights Experts, Leaders from the different thematic organizations, Civil society actors, Women and dalit rights activists to move forward together to dismantle caste-based discrimination through promoting equal access to justice for all by using law in south Asia. I am sure; the conference will also make a constructive contribution to increasing regional cooperation in the protection and promotion of human rights especially for Dalit and marginalized people

Thank you

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