

Human Rights Day

10th December 2024

Welcome Speech

by the

Secretary General, NHRC

Good morning, Namaskar!

Today, on Human Rights Day, on behalf of the National Human Rights Commission, it is my privilege and honour to welcome each one of you.

We are privileged to have with us today the **Hon'ble President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu**. On behalf of the NHRC and your behalf, I extend a very warm welcome to Hon'ble President of India.

Madam, we are grateful to you for accepting our invitation. By being here with us today, you are conveying the significance of human rights to you, the government and the whole country.

Smt. Droupadi Murmu has been a tireless advocate for the empowerment of women and marginalized communities, exemplifying resilience and leadership throughout her remarkable journey.

From becoming the first woman in her village to receive college education, to becoming the President of India, her journey has been inspirational. In her illustrious journey, she has remained a steadfast advocate for equality and justice, committing to upholding the values of the Constitution and ensuring the adherence of democratic ethos. She devoted her whole life to the service of the poorest of the poor and last person standing in the queue.

For every boy and girl coming from a modest background, she is a source of inspiration. Thank you so much for inspiring millions of young Indians to aim at contributing to improve the lives of people.

I extend my warm welcome to **Smt. S. Vijaya Bharathi, Acting Chairperson**. At the NHRC, she has been a source of inspiration, with her dedication to under-privileged and vulnerable sections of society. I also extend a very warm welcome to Mr. Shombi Sharp, UN Resident Coordinator who is here with us on the dais.

I also take this opportunity to welcome Ex-officio members of the Commission. Welcome, Hon'ble Members of Lokpal, Chairpersons and Members of other Statutory Bodies; members of Diplomatic Corps, Former Judges of Supreme Court and High Courts, Chairpersons & Members of the State Human Rights Commissions; the members of legal fraternity; seniors

officers of the Central and State governments/ UT Administrations; Special Rapporteurs, Special Monitors and members of the Core Groups of NHRC; Special Invitees; Human Rights Defenders; Academicians; representatives of civil society, business and media.

I would also like to extend a warm welcome to youth – the torchbearers of human rights – who are poised to carry forward the enduring legacy of human rights into the future.

Human Rights Day, celebrated on 10th December, marks the adoption of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** in 1948—a document that, 76 years later, continues to guide our shared vision and pursuit of justice and equality. As we all know, **Indian ethos** has a huge impact on the UDHR. This year, Human Rights Day theme is **Our Right, Our Future, Right Now**.

Today, its mandate remains profoundly relevant, particularly in the face of rising challenges in the world.

The Indian Constitution imbibes the values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and our governance is guided by the principle of *Antyodaya*—uplifting the last and the least.

Human Rights Day is not just a commemoration but a call to action—a reminder that safeguarding the rights of every individual requires vigilance, compassion, and unwavering resolve.

NHRC India, set up in 1993, works for the protection and promotion of human rights of all human beings. Guided by the Paris Principles, NHRC India bridges gaps in upholding the human rights, striving to uphold the Constitution's vision of justice and equality. NHRC plays the role of a **conscience keeper** on behalf of and for the citizen. We are steadfast in our resolve to **ensure no one is left behind**, and that the most vulnerable sections of society enjoy the same privileges as others.

The Commission issues **advisories**, bringing to attention the plight of the smaller and more vulnerable groups. This year, the Commission has issued advisories for the protection and rehabilitation of individuals engaged in beggary, and for the Protection of Human Rights of the Widows.

The Commission actively organizes conferences and meetings with diverse stakeholders to gain insights into ground realities and take effective actions to improve the lives of the most vulnerable.

In September, the NHRC hosted a National Symposium on **Women's Safety at Work and in Public Spaces**. On the Foundation Day in October, a National Conference on the **Rights of Older Persons** brought together representatives from government, civil society, international organizations, and other commissions to discuss pressing issues and identify actionable solutions.

Recently in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs, NHRC organized a six-day **Executive Capacity Building Programme on Human Rights for the NHRIs of Global South**, wherein NHRIs of from the Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Jordan participated. Similarly, we also organized such a programme for further strengthening the State Human Rights Commission of Arunachal Pradesh.

Throughout the year, the NHRC has actively convened **core group meetings** on critical themes, including Human Rights Defenders, Business and Human Rights, and Health and Mental Health. Complementing these efforts, the Commission also organized **Open House Discussions** on various human rights themes. The Commission and its Special Rapporteurs and Special Monitors regularly visit various shelter homes, prisons, Ashramshalas, schools, etc.

On the global stage, the NHRC has strengthened its role as a founding member of the **Asia Pacific Forum** of NHRIs, **Commonwealth Forum** and the **Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions**, fostering **North – South** and **South – South** collaborations.

At these platforms, NHRC advocates India's ethos of **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**—the world as one family—while championing the universal values of empathy, compassion, and justice.

As we gather here on Human Rights Day, let us reaffirm our collective commitment to building a just, equitable, and compassionate society. The work of the NHRC, alongside its partners and stakeholders, is a testament to the **power of collaboration and perseverance** in addressing the most pressing challenges of our time.

Together, let us continue to champion the rights of every individual, ensuring that dignity, equality, and justice, which remain the cornerstones of our collective progress.

Thank you.
