



**11 June 2014, 26th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council,
Item 3 Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women**

Speaker: Babloo Loitongbam

Mr. President, Mr. President, this statement is delivered by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative in association with the Working Group on Human Rights in India and the UN.

We welcome the report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women on India. The report very aptly outlines the due diligence obligations by the state to address not just the manifestations of violence – but most importantly its causes and consequences, so that social transformation becomes possible.

While new laws, particularly those relating to sexual violence, are necessary, the report also calls attention to longstanding gaps in prevention, protection, redress and reparation. Prevention must strike at the gender stereotyping and victim blaming that normalise routine violence. It must address structural inequalities that dehumanise marginalised constituencies.

We endorse the call for a qualitative assessment of the National Women's Commission and steps to ensure its independence. We reiterate the need for India to strengthen women's human rights, by ratifying all outstanding international conventions. We also demand the urgent repeal of laws like the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and section 377 of the Indian Penal Code.

We endorse the call for police reforms and for strict accountability for dereliction, collusion and apathy so that access to justice is possible and our laws are effectively implemented.

The report reminds us finally, that violence against women is played out differentially for different women. Based on their specific context of marginalisation and structures of inequality specific cycles of violence are created. For example caste, tribal status, minority status, sexuality, disability, militarisation in themselves create impunity for high levels of brutality and obstruct access to justice.

Today, the image of two girls belonging to a lower caste, hanging from a tree in rural Badaun is a stark reminder of the State's failure to fulfil its obligations to these girls. We call for an end to structures of inequality that render some women so vulnerable to egregious violence.

Thank you.