

**Statement Made The Chairperson,
UN HUMAN RIGHTS SUB-COMMISSION
50TH SESSION ON AUGUST 19, 1998 AT 3:30 IM GENEVA**

The Sub-Commission has been aware of the plight of the approximately 90,000 individuals of Nepali ethnicity, the majority of whom assert they had previously lived in Bhutan but who have been residing in UNHCR-administered camps in eastern Nepal for as long as seven years as well as others who are living outside the camps in India. The Sub-Commission is also aware that the actual status and origin of many of these people is the subject of dispute should be sorted out by an appropriate verification procedure. The Sub-Commission expresses its deep concern over the serious human implications of this situation. The Sub-Commission is particularly concerned about the ongoing re-settlement program in Southern Bhutan on lands that may affect lands previously belonging to the refugees. It therefore, urges the two governments concerned to negotiate in good faith towards a peaceful solution consistent with international human rights standards. The Sub-Commission encourages the parties concerned to set up an impartial verification process and to make more effective and urgent efforts to negotiate the return of the verified Bhutanese refugees, so that they can leave the camps voluntarily and return home in condition of safety and dignity. In these regards, the Sub-Commission suggests that the governments involved avail themselves of technical assistance from the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and from the office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, so as to facilitate a fair and lasting resolution which takes into account representations on behalf of the displaced population and the principle of international law relating to non-discrimination; the right to return; the right not to be arbitrarily deprived of one's nationality; the reduction of statelessness; and the fulfillment of Economic, Social, and Cultural rights.

The Sub-Commission calls on the parties concerned to negotiate in good faith in the hopes of achieving peace and protecting human rights. The Sub-Commission hopes by making this statement to contribute towards the achievement of the protection of human rights in this context by considering this matter at its fifty-first session.