

## Asia

On the positive side in Asia, I would like to draw attention to the women's groups, women's activists, women's human rights defenders who have emerged here in large numbers and who have brought hope because we actually do see the entire area of women's human rights coming much more prominently onto the political agenda, we do see progress taking place there, we do see women, ordinary women bringing about change in their own lives.

In Asia we also see what I would call forgotten conflicts, the conflict in Sri Lanka which has taken a very heavy toll over many years, the conflict in Afghanistan which only gets intermittent international attention and obviously these conflicts take a very heavy toll on human rights and on human lives.

Asia is a continent that has been marked by huge economic progress but that progress has brought with it a certain price. It has been the price of disparity, it has been the price of marginalization and in some cases people have been driven into poverty rather than been lifted out of poverty. We have seen the feminization of poverty in Asia in the sense that more of the poor today are women. Certainly these are big challenges for Asian governments and Asian societies but these are challenges that need to be addressed very rapidly if we are to see stability follow the economic progress.

The message to Asian governments would be you have shown remarkable progress on the economy, now its time to show leadership on human rights change.