



KINGDOM OF BHUTAN

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**ADDRESS  
BY  
THE HONOURABLE JIGMI Y. THINLEY  
PRIME MINISTER OF BHUTAN  
  
AT  
  
THE GENERAL DEBATE  
OF THE SIXTY-SIXTH SESSION OF  
THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**NEW YORK  
23 SEPTEMBER 2011**

**Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

My country is most happy to welcome South Sudan as a member of the UN family.

I seek your permission, Mr. President, to speak on the subject of Happiness.

Since joining the UN 41 years ago, Bhutan has always maintained a long term and broad perspective on the purpose of this great organization to create a secure and harmonious society. But, in the many times that I have participated in the UN General Assembly over the last 25 years, I cannot recall a session that gave me reason for hope in the future of humanity, except once. That was when the cold war came to a thundering halt and a euphoric world saw it as the dawning of a new era. I was then a young ambassador excited no less by the prospects of a *peace dividend*. Instead, what followed was a sense of betrayal and disillusionment as the world became even more divided and insecure.

We stand before this high podium, year after year, to make this annual gathering a mournful event. We speak of what ought to be; of promises broken and opportunities lost. We speak of endless conflicts within and among nations; of failure of governments; of frequent and devastating disasters; of depleting resources and fierce competition for their control; of dying ecosystems, new diseases and epidemic threats; of financial calamities and economic ruin. We speak of rising unemployment, hopeless poverty, hunger, and destitution. And of course, we talk of solutions.

Lacking political will and indeed, clarity of vision, we deny with clever arguments what we know to be the cause of our predicaments. So we go on - doing what is irrational. We continue acquiring arms to prevent war; answering climate change with more harmful emissions; racing to extract, produce and consume more in the face of depleting resources; fuelling faltering economies with debt and greed; enabling the wealthy to widen the deep crevasses that separate the rich from the poor; idealizing individualism as family and community crumble amid rising social dislocation, crime, mental illness, loneliness and suicide.

For too long, we have ignored the truth that the causes of all these problems are interrelated and that durable remedies must be found through a rational and holistic approach. For too long, we have refused to accept that GDP focused economic models have served their useful purpose and that we need to switch tracks. Guided by the belief that life satisfaction is about material pursuit and accumulation, and that good economics is about limitless growth, our economic development processes have created the monster of a consumerist market economy.

But the market gives no satisfaction. It enslaves humanity and thrives on the insatiable nature of our greed. As slaves, our value as individuals and nations are measured by the extent of our economic productivity and consumption capacity. This sad transformation, from the human to the voracious beast, comes at the cost of our physical, psychological and spiritual well-being. It is destroying our natural life support systems and threatening our long-term survival. But it need not be so.

Humanity is in need of a clear vision that will transcend the diversity of our cultures, thoughts and circumstances and bind all of us together. We need a different development paradigm, one that is guided by such a vision; one that is holistic, sustainable, inclusive and humane. Such a vision can take civilization forward and enable it to sustain the progress it has made and must make.

It is, therefore, with a great sense of joy that my country welcomed the UN GA resolution, "*Happiness: a holistic approach to development*". Introduced by Bhutan, and sponsored by 68 member states, it was adopted unanimously without a vote in July of this year. Through this resolution, member states have adopted a universal goal while acknowledging the limitations of our conventional development processes. It commits our nations to creating the necessary political, social and economic conditions to enable pursuit of happiness by citizens within a stable environment.

My delegation is of the firm belief that happiness or wellbeing in the manner that it is promoted in my country against a well-developed set of indices would be a natural progression from the MDGs that aim at establishing the minimum conditions for human survival and basis for development. It is indeed a universal value that binds the rich and the poor, the developed and the developing and articulates the ultimate purpose of life. It is about making true societal progress in ways that are meaningful, joyful and lasting.

In this regard, I am happy to report that my government, in collaboration with the UNDP, the Earth Institute of Columbia University, leading scientists and thinkers on the subject of the science and economics of happiness are working in concert to prepare for the Panel discussion stipulated by the resolution. Proposed to be held in New York in the spring of 2012 before the Rio+20 summit, it will be the endeavor of this meeting to present to the member states a set of policy recommendations in their pursuit of happiness and as they work in harmonious collaboration with each other with a shared and clear sense of purpose. We look forward to your participation at this meeting.

Mr. President,

My delegation remains fully committed to the promotion of a sustainable and progressive human civilization within a peaceful and secure environment. To this happy end, Bhutan is prepared to share her experience and modest development achievements made with the support of our generous partners. Our attempts to

promote equitable and sustainable social economic growth are bearing fruit within a rich biodiversity that includes a forest cover, which has expanded from 64% to 81% in four decades. Bhutan is, today, the only country that has pledged to remain forever, carbon neutral. Our social and cultural values remain vital even as we embraced globalization and its many offerings. And we have successfully and smoothly transitioned from absolute monarchy to a full-fledged vibrant democracy.

It is for this reason and out of a sense of duty and obligation that my country aspires to serve as a non-permanent member in the Security Council for the biennium 2013-14. Having been a member of the UN for 41 years and never having served on the council while having enjoyed fully the benefits of membership, we wish to contribute as a small state and for the small states. We believe that we can bring to the Security Council a fresh and holistic perspective on peace and security beyond its narrow confines and open to it new and innovative approaches to fulfilling its important mandate. My country is of the firm belief that maintaining peace and security is not only about preventing war. It is about recognizing and forging the will to deal with all forms of threat to the survival, progress and happiness of human society.

Yes it is a dream. But it is possible and as leaders and representatives of our peoples, we must dare to dream and find the courage and determination to pursue the highest of ideals. This is how happiness is to be fashioned.

My country prays for your support to give Bhutan an opportunity to contribute to the realization of shared dreams.

Thank you.

Tashi Delek.