



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-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE UNITED
NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**NEW YORK
28 SEPTEMBER 2012**

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

My delegation and I are very pleased to see you, Mr. President, guiding this great world body as it deliberates on some of the greatest challenges ever faced by our deeply troubled world.

We would also like to pay tribute to H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, the outgoing President, for the exemplary manner in which he presided over the 66th session of the General Assembly. In particular, I thank him for his support and participation in the High-level Meeting on Wellbeing and Happiness that Bhutan hosted in April this year.

As with most sessions of the General Assembly, we are sharing, yet again our common fears and frustrations in a world that is going wrong. We have no stories except fleeting moments, to fill our sinking hearts with hope in our near or distant future. Ours is a narrative of mounting challenges and doubts. Deep in our hearts, we know that our very survival on this fragile planet is under threat. Yet, we share no common vision and fail to think and act in concert and with faith. And so, we find ourselves being overwhelmed by the forces that our irresponsible and discordant actions have unleashed. All that we have achieved individually, as nations, as regions and as a species, face the threat of loss and reversal. As we argue and falter, the world we have built is falling apart.

Climate is changing and ecosystems are dying; the growing extractive industry spurred by consumerism is exhausting our natural resources and conflicts are rising in number and more are looming on the horizon; food and energy are becoming costlier to deepen poverty, inequality and discontent; economies are unraveling with loss of jobs and security; for too many, basic human rights and dignity remain beyond reach and relevance of governments and states is a question; family and community are losing their resilience and society is crumbling.

I have reminded the august gathering each year that the solutions we speak of and the measures we take against each of these and many others plaguing mankind are of the kind that address the symptoms and aggravate the deeper malaise. We are discovering that our problems, be they economic, social, ecological or even political, are interconnected and rooted in the folly of mankind's pursuit of the wrong ends in wrongful ways.

Although the United Nations has been a house of gloom in recent years, it does have its shining moments, projecting rays of hope. The Secretary-General has referred to some of these in his address that focused on sounding *the alarm about our direction as a human family*. One such moment came when this great body resolved that it was time to accept human wellbeing and happiness as a developmental goal binding all of humanity with a common vision and pursuit – that it should bring about a holistic, sustainable and inclusive approach to development. That resolution caused my country to host the High Level Meeting here at the UN which brought

together more than 800 distinguished participants from all walks of life and from all over the world. I was awed, humbled and indeed inspired by the phenomenal response to our call. It was a gathering of extraordinary minds and concerned citizens, moved by the urgent need for change - to blaze a new global path to human happiness and wellbeing of all life on earth. Yet another moment came just months ago when the General Assembly declared the 20th of March each year as the International Day of Happiness, thereby bringing together all of mankind, at least once a year, to reflect on the meaning and purpose of life and realign our thoughts and actions.

Three months ago, 40,000 delegates gathered for the Rio+20 Summit. The Outcome Document fell far short of what we ought to have achieved. Many saw it as a missed opportunity. Not so my country and people who, with minimum expectations, came away with reason for hope. The agreement to develop universal Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that would integrate the economic, environmental and social dimensions of development was a substantive outcome, consistent with the UNGA resolution and the efforts that my own country is taking. My country hopes to participate actively in this work and sees this as evidence of the growing convergence in the belief that we need to make a break from the past and agree on a collective vision. It is our expectation that the SDGs would steer the post 2015 international development agenda and set humankind on the right course.

What inspired me even more at Rio was the indomitable spirit of the hundreds of side events, several of which I was honored to participate in. These were organized by civil society, grassroots organizations and the private sector. They came to share best practices and learn from each other but, more importantly, to demonstrate that sustainable development was not just an idle dream but that there are individuals and organizations who are breathing and living lives to realize what is profound and necessary. While many of them went home disappointed by the outcome document, I know it is not in their creed to despair. They are the pioneers, taking the lead where governments fear to tread, and giving courageous expression to humankind's basic goodness and inherent wisdom. They are the torchbearers of a brave new dawn and we too must have the wisdom and humility to follow their lead.

I am also inspired by the appointment of a High Level Panel by the SG to advise on the global development agenda beyond 2015, which we note, convened its first meeting earlier this week. As well, the launch of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, lead by Jeffrey Sachs, is to be welcomed as the SG's personal commitment to enrich the discourse on the future of our race. On our part, I would like to submit that Bhutan has initiated a number of steps in the same direction pursuant to the recommendation by the April 2nd High-level Meeting on Wellbeing and Happiness.

In July of this year, His Majesty the King of Bhutan established an international expert Working Group, comprising over 50 thought leaders, to elaborate the details of the new proposed development paradigm over the coming two years. Their work will be made available for consideration by the 68th and 69th United Nations General Assembly sessions in 2013 and

2014. Simultaneously, His Majesty the King appointed a national Steering Committee to guide and support this process.

The Working Group will elaborate and refine the four themes of wellbeing and happiness; ecological sustainability; fair distribution; and the efficient use of resources, and will prepare detailed documentation, including thorough literature reviews and examinations of existing best practices, on how the new paradigm can work in actual practice. They will look at its potential accounting and measurement systems, regulatory and financial mechanisms, and trade, governance, and other institutional arrangements. We believe the findings will complement and contribute to the efforts being undertaken by the Secretary-General's High-level Panel. Towards this end, my Government also looks forward to the early establishment of the intergovernmental Open Working Group tasked to design Sustainable Development Goals, as agreed at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) held in Rio.

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This month, Bhutan enters its 42nd year of membership in the United Nations. During this period, Bhutan has been a beneficiary of the international community, whose support and generosity have helped to bring about tangible improvements to the lives of the Bhutanese people. In return, Bhutan's contributions to the work of the UN have been modest although focused. We have endeavored to demonstrate our dedication to the cause of peace, development, and the rule of law. As a responsible member of the international community, committed to the principles enshrined in the UN Charter, Bhutan is now prepared and seeks to engage directly in the process of building a more secure world through non permanent membership in the UN Security Council. This we regard, not only as a privilege, but also, as a responsibility of UN membership.

It is in this context, that in 1999, Bhutan informed the Asian Group of its aspiration to seek a non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council for the term 2013-14. Never having served nor sought membership on the Council before, we are convinced that all states, regardless of size, population, level of development, must be permitted the opportunity to contribute by bringing diversity of thought, approach and indeed, their will, to the work of the Council. As a small state, we have always attached the highest importance to multilateralism and the primacy of an effective United Nations that serves the interests of all its Member States. The election of non-permanent members to the UN Security Council next month will provide the opportunity for the international community to demonstrate its commitment to the fundamental precept of sovereign equality as enshrined in the UN Charter, and to the principles of democracy and rotation that give it meaning.

Thank you and Tashi Delek!