



KINGDOM OF BHUTAN

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STATEMENT

BY

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**GENERAL DEBATE
SEVENTIETH SESSION
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
2 OCTOBER 2015**

**Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Distinguished delegates,**

At the outset, I would like to convey to this august gathering the warm greetings of His Majesty the King.

Mr. President, I congratulate you on your election, and assure you of my delegation's full support in the discharge of your responsibilities.

I would also like to thank Mr. Sam Kutesa, President of the 69th Session, for his able leadership over the last year, particularly in steering the complex negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda to a successful conclusion.

I also thank Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and his team for their tireless efforts to advance the multifaceted work of our Organization over the past year.

At 70, the UN underpinned by multilateralism and sovereign equality of nations remains indispensable.

It embodies the collective will and conscience of humanity for a more peaceful, secure and prosperous world.

Its existence reflects our enduring commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

It unites all nations – big or small, rich or poor - to work together to realize our shared goals and aspirations.

Mr. President,

Over the last seven decades, the United Nations has delivered much that is promised in its Charter and it is only befitting that we pay tribute to its achievements.

- From saving millions of lives through relief efforts, vaccinating children, eradicating smallpox, and fighting AIDS to feeding millions every year in countries affected by war, conflict, and natural disasters.
- From negotiating peace deals and conducting peacekeeping operations to advancing democracy and creating an international human rights system.
- From combatting climate change and reducing extreme poverty to preventing the spread and use of nuclear weapons.

These and other achievements of the UN are, indeed, noteworthy.

However, even as we celebrate these achievements it serves us well to take stock of the state of our interdependent world and the road ahead for our Organization.

For every day we are confronted with compelling evidence that shows we are far from achieving our quest for peace, security, prosperity and human dignity for all.

- Whether it is conflicts and acts of terrorism; or the unthinkable stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction;
- Whether it is the inequalities that persist within and among nations or the rising expectations of billions living on the very margins of existence;
- Whether it is climate change that threatens our very survival;

Failure to address these interrelated global challenges is not an option.

Mr. President,

Peace, security and human rights must go hand in hand with sustainable development.

Over the last few years, we have taken stock of the state of our world, our peoples and our planet.

We have undertaken a comprehensive review of the challenges and opportunities.

And in a spirit of cooperation that many thought impossible, we have adopted an ambitious and transformative Agenda for sustainable development.

It is now time to translate the 2030 Agenda into concrete actions in earnest, individually and collectively.

Mr. President,

Since joining the United Nations 44 years ago, under the wise and able leadership of our Monarchs, the people of Bhutan have endeavored to fulfill the vision and goals set forth in the Charter.

Guided by our development philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH), which is essentially “development with values”, we have consistently worked to ensure that the peace, security, happiness and the well-being of our people always remain at the center of development.

Bhutan has achieved most of the MDG targets. Poverty has been reduced to 12 percent. Our primary school enrollment rate is nearly 100 percent and life expectancy has increased to 68 years.

We remain a bastion of environmental conservation with 72 percent of land under forest cover. Our effort to safeguard the environment is reinforced by a constitutional mandate to maintain a minimum of 60 percent of our land under forest cover for all times.

Our achievements would not have been possible without good governance. Over decades, under the enlightened leadership of our Monarchs, we have successfully embraced democracy.

Mr. President,

Peace, security and human rights depend on an all-inclusive approach to development that puts people and the environment at the center.

Bhutan spearheaded the adoption of the resolution entitled, “**Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development**” in 2011. And a year later, we were gratified by the decision of the General Assembly to observe 20th March of each year as International Day of Happiness.

The pursuit of happiness is a fundamental human goal and embodies the spirit of the 2030 Agenda. We stand ready to share our experience with GNH and contribute to the growing discourse on holistic development paradigms and indicators.

Even though we have contributed least to the causes of climate change, we, like other LDCs are amongst the most vulnerable to its adverse impacts.

Despite our limited resources and competing demands of development, Bhutan remains committed to the conservation of our natural heritage and in fact has consistently done more than its fair share to contribute to global efforts to combat climate change.

In 2009, Bhutan pledged to remain carbon neutral for all times. We have kept that promise!

In fact, our expectations are that by 2025, Bhutan through the sale of our clean hydro-power would have the capacity to offset approximately 35 million tonnes of carbon per annum in the region.

This is no small feat considering Bhutan’s emissions constitute under 7 percent of that figure.

I am pleased to state that this week Bhutan ratified the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol and submitted its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

To support to the work of the UN in the area of international peace and security, Bhutan began contributing to UN Peacekeeping Operations in 2014.

We remain a committed partner and are working to deepen and broaden our peacekeeping engagement with the United Nations.

Today, it is a matter of great pride that Bhutanese peacekeepers are deployed and serving in 9 peacekeeping missions.

Mr. President,

We have no doubt that implementing the 2030 Agenda within the next 15 years will be a daunting challenge.

Achieving the SDGs will require countries, both developed and developing alike, to take stock of their existing development strategies and embark on far reaching reforms to implement the Agenda.

For a country like Bhutan, that is least developed and landlocked, addressing the challenges will require innovative and creative approaches to build on the progress we have achieved thus far.

A key challenge we face is to build a strong and sustainable green economy that ensures gainful employment to our youth, inclusive growth and promotes self-reliance.

With a narrow industrial base and a high dependency on a single sector, our economy is faced with unprecedented macroeconomic challenges despite otherwise prolonged periods of robust economic growth.

A careful re-orientation of our economy is imperative if we are to ensure that our future development is inclusive and sustainable as envisaged in the 2030 Agenda.

In this regard, the continued support and cooperation of our development partners will be crucial as we seek innovative approaches to balance our environmental aspirations and developmental needs.

This assumes even greater importance as Bhutan progresses towards graduation from the LDC category, to ensure that hard-earned developmental gains are sustained.

Mr. President,

I would like to underscore the vital importance of education to achieve our transformative agenda.

Many of the SDGs in the 2030 Agenda will not be attainable if we do not relentlessly invest in building a dynamic and relevant education system in our countries – a system that nurtures our children and youth with the right values, knowledge and skills that reflect our aspirations and goals.

In this regard, we are happy to note that ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all is a stand-alone goal in the 2030 Agenda. In moving forward, SDG 4 must remain at the forefront of our planning and implementation of national strategies to achieve the SDGs.

The education sector, which has always been accorded high priority by Bhutan, will be given special emphasis as we mainstream the 2030 Agenda in our national strategies and plans.

We hope that our development partners will share our sense of priority and urgency in this vital area and support our efforts to ensure that it is relevant to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

Mr. President,

The 2030 Agenda sets out a necessarily ambitious vision and SDGs. We have no doubt about the complexity and enormity of the tasks for its implementation.

It will require a systemic approach, new thinking, and a longer-term perspective in our planning. It will require sincere global partnerships, predictable resources, and the collaboration and commitment of all our people.

In moving forward, the first litmus test for our commitment to action on the 2030 Agenda will be whether or not we reach an ambitious and legally binding agreement at COP21. This agreement must be firmly anchored in the principles of the UNFCCC, including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Our decisions in Paris must be driven by the latest science. The evidence is unequivocal. An emissions pathway taking us beyond 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels would have disproportionate and irreversible impacts on the most vulnerable amongst us.

A second test of our commitment to action would be whether we are able to deliver on our promises and pledges on the means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda.

And finally, whether we are able to make tangible progress in the area of UN reforms. Here real progress in revitalization of the UN General Assembly and ECOSOC is critical to ensure a robust mechanism of implementation of the Agenda.

Furthermore, the UN Security Council must be reformed to reflect current geo-political realities, through the commencement of text-based negotiations on the basis of UNGA Decision 69/560 which was adopted by consensus.

Mr. President,

The adoption of 2030 Agenda provides a historic opportunity to truly awaken our spirit of global solidarity and shared values for the sake of our children and our planet.

In the words of His Majesty the King of Bhutan:

"Let us place the interest of humanity, not national populations and constituencies, above all else. Let us take political risks and strong decisions in addressing the needs of humanity. The answer to global problems will come closer at hand when we grasp that universal simplicity – that sense of a shared planet and a shared fate for those who walk on it. We need shared human endeavor not just negotiated change ".

Thank you and Tashi Delek!