

(Check against delivery)

**Statement by H.E. Lyonpo (Dr)Tandi Dorji, Foreign Minister of the Kingdom  
of Bhutan, 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly  
September 26th , 2022**

**“A watershed moment: Transformative solutions to interlocking challenges”**

Mr. President,  
Mr. Secretary General,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

1. I bring you the warm greetings of His Majesty the King, and from the people of Bhutan.
2. Allow me to convey our congratulations to H.E. Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, the President of the 77th UNGA. Please rest assured, Mr. President, of Bhutan’s full support as you steer us through the session. I also take the opportunity to convey our gratitude and admiration for H.E. Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the 76th General Assembly, for the exceptional manner in which he guided our work this past tumultuous year.
3. Our appreciation is also due to the Secretary General, Mr. Antonio Guterres, who, in a most challenging year for our Organization, coinciding with the first year of his second term, has continued to serve as a compelling and valiant advocate for peace, people, and planet.

Mr. President,

4. I arrived in New York last week with a vastly different prepared text for delivery today. In recent days, however, I received a heartfelt appeal from Chimi, a bright seven year old girl in class two at Lunana Primary School, in Bhutan which has compelled me to rethink my statement.
5. Lunana is a place in one of our northernmost districts, remote and perched at an altitude of 3400m. It is home to a community of 810 people, comprising 185 households of highland nomadic herders, spread across 13 scattered villages. Today, Lunana is embraced in the astounding beauty of rugged snow capped peaks of the mighty Himalayas, which Lunans, or the people of

Lunana, both revere and depend upon for their livelihood and sustenance. Each time that Chimi and members of her community glance at these majestic peaks, the foremost question on their mind is - “How long before they become barren and brown?”

6. I would like to share young Chimi’s letter with you today: It reads -

*“Your Excellency,*

*My village is in great danger because of Global Warming. The glaciers and snow on our mountains are melting, the glacial lakes above our village are getting bigger every day.*

*I am sure it may cause a big flood in our village at anytime. And we have to be in constant fear every day and night.*

*Our innocent people are suffering because of others’ evil actions.*

*In near future we may not see glaciers and snow on the mountains, beautiful glacial lakes and Lunaps in this place.*

*Therefore, I would request your Excellency to kindly convey this small message to the world leaders, and big and rich nations to help and save our tiny village from Global Warming.*

*I am sure if we all come together, we can not only save our tiny village but also make our Earth safe for all living beings.*

*I think we are not late to fight against Global warming now.”*

7. Chimi’s poignant letter evokes the plain truths of communities standing on the frontlines of the climate crisis. But this is not limited to Bhutan. We are reminded with far too much frequency that across the world today, lives and livelihoods are in peril due to the impacts of human induced climate change, rising sea levels, and natural disasters. The negative impacts of climate change are disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable and marginalised communities around the world, and doing so, at a faster pace. The future of our youth and successive generations are under immediate threat. And the great irony is that it is through no fault of their own.

8. But it is not too late! There is still time to undertake course correction, but that window of opportunity is fast closing. This calls for demonstration of greater ambition from developed and large emitters, consistent with the Paris Agreement. We must see deeper emission reductions in keeping with a fair share of global efforts, consistent with 1.5 degree pathways. At the same time, we must see greater solidarity and cooperation from all states to support efforts of the most vulnerable to adapt to the changing climate, and deal with all its consequences.
9. We must ensure adequate and predictable finance, technological and capacity support, for developing countries, particularly the LLDCs, LDCs and SIDs, to enable us to achieve the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement. We need to forge strong international cooperation in coming up with viable projects and partnerships to scale up investments in alternative renewable energy, to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, particularly in the manufacturing and transport sectors.
10. Bhutan hopes that the urgency to move beyond business as usual will be heeded at COP27 this November.

Mr. President,

11. In Bhutan, our visionary Monarchs have long recognised the importance of conserving our natural environment and living in harmony with nature. Although small, we have made bold commitments to safeguard nature, and protect our environment - most significant of which is the constitutional requirement of maintaining 60% of our total area under forest cover for all time to come, although in reality, over 70% of our territory is forested. Our forests are net carbon sinks, absorbing two thirds more carbon than we emit. Bhutan is not just carbon neutral, but carbon negative.
12. In a world heading towards a water, food and energy crisis, investing in sustainable mountain development should be a global priority.
13. We need to build resilience of our communities, offer mountain communities practical and sustainable alternatives to enable them to continue living in harmony with nature and their surroundings. We must continue to foster sustainable mountain development with special emphasis on mountain agriculture, sustainable mountain tourism and opportunities to tap renewable

energy that the mountains provide. The adoption last year, proclaiming 2022 as the International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development, brought the spotlight on sustainable mountain development, its conservation and sustainable use, as integral means of protecting the common heritage of our planet.

14. To put focus and raise awareness, we are organising an annual ultra marathon event known as the Snowman Race that will take elite athletes from around the world to run across the Himalayas at elevations of 5000 meters above sea level. We hope that this will generate more action and enhance greater partnerships.

Mr. President,

15. We are at a watershed moment in history. The world today faces an unprecedented series of interlinked and cascading crises. The human race continues on a collision course with nature, battling against the climate, biodiversity, and pollution.

16. At the same time, the pandemic that surfaced in March 2020 is still with us, and rather than abate, continues to morph and reinvent itself in new and more virulent strains. Outbreaks of other viral infections continue to occur at alarmingly frequent intervals, threatening the world with another possible pandemic. It is certain that these biological threats will continue and that we need to be better prepared.

17. As with many other parts of the world, Bhutan was not spared the impacts of COVID-19 nor its induced disruptions. We are fortunate that with our beloved Monarch leading from the front, with government policies and measures firmly grounded in science, and most importantly of all, with full solidarity and confidence of our people behind us, Bhutan was fortunate to fare better than many others. As a result of stringent measures, determination, and grit, we were able to minimize the immediate public health impacts of the COVID19 pandemic, emerging with minimum loss of life. Our campaign to vaccinate our population has been recognised as an unlikely success story, and today, more than 90% of our entire population stand fully vaccinated. This, in no small measure, was possible due to the heart warming goodwill of friends and partners, including India, whose Vaccine Maitri initiative enabled the full first round of vaccinations for our adult population. We are also grateful to the United States, Denmark,

Bulgaria, Croatia, and China, whose generosity with vaccines came at a most critical time. We also thank all the other bilateral partners and multilateral agencies that supported logistics and provided financial support, medicines and equipment for our response to the pandemic. Our success would not have been possible without all of your support.

18. Just when we were embarking on rebuilding and recovering from the pandemic and its associated impacts, we were struck by conflict that resulted in supply disruptions, surge in food, energy, and fertilizer crisis. Record high food prices have triggered a global crisis that will drive millions more into extreme poverty, magnifying hunger and malnutrition. Predictably, it is the poorest and most vulnerable amongst us that suffer the brunt. The Secretary General rightly described this as either a breakdown or breakthrough moment for humanity and for the planet.

19. Transformation is what we called for in the Political Declaration of the UN's 75th Anniversary. We thank the Secretary General, for his groundbreaking report on Our Common Agenda responding to this call. Bhutan has followed closely the discussions around the report and its recommendations, and we are pleased with the momentum that has been generated. As we continue our deliberations, Bhutan will engage constructively, including in preparations for the Summit of the Future and work towards elaboration of a Global Digital Compact.

20. Our Common Agenda must provide the roadmap to “turbo charge” and accelerate our actions towards achieving the 2030 agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Bhutan welcomes the report's recognition of the need to look beyond GDP. This finds strong resonance with Bhutan's own approach to balanced and human centered development that we call Gross National Happiness. It is now widely accepted that this can not be achieved by tracking GDP alone. Bhutan has always believed that pursuit of development and progress must respond to a higher calling. We need measures that take into account the full spectrum of human development, as well as the multifaceted factors that provide the enabling environment, within which individuals can pursue and achieve that common human aspiration yet elusive goal of happiness and wellbeing. This discussion assumes greater urgency as we approach the midpoint towards implementing the 2030 Agenda, in full realization that today, the conflict in Europe and the looming climate emergency, have thrown efforts towards achieving the 2030 Agenda and SDGs - off course. We need to re-focus our priorities by shifting

gears and turning our commitments into action, and doing so by working together in the spirit of genuine solidarity.

21. Bhutan welcomed the convening of the Transforming Education Summit on 19th September. His Majesty the King has always accorded the highest importance to the education sector, recognising that a nation's fate begins in its classrooms and schools. Education is a critical pillar of a country's development, and holds the key to unlocking many of our shared global challenges. As His Majesty The King remarked as early as 2014 - and I quote "Education is empowering – it is a social equalizer and it facilitates self-discovery, which leads to realizing one's full potential. Good education gives you confidence, good judgement, virtuous disposition, and the tools to achieve happiness successfully. A good school gives a child a fair shot at success and ensures that a person's achievement in life will not be predetermined by his or her race, parentage and social connections."

Mr. President,

22. Bhutan may have been one of the most recent countries to finally reopen its borders since the emergence of the pandemic. As difficult and painful as these past two and half years have been, they have allowed for deep reflection at the national level, and permitted time for an honest assessment of gaps and challenges. Weaknesses were bared, in some instances, fault lines deepened. We came to the harsh realisation that drastic recalibration of our systems were needed if Bhutan is to position itself as a country that is prosperous, resilient, and future ready. With one year remaining before our exit date from the LDC category, these measures will buttress our efforts to ensure that Bhutan's graduation is smooth, sustainable, and irreversible.

23. As I speak, major transformational initiatives are underway in Bhutan to strengthen public service delivery. The entire public sector will be streamlined, strengthened in terms of capacity and performance, held to more rigorous standards of professionalism and accountability. We hope that our public servants will serve the citizens with better and faster public services that they deserve.

24. While Universal Health Care is a guarantee enshrined in our Constitution, reforms in the health sector focus on the importance of preparedness for future outbreaks and pandemics, strengthening quality of health care, leveraging technology, and a renewed focus on mental health. The health

sector is being reformed to provide not only primary, but secondary and tertiary health care to all people within half a days travel. Specialist services are expanding across the country including, sending mobile teams to screen and treat high burden diseases.

25. Bhutan's revamped tourism policy was launched with much anticipation on 23rd September coinciding with the opening of our international border. Since 1974 when Bhutan opened its doors for tourism, we have always followed the policy of High value, Low volume tourism, envisioned by His Majesty the Fourth King. However the minimum daily tariffs that was instituted was found to be too low, resulting in us becoming a budget destination, leading to mass tourism and its associated problems of increasing waste, decreasing quality of service standards, under-employment of our youth engaged in the sector, traffic jams and over-crowding of our most religious sites. We have always prioritized the well being of the people, preserving our environment, our tradition and culture over unsustainable and mindless development. Therefore in keeping with our development philosophy of GNH, the sector has been restructured and reformed so that it benefits Bhutan not only economically, but socially and environmentally. In the long run we want to create high value, authentic and unique experiences for visitors and well paying professional jobs and businesses for our citizens.

Mr. President,

26. The increasing fragmentation, polarization, and growing inequality we witness in the world today, only serve as an urgent cry for strengthening multilateralism, for greater political resolve, solidarity, and compassion. It is apparent that no individual, community or country can overcome contemporary challenges on their own. Interdependence is at the core of our existence and we must come together through stronger, more effective multilateralism.

27. Bhutan's commitment to multilateralism with the UN at its core, remains unwavering. As a small, landlocked and peaceful country, we remain fully committed to the noble objectives enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Coinciding with the 50th year of membership in the Organisation, which we marked last year, Bhutan responded to the call to contribute to the maintenance of peace and security - a key pillar and objective of the United Nations. Since then, Bhutan has prepared for the deployment of its first uniformed military unit, a Light Quick Reaction Force to a UN peace

mission. This process was set in motion in 2014 when we first joined the ranks of UN troop contributing countries. Our well trained troops will arrive to serve the cause of peace in MINUSCA in the weeks ahead. They will meet the highest standards in performance and accountability and I am confident that they will serve the international community with distinction and honor. It is a matter of great pride that although Bhutan is amongst the smallest members of the United Nations, with this initial deployment, we would rise to the ranks of the top 60 troop contributing countries, from 81 at present.

28. Of particular note, consistent with Bhutan's deep commitment to promotion and protection of the environment, Bhutan considers that pursuit of environmentally responsible practices in operations as a moral imperative. We feel strongly that at the minimum, "do no harm" ethic must drive all aspects of field operations and conduct, and that where ever possible, field presences should on their departure, be remembered by local communities for the positive legacies they have left for host countries.

29. Bhutan has therefore pledged that when Bhutan's uniformed contingent deploys, we will do so in an environmentally sustainable manner with renewable energy, waste management, and provision of assistance to local communities whom we will serve. The center piece of our pledge is the use of solar panels for lighting purposes in the barracks and camp area. We will carry out plantation of trees around the company location in accordance with existing policies of the host country. While these pledges are modest, our hope is that they will contribute to the overall environmental efforts of UN peacekeeping, and demonstrate that such practices can be emulated and scaled.

30. Contribution to UN peacekeeping is a significant milestone in the progression of Bhutan's engagement with the UN. We are sincerely thankful to the international community for the trust and confidence reposed in our ability to meaningfully contribute towards the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. President,

31. In its 77th year of existence, our Organisation too needs a reboot, to be able to meet the challenges of the present day and future and to keep pace and



reflect contemporary realities. It must be reformed to respond more effectively to changed global realities and to new and emerging threats that confront us today. No-where is this more evident nor urgent than in the growing call for comprehensive reform of the United Nations Security Council.

32. Yet we note that 43 years since inclusion of the subject in the General Assembly's Agenda, and nearly three decades since the establishment of the GA's Open Ended Working Group on UNSC Reform, we have fallen far short. Lack of progress on UNSC reform throws into question the relevance and legitimacy of the current global architecture, fragilizes international peace and security, and impinges on the Council's ability to deliver on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

33. Bhutan has always maintained that reform must accommodate the interest and concerns of all Member States, particularly of those unrepresented and underrepresented. Expansion of the Council in both the permanent and non permanent categories, along with reform of its working methods, constitute essential components of this process.

Excellencies,

34. The current challenges facing the world today remind us of our interdependence and the imperatives of collaboration and solidarity. While there have been shining examples of international cooperation, we continue to be distrustful, less understanding and driven by self interest. As the Buddha revealed 2000 years ago, if we are to end suffering we must rid ourselves of its three root causes, also known as the three poisons: IGNORANCE of the nature of impermanence, GREED and HATRED. It is these that are the main causes of the global problems today. The antidote, and traits we can all draw inspiration from, is said to be WISDOM, SHARING and COMPASSION. These enduring values find consonance in the essence of the principles enshrined in the UN Charter.

Mr. President,

35. I am cognisant of the lofty stature of this august Assembly. Our deliberations and decisions taken within the General Assembly hall can impact the lives of multitudes across the world, and will remain inscribed in the annals of history. Let us not forget that all who stand at this rostrum bear

the solemn responsibility to demonstrate wisdom, courage, and resolve as expected of us by current and future generations.

36.Thank you and Tashi Delek!