

*Check Against Delivery*

**ADDRESS BY H.E. TSHERING TOBGAY, PRIME MINISTER OF BHUTAN**

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

I bring warm greetings from His Majesty The Druk Gyalpo.

Fifty-three years ago, on the 21st of September, 1971, a small Himalayan kingdom was admitted to the United Nations. On that day, after centuries of self-imposed isolation, Bhutan became the 128th member of the United Nations. It was a defining moment for us—a moment when a small, poor, landlocked country, nestled in the world’s highest mountains, joined the global community of nations.

That same year, the United Nations created the Least Developed Country category, to provide targeted support to the world’s poorest nations. Bhutan was among the first to be admitted in that list. Back then, our economy was primarily agrarian, operating largely on a barter system. Our per-capita income stood at just 215 USD. Life expectancy was barely 40 years. Infant mortality was tragically high at 142 deaths for every 1,000 live births. And our literacy rate was woefully low; we had only 300 students in the few scattered schools that had been established to provide modern education.

Today, I stand before you with a story of transformation and progress. Our per-capita GDP has risen to more than 3500 USD. Life expectancy has increased to 70 years. Infant mortality has plummeted to 15 deaths per 1,000 live births. And our literacy rate has climbed to 71%, with youth literacy skyrocketing to 99%.

I am pleased to report to this august assembly that, because of our all-round progress, last December, fifty-two years after joining the United Nations, Bhutan graduated from the LDC category. This achievement did not come easily. It was a journey marked by hard work, perseverance and sacrifice. But we were not alone: we had the support of many friends who accompanied us on this important journey. I take this opportunity to extend our deep gratitude to the United Nations and its specialized agencies. I would also like to thank all our development partners including Japan, the European Union, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank for their unwavering support. But most importantly, I would like to reserve our deepest thanks for India, our closest friend and neighbor. They have been with us from the very beginning of our development journey, and have remained steadfast in their support and friendship.

Excellencies,

Graduating from the LDC category is a significant milestone. But what truly matters is that we did it on our own terms. Under the leadership of our enlightened monarchs, Bhutan has pursued a development path grounded in the philosophy of Gross National Happiness. This approach

places the happiness and well-being of our people at the center of the development agenda. Thanks to Gross National Happiness, our economy, while small, is sustainable and inclusive. Healthcare and education are free for all. Our unique culture not only survives but thrives. More than 72% of our land is under forest cover, and we are recognized as a biodiversity hotspot and a carbon-negative country. Our democracy, a gift from our King, has been embraced by a reluctant population.

Excellencies,

Having graduated from the LDC category, it is now our responsibility to ensure that we sustain our hard-earned progress and that under no circumstances, we should ever slide back. As we do so – as we chart a new course for the future – we know that we will face new challenges, and that these challenges will call for a new development paradigm. In this context, I am pleased to report that His Majesty the King has announced the establishment of the Gelephu Mindfulness City.

The Gelephu Mindfulness City is a transformative vision for future urban spaces, a blueprint for living mindfully and sustainably. Spanning 2600 square kilometers of pristine forests and fertile farmlands, it will enable human innovation and natural ecosystems to thrive together, while fostering human well-being, environmental sustainability and mindful living. We invite thought leaders, innovators and investors to join us in building this groundbreaking city, contributing to a model of peace, harmony and progress that others can follow.

Excellencies,

Bhutan's story is one of hope. But it is also a call to action. More than fifty years have passed, and only seven nations have graduated from the LDC category, leaving forty-six countries still in need. This is unacceptable. The international community must intensify its efforts to ensure no nation is left behind, and that all LDC countries achieve graduation. To accomplish this, we must address poverty, inequality, and vulnerability with a renewed sense of urgency. The Pact for the Future, which we adopted collectively at the Summit of the Future, provides us with a roadmap to transform the lives of the world's most vulnerable.

However, transforming the future requires that we also transform the institutions shaping it. The United Nations must evolve to meet the realities of today's world. The Security Council, as it stands, is a relic of the past. We need a Council that reflects the current geopolitical and economic landscape. Bhutan has long advocated for the reform of the Security Council to make it more representative and effective. For this, India, with its significant economic growth and leadership in the Global South, deserves a permanent seat at the Security Council. Similarly, Japan, a leading donor and peacebuilder, warrants permanent membership.

Excellencies,

In conclusion, let me reiterate our deep gratitude for the support we have received on Bhutan's journey to LDC graduation. Now, we are committed to sustaining this progress. But we will need your continued support. In this regard, we invite your support and investment in initiatives like the Gelephu Mindfulness City.

However, as we celebrate Bhutan's progress, we must also intensify our efforts to support other LDCs, ensuring that they too can achieve graduation. In this regard, the role of the United Nations is more crucial than ever, reinforcing the imperative for multilateralism in addressing the global challenges we face.

As we look to the future, I have the honor to close by repeating a profound message from our beloved King: "No nation today can stand alone in achievement. Time is slowly telling us that there can be no lasting individual success without success as a community, and there cannot be lasting national progress and success if it does not fit into a future of global peace, harmony, and equality. The world must progress together or fail together."

Thank you.

Tashi Delek!