

KINGDOM OF BHUTAN

Statement by H.E. Lyonpo Jigmi Y. Thinley,
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the Delegation of the Kingdom of Bhutan
to the Fifty-sixth Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly
New York November 14, 2001

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Please accept, Mr. President, my felicitations on your assumption of the difficult role of guiding the 56 session of the General Assembly. This session is being held during one of the saddest moments in the history of our organization. In the discharge of your most important functions, let me assure you of the full support of my delegation.

The 21st century will forever be remembered for the fiery hell that engulfed the world on that dark day of a cloudless sky on September 11th. The horrific images of passenger airplanes flying into their doom to cause greater death, grief and - despair to countless others will always be scarred on our individual and collective memory. Surely, our failure to bring those guilty of the crime and those who pursue the same path would mean our collective submission to an endless reign of terror - to fearful darkness.

Mr. President,

It is the wish of the government and people of Bhutan that I should, once again, express our solidarity with the American people and convey our heartfelt sympathy for those who have suffered irreparable loss of their loved and dear ones. We admire the way in which the people of this great nation have come together to rise against the challenges that the tragic events have left in their wake. We pay tribute to the brave and the selfless who have laid down their own lives as they fought to save those of others. Our hearts and minds are with the city of New York which has not only been a gracious host to the UN but is unparalleled in its generosity to give shelter, livelihood, and hope to people of all race and creed. Indeed, it came as no surprise that the scale of the tragic event should be felt not only in the devastatingly high number of victims, but the more than eighty countries that counted their dead.

A bit of every one died that day for reasons that can never be explained or justified. Indeed, human society has been left to ponder its claim on being civilized.

Until the September 11th tragedy, the threat of terrorism was not fully appreciated. Those who had not felt its demonic wrath tolerated it as just another manifestation of social or political discontent. The current environment throughout the globalized world has harshly and most cruelly removed such misconceptions. People all over the world are losing their freedom willingly or without choice in a multitude of ways. And there is a pervasive sense of fear.

Freedom is a heavy price to pay - for anything! Civilized society ought to provide more liberty, not be cowered into affording less.

The disease that is the cause must be stamped out. A determined and coordinated approach by all countries is the indispensable key. To this end, the UN must play the central role. It must inspire, unite and act. It must be behind all individual country, group and global efforts. In this context, the important initiative taken by the Security Council in its resolution 1373 is to be welcomed. However, we must remember that its impact will be determined not so much by its letter as the spirit with which it is accepted and implemented by all member states.

On its part, Bhutan will make every effort to fulfill its duty as a member state and as a nation that is fully committed to the eradication of terrorism. Today, I signed the "International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism" and, in due course, our legislature will have cleared the way for accession to the other conventions relating to international terrorism.

The reign of terrorists in Afghanistan is coming to an end. It is our hope that the healing of the deep and painful wounds suffered interminably by the helpless and innocent victims will begin immediately. We also hope that they will find in the coming years, the environment of peace and security that have eluded them for too long. Unfortunately, the period for renewal and reconstruction at the individual, community and national levels will be long and arduous for the country that has been reduced to rubble by war and its ravaging companions. We appeal to the international community to give sustained support to Afghanistan in a way that is sympathetic and responsive to its immediate and long-term needs while respecting fully the dignity of the proud people.

Mr. President, even as we call for sustained and adequate assistance to Afghanistan, we must acknowledge that the world is still reeling from the aftershocks of the September 11th attacks. The cumulative impact on a world economy that was already on a downward trend is yet to be seen. There are other uncertainties that are disturbing. Clearly, there is a need to better define and understand the scope and limits of the war on terrorism so that the fears of a broader clash that is being spoken of are calmed. How do we create a climate that would prevent further diversion of resources to defense? Will the onslaught be protracted and consumptive in terms of our combined energies and resources? Amid such doubts and

concerns, it is natural that we should worry about how the international community might be able to deliver on the hopes that were raised by the Millennium Declaration a year ago. Our capacity to fight HIV/AIDS and poverty becomes questionable especially within the time frames we have set for ourselves.

Against such a backdrop, the growing challenge will be how to share and give in difficult times how does one give beyond the bounds of disposable surplus? As a developing country, I say this without undermining the greater importance of raising and devoting domestic revenues to meet the set targets. In this context, the defining moment would be offered at the "International Conference on Financing for Development" to be held next year in Mexico.

It is now, more than ever, necessary to reform the Security Council. We cannot continue to procrastinate on this vital issue. The Council has to be a truly representative body to be relevant, respected and effective. This is not possible when vast continents and significant populations in the world are left out of crucial decision-making processes on international peace and security, simply because history was not on their side in 1945. Without a fair representation, the Council will risk emasculation faltering on making decisions and feeble in their implementation.

Mr. President,

The serious humanitarian, political and economic consequences of the terrorist acts demand unity in thought and action of all nations. Terrorism must be rooted out. Yet, as in the conduct of our every day life, there is a need for balance and moderation. Just as the reasons for soul searching and doubts in ourselves as a civilized being are compelling, it is my earnest hope that the success of this session will be marked by the profundity of collective wisdom and commitment to restore lasting security, peace and normality.

Thank you.