

KINGDOM OF BHUTAN

Statement by His Excellency Khandu Wangchuk, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Head of Delegation of the Kingdom of Bhutan at the 58th Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York 30 September 2003

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

It gives my delegation immense satisfaction to see Your Excellency in the high seat of the Presidency, not only because of Your Excellency's wide experience and proven abilities, but because St. Lucia, a small country like Bhutan, has assumed leadership of the General Assembly at this critical juncture of its history. We are confident that under your able leadership and guidance, our deliberations on the many important and challenging issues that confront our world today will be fruitful. Allow me also to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan for his excellent stewardship of the 57th session. His Presidency has enhanced the esteem of the international community both for himself personally and for the Czech Republic.

My delegation would like to pay a special tribute to our distinguished Secretary General Mr. Kofi Annan for his dynamic leadership and tireless efforts to revitalize the United Nations and enable it to assume its rightful role at a very challenging time in our history.

Mr. President,

We have gathered in this magnificent hall year after year, bound together by a common vision of a peaceful, prosperous and just world. The end of the cold war renewed our hope to bring to fruition our collective aspirations enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The historic Millennium Summit ushered in a sense of optimism that we can bring about a world free from want and fear. The horrific events of September 11 have unfortunately, shaken the very foundations of our nascent faith in our ability to deliver a new era of peace and prosperity. The situation in Iraq is a serious challenge to the international community. Three years ago, we stood united and confident about the prospects in the new millennium, giving a ray of hope to millions around the world. Sadly today, we stand as a house divided, uncertain about the future, and unsure whether we can rid the world of the vicious circle of conflict, poverty and fear that has plagued humankind for centuries.

Mr. President,

It is clear that international peace and security and eradication of poverty remain the most pressing challenges confronting the international community. What must be recognized is the undeniable but often overlooked fact that these overarching goals are inter-linked and cannot be achieved in isolation. There can be no prosperity without peace and security. At the same time, peace and security cannot be sustained if billions are deprived of the basic necessities of life. Our collective resolve to combat the menace of terrorism must be matched with an equal commitment to eradicate the scourge of poverty that afflicts more than half the world's population.

Mr. President,

We welcome your intention to focus the assembly's effort on the implementation of the outcomes of United Nations summits and conferences, including the Millennium Declaration Goals. The realization of a new economic order that is inclusive, equitable and sustainable is an imperative that must be pursued with renewed focus and resolve. The Millennium Declaration provides a clear set of targets and steps to be undertaken to achieve them. The Monterrey Consensus, the Doha Development Agenda and the Johannesburg Declaration provided further impetus towards the achievement of the MDGs. Yet, 33 countries that together account for 26% of world population, are reported to be off-track on more than half of the MDGs. The lack of progress so far is indeed disconcerting.

While emphasizing the need to accelerate the implementation of the commitments by both developed and developing countries at the various international conferences, my delegation would like to highlight the critical need for adequate financing mechanisms through trade, investment and ODA. In particular, my delegation hopes that the special needs and vulnerabilities of LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDs will be comprehensively addressed as called for in the Brussels Program of Action, the Almaty Declaration and the Barbados Plan of Action respectively.

Mr. President,

Of the 33 countries off-track in achieving the MDGs, 23 are in Sub-Saharan Africa, highlighting the need for special attention to Africa. My delegation calls on the international community to lend its full support to the implementation of NEPAD. International support is particularly crucial for those countries emerging from conflicts for without the rehabilitation of social and economic infrastructure, progress in peace making cannot be sustained. In this context, we hope that the international community will also provide the necessary support to the peoples of Afghanistan and Iraq as they endeavor to rebuild their nations under the most trying circumstances.

Mr. President,

Every member of the United Nations has the responsibility to eradicate poverty and create an enabling environment for peace and security. It is in the mutual interest of all nations, small or large, developed or developing, to collectively promote global prosperity and peaceful co-existence.

I thank you, Mr. President.