



Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Bhutan
to the United Nations

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STATEMENT

BY

H.E. JIGMI Y. THINLEY,

PRIME MINISTER OF THE

KINGDOM OF BHUTAN

AT THE

63RD SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE UNITED NATIONS
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26
NEW YORK

Mr. President
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

I bring to you, Mr. President, and through you to all the distinguished delegates the warm greetings and good wishes of His Majesty the King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, for the success of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly.

I wish to convey our warmest felicitations to you Mr. President, on your election to the Presidency of this Session. We have every confidence that under your leadership we will be able to effectively respond to the crucial issues facing the global community. In this endeavour, I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

May I also convey our appreciation to your predecessor, H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim for the able manner in which he guided the 62nd Session.

1. As the youngest democracy, having become one, in April of this year, my country and I are honoured to have this opportunity to present ourselves before this great world body. In a country that has enjoyed continuous justice, stability and progress, democracy came not by the traditional way of struggle and violence. Nor did it come by the will of the people. Bhutan became a democracy by the persuasion and personal efforts of a King who worked consistently over thirty years to establish the prerequisites of a democratic culture and institutional arrangements.
2. Having achieved this noble task and set the polity on the final and irreversible path of democracy, our King abdicated the throne as a final mark of His confidence in democracy. He now lives in quiet retirement at the "grand old" age of 53.
3. The King has shown that if leaders themselves are committed to democracy, transition can be smooth and peaceful. Likewise, if leaders elected to govern believe in it, democracy provides the best means to serve the people. That is the conviction with which my government will fulfill the powerful mandate the people have given to us.
4. As the representative of a country that is deeply committed to multilateralism and believes firmly in the indispensability of the UN system, I seek your indulgence as I offer Bhutan's perspective from the high Himalayas of our troubled world.
5. We are confronted with a host of serious challenges that are testing the relevance of the UN and the resolve of its member states to work together.
6. Natural disasters, food, fuel and financial crises, deepening (chronic) poverty, failing states, dwindling water resource, diseases, human trafficking and even maritime lawlessness afflict our society.

7. And then there is terrorism and extremism of the most barbaric and cowardly kind – using the weak and the deranged to kill and maim the innocent.
8. These threaten to undermine what we have achieved collectively and as individual states. These thwart directly our slow progress in the pursuit of the millennium goals which I believe are among the most laudable consensual agreements achieved by this Assembly to bring about a more just and equitable world, indeed, a more civilized world. *These were questions that we addressed yesterday (not so satisfactorily) at the High Level discussion on the MDGs.*
9. Bhutan does not look at these developments as separate, disconnected events. Rather, we see them as directly interconnected symptoms of a larger and deeper malaise that threatens our collective wellbeing and survival. Responding to each of the challenges separately will most probably be useful in the short run, but piecemeal efforts will not lead to permanent solutions. We need to treat the disease beyond the symptoms. And the disease, we believe, has to do with our way of life that is **just not rational and sustainable**.
10. One does not need to be an economist to understand that the **oil crisis, soaring price of metals and diminishing water reserves**, have to do with the fact that for too long we have been exploiting and wasting our scarce natural resources. At the very least, these are market reactions and attempts to reflect their true value. As for the **financial crisis**, it is becoming quite clear that its main cause lies in our culture of living beyond our means, of private profiteering, of socializing risks. Unfortunately, the possible solution seems to lie in transferring our debt to future generations who are not here to argue against it.
11. It is not difficult to see how all these crises are the outcomes of a way of life that is dictated by the powerful ethics of consumerism in a world of finite resources. Our life is all about fear of not having enough, about wanting more and doing better than our dear neighbour and friend. We spend and consume beyond our means and those of generations unborn bringing upon ourselves the kind of crises that were inevitable.
12. As we go on expanding our economies by extracting natural resources, raising productivity, increasing consumption and discharging immeasurable volumes of polluting waste, **the climate is changing**. Striking unpredictably, unseasonably and with greater fury and frequency, natural disasters such as drought, cyclones, hurricanes, floods and land slides are destroying life, property and crops. Weather patterns have changed and continue to change with far more profound implications for our civilization than we can fathom. We even wonder whether earthquakes and tsunamis may have something to do with climate change.
13. Yesterday, we huddled together to find solutions to the food crisis and the danger of growing hunger in a world where too many already are starving. **Diseases abound** and new **epidemics** threaten man, other life forms and crops even as medicine and

technology combine to conspire against mortality. Are these not signals from a planet grossly abused? Could these not be pleas to mend our ways and to search for a more sustainable way of life?

14. **Deepening poverty**, not unlike food crisis, is also a sign of the disintegration of communities. As communities die, so does the spirit of sharing, of borrowing and giving amid good neighborliness in times of need, as opposed to competing and making gains at the cost of community, neighbor, and even one's own family. It is about the failure of human relationships including between and among states. This, then, lies at the root of poverty, hunger, instability and insecurity that plague much of the world today.
15. These multiple crises bring out in sharp focus, the shameful inequities of our society that fails to share and distribute the enormous wealth it has created to satisfy man's insatiable greed. People suffer from hunger, thirst, exposure to the elements and die without treatment not because we do not have enough food, water, clothes, or medicine but because we do not have the will to share and the care to distribute. Only yesterday, I was wondering how many tons of food and medicine must go off the shelves of Manhattan stores into the incinerator at the end of each day as they become stale or cross their date of expiry. On the other hand, even to this day, few developed countries have fulfilled their pledge to share less than one percent of their GNP with the developing countries. Likewise, the pharmaceutical companies have convincing arguments against lowering cost of medicines.
16. We need to wake up from our narcissistic slumber and self indulgence, and realize that economic wellbeing is not human wellbeing. We must break away from the shackles of the powerful forces of the market. For that matter, could the unraveling of the market based economy as evident in the financial crisis, be a glimpse of the truth that mindless and irresponsible economic growth cannot go on. It is neither sustainable nor fair to future generations. Above all, we could be condemning our own selves to an old age of burdensome debt and regret?
17. This brings us to the question, are our fundamentals sound? Is the GDP led growth that has served as our measure of progress, good enough for the future? What are the foundations of our civilization and the values that guide us? As we get richer and live by the terms that we have set for ourselves, are we truly becoming more civilized or is it a downward spiral of de-civilization in which we are trapped? Does economic growth translate as human development? Are we mutating to become senseless robots programmed to be materially productive, to earn more, to want more, to consume more and more of what we do not need and will ultimately destroy us?
18. As human beings, should we not search for and be driven by higher values? Do we not have needs beyond the material, beyond that of the body alone? Can we conceptualize a holistic alternative paradigm for meaningful and sustainable

development that places the wellbeing of the individual and community at the center and gives cause for true happiness as opposed to fleeting pleasures?

19. I am pleased to submit that many academic institutions and researchers across the world are engaged in such a search and making progress too. The latest to join is the European Union which has hosted a series of regional and world conferences to develop indicators to measure true human progress.
20. My country Bhutan is one such entity. While being actively involved as a partner in the global efforts in this regard, we have pursued a unique development path guided by our former King's philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH as Opposed to GDP) since the early 1970's.
21. GNH is based on the belief that happiness is the single most important goal and purpose in life for every individual and that the end of development must be the promotion and enhancement of happiness. It must, therefore, be the responsibility of the state to create an enabling environment within which its citizens can pursue happiness. The concept emphasizes a balanced life – matching material needs of the body with the spiritual, psychological and emotional needs of the mind. To this end, the Royal Government structured its development programmes on four broad themes or 'pillars' that constitute a paradigm for holistic and sustainable development. These are:
 - i. sustainable and equitable socio economic development (not growth),
 - ii. environmental conservation,
 - iii. promotion of culture and
 - iv. good governance.
22. We have never wavered from this path, thanks due greatly to the generosity and support of our development partners. The King never faltered having sacrificed his own reign to leave the legacy of a unique democracy, and a country that is peaceful, progressive and happy.
23. I urge you ladies and gentlemen to reflect on these and more so that such crises as have stricken us now may never reappear – so that we can return each year to this august assembly and find reasons to smile and be happy. To this end, Mr. President, please be assured of Bhutan's fullest support and cooperation to you and the Secretary General.

TASHI DELEK, THANK YOU.