

BHUTAN STATEMENT BY  
HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS DASHO JIGME KHESAR NAMGYEL WANGCIIUCK  
CROWN PRINCE OF THE KINGDOM OF BHUTAN  
AT THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON  
CHILDREN 8 May 2002 New York

Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
And above all young delegates from countries around the world,

On behalf of the children of the Kingdom of Bhutan and on my own behalf, I should like to begin by paying tribute to those men, women and organizations who serve the cause of children throughout the world. Their dedication and compassion is a source of hope to every child living in hunger, sickness and fear.

Mr. President,  
I would like to extend my delegation's warm congratulations to you on your election as President of this Special Session. I would also like to commend the work of UNICEF and other organizations that have spearheaded the Global Movement for Children and are now taking it forward. As we discuss issues of fundamental importance to the future of mankind, I am confident that the collective wisdom and experience of this assembly will yield results of great benefit to children all over the world.

Mr. President,  
While we have made significant progress in placing the issue of child welfare on the national and international agenda, there is no room for complacency. The lives of millions of children today continue to be stunted by disease, illiteracy and exploitation. Their innocence shattered by terrorism and war. Even in the developed world - drugs, crime, unequal access to education and health facilities and the disintegration of the traditional family structure - all affect their physical and emotional development, and future welfare.

Mr. President,  
In reporting on the state of children in Bhutan, I am pleased to submit that we have achieved most of the goals set during the World Summit in 1990. Guided by His Majesty the King's development philosophy of Gross National Happiness, which stresses holistic development, we have accorded the highest priority to the welfare of children. Over the past two decades, investments in basic social services have crossed over 26% of the annual budget. A comprehensive primary health care system covers over 90% of the population; life expectancy has increased by 20 years to 66; infant mortality rates have been cut by 40%; and 80% of our children are in schools.

In highlighting these modest achievements we also acknowledge the major role played by our development partners in providing important financial and technical resources. My delegation would also like to place on record our sincere appreciation to them for being sensitive to our wishes and priorities.

Mr. President,  
All of us have seen poverty, disease, hunger and pain in our societies. Many of us live and work in places or institutions where we are directly touched by the experience. My first thought on this issue remains my guiding priority today. It is our duty to build a future which ensures that every child will be free of these afflictions. To achieve this, we must all work together in a spirit of commitment, trust and mutual respect while taking great care to plan - not just a few years ahead - but generations into the future.

Thank you very much for your kind attention and Tashi Delek!