

Kingdom of Bhutan

Statement by

H.E. Lyonpo Om Pradhan,

Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Bhutan to the United Nations in the Plenary of the 56th session on the United Nations General Assembly on Agenda item 166: Terrorism (October 1-3, 2001)

The Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Bhutan to the United Nations made a statement at the Plenary of the 56th Ssession of the United Nations General Assembly on October 1-3, 2001. While condemning the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, the statement underlined Bhutan's commitment to support the international community in the fight against terrorism.

Mr. President,

The General Assembly meets this year under exceptionally grave circumstances in New York to consider the agenda item on terrorism. Hence, allow me at the outset, to join other speakers in thanking the Honorable Rudolph Giuliani, Mayor of New York, for having taken time from his exceedingly difficult and busy responsibilities and call of duty, to make a historic visit to the UN and address the General Assembly. My delegation, like many others, was moved by his appeal to the international community to fight unambiguously against terrorism. The impact that he made was immense. We thank the Mayor for his outstanding leadership of our host city and the effective and humane manner in which he is conducting the rescue and recovery operations at Ground Zero. This is indeed the darkest hour in the history of our host city and the Mayor's leadership has been nothing short of crucial.

At the start of our deliberations on terrorism, my delegation would like to once again convey the deepest condolences of the government and the people of Bhutan to the government and the people of the United States on the tragedy of September 11th. The terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers, the Pentagon, and the hijacked airplane crash in Pennsylvania, have left all of us shocked and horrified.

Mr. President,

It is gratifying that in these most trying of times, we, the member states of the UN are coming together and mobilizing our efforts in the fight against terrorism. While the international legal framework is being established and built upon, cooperation in intelligence, intensification of intelligence gathering, sharing and analyzing information, and timely and preemptive action will go a long way in preventing terrorist acts. This is something we have to now undertake vigorously and with the greatest of unity.

Then there is the long-term war against terrorism. But the question is: How do we go about doing this?

This is obviously a very difficult task, and may even sometimes seem elusive. This war against terrorism, as the United States President His Excellency Mr. George W. Bush put it, has to be fought on several fronts.

One of the major fronts would be the fight against extremist beliefs and organizations that justify their violence and killings on the basis of political, and unfortunately, on distorted religious grounds. Such justifications, again regrettably, attract support and sympathy among groups in some countries that may even subscribe to, aid and abet, or maintain their silence, or cast a blind eye on such activities in view of political or other pressures.

Mr. President,

When it comes to terrorism we are most concerned with beliefs and mindsets that engage in terrorist acts leading to the death and destruction of innocent lives and the peaceful functioning of the economic, social, cultural and political fabric of societies.

We are apprehensive that peaceful coexistence, a fundamental principle of the UN Charter and the Nonaligned Movement, will be cast to the winds. We are concerned with the survival and continuance of all of the world's civilizations that we cherish. We are worried that the economic development that we are putting our hearts and minds into towards removing poverty, fighting against the worldwide scourge of HIV/AIDS, and raising the living standards of our people, will be seriously jeopardized. Above all, we subscribe to peaceful co-existence and tolerance. We demand no less from other nations and peoples.

The investigations carried out thus far by the US and other countries and organizations, reveal how deep the tentacles of terror have spread around the world. Its strength and reach, and more surprising, the human beings who are willing to indulge in such activities and sacrifice their own lives, seem to be growing by the day.

This, without a doubt, is due to the inculcation of extremist beliefs through the brainwashing of minds. We were alarmed to learn of so-called "training camps" in Afghanistan and other countries. Mr. President, how much inhuman can one get?

Before the terrorist attacks on the US, the Taliban bombarded to pieces the ancient Buddhist statues in Afghanistan, which were in fact a valuable cultural and historical legacy of the Afghan people themselves, and also that of the world at large. The appeals by civilized people the world over, including many brotherly Muslim countries, called on the Taliban to respect the sentiments of Buddhists and the international community alike. But as we all know, these appeals fell on deaf ears.

Mr. President,

How can peaceful coexistence be possible in these circumstances?

How can peaceful coexistence be possible when the distorted mindsets of some, feel a sense of superiority to other people on the planet, and work for their destruction?

These are vital questions to which we need answers.

Mr. President,

Although we have individually condemned the terrorist attacks and collectively adopted resolutions in both the Security Council and the General Assembly, it is of little or no solace for the thousands of victims; for those who have lost their near and dear ones; for those whose lives have been forever changed as a result of these heinous attacks.

What the international community must now demonstrate is the requisite political will, and renewed commitment to fight this menace. Today, terrorists used jet aircraft as human guided missiles; tomorrow, they will use chemical, biological or even nuclear weapons. These are weapons of mass destruction that will wipe out entire cities and populations. We must, therefore, undertake sustained and vigorous efforts for a comprehensive strategy to combat and eliminate such terrorism. Preemptive action based on sound information will be of the essence.

Mr. President,

Bhutan has faced its own share of terrorism. Despite our limited resources, we have taken a firm stand against such activities. We have an adequate legal framework to deal with those that commit such crimes. We are increasing our capabilities to fight against this menace. Above all, the entire Bhutanese people, irrespective of ethnic or religious origin or background, have joined hands to fight against this scourge.

In our region of South Asia, terrorism has been rife for many years. Even we in the remote Himalayan Mountains have not been spared. In an effort to counter it jointly, the seven countries of South Asia have adopted the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism in 1987. Bhutan is a state party to this convention.

In conclusion, Mr. President, allow me to end my presentation with a quotation from the 16th century English Poet, John Donne, who put it so eloquently when he said:

"No Man is an island, entire of itself,

Every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main,

Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind.

Therefore, never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

Thank you.