



KINGDOM OF BHUTAN

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Statement
by
H.E. Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk,
Minister of Foreign Affairs
and
Leader of the Bhutanese delegation
at
the General Debate of the 60th session of the UN General
Assembly,
New York

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Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Bhutan to the United
Nations,
New York

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,
Ladies & Gentlemen

1. Allow me to begin by extending my delegation's warmest congratulations to you upon your assumption of the high office of the Presidency of the Sixtieth session of the UN General Assembly. We have every confidence in your ability to guide our deliberations to a successful conclusion. I also pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping for skillfully conducting the work of the 59th General Assembly and for his efforts in the preparations for the High-level Plenary Meeting that was held from 14 to 16 September, 2005.

2. It is appropriate that the theme for the 60th General Assembly session is "For a stronger and more effective United Nations: the follow-up and implementation of the High-level Plenary Meeting in September 2005". Indeed, this session has the responsibility to implement the decisions of the High-level Plenary Meeting. Our leaders have clearly pronounced that the goals and objectives of the Millennium Summit and other UN conferences and summits represent the minimum required to deal with the issues and challenges of our time. Their message is that 2005 should be a year for concrete actions to deliver on those goals and objectives. We must therefore summon political will and assume moral responsibility to truly work for the benefit of our peoples on whose behalf we gather at the United Nations year after year.

Mr. President,

3. In the report "In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All", the Secretary-General has argued that the principles and purposes of the United Nations contained in the Charter remain as valid and relevant today as they were in 1945 and that what is now required is for practice and organization to move with the times. My delegation fully agrees with this view. Our work must always be guided by the Charter, but our approach has to adapt to changing circumstances and challenges. In doing so, we must move beyond narrow national perspectives and interests and treat all issues in a balanced and holistic manner.

4. As I stated at the High-level Plenary Meeting last week, my delegation supports all initiatives to strengthen the United Nations and its institutions. Of significant interest to my delegation is the strengthening of this august Assembly which is the only universal body in the United Nations. There is a clear consensus within the membership on the need for urgent and wide-ranging reform of the United Nations, although differences remain on the nature and extent of reform. The 2005 World Summit Outcome has entrusted the 60th session to implement certain reform decisions and at the same time to carry out further discussions and negotiations in areas where consensus has not been reached. We must continue with our efforts to find consensus in those areas.

5. Among the issues that is unresolved is the reform of the Security Council. We have debated this issue for well over a decade but are yet to arrive at a decision. My country continues to call for early action to enlarge the Security Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories and to improve its working methods. In this context, we reiterate our support to include India, Japan, Germany and Brazil as permanent members. These countries have demonstrated their capacity and will to contribute to world peace and security. We also believe that Africa should be adequately represented in the permanent category.

Mr. President,

6. Development is the most immediate and pressing issue for the vast majority of the members states. No other issue can be as central as development when millions live in deprivation and despair; and global peace and security cannot be truly achieved without advancing development. In fact, partnership in other areas cannot be sustained without genuine international cooperation in development. The shortfalls in our commitments to the Millennium Summit and other major UN conferences and summits are all too clear. More needs to be done urgently to address the hurdles of development ranging from finance to debt, trade, global governance & systemic issues, environment and science & technology, etc.

7. Adequate and predictable sources of financing are crucial for the development efforts to succeed. We, therefore, welcome the ideas for innovative sources of funding and the calls for increased official development assistance. In this regard, my delegation would like to commend those countries that have achieved or exceeded the ODA target of 0.7% of gross national product. We welcome the timetable established by some countries to achieve the ODA target by 2015 and urge others to do so expeditiously. We urge 0.2% of the ODA be allocated to LDCs to enable them to achieve the goals and objectives of the Brussels Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals. The recent decision of the G-8 to cancel external debt of 18 Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) that include 13 LDCs is a welcome move. My delegation is hopeful that the same consideration would be given to all LDCs.

8. As a small, least developed and landlocked country, official development assistance is the primary source of development finance for Bhutan. In this regard, my delegation would like to place on record its deep appreciation to the bilateral and multilateral partners that are actively supporting our development efforts. Despite significant increase in its own resource, the country will have to rely on ODA for some time in its efforts to realize the MDGs and overall development.

9. The continued support of the international community to our development efforts is crucial at the present juncture. Decades of gradual but deliberate change in the system of governance of the country, spearheaded by His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, is entering a critical phase. A draft constitution for the country is currently under discussion. Its adoption in the near future will transform the country into a

parliamentary democracy. For this system of governance to succeed, it is imperative that the country is able to maintain the current level of progress in social, economic and other fields.

10. My country places great importance to the conservation and protection of the environment as human life is fundamentally dependent on natural systems and resources. There cannot be sustainable development without environmental sustainability. We must commit ourselves to meet the goals of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Agenda 21, the Kyoto Protocol and others. In Bhutan, we have made serious efforts to integrate the principles and practices of environmental sustainability into our development policies and programmes. As a result of our conservation efforts, Bhutan has successfully maintained 72.5% of its land area under forest cover. Our modest achievement in this area was duly recognized by the United Nations Environment Programme in April 2005 when it awarded to His Majesty the King and the People of Bhutan UNEP Champion of the Earth Award 2004.

11. My country fully supports the establishment of a worldwide early warning system for all natural hazards. Being situated in a very fragile mountain eco-system, Bhutan is prone to glacial floods and other natural disasters including earthquakes. The solidarity that the international community demonstrated last year when many countries in the Indian Ocean Rim were devastated by the Tsunami was exemplary and is worth replicating in other areas.

Mr. President,

12. Terrorism is a pernicious threat to peace and security. It cannot be justified under any circumstance. It is imperative for the international community to act resolutely to root out this menace. We condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Bhutan supports all efforts to conclude a comprehensive convention on international terrorism and other initiatives. Small and poor developing countries are particularly vulnerable and are in need of international support to fight terrorism. They are also vulnerable to transnational crimes and need assistance to deal with them.

13. International migration is on the increase today. Migration offers opportunities and at the same time presents serious challenges to both source and recipient countries. Associated with it is the problem of illegal immigration which presents serious challenges, particularly to small countries such as my own. It is, therefore, important for the high-level dialogue on international migration and development to be held by the General Assembly in 2006 to address all issues associated with migration.

14. My delegation supports the Secretary-General's continuing efforts to organize annual multilateral treaty events in conjunction with the General Assembly sessions. In this context, we are pleased to report to the Assembly that Bhutan acceded to the following treaties last week:

- United Nations Convention against Corruption;

- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict;
- Optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography;

Bhutan as a responsible member state fully upholds all relevant international treaties and conventions. However, our desire to accede to them are consistently constrained by lack of capacity to deal with the range of issues contained in them and in meeting reporting and other obligations. This is a serious hurdle faced by many small countries, especially LDCs. There is a genuine need to look at ways to simplify reporting & other obligations and to provide technical and financial assistance to countries in need.

Mr. President,

15. We must heed the call of the Secretary-General who has said that “our actions must be as urgent as the needs, and on the same scale” and “Only by acting decisively now can we both confront the pressing security challenges and win a decisive victory in the global battle against poverty in 2015”. We believe that the time to act is now. We must not let the opportunity slip.

I thank you, Mr. President and wish the General Assembly session success.

TASHI DELEK!