



KINGDOM OF BHUTAN

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Statement
by
H.E. Mr. Yeshey Dorji,
Foreign Secretary
and
Leader of the Bhutanese delegation
at
General Debate of the 62nd session of the General Assembly,
United Nations, New York
2 October 2007

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

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Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Mr. President,

1. I offer my delegation's felicitations on your election as the President of the 62nd session of the General Assembly and assure you of our support and cooperation. My delegation would also like to convey our appreciation to your predecessor, Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa for the able manner in which she guided the work of the 61st session. We are gratified that climate change and the millennium development goals are among the top priorities of your presidency.

2. The irony of climate change is that its worst impacts will be on the developing world, particularly small and island developing countries, who are least responsible for the problem. As complex as the issue is, climate change is inextricably linked to development and the debate engenders issues of equity, fairness and right of countries to grow economically. The challenges of climate change, therefore, have to be addressed within the framework of sustainable development and on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

3. Bhutan has two major concerns from climate change. First is the potential adverse impact on agriculture, which is the mainstay of 79% of the population. Second, more serious and immediate, is the rate at which Himalayan glaciers are receding. Bhutan has about 3000 glacial lakes of which 24 have been identified to be potentially dangerous. Glacial lake outburst floods or (GLOF) have caused devastations in the past, and future outbursts would be far worse. Our capacity to carry out research, monitor developments, forecast outbursts and take mitigation measures are severely constrained by lack of scientific, technical and financial resources.

Mr. President,

4. In the Millennium Declaration of 2000, world leaders undertook to channel the fruits of globalization to benefit all people and lift one sixth of

humanity from extreme poverty. At mid-point between the adoption of the MDGs and the target date of 2015, reports including the MDGs Report, 2007 provide a mixed picture at best. The Secretary General has rightly asserted that the world does not need new promises to achieve the MDGs. What is needed is urgent and concerted action by political leaders and stakeholders to meet, in their entirety, the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration, the 2002 Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development and the 2005 World Summit.

5. The 2006 comprehensive midterm global review of the Brussels Programme revealed that the LDCs were unlikely to achieve all the goals and objectives of the BPOA and, therefore, the MDGs, if the current trends continued. It is the moral and political imperative of the international community to help the LDCs through strong supportive global programmes, measures and policies. However, one year later, the situation has remained largely unchanged.

6. Geographical constraints present enormous challenges to landlocked developing countries. Bhutan is working closely with the group of landlocked developing countries to address these challenges through the cooperation of transit countries and the international community. The needs of the landlocked countries are well documented and there is a road map for global partnership set out in the Almaty Programme of Action.

7. Bhutan has made tremendous socio-economic progress during the past forty five years. However, there are many hurdles to overcome before we can stand on our own feet and be self-reliant. We are determined to achieve the cherished goal of self-reliance at the earliest time possible. Until then, we will have to rely on external assistance and support. Here, I would like to record my country's appreciation to bilateral and multilateral donors who steadfastly support us.

Mr. President,

8.. We hope that under your leadership the 62nd session will undertake result-oriented intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform in order to bring this issue to its logical conclusion. As we have stated before, Bhutan supports India, Japan and their G4 partners for permanent membership. We also support Africa's claim for permanent seats.

9. My country, small as it is, has as much interest in the work of the Security Council as others and would like to see it adapt to current demands and realities. Since becoming a member in 1971, my country served in a number of important bodies of the United Nations, but not in the Security Council. We are confident in our capacity to contribute directly to the work of the Council. Bhutan, therefore, announced in 1999 its candidature for a non-permanent seat for the period 2013-2014. If realized, Bhutan would gain entry into the Council after four decades in the United Nations. It is our sincere hope that the General Assembly will support Bhutan's candidature during the elections in 2012.

10. Terrorism strikes at the very foundation of humanism and cannot be justified under any circumstances. This evil, which does not spare even my country, has to be countered through cooperation at bilateral, regional and global levels. At the global level, greater efforts have to be made to implement the Counter Terrorism Strategy and conclude a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. Within our region, the leaders of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation at their 14th Summit meeting in New Delhi last April reaffirmed their commitment to collectively fight terrorism. This is a positive development but more needs to be done to rid the region of this menace.

Mr. President,

11. Allow me to briefly apprise the august body about developments in my country. The development model pursued by Bhutan is based on the philosophy of Gross National Happiness or GNH, a concept conceived by our Fourth King, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck in the early 1970s. GNH is premised on the belief that if happiness is the ultimate desire of every individual, then it is the responsibility and purpose of the state to create conditions that enable citizens to realize this desire. We are glad that GNH is drawing increasing global attention and we stand ready to share our experiences in this regard.

12. Bhutan is now set on the irreversible path to a full-fledged Democratic Constitutional Monarchy. The people of Bhutan are looking forward to 2008 when parliamentary democracy will be introduced. Next year, Bhutan will also celebrate the formal coronation of His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and the centenary of the Wangchuck dynasty. As we stand at the threshold of these momentous development, the people of Bhutan look to

friends and well-wishers and the global community for support and inspiration.

Mr. President,

13. Before I conclude, allow me, to refer to the comments made yesterday by the Honourable Foreign Minister of Nepal on the problem of the people in the camps in Nepal. As her comments were less than objective, it is important that misperceptions be clarified. It is disingenuous on her part to blame Bhutan for lack of progress in our bilateral talks when it is widely known that disruptions to the bilateral process resulted from the political instability in her country which were accompanied by frequent changes of government and positions on the issue. Bhutan on its part has always been committed to the bilateral process and did not deviate from the understandings and agreements reached between the two countries.

14. The issue is a highly complex one that does not lend to conventional solutions. The genesis of the problem lies in illegal immigration. The camps were established without any screening procedures when only 304 people claiming to be refugees from Bhutan arrived in eastern Nepal. Screening procedures were put in place by the UNHCR only after two and a half years and by then the number had reached its present proportion. In view of the complexity of the issue, the two governments had agreed that the bilateral process was the only way forward to find a solution. In this regard, we appreciate the offer of the US and other countries for third country resettlement as it would help address this humanitarian problem.

15. While the Royal Government remains committed to the bilateral process, it has serious security concerns with the Maoist infiltration in the camps and the formation of several radical groups, who have publicly stated their objective to destabilize Bhutan and disrupt the country's first parliamentary elections next year.

Mr. President,

16. In conclusion, I would like to once again convey my delegation's full support to your Presidency and wish the 62nd session of the General Assembly every success.

Thank you and Tashi Delek.