

Check against delivery

Statement By

**H. E Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk, Hon'ble Minister Incharge of
Foreign Affairs and Minister for Economic Affairs,**

Royal Government of Bhutan

**Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed
Countries**

9-13 May 2011, Istanbul, Turkey

Mr. President,

Head of States and Governments,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Mr. President,

Ten years ago, the adoption of the Brussels Declaration and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 ushered in renewed hopes and aspirations for “the poorest and the weakest segment of the society” and promised them a new future. Today, disheartening as it is, the number of LDCs has increased from 25 in 1971 to 48 and the number of people without access to adequate food, clean water, education, health, connectivity, energy etc, are increasing and is projected to touch the billion mark by 2015 unless we are able to not only halt the slide but reverse it.

Mr. President,

The global community must accept that we have a common future on this planet and that we need to share our resources for mutual benefit and for sustainable peace and prosperity. In an increasingly globalizing world, no nation is insulated and problems in any country or region will impact other countries or regions. All issues facing us will need to be resolved through global efforts where all nations must work together. My delegation is confident that today’s gathering of world leaders will serve as a beacon of hope – not only for the world’s poor – but for our common future. I urge this Conference to remind ourselves of the crucial need to strengthen our co-operation towards ensuring that development is equitable, inclusive and sustainable

Mr. President,

We recognize that peace is a precondition for development and that the basis for peace is justice. There cannot, however, be justice when large numbers of people on account of poverty suffer and struggle everyday just to survive. For peace, development and justice, poverty must be reduced and ultimately eliminated. For this, the poor countries require the support of richer nations. At the present we are grappling with multiple, interlinked global crisis especially on the food and energy front driving millions of the most vulnerable people into further desperation and poverty. Meeting the needs of these populations and freeing them from the shackles of poverty continue to be the single most compelling challenge of our times. It is inconceivable that in an era of unprecedented wealth generation, vast majority of our population continues to remain in poverty and destitution. Poverty alleviation, therefore, must remain at the forefront of the international

community's development efforts. They must honor their commitments under Monterrey Consensus and Doha Round for Financing Development.

Mr. President,

Bhutan has been following a balanced approach to development outlining equitable and sustainable economic growth, environmental protection, cultural preservation and good governance as the guiding principles under the development philosophy of Gross National Happiness initiated by our Fourth King. GNH places the wellbeing and happiness of the people at the centre of all development. I am happy to report that my country is well on its way to fulfill the MDGs with most goals being achieved before the deadline of 2015. All our achievements including, the peaceful emergence of Bhutan as the youngest democracy has been the result of pursuing our development philosophy. I would like to remind the Conference of the proposal made by my Honorable Prime Minister at the High Level Plenary Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the MDGs in September 2010 to include "Happiness" as the Ninth Voluntary MDG. It is a goal that stands as a separate value while representing as well, the sum total outcome of the other eight goals. Its relevance goes beyond the poor and developing member states to bind all of humanity to a timeless common vision. I also wish to add that the MDGs are completely in harmony with our program to create the enabling conditions for achieving happiness. We seek the kind consideration of all member states on our proposal.

Mr. President,

By now, it is clear that the impacts of continuing climate change are real and cannot be ignored. The irony of Climate Change is that it's devastating impacts are being felt more by the developing countries that are least responsible for causing the problem and has the lowest capacity to adapt and mitigate. Bhutan, as a small landlocked and least developed country, with a very fragile mountain ecosystem, is all too aware of the dangers of climate change and the threat it poses to our future wellbeing. We are highly vulnerable to catastrophic glacial lake outburst floods, drying water sources, increasing landslides and flashfloods, freak windstorms, decreasing snowfall and unpredictable rainfall patterns.

In view of these threats, we have made concerted efforts towards pursuing the goals of the UNFCCC. During COP 15 in Copenhagen, we have committed to remain “Carbon Neutral” at all times. However, we are only too aware that our efforts are simply not enough and that we need both regional and global support to reduce the global emission of Green House Gases. Bhutan has always maintained that climate change has to be addressed within the framework of sustainable development and any debate on the subject must relate to equity, fairness and the right of developing countries to be able to provide better lives to their people. The 16th South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Summit held in our country last year has adopted the “Thimphu Statement on Climate Change” as a means to further regional cooperation and action on climate change.

Mr. President,

This Istanbul Conference must be used to remind ourselves of the need to strengthen our co-operation towards ensuring that development is equitable, inclusive and sustainable. We have witnessed time and again the ill-effects of the widening gap between the rich and the poor and consequences of the fruits of development and economic growth not trickling to the poor regions, nations and societies.. If our world is to enjoy peace, stability, security and prosperity, we need to strengthen our co-operation to uplift the wellbeing of the poor among us.

In this respect, we welcome the LDCs’ call for a desirable and necessary Istanbul Programme of Action 2011-2020 that aims at reducing the number of LDCs by half. We also recognize that for the successful implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, full potential of south-south cooperation and triangular cooperation needs to be harnessed to augment Official Development Assistance (ODA). However, this should not be seen as a substitute, but rather a complement to North-South Cooperation. The countries of the North must continue to accord the highest priority to the cause of the LDCs and in fulfilling their ODA commitments. This is an obligation that is in the interest of global harmony through equitable development and growth.

Mr. President,

Bhutan is not only a landlocked country, but it is also a least developed country with a small population, located in an area of rugged and mountainous terrain. The difficult terrain and the scattered nature of population settlements involve huge infrastructure development costs. The demographic constraint of a small population that survives on a fragile eco-system within the physical constraints of being mountainous and landlocked presents enormous challenges to our country. The challenges are particularly acute in the delivery of social services, enhancing agricultural productivity and the development of a

dynamic private sector. However, over the years with the support and cooperation of our development partners, we have been able to achieve steady progress in our socio-economic development, especially in our priority areas. The full achievement and realization of our goals will depend a great deal on the availability of adequate financial resources. Bhutan has relied heavily on development assistance. The substantial all round socio-economic development that has been achieved would not have been possible without the assistance of our development partners. Uninterrupted and continued flow of assistance is of critical importance to consolidate and sustain the developments that have taken place. In this context, we are deeply concerned that some of our traditional development partners may be phasing out their assistance in the near future. Given the fact that we have depended on few traditional donors, any withdrawal of assistance from them will impact severely on the sustainability and future socio-economic development.

Mr. President,

These concerns come at a time when our country is in its initial years of democracy. We transitioned to a democracy in 2008. This historic political change came about at a time of unprecedented peace, economic prosperity, improved social conditions and wellbeing for the people of Bhutan. The challenge for the country now is to ensure that a firm foundation for democracy is established by strengthening democratic institutions and setting up a democratic culture that will provide the basis for continued peace and socio-economic development. At such a critical time and juncture in our history, I cannot overemphasize the important role that our development partners will play in ensuring that the highly regarded socio-economic progress we have achieved thus far continues in a new democratic political set up. Therefore, while we remain grateful to our development partners, both bilateral and multilateral, for the assistance that we have received thus far, we appeal and seek continued assistance to us and to other LDCs.

Mr. President,

I would like to submit that the task ahead may be daunting but my delegation is confident that the collective wisdom of this Conference will provide the framework for a continued strong global partnership based on shared responsibility to promote all round socio-economic development in the LDCs. We note with satisfaction that this Conference has placed strong emphasis on adopting deliverables for the LDCs. This will augment the achievements of the previous three Programmes of Actions and pave the way for a better future for our peoples. Indeed, my delegation is confident that with the generous support and cooperation of our development partners, the LDCs will make tangible progress and become successfully integrated into the global economy

I call upon the international community for its highest political commitment in support of the Istanbul Program of Action and ensure a successful outcome of the UN-LDC IV Conference.

Mr President,

In concluding, on behalf of the people and the Royal Government of Bhutan, I would like to submit that the success in the political, social and economic fields that we have achieved would not have been possible without the generous support and cooperation of our development partners, both bilateral and multilateral. I take this opportunity to extend our deep appreciation and heartfelt gratitude to them. We look forward to continuing our engagement and cooperation with you to build a more peaceful, secure, prosperous and a happier world in the years ahead.

Finally, my delegation joins me in expressing our sincere appreciation to you, Mr. President, and the Government of Turkey for the excellent arrangements made for this important conference, the warm hospitality and for financing the participation of the LDC delegations. The large gathering here today clearly demonstrates our joint commitments to foster and strengthen the socio economic advancement of LDCs as a developing partner.

Thank you and Tashi Delek!