



KINGDOM OF BHUTAN

STATEMENT

BY

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PRIME MINISTER

ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN

AT

WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**JOHANNESBURG
SOUTH AFRICA**

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**Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

It is my privilege and honour to convey the warm greetings and good wishes of His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, and the government and people of Bhutan for the success of this landmark Summit. I would also like to extend my delegation's warm felicitations on your election as President.

My delegation and I would also like to place on record our deep appreciation to the government and people of South Africa for the warm reception and generous hospitality extended to us. May I also commend the WSSD Secretariat and the government of South Africa for the excellent arrangements made for this Summit. We have come with the hope that our collective wisdom will forge concrete solutions to the problems and challenges that threaten the survival of our planet.

Mr. President,

Ten years ago, world leaders met at Rio to rethink economic development and find ways to halt the destruction of irreplaceable natural resources and pollution of the planet. The Rio process resulted in the adoption of a bold agenda that sought to transform our attitudes and behaviour towards the environment. However, many of the goals of Agenda 21 remain unfulfilled while the threats to our environment have become more pressing. This Summit must review our accomplishments and shortcomings, address new and emerging challenges and most importantly, reinvigorate the political commitment and resolve to implement the plan of action for sustainable development in a spirit of partnership and shared responsibility. We must refrain from renegotiating the principles and commitments of Rio and agree on a programme that can be achieved within a realistic timeframe.

Mr. President,

Bhutan fully supports the principle of global partnership and common but differentiated responsibilities. However, commitment to international agreements, principles and standards comes at a cost, one that weighs most heavily on the poorest of the poor. While the benefits of environmental conservation transcend national boundaries, it imposes

substantial opportunity costs that are neither shared nor accorded due recognition or compensation. Bhutan has foregone short-term benefits for long term sustainability at great costs to the people and the government. The need to protect forests, conserve biodiversity, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adopt clean development mechanisms is justifiably on the rise. The support for such initiatives has unfortunately not been forthcoming. We are deeply concerned about declining resources and urge the developed countries to honour the promises made at Rio and more recently at Monterrey.

We firmly believe that our success in pursuing sustainable development hinges upon the implementation of the outcomes of, among others, the International Conference on Financing for Development, the Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference and the Millennium Summit. My delegation is gratified to note that the funds of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) have been replenished to fulfil its specific objectives and goals, for which we are grateful to all the donors.

Mr. President,

During the Millennium Summit, we resolved to achieve a number of internationally agreed goals. We also reaffirmed our support for the principles of sustainable development including those set out in Agenda 21. We must now endeavour to close the gap between our promises and commitments. The UN Secretary-General in his report entitled "Implementing Agenda 21" identified four key areas where these gaps were particularly evident. Unless we address these key areas, our attempts to halt and reverse the decline in the health of our planet and ensure its survival for future generations will prove futile.

Mr. President,

Bhutan has made modest progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and other outcomes of the Rio Summit. Sustainable development forms the guiding principle of our development strategy, which is based on the concept of Gross National Happiness as opposed to Gross National Product. In Bhutan development is gauged not simply in terms of economic growth but is viewed in terms of happiness, contentment and the spiritual and emotional well being of the people. Gross

National Happiness exemplifies a holistic approach to development through equitable socio-economic development, good governance, environmental conservation and preservation of culture.

As a follow-up to the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Bhutan and the Netherlands signed a Sustainable Development Agreement (SDA) in 1994 based on the principles of equality, participation and reciprocity. This Agreement has also forged a partnership between Bhutan, Benin and Costa Rica as a new south-south alliance to pursue sustainable development.

Towards realizing the Rio Accord, Bhutan ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 1995. I am pleased to state that Bhutan has also acceded to the Kyoto Protocol, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.

Mr. President,

Bhutan has formulated a National Environment Strategy (NES) called "The Middle Path" in 1998 and adopted the Environment Assessment Act in 2000. Efforts are also underway to develop a National Environmental Action Plan and a comprehensive legal and policy framework to manage our water resources. A number of innovative mechanisms to finance sustainable development activities have also been established, such as the Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation, the Health Trust Fund, the Cultural Trust Fund, and the Youth Development Fund.

As a country situated in the eastern Himalayas, we are gratified to note that 2002 has been declared the International Year of Mountains, recognizing the importance and vulnerability of mountain ecosystems. In support of this initiative, Bhutan will host an international conference in October this year Celebrating Mountain Women.

While highlighting our achievements and initiatives, I would like to acknowledge the important role played by our development partners and express my deep appreciation to them for their unstinted support and assistance.

Mr. President,

I would like to conclude by mentioning that while Bhutan has made significant inroads in implementing Agenda 21, our efforts may not be sustainable unless complemented with similar efforts at the regional and global level. Although the challenges before us are manifold and daunting, we must intensify our efforts to overcome them - nationally, regionally, and globally. Let us remind ourselves that sustainable development is not environment management alone but inextricably linked to upliftment of human lives. This Summit must not be futile in its attempts to secure a healthy future for our peoples. Let it be the platform for launching a fresh assault on the many ills that threaten our planet and the survival of humanity. Let us deliver on the promises made ten years ago at Rio.

Thank You and Tashi Delek!