



KINGDOM OF BHUTAN

STATEMENT BY

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**ANNUAL MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF THE LAND-LOCKED
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (LLDCs)**

75TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

1. Greetings from the Kingdom of Bhutan.
2. At the outset, allow me to convey my deepest sympathies to all who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and I pray that we can collectively overcome this challenging period very soon.
3. It is a great pleasure for me and my delegation to participate at this Annual Ministerial Meeting of Foreign Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries, and I would like to thank the Chair of the LLDC group, Kazakhstan, for successfully coordinating the events of our Group and in convening this meeting.
4. I would also like to express my Government's appreciation to the United Nations High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDs, Ms. Fekita 'Utoikamanu, and her office for the continued effort in bringing to the forefront the development challenges faced by our countries.
5. The meeting this year is being held at the backdrop of the unprecedented challenge posed by the pandemic which has led to devastating effects on both health care and the economy. With many countries resorting to closing borders and restricting movement of people and goods, LLDCs have been the most affected.
6. The VPoA constitutes an integral part for the LLDCs in the fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The High-level Midterm Review in 2019 noted that the progress made by the LLDCs was insufficient to achieve the VPoA targets and the SDGs. Given the severe effects of the pandemic on the LLDCs, socioeconomic progress is further expected to be impeded, potentially derailing our progress.
7. It is in this light, I take this opportunity to commend and congratulate Kazakhstan for developing the UN Roadmap for Accelerated Implementation of the VPoA which provides a strategic vision with a focus on key deliverables to accelerate actions in the remaining period of the VPoA implementation.
8. Bhutan has been fighting the pandemic through the whole-of-society approach. Under the leadership of His Majesty The King, we have had to make tough decisions such as closing our borders, instituting a government funded mandatory 21 day quarantine for travelers returning to Bhutan, and instituting wide spread testing. These strict measures along with public health safety protocols have been successful in avoiding community transmission and having zero COVID related death.
9. However, our economy has taken a severe hit. All sectors of the economy have been severely impacted and the GDP growth has slumped to its lowest at - 6.7%.
10. For Bhutan, like most countries, we are trying to find a balance containing the epidemic and stimulating the economy.

11. We are doing this through a major overhaul of the country's 12th Five Year Plan to prioritize economic recovery by intensifying exports, frontloading of resources, boosting domestic consumption capacity, investing in agriculture, and identifying productive sectors to generate domestic revenue.
12. This will also contribute in meeting the Economic Vulnerability Index, one of the three criteria which Bhutan has not met in its graduation from the LDC Group.
13. To conclude, I would like to reiterate that Bhutan is committed to working together in addressing the common challenges faced by all the LLDCs and join fellow LLDCs in calling on development partners, the United Nations, the International Financial Institutions, and other international organizations to support LLDCs in accelerating implementation of the VPoA.

Please stay safe, Thank you and Tashi Delek!
