

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. TSHERING TOBGAY
PRIME MINISTER OF THE KINGDOM OF BHUTAN AT THE
2nd PLENARY MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS SUMMIT FOR THE
ADOPTION OF THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA
25th September 2015, United Nations General Assembly, New York**

**Honorable Co-Chairs,
Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon
Excellencies**

The United Nations is 70 years old!

For 70 years, the United Nations has maintained global peace, protected human rights and upheld international law. It has helped to stop the use and spread of nuclear weapons, and prevented a third world war.

For 70 years, the United Nations has reaffirmed the sovereignty of nations, bringing into its fold, new member states, irrespective of their size, population, wealth and power. This is especially important – in fact, it is critical – for otherwise small, vulnerable countries, like mine, Bhutan.

For 70 years, the United Nations has led the global fight against poverty, disease and hunger. As we conclude the Millennium Development Goals, our peoples are now healthier, they live longer, and they are better educated.

Today, the United Nations is poised to do more.

We have set ourselves an ambitious “agenda for sustainable development” – one that calls for our collective action to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities and save our planet.

The vision and principles set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development resonate strongly with my country’s development philosophy of Gross National Happiness.

As early as the 1970s, we in Bhutan have stressed that Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product.

Gross National happiness, or GNH, is a holistic approach to development aimed at improving the happiness and wellbeing of our people. For that, we carefully balance material growth with social inclusiveness and environmental sustainability within a framework of good governance.

GNH drives development in Bhutan. Our people, for example, enjoy free healthcare and free education. And our economy, even though small, is largely clean, green and renewable.

More importantly, 6 years ago, in 2009, we pledged to remain carbon neutral. But in reality, we are carbon negative. That’s because 72% of our country is

under forest cover, and more than half our country is protected as national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.

And most importantly, we have institutionalized good governance by embracing democracy.

Democracy in Bhutan is unique in that we, the people, didn't want democracy: we didn't demand for it, and we certainly didn't fight for it. Instead, democracy was instituted in an unprecedented manner – imposed by our King, against the will of his people.

This, in my humble view, is GNH in action.

His Majesty the King has defined GNH as “development with values”. This, in essence, is what the Sustainable Development Goals are also about – development with values.

My government has already started integrating the SDGs in our own development plans. And we look forward to working diligently to fulfill their promises.

“The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” is an exciting testament to the collective will and wisdom of all nations to transform our world meaningfully.

But to transform our world, we must first transform ourselves; we must transform the United Nations; we must transform it to make it “fit for purpose”.

The United Nations has served us well for 70 years.

To serve us for the next 70 years, it must stay relevant. And to stay relevant, it must reflect the geo-political realities of today. Countries like India and Japan, Brazil and Germany must be made to serve as permanent members in the Security Council. And Africa must be appropriately represented.

If we don't reform the United Nations, we risk making this important institution irrelevant and ineffective. That would harm all nations. But small countries, vulnerable countries, countries like mine and many others, would suffer the most.

Now, if we do reform the United Nations – if we make it relevant, and if we make it effective – it will continue to serve us well. And 70 years hence, our future generations will gather here, in this very hall, and they, like us, will celebrate the United Nations for making their world more secure, more peaceful and more prosperous.

Thank you. Tashi Delek!