



KINGDOM OF BHUTAN

**Check Against Delivery**

**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**THE HONORABLE JIGMI Y. THINLEY,  
PRIME MINISTER OF THE KINGDOM OF BHUTAN,**

**AT THE**

**HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY ON THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS,**

**NEW YORK**

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**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE KINGDOM OF BHUTAN TO THE UNITED  
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Mr. President,  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Distinguished Heads of State and Government,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Ten years ago, we committed ourselves to the pursuit of the eight MDGs to raise human conditions beyond basic survival. We pledged to galvanize a partnership of rich and poor countries to eradicate poverty, hunger and disease. These goals have become a critical and coherent force to establish the minimum social, economic and ecological preconditions for the promotion of human well being. To these, my delegation would humbly like to propose the inclusion of a ninth goal.

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. There are many other countries that will find similar or greater success having reoriented their policies and resources to achieve these ends. I take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation and gratitude to our development partners without whose generous assistance, such progress would not have been possible. I would also like to pay tribute to the UN and the other multilateral development agencies. The World Bank and ADB are to be thanked for their current lending focus on the achievement of MDGs to the middle and low-income countries at preferential rates through such windows as the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA).

This summit, I am confident, will generate the determination and the means to ensure that those governments which are in danger of failing their people will continue to receive the necessary technical and financial resources from the international community.

As all our people rise above the threats of basic survival, what will our collective endeavour be as a progressive society? Must we continue to believe that human life is to be spent in labouring for higher income so as to be able to consume more at the cost of relationships, peace and ecological stability? Are the causes of depression, suicide, community disintegration, and rising crime to be accepted as inevitable? Having dreamed the impossible and achieved the unthinkable, has human civilization not reached the time and moment, to aspire for a higher goal as individuals, families, communities, nations and as a society? And, is it unreasonable to assume that we can consensually chart a common course to tread with collective endeavour, sharing trust and cooperation for mutual gain and to live in accord with nature? Could we not find a way to steer ourselves from the self-consuming fire of greed that is fuelled by the media and paid for by industry and commerce which thrive on reckless consumerism? And should we not hope that the pursuit of such a state of being will be more of the kind that refines the mind, disciplines the body and conserves the life-supporting environment?

Enough thoughts and knowledge have been generated in recent years by those who care to convince us that humanity needs to get off the perilous path on which the wrongful use of GDP has set it since its inception in the 1930s. It does not demand much imagination and intelligence, indeed, to understand that endless pursuit of material growth in a world with limited natural resources within a delicately balanced ecology is just not sustainable - that it is dangerous and stupid. One cannot imagine, even as China and India aspire to compete in consumption with the USA, what would become of earth if every global

citizen acquired the same voracious capacity. The evidence of the limited ability of nature to tolerate abuse is there for us to suffer in the rising frequency and fury of multiple calamities. I refer not only to natural and manmade disasters such as the one from which millions of innocent Pakistani victims are trying to recover and the one that has destroyed the ecosystem and much of a way of life in the Gulf of Mexico. I remind you also of the socio economic calamities such as the current economic recession whose bottom we may not have, as yet, seen. The latter is particularly instructive in the way it reminded us that much of the so called wealth we have created are in fact, illusory and that being unreal, they disappear often, without a trace, like the jobs, homes, savings, investments and more. The only things real are the psychological, emotional and environmental costs. More, we can be certain, will strike to persuade us of the need to change our way of life.

The good thing is there is a burgeoning class of people out there - academics, writers and journalists; economists and policy makers; corporate leaders and ordinary folk and indeed, teachers and youth - who are concerned, responsible and increasingly daring. They have the redeeming courage to be different - to acknowledge the futility of our way of life and to be 'sacrilegious' in pleading for an alternative way to live a good and decent life. Relegating the purpose of GDP to its intended role of simply measuring the sum of goods and services transacted in the market at a given period of time, they recommend a variety of indicators and analytical frames to undertake and measure genuine societal progress. The MDGs comprise one such contribution and I commend the Secretary-General and his Special Advisor, Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, for their vision and devotion.

It was some four decades ago that Bhutan, on its part, chose not to be led astray by conventional development practices. Having pondered the meaning and purpose of development and being dissatisfied with the aimlessness of prevailing models, our king's understanding of the innermost yearning of his people inspired him into conceiving the development philosophy of Gross National Happiness. It is based on the belief that since happiness is the ultimate desire of every citizen, it must be the purpose of development to create the enabling conditions for happiness. His understanding of happiness is a state of being that is realised through a judicious equilibrium between gains in material comfort and growth of the mind and spirit in a just and sustainable environment. It is not about asceticism and denial. Consequently, our small success in balancing the needs of the body with those of the mind, with visible ecological benefits, have raised a level of interest in GNH as a holistic development paradigm.

The pursuit of happiness in Bhutan has been, at the broadest level, a concomitant effort to achieve four goals. These are equitable and sustainable socioeconomic development, conservation of our environment, promotion of culture and good governance. All our achievements including, the peaceful emergence of Bhutan as the youngest democracy has been the result of pursuing happiness. I wish to add also that the MDGs are completely in harmony with our program to create the enabling conditions for happiness.

With these in mind and as it is likely that the relevance of the 8 MDGs will remain beyond 2015, my delegation would like to propose to this highest forum in the world that we include happiness as the ninth MDG. It is a goal that stands as a separate value while representing as well, the sum total outcome of the other eight. Its relevance goes beyond the poor and developing member states to bind all of humanity, rich and poor, to a timeless common vision. It will be in the conscious pursuit of happiness

that the very best in the nature of the human race will flourish. Through the pursuit of such a goal, we will find the reason and genius to moderate and harmonize our otherwise, largely material wants with the other equally important human needs and nature's limitations. It is what will make life on earth sustainable. And the way in which a nation pursues this goal will be a measure of its devotion to the promotion of its people's true well being. We must not lose time and opportunity to work in concert at all levels of society for the collective pursuit of this ultimate value through public policy, plans and programmes.

The inclusion of happiness as the ninth goal will confirm we are concerned with the quality of life, of adding meaning and value to life. Its inclusion will be a broader set of outcome indicators. Above all, it will enhance the feasibility of moving towards a more responsible human endeavour that bears the promise of meaningful pursuit, fulfilment and happiness. Based on the set of elaborate and precise metrics developed by Bhutan and others, we could leave the task of adopting or developing indicators for uniform application to the experts.

Let us get off the beaten path to blaze a new trail to gain new knowledge, wiser ways of doing things and fulfilling ways to spend our transient life. Let us agree to leave a legacy of ideas and a way of life that will be worth living with a greater certainty for the long-term survival of humanity.

Hope has prevailed against cynicism to bring us to the United Nations today. Let us go forth from this summit not only rededicated to the eight goals to banish hunger, disease, and extreme poverty, but also to the new ninth voluntary goal, to build a world that can sustain happiness for all its people, today and for generations yet to come.

I thank you for your patient hearing.

TASHI DELEK.