

**ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN
TASHICHHODZONG, THIMPHU**



STATEMENT BY

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AT

**THE FIFTEENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF PARTIES
UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON
CLIMATE CHANGE**

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Mr President,

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen

I convey to you the hopes and aspirations of the people and government of Bhutan, and the good wishes of our King and Prime Minister for a fruitful outcome from Copenhagen.

Mr President,

While associating myself with the statements made by the distinguished Prime Minister of Lesotho on behalf of the Least Developed Countries, by the distinguished Vice-President of Sudan on behalf of the Group of 77 & China, and by the distinguished Minister of Sri Lanka on behalf of the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation; I wish to put forward our own context as a small, landlocked and mountainous country facing the brunt of the impacts of climate change.

Mr President,

In my own country, we are experiencing unusual weather patterns such as short and dry winters; prolonged droughts in summer; flash floods; windstorms and perhaps the most serious of all – the rapid melting of glaciers and the increased risks from glacial lake outburst floods. These unpredictable changes related to climate change

diminish the abilities of societies – especially in the least developed countries like Bhutan – to meet our development aspirations.

It is indeed ironic that Bhutan, which has all along pursued strong conservation policies and implemented stringent environment regulations, is suffering the consequences of climate change. In the past five decades since Bhutan embarked on planned development, we have consciously sacrificed faster economic growth from exploitation of our natural resources such as forests and minerals. We have also deliberately avoided mass tourism and intensive agriculture based on the use of chemicals. As a result, today we boast a forest cover of over 72%. Furthermore, it is mandated in our constitution to maintain 60% of our lands under forest cover for all times to come. In addition, we have also placed more than 50% of our land under parks and protected areas. However, we are paying a substantive price for our conservation success in terms of lost economic opportunities.

Mr President,

Bhutan is and always has been carbon neutral. And we have committed to remain carbon neutral. This commitment is in line with our philosophy of Gross National Happiness, and reaffirms our will to remain a responsible member of the global community. We believe that the path is both ecologically sensible and morally correct.

Mr President,

This generation is charged with the responsibility to decide whether to save our planet or to let it die along with all forms of life. Ladies and gentlemen, it is in the hands of none other than us, the leaders gathered here, to make this difference by agreeing to act collectively and decisively towards reducing green house gas emissions and reversing the trend in global warming.

Mr President,

The war against climate change cannot be won by any single nation. It has to be a collective and coordinated effort of all nations. However, the battles must be fought and won on individual turfs by every nation. Small countries like Bhutan, which are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, are like foot soldiers at the frontline of this campaign. If the foot soldiers are to be successful, they need to be well equipped in terms of financial, human and technological resources. Therefore, I join previous speakers from the LDCs seeking the support of rich countries to come forward with the resources necessary to put in place effective mitigation and adaptation measures.

We hope that there will be substantial and adequate funding for the least developed and most vulnerable nations to combat climate change through replenishment of the LDC Fund, the SCCF and a new Climate Fund from Copenhagen. We also look forward to a more simplified

mechanism for accessing these funds given that existing procedures are overly cumbersome and difficult.

Mr President,

In concluding, I call on all the leaders gathered here to go beyond mere political and economic considerations in reaching a decision. The north and south poles and the third pole – the Himalayas, cannot afford a failure here at Copenhagen. The eastern Himalayas, where my country is located, have now become a hotspot of climate change from being a hotspot of biodiversity.

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen;

When we return home, our children and grandchildren will ask whether we have sealed the deal on climate change? The answer from all of us should be a resounding ‘yes’. Anything less would be a betrayal of their trust and faith in our leadership.

Thank you.