

Bhutan & the UN



50 Years of Partnership and Building a Better Future

# Reflections & Beyond

50 years of Bhutan and the United Nations



# Foreword



PARO PENLOP

Foreword

MAJALING  
THIMPHU  
BHUTAN

It was a matter of immense privilege for me to represent Bhutan and its people, on the command of His Majesty the Third Druk Gyalpo, at the ceremony marking the country's membership to the United Nations.

It was on the morning of 21 September 1971 at the United Nations headquarter in New York. Personally, for me, it was a moment of great pride, to witness on behalf of all Bhutanese, formal recognition of the Kingdom's sovereignty by the United Nations, an association of sovereign States. That was just a decade after we hurled open our doors to the rest of the world and took measured steps towards development.

As Bhutan marks the 50 years of its membership to the UN, it is only natural to pay our homage to the Father of modern Bhutan, the Third Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck. It is because of his foresight that generations of Bhutanese are able to reap the fruits of modernization and generations more will continue to do so.

Development works towards transforming Bhutan into a modern nation-state began in the early 1960s with the first Five-Year Plan launched in 1961. It's enduring partnership with both bilateral and multilateral partners including the UN complemented progress in all sectors of the economy. National efforts in the last several decades towards progress and happiness of its people has transformed Bhutan to a modern nation state. The fact that Bhutan is on the threshold of graduation from the category of Least Developed Countries is a significant milestone, a culmination of decades of unrelenting efforts under the visionary



PARO PENLOP

MAJALING  
THIMPHU  
BHUTAN

leadership of our Kings, and unprecedented support from Bhutan's development partners.

When Bhutan became UN's 128th member, apart from the move being an important foreign policy initiative of the Royal Government of Bhutan, His Late Majesty's vision was to achieve progress for Bhutan and wellbeing of her people. Today, in a world driven by insatiable economic pursuits, Bhutan's middle-path to development as encapsulated in the national development philosophy of Gross National Happiness, emphasizes a holistic approach to progress that is being increasingly recognized globally as an alternative to what has, for millennials, been a pursuit driven by materialism. In the past 50 years, the UN's support to Bhutan has played a vital role in the process of this path to modernization in Bhutan.

This book, "Reflections & Beyond; 50 years of Bhutan and the UN" contains the story of this special bond and it is my hope that as you turn the pages of this journey, you will come to know the milestones and vital links of a rich and enduring partnership.

His Royal Highness Prince Namgyal Wangchuk





## Introduction

---



This year, 2021, marks the 50th anniversary of Bhutan as a member state of the United Nations. We are fortunate to be part of this momentous occasion that celebrates our golden age of partnership. The act of ‘looking back’ is particularly relevant because we know that partnering invites us to build the future by selecting key building stones from the foundations of the past.

This book documents key highlights from the 50-year partnership between the Royal Government of Bhutan and the UN. Each page tells a remarkable story of Bhutan’s rapid development over the past five decades and we are honoured to have partnered the country through this time of change, promoting inclusive economic growth that prioritizes good governance, poverty reduction, inclusivity, and environmental sustainability. All of this work is under-girded by the practical values of Gross National Happiness.

As we commemorate this significant milestone, share our hopes, learn from our experiences and spark ideas for building the future, we strive to ensure the UN remains ‘fit for purpose’. Together, we listen; and together, we act in partnership.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the world faced the paradox of diminishing global cooperation against a backdrop of rising global challenges: the climate crisis and threats of nuclear weapons; changes in our populations and transformations in the digital sphere; growing geopolitical tensions and new forms and patterns of violence; and deepening inequalities with growing social unrest.

In response, the UN must evolve and adapt to this changing world. We need to develop long-term sustainable strategies to address the challenges we face. The world of today is different



from what it was when the United Nations was created 76 years ago. While there are more countries, more people and more challenges, there are also more solutions. Our working methods need to adapt, and we need to create a more agile, effective and accountable organization that delivers results-solutions to global challenges. It is not enough to say we are part of the solution; our responsibility is to deliver results in the actions we take, day in – day out.

The Honourable Prime Minister, Dr. Lotay Tshering aptly captured at the UN General Assembly in 2020, that the UN needs to think differently about development and consider new ways of building back better. This will require practical and creative thinking, not just from UN member states or UN policymakers but from a diverse network of supportive, non-state actors, including CSOs, the media, academia and the private sector. The COVID-19 pandemic, and the inequalities it exposed, are a global challenge that must be solved through global cooperation.

This is a time when the world needs bold and innovative leadership based on timeless values. The dynamic leadership of His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck is a key source of inspiration. His Majesty The King's egalitarian leadership, best evidenced during this pandemic stands testimony to the sort of leadership to be emulated globally.

Partnership is the foundation on which the UN-Bhutan relationship is forged. And as we mark this milestone, we look forward to a strong and enduring partnership with the Royal Government and people of Bhutan. This partnership will continue to benefit from agility, transparency and accountability from the side of the UN to Bhutan. We will continue to strengthen our partnership with Bhutan in realizing its development aspirations.

As you go through this book, you will gain a true sense of the many people and organizations that contributed to the responsible development of this country. The accomplishments



of the Royal Government have benefited from the contributions of many, including the civil society, the media, academia, the private sector and development partners.

On behalf of the 31 UN agencies working in Bhutan, allow me to rededicate our commitment to the Royal Government and to the people of Bhutan. Your consistent professionalism and unwavering commitment to Bhutan's development - in line with the values of Gross National Happiness – will help ensure the UN remains ever 'fit for purpose'.

**Gerald Daly**  
*Resident Coordinator*  
*UN Bhutan*





**Bhutan and the UN  
1971-1980**

18 Page

A New Partnership begins

26 Page

Excerpts from the Fourth Druk Cyalpo's speech

22 Page

Excerpts from the Third Druk Cyalpo's Address to His People

28 Page

A brighter future for Bhutan's children

24 Page

Membership brings rounded development

30 Page

A historic moment



**A development partner  
1981-1990**

36 Page

Deepening and diversifying partnership

42 Page

UN Secretary General makes first visit to Bhutan



**Bhutan and the UN  
1991-2000**

46 Page

Climate change in focus

52 Page

UN High Commissioner visits Bhutan

54 Page

Bhutan can help with global food security



**The MDG Era and Transition to Democracy  
2001-2010**

58 Page

Transition to democracy

70 Page

Development partners reaffirm support

66 Page

The Crown Prince's address

73 Page

HEE-HAW



**The Sustainable Development Goals  
2011-2020**

76 Page

A development story

88 Page

Engagements and interactions

82 Page

UN Department of Operational support Under Secretary General visits

92 Page

Civil Society Organizations

84 Page

Peacekeeping

94 Page

Civil Society Organizations in Bhutan

86 Page

A UNV story from Congo

98 Page

For the ozone layer

104 Page

Honoring the People's King

106 Page

Human Development Index

108 Page

A goodwill ambassador

110 Page

Policy for persons with disabilities

112 Page

Innovative financing

114 Page

Investment case for development

120 Page

From strength to strength



Student monks play on the lawn outside Dechhenphodrang Monastery which overlooks Thimphu.







**1971-1980**  
Bhutan and the UN



# A new partnership begins



Bhutan's membership to the United Nations (UN) was symbolic to the country's decision to break out of its centuries of self-imposed isolation and enter the modern world.

It was an expression of the Kingdom's faith and consensus in the organization that stood to ensure and protect peace and sovereignty of member nations across the world, with particular regard for the small and the vulnerable.

“

**Till now, whatever we did mattered little outside, but from today onwards our success and failures will be reflected before the whole world.”**

-His Majesty the Third Druk Gyalpo



His Royal Highness Prince Namgyel Wangchuck (third from right) at the ceremony admitting Bhutan as the 128th member of the UN.





His Majesty the Third Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck's letter of request for membership to the UN in keeping with the aspirations of the Bhutanese people, resonating through their representatives at the National Assembly that passed the resolution to join the UN in 1967, is testimony to that.

An excerpt of His Majesty's letter, which appeared in the 26 December 1970 print edition of the New York Times stated that the Bhutanese were "acutely aware of the proven value of the United Nations organization to small and developing nations".

In the following year of 21 September 1971, 26 years after the institution of the United Nations, Bhutan was admitted among a union of nations as its 128th member.

The news of its admission reached Bhutan in the early hours of 22 September.

### **A moment to celebrate**

To mark the occasion, the Royal Government declared a three-day national holiday. A wave of festivities caught on with Bhutanese across the country. Archery tournaments masked and traditional dances, official luncheons and dinners with dignitaries took centre stage.

Speaking to the public on the admission of Bhutan to the UN, His Majesty said: "This has been made possible only due to the tireless efforts made by India. Just as our National Assembly is the supreme body to debate upon and decide our problems, so also the United Nations is the world body where all the International problems are discussed. The main aim of the United Nations is to promote international peace and friendship amongst countries of the world.



*A grandmother in one of Bhutan's western districts spends her days caring for her grandchildren.*

# Excerpts from the Third Druk Gyalpo's address to his people

“

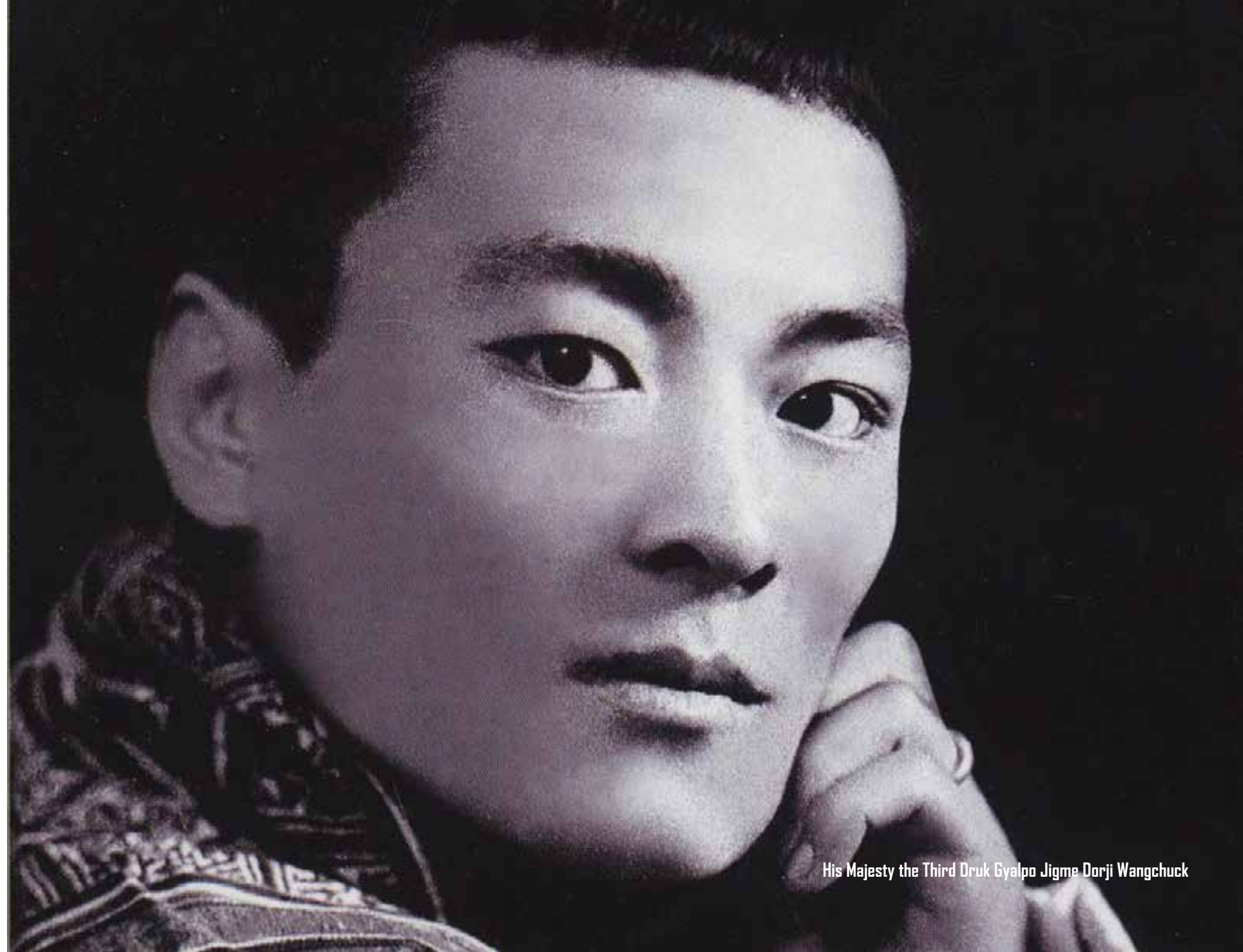
Till now, whatever we did mattered little outside, but from today onwards, our success and failures will be reflected before the whole world. We have now joined hands with other advanced countries of the world. It was only a decade ago that we launched development programmes to raise the level of our economy and provide welfare facilities for the people. We have not made much headway during this period and we have nothing much to show to the outside world. I am confident that if we are all united, the day is not very far when we will be amongst the other developed nations of the world. Our admission to the United Nations is not an end in itself, whereby, all our problems will be solved on their own. We will have to work hard and as one to usher in prosperity in the country and raise the standard of living of the people.

Our admission to the United Nations is, verily, as important as, when Shabdrung Rimpoche came to our land bringing unto us the message of Truth and Dharma. I myself, all the officers

servicing my Government and the Representative of India in Bhutan are lucky indeed that our admission to the United Nations has occurred during our time.

## **Hopes and prayers in the membership**

Bhutan has all along been a paradise of peace and tranquility and I am sure it will continue to be so. It is only for a few years that I shall serve the country as the king. After my retirement my son, Jigme Singye Wangchuck will shoulder this responsibility and I am sure that during his time the progress towards prosperity and happiness of my people will be accelerated. If I were to make a prayer, I would only say that in my son's time may the people of my country be far more prosperous and happy than they are today. I also exhort you all to pray likewise that during my son's time this wish of mine is fulfilled. ”

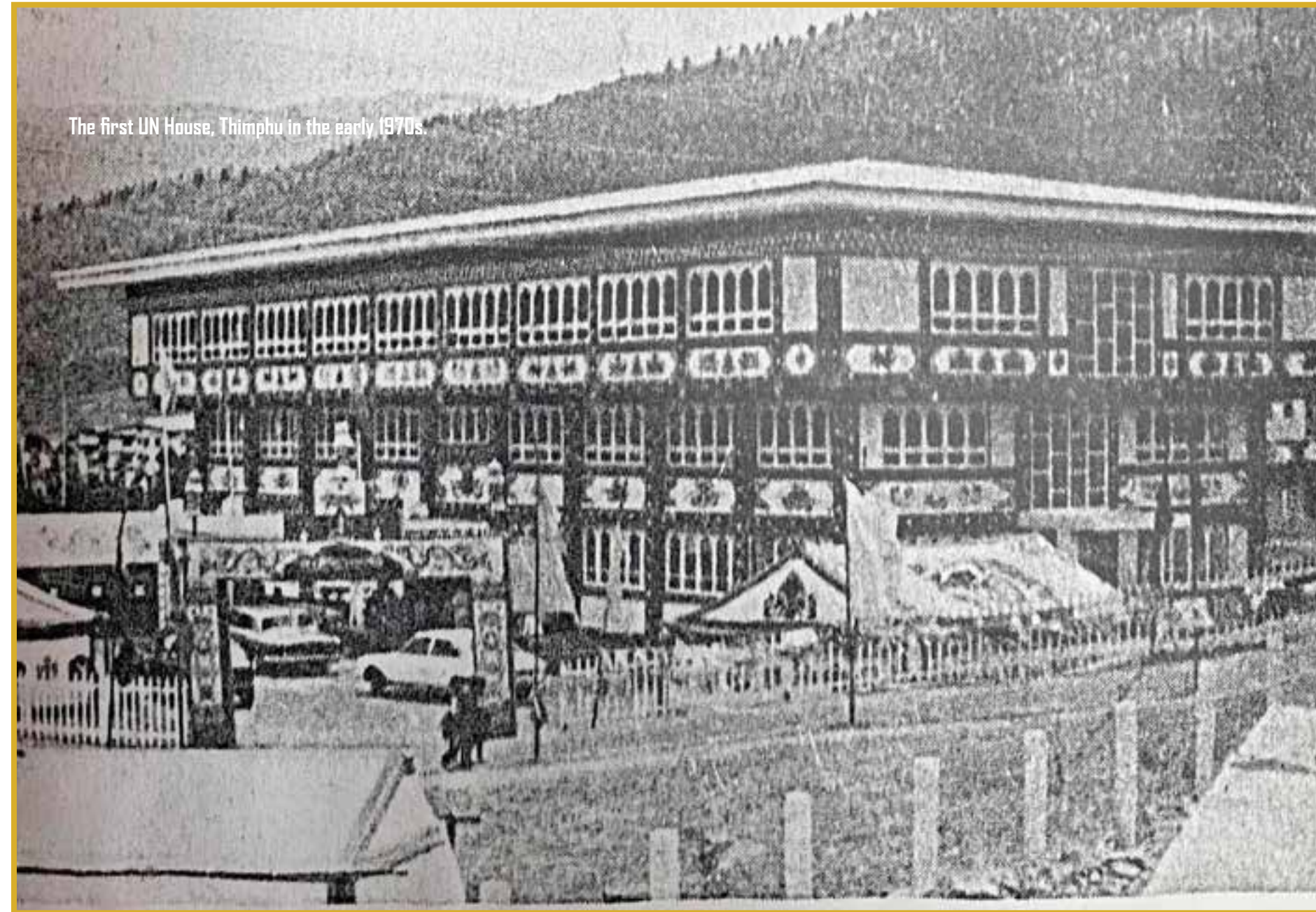


His Majesty the Third Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck

# Membership brings rounded development

Although Bhutan's development process began under the first Five-Year Plan in the early 1960s with infrastructures like roads, electricity, telecommunication network and basic health and education facilities, UN assistance complemented in deepening these modern facilities.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) started providing development assistance to Bhutan in 1972 focusing mainly in two areas – sustainable forest management and food security, including food quality and safety. Increased food production was supported by projects that built the capacities of Bhutanese officials and farmers and encouraged the rational use of fertilizers and chemical pesticides. Operational and management plans, information generation, and forest classifications were developed for the forestry sector.



The first UN House, Thimphu in the early 1970s.

In 1973, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) partnered with the Royal Government of Bhutan to support human development through provision of special skills training to civil servants. UNDP also supported the tourism and energy sectors.

In 1974, the United Nations Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) came in to support the rural water supply and sanitation programme. Since the start of the programme until the end of 1980s, about 1,500 rural water supply schemes were built across the country ensuring the rural population had access to safe water supply.

In the same year, the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) brought the School Feeding Programme by providing school meals to children. The support helped reduce incidence of malnutrition, reduce gender and economic inequalities, and increase primary and secondary school enrollment, particularly for girls.

The United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) in Bhutan from 1979 initially focused on infrastructure and agriculture towards fiscal decentralization and local governance.

In early 1970s, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) started support to the Royal Government of Bhutan with the first country programme cycle starting in 1987. It aimed to promote sexual and reproductive health for all, gender equality and use population for development.

# Excerpts from the Fourth Druk Gyalpo's speech

“

It is now eight years since our country became the 128th member of the United Nations. Having set Bhutan on the path of progress and modernization, my late father was aware of the many benefits available from the various agencies of this noble body for the progress and prosperity of our people and country. He also looked upon the United Nations as an international forum through which our country, as a sovereign Buddhist state, could, in our own way, contribute to global understanding, peace and justice. It was, thus, through his dedicated efforts that Bhutan is today a proud member of the United Nations.

Bhutan began receiving UNDP assistance in 1973. Although we are assisted by many countries, in particular our close friend and neighbor, India, the substantial and meaningful UNDP assistance has made a very significant impact on our overall development programme. During the last six years, we have received over Nu. 70 million from the UNDP.

Today we are celebrating with great joy and happiness the inauguration of the office of the Resident Representative of the UNDP in Thimphu. Our happiness on this occasion does not emanate from our anticipation of receiving further assistance, but from the true appreciation of the many benefits that our people have already received from the UNDP.

Until now, the UNDP office in New Delhi has been administering the UNDP programme in Bhutan.

On behalf of my people and government, and on my own behalf, I invite the distinguished guests from the UNDP to join with me in my hopes and prayers that the close understanding and cooperation between the UNDP and Bhutan would grow ever stronger with the passage of time and that all UNDP projects would be successful and continue to benefit our people. ”



His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Singye Wangchuck with Mr. Bradford Morse, Administrator of UNDP and Mr. Andrew Joseph, Director of UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific at the inauguration of the UN office in Thimphu.

# A brighter future for Bhutan's children



**Aum Dorji Choden**  
Bhutan's first female Minister  
and former UN staff

Ms. Dorji Choden still remembers the days when she woke up every morning before dawn, braving the morning chill and trekking a long way to get to her village school. Coming from a humble family, she understood from an early age that education held the key to her future. Besides, the hot, tasty lunch offered to her and all her friends, gave her another reason to go to school and study as hard as she could.

“I loved the school lunch of rice, dahl mixed with potatoes and occasionally the big, flat, dried fish that I later learnt came from Norway,” recalls Ms. Choden. “In those days, many families couldn't afford three square meals a day in some months of the year, and education was never a priority for the struggling parents. So the food we were getting at school meant a lot to me and my community.”



**A government official inspects WFP supplies at a store house in Thimphu.**

After secondary school, she went to university and graduated with a degree in Engineering — a remarkable achievement for a child of her generation, and even more so for a woman. Ms. Choden then became an engineer — the first woman engineer in this landlocked kingdom — and in 2013, she was appointed by the King as the Minister of Works and Human Settlement, making her the first female minister in Bhutan's history.

The school meals that Ms. Choden enjoyed as a child had been supported by the World Food Programme (WFP) for more than 40 years. In 2018, WFP handed the responsibility for the programme to the Government, signaling the organization's strategic shift in Bhutan as the once poverty-ridden country is now on course to graduate to Lower Middle Income status by 2023.

Under its new Country Strategic Plan (2019–2021), WFP now allocates most of its resources to building capacity and systems to help the Government take the National School Feeding Programme to scale. Some 75,000 children, almost half the total population of school-aged children, are now receiving school meals under the programme. Soon, an additional 30,000 children — all from remote parts of the country — will also enjoy the delicious lunches and tea breaks Ms. Choden once did.

*Article from WFP Bhutan website*

# A historic moment

His Majesty King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, the Third Druk Gyalpo, was pleased to seek Bhutan's entry into the United Nations in December 1971. His Royal Highness, Paro Penlop Prince Namgyal Wangchuk ably led the Kingdom's delegation to this event. Members of the Bhutanese delegation included Lyonpo Dawa Tsering, Minister-in-charge of Foreign Affairs at the time, and Lyonpo Sangye Penjore, Bhutan's first Permanent Representative-designate, amongst others.

Bhutan's membership to the United Nations was vital for the international community's full and formal recognition of the country's sovereign status in the community of nations. This was of utmost importance especially for a small landlocked and economically vulnerable country. It was also the best way for Bhutan to enhance relations with other member states, expand economic cooperation, and play a role in international affairs. In this regard the nation's heartfelt gratitude goes to His Majesty the Third Druk Gyalpo for his vision and foresight towards strengthening our independence and sovereignty.



**Lyonpo Om Pradhan**  
Former Permanent Representative of  
Bhutan to New York

The United Nations is the most historical and universal body established in 1945 towards the end of World War II. The aim was to get together representatives of countries across the globe to resolve international concerns through dialogue, objective analysis, and come up with peaceful solutions between countries. Such a process was expected to avoid resorting to military means and bloodshed.

The United Nations Charter was initially signed by 50 independent and warring nations at that time in San Francisco, USA. The primary objective was “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.”

In the last 75 years or so since its existence there have been shortfalls in the work of the United Nations with its now 193 members. This in no way undermines the international organization and its creation was truly a monumental achievement and the best instrument for the conduct of multilateral relations. What is vital is that the UN continues to provide the foundation for a rules-based international order and is a deterrent for governments to act in contradiction to any of the principles laid down in its Charter.

The UN's ultimate responsibility is to avoid the scourge of war. But equally critical is for the UN to promote justice and human rights, and the social and economic advancement and wellbeing of all people without discrimination, and irrespective of race and religion. Bhutan's Buddhist Kings and leadership, and now more than ever, His Majesty the King's every action, is the highest example set to the world on how a responsible, compassionate and caring leader addresses issues for the wellbeing of people. Bhutan's GNH policies and approach to development go beyond simply fulfilling the principles of the UN Charter.

During the rule of His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, I was highly privileged and deeply honored to serve as the Kingdom's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York on two occasions. This was from 1980 to 1984, and again from 1998 to 2003. After that, with His Majesty's blessings I served in the United Nations Secretariat in New York from 2003 to 2007. In 2007, His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, The Fifth Druk Gyalpo graciously summoned and appointed me the first chairman of Druk Holdings and Investments.



A primary school girl from Lunana, one of Bhutan's remotest nomadic communities on the northern frontiers.

Special Contribution

I am forever grateful to Their Majesties for the honor bestowed upon me to be of such service to the nation.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic accompanied by all its movement restrictions, I am glad that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been able to organise celebrations for the 50th anniversary of Bhutan's membership of the United Nations.

I congratulate the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Dr. Lotay Tshering, Hon'ble Foreign Minister Dr. Tandi Dorji, our Ambassadors and diplomats at the United Nations, and Bhutanese serving on United Nations duties around the world, and the officers and staff of the Ministry for their valuable contributions. Under the wise guidance of our beloved Monarch I am confident that they will take Bhutanese foreign relations and international cooperation in the years ahead to even greater heights.

TASHI DELEK!



**1981-1990**

A development  
partner



# Deepening and diversifying partnership



**F**or Bhutan, the 1980s were a momentous decade. The first air links were established with the outside world, the country launched its first weekly newspaper and modernizing domestic telecommunications network began.

In all these far-reaching developments, the UN was a partner to Bhutan during an era that saw the partnership deepen and diversify with more agencies establishing country offices.

**A key initiative of the 1980s was the Round Table Meetings (RTMs), where Bhutan and its development partners meet to strengthen development cooperation through policy dialogue and aid coordination.**



**The first aircraft, a Dornier 228-200, was procured with support from the UN.**





A village cook serves lunch for students in a remote school in Bhutan.

### Meals in schools

In the education sector, the partnership saw the start of the school feeding programme to provide meals to children across the country, boosting attendance and reducing malnutrition. The programme also extended to pregnant and nursing mothers, hospital patients and road workers. Assistance was also provided in developing a reserve stock in dairy production.

### A robust primary health care

With health identified as a priority, the partnership built the capacity of health workers to institutionalize the Primary Health Care (PHC) strategy and modernize the healthcare system at a time when health infrastructure was rapidly expanding to provide more equitable access. Immunization coverage saw a steady increase and support to rural water supply schemes enabled villages across the country to access clean water, leading to better health.

### The Round Table Meetings

A key initiative of the 1980s was the Round Table Meetings (RTMs), where Bhutan and its development partners met to strengthen development cooperation through policy dialogue

and aid coordination. The UN continues to lead in providing support to the RTMs, which are held twice in a Five-Year Plan period.

### Food security and forest management

Support to sustainable forest management and food security, further expanded during the decade with the partnership building the capacity of Bhutanese officials and farmers, and encouraging rational use of fertilizers and chemical pesticides to increase food production.



Pioneers of Bhutan's primary health care system.



*His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo with Executive Director of UNICEF Mr. James P. Grant in 1988.*



*UNICEF Executive Director James P. Grant (front row centre) with the UN staff in Thimphu in 1988.*



*French Honorary Consul (current) Françoise Pommaret at Talo, as a UN Volunteer, documenting the history of Talo Monastery in 1983. Also in the picture are Dophu Drukpa and Yeshey Tenzin.*



*UN Junior Professional Offices (UNJPO) Aum Patricia Tshering with Bhutan Postal Corporation's first Managing Director Dasho Megraj Gurung in 1984.*

## UN Secretary General makes first visit to Bhutan

March | 1989

The Secretary General of the United Nations Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar and Mrs. Marcela Perez de Cuellar visited Bhutan in 1989.

The two-day visit was the first to Bhutan by a Secretary General of the United Nations.

The United Nations delegation were greeted by His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo and their Majesties the Queens, Ministers and officials from the Royal Government and members of the diplomatic community.

His Majesty the King thanked the Secretary General on behalf of the Royal Government for the generous assistance Bhutan received for its development programmes from the United Nations.

His Majesty also expressed the Royal Government's deep satisfaction for the very high rate of success of all the United Nations assisted projects and programmes in the country.



*His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo with UN Secretary General Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar at Kuengachholing State Guest House in Motithang, Thimphu. Mr. de Cuellar is the first and only UN Secretary General to visit Bhutan.*



**1991-2000**

Support to  
climate action



# Climate change in focus



While the UN support continued to expand in a number of areas already prioritized by the Royal Government such as health and education, environment gained prominence in the 1990s with several initiatives to combat climate change and its impacts.

A key development was the establishment of the Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation (BT FEC), the world's first environmental trust fund.



Representing Bhutan's highland communities, as guardians of the country's sacred glacial lakes, young Laya residents advocate for climate action.



### A trust for environmental conservation

A key development was the establishment of Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation (BTFFEC), the world's first environmental trust fund, which has since provided grants to more than 200 conservation projects.

### Global Environment Facility-Small Grants Programme (GEF-SGP)

Another significant initiative was the Global Environment Facility-Small Grants Programme (GEF-SGP), implemented in partnership with the Royal Government, to support micro environmental projects through community based organizations, civil society, educational institutions and other organizations.

In the past two decades, the programme enhanced the livelihoods of thousands of rural and vulnerable Bhutanese through support to biodiversity conservation, climate action, sustainable land use, and water and waste management. The programme also helped the growth of community based and civil society organizations.



An aerial view of Paro valley.



Students learn basic water storage.

### Exploring power potentials

The partnership also extended to the energy sector with support to develop a power system master plan, conducting pre-feasibility studies for promising hydropower sites, exploring alternative energy sources for rural communities such as solar lighting and low wattage stoves. A UN supported study with the government of Norway showed that Bhutan had the potential to produce 30,000 MW of hydropower.

### In education and health

Meanwhile, ongoing partnerships in the education sector saw the school feeding programme further expand, enabling thousands of children from remote and rural schools to attend classes. In the health sector, building capacities of health workers continued to meet the huge demand for staff in new health care facilities.



*UN Resident Representative Mr. Shun-ichi Murata and Secretary of National Women Association of Bhutan (NWAB) Dasho Daw Dem sign the MOU to promote the craft of Deysho (Bhutanese Paper) making in Thimphu.*



*Dasho Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, and Thimphu school students participate in the First UN Fun Run in 1995.*



*Students of Yangchenphug, Motithang and Lungtenzampa schools re-enact the 1971 UN General Assembly, the year Bhutan became a member.*



*International Representatives and Ministers light butter lamps at the Tashichhodzong to celebrate UN Day in 1995.*

# UN High Commissioner visits Bhutan

July | 1994

His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo granted audience to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Ayala Lasso, who was in the country on the invitation from the Royal Government.

He also held detailed discussions with Cabinet Ministers, senior government officials, and representatives of the National Assembly and the Royal Advisory Council.

Mr. Ayala Lasso said the discussions covered the possibility of projects in the judiciary, civil service and sectors like health, education, and environment.

He was impressed with the atmosphere of peace and quiet in which the Bhutanese people lived and tried to contribute to the progress of the nation.



His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo grants audience to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr Jose Ayala Lasso (left) and the Chief of the Technical Cooperation Branch, Mr John P. Pace.

# Bhutan can help with global food security

September | 2000

Bhutan could contribute to the goal of international food security by, not only improving its own food security but also through effective and full participation in the process of international decision and policy making, according to the Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Mr. Jacques Diouf.

“Bhutan is part of the FAO and participates in the different government bodies, where policy decisions are made and different negotiations are conducted,” said Mr. Diouf, who was in Bhutan from September 8 to 11. “Naturally the voice of Bhutan in the process is very important.”

Mr. Diouf, who is the first FAO Director General to visit Bhutan, said the organization would continue to assist Bhutan in areas like the telefood project, in joining the World Trade Organization, globalization, issues of technical barriers to

trade, quality control, problems of intellectual property rights, and human resource development among others.

“We hope to strengthen and expand these activities particularly in the framework of the food security project being implemented in 60 countries as a follow-up to the world food summit of 1996,” he said.

Mr. Diouf told Kuensel he admired His Majesty’s farsighted vision and concept of development, which was based on the happiness of the Bhutanese people.

Mr. Diouf said there were still 800 million people around the world who do not have adequate access to food, 719 million people from the developing countries and 34 million in developed countries.

FAO-Bhutan relations started in the early 1970’s before Bhutan formally became a member of the organization in 1972. Since then, FAO has provided technical assistance to the forestry and agriculture sectors.

Mr. Diouf was accompanied to Bhutan by the FAO Representative to Bhutan and India, Mr. Peter Rosenegger.



*His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo grants audience to the Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), Mr. Jacques Diouf at the Tashichhodzong.*



**2001-2010**

The MDG era and  
transition to  
democracy



# Transition to democracy



The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000. The eight development goals were:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) succeeded the MDGs in 2015.

The UN played a key role in enabling Bhutan to advance good governance, one of the four pillars of Gross National Happiness.

Bhutanese citizens displaying their voter cards to enter the voting booth.





As part of International Women's Day, a young Dagana resident partakes in an awareness campaign.

### Bhutan's MDG achievements

The Royal Government of Bhutan aligned development plans to the MDG targets, and later the SDG targets. For example, poverty reduction was the main objective and theme of the Tenth Five-Year Plan. Consequently, the plan's targeted approach to poverty reduction was effective and reduced the national poverty rate to under 15 percent by the end of 2012. The proportion of Bhutan's population living in extreme poverty dropped to 1.5 percent. Bhutan, thus, achieved the poverty target of the MDG's three years ahead of the 2015 timeline.

A couple of other early achievements were made in enhancing sustainable access to sanitation and safe drinking water and halving the number of under-weight children below five years of age. Although Bhutan achieved the MDGs target of gender equality in school, the overall gender gap in education continued.

Maternal mortality decreased from 255 per 100,000 live births in 2000 to 86 per 100,000 live births in 2016. Bhutan also made significant progress in controlling malaria and tuberculosis.

### What made these early achievements possible?

The outcomes of all national, sectoral, and local government plans and programmes—defined as Key Result Areas in the Five-Year Plans—responded to relevant MDGs.

The UN's contribution to these successes came mainly through facilitation of policy advice and capacity building for pro-poor growth, integrated poverty reduction, and mainstreaming environment and disaster risk reduction into national and local development planning.

### Support to Good Governance

The UN played a key role in enabling Bhutan to advance good governance, one of the four pillars of Gross National Happiness. This became even more important as the country set up key institutions to support its democratic process. In 2006, the UN supported the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) as part of Bhutan's transition to the new democratic system of governance.





Today, Bhutan is ranked 24th cleanest country out of 180 countries and territories in the Transparency International's 2021 Corruption Perception Index (CPI).

The UN was also part of joint efforts to harmonize and align support to the good governance component of the Tenth Five-Year Plan. In April 2008, the joint appraisal mission of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC) finalized the first-ever

Local Governance Joint Support Programme. This supported decentralization in line with the Royal Government's aspirations spelled out in the Tenth Five-Year Plan to foster an enabling environment through good governance.

In 2008, the UN supported the Election Commission of Bhutan to enhance national capacity to conduct 'free and fair elections' at both national and local levels. One of the components of the project was to raise awareness among eligible voters on the electoral process. Perhaps, this indicates why Bhutan saw an unprecedented voter turnout of 79.4 percent in the first national election in 2008.

A woman in rural Bhutan cooks a meal for her family on an wood-fed earthen stove.







## Support to climate action

Another engaging partnership between the UN and the National Environment Commission and the National Action Plan has been in climate action where the UN supported critical climate action projects through three National Adaptation Programmes of Action.

A major project under the first NAPA (2008-2012) was the lowering of the water level of the Thorthromi glacial lake to reduce the risk of flooding caused by glacial lake outburst. A series of early warning stations were built, and disaster preparedness and response capacity was improved. The second NAPA (2014-2018) responded to the threats of landslides and flooding in Rinchending and Pasakha in Chhukha respectively. It also had projects on resilient water harvesting systems, climate-induced forest fires, and setting up of hydromet stations.

A number of targets related to environmental sustainability were embedded in the programmes and projects of relevant sectors like the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests and National Environment Commission. For example, the National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan 2014 was designed to address biodiversity conservation and use, and National Action Plan (NAP) 2014 was geared towards combating land degradation/desertification in Bhutan, including soil erosion. Likewise, the Intended Nationally Determined Contribution submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has nine mitigation and 10 adaptation measures to combat impacts of climate change in Bhutan. The UN supported Bhutan's first Nationally Determined Contribution (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement in 2015.



Workers mobilized from across the country at the Thorthromi Lake in Lunana to mitigate threats of Glacier Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF).

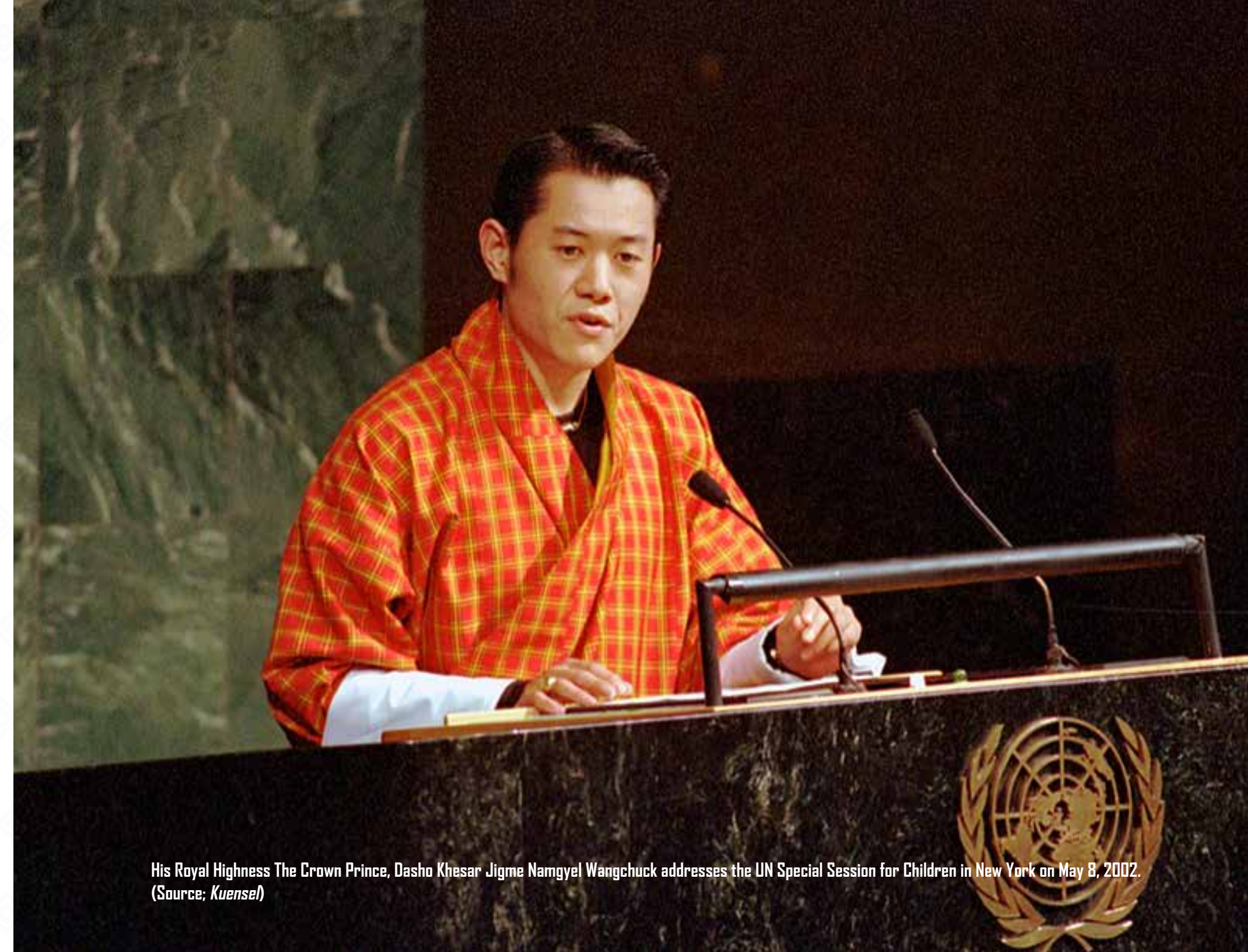
# The Crown Prince's address

May | 2002

Dasho Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck, the Crown Prince of Bhutan, delivered a historic address at the 27th session of the UN General Assembly on May 8, during the “UN Special Session for Children”, one of the most important international conferences ever held to create a “World Fit for Children.”

“All of us have seen poverty, disease, hunger and pain in our societies. Many of us live and work in places or institutions where we are directly touched by the experience. My first thought on this issue remains my guiding priority today. It is our duty to build a future which ensures that every child will be free of these afflictions. To achieve this we must all work together in a spirit of commitment, trust, and mutual respect while taking great care to plan - not just a few years ahead - but generations into the future.”

The Crown Prince expressed his appreciation to Bhutan's development partners and commended organizations like UNICEF which had spearheaded the global movement for children.



His Royal Highness The Crown Prince, Dasho Khasar Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck addresses the UN Special Session for Children in New York on May 8, 2002.  
(Source: Kuensei)



*His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo with Mr. James T. Morris, the 10th Executive Director (ED) of the World Food Programme in 2006.*



*Former Prime Minister Jigmi Y. Thinley with the UN Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki Moon at the UN Summit, Geneva in 2008.*

## Development partners reaffirm support

February | 2003

All development partners reaffirmed their support to Bhutan and expressed their long-term commitment to Bhutan's development efforts during the eighth Round Table Meeting (RTM) held in Geneva on February 18-19.

The RTM is the highest level of donor coordination between the Royal Government and its development partners. The delegates included high-level representation from 18 donor countries and 27 multilateral and other donor agencies. It was the largest meeting held until then with 106 delegates attending the meeting.

The RTM discussion included presentation of the Ninth Five-Year Plan and the external assistance requirement, poverty reduction and decentralization.

The donors noted the remarkable socio-economic progress made so far and expressed great optimism for further economic growth and transformation. Bhutan's holistic development policy based on Gross National Happiness that puts people at the centre of development was lauded.



Senior Representatives of Government and International Agencies in Geneva after the Round Table Meeting.



## HEE-HAW

October | 2008

UN Resident Coordinator Mr. Nicholas Rosellini is almost launched into orbit by the Secretary for International Boundaries, DASHO PEMA WANGCHUK, on the occasion of the inauguration of the Lampelri Botanical Park by Her Majesty Gyalyum Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck.

Also in the picture on the far left (behind) are former UNICEF Resident Representative Gepke Hengst, Tarayana Executive Director Aum Chime P. Wangdi, and Former Opposition Leader Dr. Pema Gyamtsho.



**2011-2020**

The Sustainable  
Development Goals



# A development story



As Bhutan marks its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a member to the UN, it also celebrates the swift progress it made since the early 1970s.

Today, the country is in the third year of a preparatory period with the UN General Assembly having endorsed, in December 2018, Bhutan's graduation from a Least Developed Country to Lower Middle-Income Country.

The political will and farsightedness of its Monarchs have made Bhutan a developmental success story, having made tremendous socio-economic progress and by becoming one of the fastest growing economies, although small, in the world.

**The political will and farsightedness of its Monarchs have made Bhutan a developmental success story.**



Participants and UN staff members during a workshop on Sustainable Development Goals in 2018.



## Leaving No One Behind

Embracing the Agenda 2030, Bhutan aligned the pursuit of Sustainable Development Goals in its 16 National Key Result Areas (NKRA) of the 12th Five-Year Plan (FYP).

Ten of these are directly aimed at “leaving no one behind”, the theme of the Agenda 2030. Responding to these key result areas, the UN focuses on reaching those furthest behind, identifying socio-economic groups like the children in conflict with law, persons with disability, persons living with HIV, unemployed youth and victims of domestic violence, who are at risk of being left behind.

## Sustainable Development Partnership Framework

Bhutan’s ascension to a Lower-Middle Income Country (LMIC) from a Least Developed one today, requires sustained partnership between the Royal Government, its development partners, key stakeholders and the UN agencies. Likewise, the same partnership and support is paramount to achieving Agenda 2030.

The stress on sustainable development for Bhutan is in view of ensuring a smooth transition to a LMIC without reversal of results already achieved so far. The overall goal of the United Nations’ support to Bhutan from 2019 to 2023 is towards “A just, harmonious and sustainable Bhutan where no one is left behind”.

Based on a theory of change, by 2023, the UN aims to mobilize and invest an estimated USD 120 million to achieve results in four outcome areas of:

- Enhanced access to and use of reliable and timely data for inclusive and evidence-based policy and decision making.
- Access to quality health, nutrition, protection, education, water, sanitation and hygiene services for the vulnerable and the unreached.
- Strengthened national stakeholders to provide equal opportunities for all, particularly women, and vulnerable groups.
- More resilient communities and their economics to climate-induced and other disasters and biodiversity loss as well as economic vulnerability.

The UN’s investment is targeted at these four outcomes to help implement the 2030 Agenda in Bhutan and traverse the last mile to LDC graduation.

## A lab for many issues

For youth unemployment, waste management and public sector innovation, which are some of the pressing issues facing Bhutan, the UN initiated the Accelerator Lab, becoming a part of the UN’s global network of 90 labs in 114 countries in October 2020.

The innovative platform further augments partnership with the Gross National Happiness Commission, National Environment Commission, Royal Civil Service Commission and the Prime Minister’s Office.



Sachin Tendulkar asks children in Bhutan to wash their hands after outdoor games and sports.







### Commitment to peacekeeping

Bhutan is known for being a peaceful country, and though small, it extends its help in peacekeeping by deploying troops and police to the mission. It is currently ranked 90 out of the 124 contributing countries.

During the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations in 2018, Bhutan subscribed to the “do no harm” principle, to reduce the carbon footprint of its peacekeeping contingents through good environmental management.

Bhutan’s participation in peacekeeping missions began with three officers from the Armed Forces being assigned to the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) mission in the Middle East and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

The assignments at UNSTO and MINUSCA marked the first and historic participation of Bhutanese Armed Force officers as UN Peacekeepers, serving as a Blue Beret under the UN flag.

Bhutan’s participation in UN peacekeeping missions is a proud moment for the country and reflects its long-standing support and commitment for the UN and its obligation as a member of the international community to respond to crisis and humanitarian disasters.

The UN peacekeeping operation, which began in 1948 has become a cornerstone of the international response to conflict resolution.

In 2017, Bhutan signed up for UN peacekeeping rapid deployment, providing 45 peacekeepers to 10 UN field operations. The Bhutanese Force Protection Company will be able to deploy within 60 days of a request by the Secretary-General.



*UN Police (UNPOL) Commissioner Gregory Hinds welcomes six RBP officers, on a year-long assignment to UNMIL (United National Mission in Liberia).*



# UN Department of Operational Support, Under Secretary General visits

His Excellency Mr. Atul Khare, under Secretary General, Department of Operational Support, United Nations arrived in Thimphu on a two-day official visit to Bhutan from 18-20 October, 2019. His arrival marks the first high-level visit from the Department of Operational Support of the UN Secretariat, which provides operational support to all UN peacekeeping missions around the world.

The UN Peacekeeping is a global partnership which helps countries devastated by conflict to make difficult and complex transition from conflict to peace. Bhutan began participating in UN Peacekeeping in September, 2014. The assignment of a Military Observer at UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organization) and two Staff Officers at MINUSCA (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission) in Central African Republic marked the first and historic participation of the Bhutanese Armed Force Officers as “Blue Beret” under the UN flag.



His Excellency Mr. Atul Khare, Under Secretary General, Department of Operational Support, United Nations calls on Lyonchhen Dr. Lotay Tshering at the Prime Minister's Office in Thimphu in 2019.

# Peacekeeping



**Tshoki Choden**

*Chief, Political and International  
Security Division  
Department of Multilateral Affairs*

Bhutan began to partake in United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping in September 2014. The first deployment of three Bhutanese peacekeepers to UN Peacekeeping Missions in the Middle East and the Central African Republic, although modest, marked an important milestone in Bhutan's multilateral diplomacy trajectory. Undoubtedly it served to reaffirm Bhutan's commitment to the principles and objectives of the UN, the quintessential seat of global multilateralism, and work towards maintenance of international peace and security. Having benefited from its membership in the UN since 1971, Bhutan decided that it was not only right but time to give back to the UN. The development signaled that Bhutan had come of age barely forty three years after its admission as a UN member state. Bhutan's engagement with UNPK diversified over time to include modalities of participation other than deployment of individual peacekeepers. Since 2017, under

an arrangement known as the Rapid Deployment Level Agreement with the UN, Bhutan annually pledged a Force Protection Company consisting of a military unit of 200 troops in the highest state of readiness to be deployed within sixty days of receiving a notification from the UN. Bhutan was the first troop contributing country to sign such an agreement with the UN. The capacity of the police is also being built for a similar modality of participation. Values that govern Bhutan's national development also guide its UN Peacekeeping engagement. While Bhutan aspires to gradually deepen the scope and level of its contributions to UN Peacekeeping operation, the intent is to focus on pledging small units that are well equipped and trained to adhere to and uphold the highest standards of ethics and professionalism. In line with national commitment to sustainable use of environmental resources to mitigate the impact of climate change, the pledged military and police contingents are trained to adopt environment

friendly measures when they deploy. Bhutan has achieved the 15 percent rate of female participation in UN peacekeeping operations, and committed to the UN zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. Going forward, the length and breadth of Bhutan's peacekeeping engagement would to a large extent determined by how successfully it is able to navigate the international climate surrounding UN peacekeeping. For a relatively new participant in UN peacekeeping operations, especially a small country like Bhutan, the challenges are formidable but not impossible to overcome.

*Excerpts from an article written by  
Tshoki Choden*

# A UNV story from the Congo



**Yeshey Zangmo**  
UNV Nurse

## Background

My name is Yeshey Zangmo and I am from Wamrong in Eastern Bhutan. The eldest among eight siblings and a mother of two, I attended my junior high school in Wamrong with my siblings brought up by parents, who ran a small business.

After high school, I joined the health sector. I did my Diploma in Nursing and midwifery in Bhutan in December in 1999. A decade later, I completed my Bachelor's in nursing from La Trobe University, Australia and gained my Master's certificate in Community Health Nursing in 2012.

I worked as Staff Nurse and Chief Nurse in various District hospitals in Bhutan for 19 years, before volunteering with the UN to work in other countries like the Middle East and Africa.

## Working as a UNV nurse

My association with the UNV programme dates back to my nursing school in Bhutan. I worked with doctors who came to Bhutan under UNV scheme. These doctors left a good impression on me that I always aspired to share and gain experiences, knowledge, and skills like them.

## Current situation of the Congo

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), is a beautiful country, although mired in political turmoil, compounded by occasional surge of epidemics such as Ebola, and now, COVID-19. Although the COVID cases are not as overwhelming as some developing nations around the world, the country managed the pandemic quite well. At the UN clinic here, COVID-19 did not hit us by surprise. We are comparatively better prepared. PPEs and isolation rooms were already in place from the earlier Ebola cases.

## What keeps me going

I always remind myself that I should never give up easily, no matter how challenging life can be at times. I may choose to fail as an individual, but I should never fail my King and my country. Like many Bhutanese youth of my time, I grew up listening to our Kings encouraging us to work hard and how, what we did, represented us. This works in my favour to navigate through such a huge organization as the United Nations and continue learning every day.

## The inspiration

The thought that I just have this one life to do whatever good I possibly can for others inspires me every day.

As care-givers we went around with empty bowls begging for food for the not so privileged patients from those that were. We tore bed sheets to wrap a newborn of a new and unprepared parents. We prayed for lives that hung on drips. Working as a nurse and traveling around the world, I lived many lives in one lifetime.

# Engagements and interactions

## An important international organisation

More than 75 years after it was established, the United Nations continues to remain the most important international organization for all countries, big and small. Despite the many criticisms it has faced over the years on its record in fulfilling its main objectives, the fact that countries that did not initially join it and the new nations that emerged over the years all applied for membership is a testament to its continued importance and relevance today.

If one were to ask whether the world would have been better off with or without the United Nations, I believe the general consensus would be that its balance sheet has more credits than debits. At the same time, the UN also needs to keep pace and move in tune with the changing times. To this end, necessary reforms in its structure and functioning must be carried out judiciously. An important reform that is already under discussion is the need to expand the Security Council to make it more representative and equitable in the present international scenario.



**V. Namgyel**  
Ambassador of Bhutan to India

For the people of Bhutan, it was a proud moment in our history when our country was admitted to the United Nations on 21st September 1971 as the 128th member of this prestigious international organization. It was only four months back that Bhutan had opened its very first embassy in the capital city of our friendly neighbor, India, with whom we had established diplomatic relations in 1968. As a small, landlocked nation sandwiched between giant neighbors, Bhutan had preserved its sovereignty over the years by following a cautious foreign policy that could be termed as a form of self-imposed isolation from which we had emerged just 10 years back in 1961 when development programs were started with generous assistance from India.

Bhutan was then among the least developed countries in the world. However, we had a rich cultural heritage, a pristine natural environment, a good value system with strong bonds between families and members of our society. We were also blessed with the wise leadership of farsighted Monarchs committed to promoting the best interests of the people and country. Our Kings recognized that the time had come to

implement sustainable development at home and also start working at a comfortable pace to enable our nation to attain a respectable image as a responsible member of the international community.

Bhutan has been successful in implementing development programmes with unstinted support from India and valuable assistance from Japan, the European Union and many friends in Europe. Following our UN membership, development activities also benefited from assistance it extended and other specialized UN agencies that have their offices in Bhutan. The other important benefit of UN membership was the opportunity it provided for small countries like Bhutan to raise our international profile.

Through engagements and interactions during the multitude of meetings and conferences of the United Nations and its related bodies, the international community has come to know more about Bhutan and appreciate the way we conduct our foreign policy and diplomatic engagements. We have gained a respectable reputation as a country that takes a principled

Students of a remote school in Bhutan walk to class for the day's lessons.



stand on most issues and a pragmatic position on some others depending on our own national interests. We have also shown our commitment to international peace by making a modest contribution in the area of peacekeeping despite the small size of our armed forces. Our environmental policy and our commitment to remain carbon neutral for all time has received wide appreciation. Our development philosophy of Gross National Happiness has also generated a positive image of Bhutan.

We greatly value and cherish our membership of the United Nations and deeply appreciate the benefits we have received from it and all its specialized agencies. We thank the UN and its other agencies for their presence in Bhutan and the valuable contributions they have made to our country's socio-economic development. As we celebrate the past 50 years of our membership to the UN, we look forward to an even brighter future as a member of this great organization.

# Civil Society Organizations

The emergence of citizen initiatives as an organized and legally registered civil society (CSO) is a new phenomenon in Bhutan. The Civil Society Organization Act of Bhutan was enacted in 2007 and the Rules and Regulations in 2010. Today, there are 52 registered CSOs in Bhutan, including 41 Public Benefit Organizations and 11 Mutual Benefit Organizations. These CSOs cater to a wide range of services from livelihoods, youth, care-giving and rehabilitation, gender, disability, good governance, health, education, arts and culture, environment, animal welfare and recreation. For their credibility, empathy, and compassionate services, 22 CSOs received the National Order of Merit (Gold) in 2016 from His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck. All along, the UN in Bhutan has advocated, recognized, and partnered with the CSOs in different sectors and at various levels. The UN continues to advocate for CSOs as a critical part of the governance system as it benefits and delivers key services especially to the most vulnerable and unreached population.

To further strengthen CSOs and build their capacities and outreach, the UN is currently supporting development of two key documents: (1) CSO engagement strategy for Anti-Corruption Commission to engage CSOs in promoting integrity, accountability, transparency and justice in the country; (2) Guidelines on CSO-Government Collaboration.



A panel discussion underway during the CSO Capacity Building Workshop in 2019 organised by UN Bhutan.

## Civil Society Organizations in Bhutan



## Civil Society Organizations in Bhutan







*Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Christina Figueres with former Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay in Thimphu in 2014.*



*Former Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay addresses the UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York.*

## For the ozone layer

November | 2017

Protecting the ozone layer remains an important endeavor for Bhutan, and efforts have been bolstered by Her Majesty Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck as United Nations Environment Programme's Ozone Ambassador.

Bhutan ratified and signed the Montreal Protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer in 2004.

Bhutan phased out Chlorofluorocarbons in 2010 and worked towards phasing out Hydro Chloro Fluoro Carbon 22(HCFC) by 2025, 15 years ahead of the global target of 2040.



Her Majesty Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck, United Nations Environment Programme's Ozone Ambassador inaugurates the Ozone Park in Motithang, Thimphu. Also in the picture are former Agriculture Minister Yeshey Dorji and Regional Director of UNEP Ms. Dechen Tsering.



February | 2018

*His Majesty The King and  
Her Majesty The Gyaltsuen  
with Bhutanese UN Peace  
Keeping Volunteers at  
the Royal Bhutan Army  
(RBA) Headquarters,  
Dechhencholing, Thimphu.*



Former Executive Director of the International Trade Centre (ITC) Ms. Arancha Gonzalez with former Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay in 2014.



Prime Minister Dr. Lotay Tshering (centre) with UN Resident Coordinator Gerald Daly (left), UNDP Administrator and UN Under Secretary General Mr. Achim Steiner and National Assembly Speaker Wangchuk Namgyel (extreme right) at the launch of Bhutan's National Human Development Report in 2019.

## Honoring the People's King

March | 2019

In recognition of His Majesty The King's leadership in advancing human development, the wellbeing and happiness of the people of Bhutan, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Mr. Achim Steiner honored the Druk Gyalpo with a Special Award of Recognition.

Having been a close partner in the country's development for over 40 years, the recognition was a testament of how fortunate Bhutan and her people were to be guided by the selfless leadership of the monarchs with extraordinary caliber, benevolence and commitment to the service of the people.

His Majesty The King's championing of the holistic development paradigm of Gross National Happiness, leadership in environment conservation and guidance in ensuring a smooth transition to democracy continue to receive international acclaim.



The UNDP Administrator and United Nations Under-Secretary General, Achim Steiner presents the Special Award of Recognition to His Majesty The King at the Throne Room in Thimphu.

# Human Development Index

December | 2019

Prime Minister Dr. Lotay Tshering, UN Resident Coordinator Mr. Gerald Daly, senior government officials, the UN Country Team, Members of Parliament, Representatives of the Diplomatic Community, Opposition Leader, Vice Chancellor of the Royal University of Bhutan and Representatives from Dratshang Lhentshog at the launch of the 2019 Human Development index..



## A Goodwill Ambassador

October | 2019

Coinciding with the United Nations Day celebration, Her Majesty Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck was recognized for her leadership role as the United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA) Goodwill Ambassador for the past two decades. UNFPA Under Secretary General and Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem presented the award to the Queen Mother.

Her Majesty Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck also received the individual laureate for the 2020 UN Population Award through a virtual ceremony. The award recognized Her Majesty's outstanding contribution in raising awareness and devising solutions to population and reproductive health issues.

The UN Population Award was established in 1981 and was first presented in 1983. The Award is presented annually for the most outstanding contribution in the area of population and reproductive health.

A special documentary on Her Majesty the Gyalyum's journey as the UNFPA Goodwill Ambassador for 21 years was also screened at the Grand Kuenray before the award ceremony.



*Her Majesty Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck receives the award in recognition for her role as the Goodwill Ambassador of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for the past two decades from Dr. Natalia Kanem, Under Secretary General and Executive Director of UNFPA.*

## Policy for persons with disabilities

December | 2019

The UN supported the Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC) in the drafting of the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities. The policy was launched on 3 December 2019 coinciding with the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Described as one of the most comprehensive policies for Persons with Disabilities, the policy is also available in Braille. It was formulated with participation from persons with disabilities, their parents and representatives, and covers major areas such as education, health, economic security policy and planning, access to justice, public transport, communications and technologies and political participation among others.



A woman living with a disability holds up a copy of the Policy for Persons with Disabilities.



## Innovative financing

A joint initiative of the Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC) and the Ministry of Finance in close partnership with the UN RCO, UNDP and UNICEF, the Bhutan SDG Financing Programme aims to make a transformative contribution to the way Bhutan finances its development.

Under the partnership, the UN and RGoB will jointly explore new approaches to innovative financing, develop new financing strategies, and strengthen public-private partnerships for sustainable investment in the future.

The UN is undertaking activities that bring in ‘double return’ both socially and economically, some of which are investing in high quality Early Child Care Development (ECCD), electric vehicles, addressing gender-based violence and food fortification for improving public health.



Gross National Happiness Commission Secretary Thinley Namgyel, Foreign Secretary Ambassador Kinga Singye, UNDP Resident Representative Ms. Azusa Kubota and UNICEF Resident Representative Dr. Will Parks launch the Bhutan SDG Financing Programme in Thimphu in 2021.

# Investment case for development

*The UN undertook activities that bring in  
double return both socially and economically*



Renewed investments that are effectively implemented are key drivers of achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As a key collaborator in this objective, the UN emphasizes programmes that are innovative with high returns on investments both for donors and the people empowered by it.

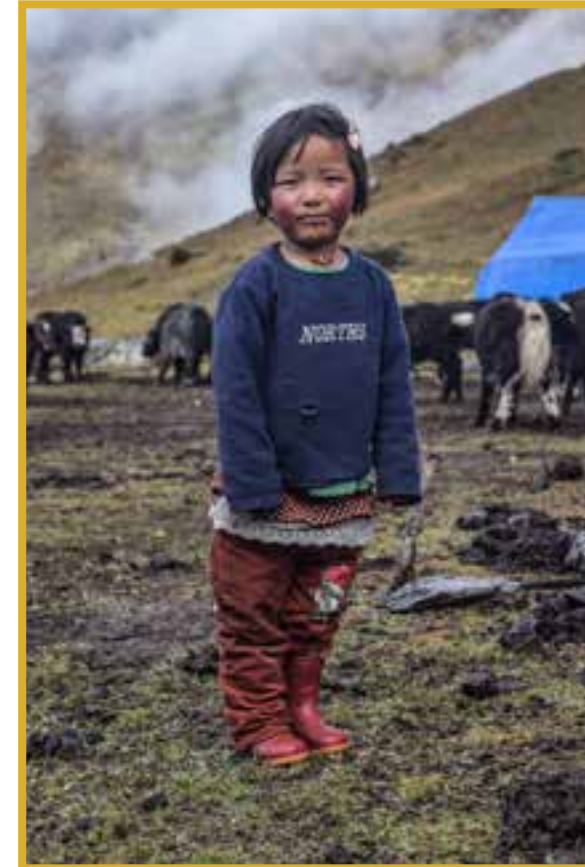


**1.** Investing in high-quality ECCD is one of the surest ways of addressing inequalities in health, ability, achievement, opportunity, and long-term success. For every 1 USD invested in ECCD, there is a return of 16 USD.





**2.** Through a key UN initiative, nuns and monks receive education on sexual and reproductive health including their right to freedom from violence.



**3.** Across a range of societies, violence against women costs between 1 to 2 percent of the GDP - these costs are often of a physical, social and psychological nature. The work that the UN is doing through its pilot project is a practical example of what the UN is doing to address gender-based violence at the family and local levels.





4. Today, all the 180 Basic Health Units provide early detection and screening of common Non Communicable Diseases.



5. Adding micro-nutrients to commonly eaten foods has a documented impact on reducing micro nutrient deficiencies. Food fortification has played a major role in improving public health.



# From strength to strength

I served as Permanent Representative of Bhutan to the UN New York from February 2014 to June 2017. Representing my King and Country as the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Bhutan to the United Nations has been the greatest honour and the highlight of my almost 40-year career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was also a high privilege to be appointed as the first female Ambassador of the country.

In addition to my UN mandate, it was also an honor for me to be accredited as Bhutan's Ambassador to Canada.

I consider my years in New York as some of the most fulfilling years, both professionally as well as personally.

Becoming a member of the United Nations in 1971 at a time when Bhutan's development was still in its nascent stages was a historic milestone. It reaffirmed the country's sovereign status as well as its role as an equal and active member of



**Kunzang C Namgyel**  
Permanent Representative of Bhutan to UN

the World Body. I recall my years in New York as a young officer in the mid 1980s when we relied on long distance calls, fax transmissions and postal mail to communicate with headquarters; and fast forward 30 years later to the digital era of lightning speed communications with information available at the click of a button. How times have changed, and for the better I say.

2021 is an extremely auspicious year as we commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Bhutan's membership of the United Nations. In the past five decades of our membership, Bhutan's engagement and participation as a UN Member State has grown tremendously and our contributions are well recognized by the international community. Despite our small size and human resource constraints, we can say with confidence that Bhutan is well known for its holistic approach to development under the umbrella of Gross National Happiness. The country's focus on environmental conservation in particular, as one of the four pillars of GNH, is a noteworthy accomplishment that has caught the attention and admiration of much of the international community. Naturally Bhutan

joined 174 countries to become a signatory to the Paris agreement on Climate change. I had the honor of signing the agreement on behalf of the Royal Government at a High level signing ceremony convened by the UN Secretary General on 22 April 2016.

Among many others, an important milestone in Bhutan's engagement with the UN, initiated during my tenure as Permanent Representative, was the Country's substantive engagement in peacekeeping operations. Bhutan became an active member of C34 based on the command of His Majesty The King. Within a very short period of time, we have made impressionable progress with members of our armed forces serving in peacekeeping missions in various parts of the world and in doing so, have reaffirmed a strong commitment to international peace and security. As a small country with a population just over half a million people, our willingness to contribute physically to UN peacekeeping operations is an impressive feat that we must remain proud of.

As a Member State, our delegations have been participating actively in all meetings held at the UN and elsewhere. Cognizant of the undeniable fact that all Member States, regardless of size and economic might, exercise one vote at the UN, our delegates to the UN fulfill their roles as representatives of the country most impressively and with the highest due diligence. Bhutan's engagement with the UN and its specialized agencies has contributed effectively to the progress that we have achieved in our development process under our Five-Year Plans. I consider myself to be in the generation of Bhutanese that have seen and experienced for ourselves the tremendous strides that Bhutan has made in its development under the dynamic leadership of our benevolent monarchs and with the unstinted support of our development partners both bilateral as well as multilateral. At the UN we also work closely with different groups of countries under the umbrella of SAARC, NAM, G77, LLDC and LDC's among others to promote and coordinate specific areas of interests with the overall goal of promoting development, international peace and security.

My years serving as the Deputy Permanent Representative at our Mission in Geneva in the mid 2000s were also very rewarding. We've taken an active role in promoting Bhutan's relations and participation in the work of the UN and its related specialized agencies based in Geneva, Rome and

Paris, which our mission covered from Geneva. Notable among others, was the focus on human rights with the Sub-Commission on Human Rights, transitioning into the Human Rights Council during my tenure, all towards fulfilling the mandate of the United Nations in promoting the wellbeing of peoples around the world.

As diplomats in the service of our nation, it is our profound duty to work towards promoting the policies of our country, build goodwill and support and build friendships with counterparts from different countries. The UN, with its membership of 193 member states, provides the perfect platform to pursue this mandate and I was indeed most fortunate to have had this opportunity in New York. In particular, I was extremely humbled to be amongst a strong network of Female Permanent Representatives, which during my tenure was around 37 ladies and recall fondly the many friendships and close bonds formed in solidarity.

The tremendous advances we have made as a small nation at the UN brings us great pride and, as a now retired career Foreign Service Officer, I am convinced that Bhutan's role and profile will scale to greater heights in the years ahead, inspired by the wisdom and leadership of our visionary King and Government.

As a Foreign Service Officer, working at headquarters as well as our missions abroad, provides us the ideal platform to serve our fellow citizens and impact lives. I recall with great joy that during my sojourn of various places of posting, many lives have touched me. I had the pleasure of playing mother, mentor and friend to many whom I crossed paths with. To this day, I feel blessed to receive their love and affection, which I will continue to cherish.

On a more personal note, I recall with great affection the memories of my late father and maternal grandparents who were the crucial caregivers to my siblings and myself in our formative years, the six of us having lost our beloved mother well before reaching our teens. I feel so happy to have brought them great pride and joy while they were with us.

Last, but not the least, I am grateful to my husband and three children, whose love and unconditional support helped me in accomplishing my full career in the service of my King and Country.

On this most auspicious 50th Anniversary, I pray that Bhutan's Membership of the United Nations will continue to flourish and grow from strength to strength in the years ahead.



A Bhutanese woman in traditional attire

# Bhutan's Permanent Representatives to New York



**Lyonpo Sangay Penjor**  
September 1971 - December 1973



**Lyonpo Dago Tshering**  
December 1974- January 1980



**Lyonpo Om Pradhan**  
February 1980- April 1984



**Dasho Jigme Y. Thinley**  
October 1987- July 1989



**Dasho Ugyen Tshering**  
August 1989- August 1998



**Ambassador Daw Penjor**  
November 2003- December 2008



**Ambassador Lhatu Wangchuk**  
January 2009- July 2013



**Ambassador Kunzang C. Namgyel**  
February 2014- July 2017



**Ambassador Doma Tshering**  
Present

# Bhutan's Permanent Representatives to Geneva



**Ambassador Tobgye S. Dorji**  
November 1986



**Dasho Nado Rinchen**  
December 1989



**Dasho Paljor Dorji**  
July 1991



**Ambassador Sonam Tobden Rabgye**  
November 2003



**Ambassador Yeshey Dorji**  
January 2010



**Ambassador Daw Penjo**  
July 2012



**Ambassador Kinga Singye**  
June 2016



**Ambassador Tenzin Rondel Wangchuk**  
August 2020

# UN Country Team



**Gerald Daly**  
Resident Coordinator  
UN Bhutan



**Chadho Tenzin**  
Assistant Resident Representative  
FAO



**Kiran Subedi**  
National Project Coordinator  
ITC



**Azusa Kubota**  
Resident Representative  
UNDP

# UN Country Team



**Argentina Matavel Piccin**  
Country Director  
UNFPA



**Dr. Will Parks**  
Representative  
UNICEF



**Tandin Wangmo**  
National Project Coordinator  
UNODC



**Svante Helms**  
Head of Office  
WFP



**Dr. Rui Paulo de Jesus**  
Representative  
WHO



## Acknowledgment



The UN Bhutan family with Prime Minister Dr. Lotay Tshering at the UN House in 2019.

This book is a collection of milestones and memoirs, capturing key development progress that Bhutan has made since joining the UN. The 50th anniversary of Bhutan's membership to the UN serves as an important landmark in Bhutan's development journey so far and reminds every Bhutanese of the importance of our strong and enduring partnership with the United Nations.

This book represents the first official documentation of this partnership and contains untold anecdotes from individuals who are living memorabilia.

We would like to extend our humble appreciation to His Royal Highness Prince Namgyal Wangchuk for kindly writing the Foreword to the book, Lyonpo Om Pradhan (former Foreign Minister, Ambassador to NY), Dasho V. Namgyal (Ambassador to India) and Aum Kuenzang C. Namgyal (former Chief of Protocol and Ambassador to NY) for sharing their memories with us.

We are also grateful to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Aum Patricia Tshering, Françoise Pommaret and Kuensel Corporation

Our special appreciation also to the Royal Government of Bhutan without whom this book would not have been possible.

We would also like to thank Tshering Phuntsho (GEF-SGP) for the cover photo, Heather McNeice, Jigme Thinley (Shutterbug Bhutan), Karma Thinley Gyatsho (student of Mothithang High School), and Tshering Tenzin (Aarkarling) for contributing photos for the book. On a final note, we are immensely grateful for the support given by the Royal Government of Bhutan and all the UN agencies of Bhutan.

We would like to express our special appreciation to Kuenga Lhaden (Consultant, RCO), Carolyn Hamer-Smith (Senior Consultant) and Tshering Chuki (Communications Officer, RCO) for coordinating with all relevant agencies and individuals in bringing the book together.

We would also like to thank the UN50 task force team Dasho Kinga Singye, Secretary, MoFA- Chair, Dasho Nim Dorji, Secretary (MoF), Dasho Thinley Namgyel (GNHC), Mr. Gerald Daly, Resident Coordinator (UN Bhutan), Mr. Will Parks, Representative (UNICEF), Ms. Asuza Kubato, Resident Representative, (UNDP) and the Working Group Aum Pema Choden, Chair, Ugyen Dorji (MoFA), Dechen Pelmo (MoFA), Tshering Yangki (MoF), Dorji Pem (GNHC), Tashi Tshering Dukpa (UNRCO), Dechen Wangmo (UNDP), Sonam Pelden (UNICEF) Tshering Chuki (UNRCO) for their continued support.

## UN Agencies in Bhutan



## Royal Government of Bhutan

The Prime Minister's Office  
 National Assembly of Bhutan  
 National Council of Bhutan  
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
 Gross National Happiness Commission  
 Ministry of Health  
 Ministry of Finance  
 Ministry of Agriculture and Forests  
 Ministry of Economic Affairs  
 Ministry of Education  
 Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs  
 Ministry of Information and Communications  
 Ministry of Labor and Human Resources

Ministry of Works and Human Settlement  
 Department of Disaster Management  
 Office of the Attorney-General  
 Dratshang Lhentshog  
 Royal Civil Service Commission  
 Royal Monetary Authority  
 National Commission for Women and Children  
 National Statistics Bureau  
 Anti-Corruption Commission  
 National Environment Commission  
 National Center for Hydrology and Meteorology  
 Tourism Council Bhutan  
 Royal University of Bhutan

## Bhutan & the UN



**50 Years of Partnership and Building a Better Future**