

RC's statement for International Mountain Day

“It is my aspiration that, when my son Jigme Namgyel, grows up and when his generation, ... come of age, they will be able to actualize their full potential and contribute to nation building...” His Majesty The King

Thank you, 200 young people present here today.

Students from CNR, JSW, Pelkhil, Motithang, Kelki, Nima, Des,i Babesa, YHSS, Loselling, Dechencholing, Wangbama

Thank you for being with us.

Honorable Foreign Minister Lyonpo Tandi Dorji, Aum's, Dasho's, UN colleagues *charos*.

Kuzuzangpola!

Our friend had a dream. To help ensure Bhutan remains a nature Zhinkham. Allow me to give a shout-out to the person who dared to dream this dream and dedicate his life. He is Bhutan's 'Godfather of Conservation.' Dasho Benji.

There is no better day than today, on International Mountain Day to follow in Dasho's shoes and the 75 Aum's of UNICEF.

Today we are here to show our support for the Bhutan Youth Declaration for Climate Change. This declaration asks that every citizen take bold actions to care for Bhutan's natural environment and to prevent further damage from climate change.

Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.” I urge each and every one of us to contribute in some way to the pledges in this Declaration and achieve Bhutan's vision of a **Zero Waste Society by 2030**.

Her Majesty The Gyaltshen has urged us to keep our surroundings clean and that it is critical to act now.

As a call to action, we have thousands of young people from all over the country pledging to fulfill their duties, as trustees of the environment, to play their part, in the form of the '***Bhutan Youth Declaration on Climate Action.***'

Apologies for using any words today that I may not fully understand but my hope is I will sow a seed of love, deeper in your heart which will lead you to take personal action for Bhutan's great Environment.

Each of us present here today will be handed a copy of this declaration – but only if you are serious about acting on it. This declaration will serve as a daily reminder of our pledge to the environment.

“Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.”

Today, I have two key messages:

1. *Yang Drak Pai Drenpa*- development with values
2. The next 50 years- a UN that is fit for purpose

Key message 1: *Yang Drak Pai Drenpa*- development with values

Yan Drak Pai Drenpa- every development initiative that the UN supports must put the needs of the people first. This is the UN pursuing development with values- *Yang Drak Pai Drenpa*.

Young people are the true custodians of the Himalayas. This means giving them platforms and opportunities to make their voices heard, helping them make sustainable choices in their everyday lives such as recycling household waste and taking more public transport, and most importantly supporting them to make bold calls to replace all single-use plastics with biodegradable alternatives to realize Bhutan's vision for a Zero Waste Society by 2023.

All the actions in the Bhutan Youth Declaration on Climate Action speak to me but I especially recommend Item I, Zero Tolerance for single-use plastic.

Every day, Bhutan generates 170 tons of waste. Plastic and paper waste makes a third of that waste.

We must make changes in the way we consume everything that comes out of plastic bags or bottles.

We need to slow the flow of plastic at its source, but we also need to improve the way we manage our plastic waste. Because right now, a lot of it ends up in our rivers and forests.

Coca-Cola produces 167,000 plastic bottles every minute. Coca-Cola and other soft drink products most often ended up as environmental waste.

If all of us here today, pledge to stop drinking Coca-Cola or other soft sugar drinks or stop using single-use plastic bottles, we can, in our own way, contribute to the decrease in the production of plastic waste.

Key message 2: The next 50 years- a UN that is fit for purpose

Today's UN must be ready to handle tomorrow's challenges, we must ensure that the UN is able to meet the challenges of a new era. **As we come to the end of observing Bhutan's 50th year as a member to the UN, we must work towards a UN that is fit for purpose.**

I would like to read out a sentence from one of the winners of the UN50 essay competition- “In the next 50 years, I envision a developed Bhutan transitioning and striving in a green economy with a thriving natural environment and wildlife.”

We the UN and the 31 UN Agencies working in Bhutan will do our part in supporting Bhutan and its youth in creating a better world- this will be a UN that is fit for purpose.

Apart from supporting a number of activities in the country that helps build resilience to climate change, we the UN must walk the talk. On behalf of the UN, my ambition is to become the first carbon-neutral office in Bhutan which is good for the environment but it also reduces the cost of running the office.

2022 → Women's Climate Summit

Partnership → Youth Network in Region on Climate Action

Closing

Going forward, I ask you to support the youth changemakers especially those who are working on climate action so we can ramp up actions. When you preserve the **Beyul** of Bhutan for future generations of Bhutanese, you also are preserving it for all generations of people around our great Mother Earth. I credit my Buddhist partner Celine for reminding me, we also preserve it for all sentient beings.

You can count on the UN to be on the frontlines – supporting climate action every step of the way.

As we close out the year of celebrating the UN@50 allow me to thank:

- His Majesty- Highest levels of guidance + leadership + gift of Tsendrong UN Park.
- PM's Office, National Assembly, National Council, Foreign Ministry, Ministry of Education + other 8 Ministries, GNHC, NEC, NCHM, 5 Constitutional Bodies, the Monk Body, RUB, the Armed Forces
- Members of the UN@50 Task-Team
- The CSO's
- The Media
- Private sectors, especially Dr. Pema Gyamtsho + ICIMOD

Please allow me to end with a quote from the UN SG:

“Climate change is still running faster than what we are. It is the Young generation that must make us be accountable, to make sure that we don't betray the future of humankind. I believe that what the youth is doing today, what grassroots movements are doing today, is absolutely essential for this to happen.”