

Address in Copenhagen-In 100 Years Starting now (21 Sept. 2011)

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I am delighted to be standing in-front of august gathering of highly knowledgeable visionaries, thinkers, academicians, scientists, researchers, economist and corporate leaders – I am humbled by this opportunity.

Hon’ble participants, my Prime Minister who is the teacher for Gross National Happiness once said “Happiness is a serious matter” –therefore, I will not claim that I am happy – we all need to be happy and the world needs to be happy – this forum must mean a lot to the world and not only to Denmark and Danes.

Let me begin with a quote from my King, “Today GNH has come to mean so many things to so many people but to me it signifies simply – DEVELOPMENT WITH VALUES. Thus for my nation today GNH is the bridge between the fundamental values of kindness, equality and humanity and the **necessary pursuit** of economic growth. GNH acts as our National Conscience guiding us towards making wise decision for a better future.”

What is GNH? The audience here probably has more knowledge than me in the subject. Nevertheless let me remind ourselves – that it is a holistic approach balancing between the mind and the body with the conviction that man is **bound by nature** to search for happiness. In 1972, the Forth King Jigme Singay Wangchuck ascended the throne at an early age – and looked around for development models for his country. Realising that the single most desire of every human being was happiness, and when he did not find a suitable development model, he propounded on “Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product”. We without being deterred have walked this path for last 40 years – it is a challenge and we know we will make mistakes and fall, but we will rise again and walk the path until we are there. Also the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan spells out that

the state will strive to provide conditions that will enable pursuing GNH– thus per se GNH is not an indicator. Today, Samdrup Jongkhar, a district in south eastern part of Bhutan has taken the challenge to learn to live in a sustainable way with combined support from GPI Atlanta, scientists from organic farm led by Dr. Vandana Shiva, Indian barefoot college, and others.

For the last 4 decades, the government policy and plans have been based on the four GNH pillars, which are equitable socio-economic development, cultural preservation & promotion, environmental conservation, and good governance. In the second phase they were further elaborated to nine domains (psychological wellbeing, standard of living, health, culture, education, community vitality, good governance, time use, and ecological integration). Accordingly, 38 sub-indices, 72 indicators and 151 variables were developed – two surveys have been conducted with the most recent one in 2010, and results will be soon on the website. The national happiness index stands at 0.608. Our early survey results shows at 0.438. We are not getting happier – and women seem to more unhappy than men. The measure defines that, to be rated happy, the person should be happy in all 38 sub-indices of the nine domains (if a person is unhappy in one of the indices, s/he is not categorised as happy). However a question that was asked at a national survey in 2005 brought us the results 90% happy, 5% very happy and 5% not very happy. Based on the survey 2010, the early results indicate that no Bhutanese is completely happy and mainly those falling in age group <20 and >65 years. On average people are deprived in 6 of nine domains corresponding to 21 of 38 sub-indices.

How does this result help us? Among others, it will help us evaluate, monitor, set goals, build national conscious, involve people in mindful development planning and practices. We have achieved 81% land area as forest cover and of this 40% is Parks and Reserves (our Constitution mandates for 60% forest cover); zero emission of carbon (we have pledged during COP 16 that Bhutan will remain carbon free

always); our new projects can only be started if they pass through the screening tool of the GNH; we have begun GNH accounting; and educating for GNH in schools.

To elaborate a bit on what we are doing: If we do not learn in schools what is nature how would we appreciate and mindfully consider protection of ecology, if we do not learn the effects of harmful substance, smoking and junk food how can we expect to be healthy, if we are ignorant about what causes climate change, how can we help save the earth, if we do not learn politics how can we have informed choices for voting and develop a healthy democracy and government, if we do not learn about our culture how can we serve our community and the world? Therefore, we have begun the process of teaching and practicing GNH in schools, which we all know will have a multiplying and far reaching effect. Bhutan debated to join WTO and most Bhutanese who were educated debated for, even most of Cabinet members were for the motion, against the Prime Minister. When this was passed through the screening tool of GNH, it failed – we have a GNH tool – you can see the example when my PowerPoint presentation, which I could not present here today, would be hosted on the web by the House of Future.

Similarly, allow me to give another example on GNH accounting: if my country cuts all the forest and sells, the GDP will increase tremendously; more we burn fossil fuel and emit green house gases, the more GDP grows; our changed living habits pressurises the health system, the more GDP grows. The dogma of economic growth ignores **ecological benefits and costs**. The true cost of climate change remains invisible. In fact many things that make GDP grow, and that are therefore conventionally (and misleading) counted as positive signs of an expanding economy, actually signify a decline in wellbeing. The more crime, pollution, war, and sickness we have, for example, the more GDP grows, simply because money is being spent on prisons, politic, weapons, drugs, cigarettes, and pollution cleanup costs. And so, **volunteer work, community services, and the vital unpaid work-done in**

households count for nothing in GDP, and the precious free time that we need to meditate, garden, and socialise is completely valueless.

All said and done, I will not conclude that Bhutan has achieved GNH, we get a lot of aspirations through the initiations of so many countries who are trying to pursue similar paths and thanks that the knowledge, and publications on the subject of wellbeing are made available. Two months ago on 19 July, UNGA adopted unanimously without a vote, the resolution - Happiness as a standalone goal towards holistic approach to development -my Prime Minister thus happily concluded, “Happiness is now accepted by the international community as a timeless, common vision that **binds all humanity, rich and poor**”.

The greatly knowledgeable participants here know that the world is crumbling under the devastating impacts of climate change – it is felt everywhere with earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, pollution, species extinction, inequalities, terror, financial insecurity, entrenched poverty – a world not getting happier despite ever rising levels of **material consumption** fuelled by rampant resource degradation. The world is getting poorer by the day, half of Bhutan’s population size is poor in Denmark and America reports that it has reached highest level of poverty.

Greatly pained by such changes, my Prime Minister, our GNH teacher, holds deepest and longest dream to build a GNH Centre in Bhutan – a light to consciousness for a sustainable living. It may not rank high in the conventional policy priorities, he regards realisation of this would be central to our survival and greater benefit to the world. And this is where he is seeking help from all of you to join hands to build a safer and happier world. As a small token, he wants to create a GNH Centre that fully embodies and models the principles of GNH in every aspect of its design, functioning, activity, and human interaction, manifesting simple and sustainable living in **harmony with nature** and other beings, and teaching and demonstrating both to our own citizens and to international visitors how to bring GNH values and practices fully into their daily work, life, community, country, and

world. It will be a beacon to our nation and hopefully far beyond Bhutan's borders. Until we bring GNH demonstrably, completely, and convincingly into the very fabric of our society, behaviour, policy, and activity, our high-sounding words and principles will ring hollow. We need to launch that ambitious endeavour by creating a place that, in every aspect of its living practice, demonstrates "*The GNH!*"

We have a beautiful piece of land in Bumthang, central Bhutan— Bhutan's spiritual heartland – a hidden land of bliss. We have a dedicated task force, including a few design and architectural experts, and we have a draft design plan. And we want the GNH Centre to be fully up and running by the summer of 2013, offering a full range of GNH-based educational, leadership, intercultural, contemplative, ecological, work and training programs, and demonstrating in living action how we can build a better, saner, more humane world for the benefit of all beings. In every respect, we are ready to go!

To make this happen, we need to raise funds. Immediately we need about 7 million to start operation in the centre. We are now under pressure. The globe will want to see how Bhutanese practice living GNH and we have nothing to show to them.

Please think of your **support and contribution in any way possible as multiplying a thousand-folds** in the potential benefit this place will bring. Sustainability of the centre will not be an issue. The sources of earning are from tourism, hosting national and international seminars /conferences, fees from participants, selling of organic products produced at the centre, and there are so many other meaningful ways.

The **pursuit of happiness** will change our way of thinking, living, production, consumption and it will bring joy without offending anyone. My Prime Minister said – "Happiness is a sustained feeling of compassion and calm fulfilment that we experience when others around us are happy especially when one has played a part". His Majesty the King said – "I feel that there should be some convergence among nations on the idea of what the primary objective of the development and progress should be – something that GNH seeks to bring about." Joining the above quotes to

the idea of the theme “In 100 years starting now” is a great initiative towards creating a greed free world, a world of sustainable living. Why because we are all connected and cannot be treated as individuals in the globalised community therefore any impact whether negative or positive made in any corner of the earth has direct repercussion to the other part.

The initiation that starts here must go global for humanity and all sentient beings. If the kind of consumption, some of the societies in rich countries enjoy, were to be spread to every community on earth – we will need some 1000 earths to manage our **greed**. For e.g. the consumption patterns of Nova Scotia (as per GPI Atlanta study) was to be equally spread to world communities on the planet, it would need 4 earths. If we cannot contain our greed today and fall back to sufficiency principles, the earth may exist in some form, but the human race will be extinct before we even realise. I said what happens in one part of the earth has direct influence in the rest of the world. It will not be wrong to say that carbon spewed in atmosphere in developed countries thousands of miles away is contributing to causing Himalayan glacier to melt – climate change is real!

“Doing good, thanks! – But What?” The organizational designs and policy and business models must think about looking from the global perspective, not individually and definitely not with complete profit motive. It must ask, what is enough to produce, how do we do mindfully without excess and waste, how can we be sustainable and mindfully avoid the negatives impacts in every walk of life, and how can we contribute to Danish happiness and beyond its border. In 100 years starting now must also bring self realisation in the minds of every individual through disseminating information for human good and make them think what is enough for him/her to live happily without excess – we have become too luxurious and want to wear or eat things which we don’t produce/grow or require to live healthy and happy.

We have become half contaminated, and become half robots – before we completely become one – I think these series of conference could challenge the globe and come out with daring resolution on what is most essential for a living, what and how much to produce, how to serve the global community without being regional, how to apply oneself and connect with the nature and begin its rebuilding, anything you do must avoid greed and fulfil the need. Today, we need a leader to prove to the world, how to be sustainable in the way of living and this conference gives me a big hope, and I am confident that Denmark will be successful in its endeavours.

It is said if two unknown people walked seven steps together, you are friends; I have lived 9 days today in Demark, so I have become a Dane. As I am told that Danes have the right to doubt, let me ask you few of my doubts. Do you work so hard in your life to land finally in a Plejehjem (an old person home)? Is this the ultimate aspiration? How many times in a day do we reflect that we ultimately would die (the irrevocable truth of life) so that we do each moment something good for others – **giving is the highest form of living**? Do we think of sharing with others, helping old to be happy and young to grow as happy citizens? Danes can do it because I have entered in their hearts since I landed here. Samoe is trying to be a sustainable Island, it has begun with energy, and it is now going organic with its own cheese and butter, and agriculture produce – do you need to buy things that travel thousands of miles to fulfil our pride and ego? Did Vikings go to Africa to buy bananas? – In this, I liked the motto of Samoe “think local and act local” – So what is sustainable growth is linked very strongly with happiness. Slip back in time; dig back the memories of 100 years to make the difference for another 100 years. You can do it because you are **individualistic minds cooperating at the highest level**.

Finally, before completing my talk, let me reiterate that the role of this second of the four series of the conference *In 100 years starting now* organised by House of Future with today’s theme *doing good* – must look for an alternative, a viable alternative to the **materialistic paradigm** – many of us here may be wearing fashioned dresses

and shoes – how many can afford in my world, not many I suppose – so where is equity? We Bhutanese don't kill but we don't stop eating meat thus someone kills for us. Similarly if **advertisements and commercials** were stopped, production done equitably for the poorest of the poor, and just enough – we can sustain. I am not implying to stop productions. To give you an example, in our part of the world, there are every day new kinds of gadgets (e.g. cell phones) in the market tempting us – if producers were mindful and only produced after a certain level of technological development from the first – we will definitely support the earth from resources drains, greed, jealousy, pride, desire, and frustrations – which is even further aggravated by **barrage of advertisements**. Advertisement and commercials of any kind, if not for social betterment, must be stopped.

Forgive me if I have spoken too loud and too tall for my size? I am only requesting you, the great minds, to mindfully lead your own thought processes for the benefit of the rest of the human kind. I wish the House of Future and corporate leaders who have joined hands to make a difference in the lives of Danes and far beyond its borders, all the success and fruition of happiness. Further, I wish to thank the core group who gave me this opportunity and especially Mrs Gitte Larsen, House of Future – and of course the passionate listeners - with a request, please do not ask me difficult questions. My most sincere appreciation to all the members in the panel for making this a success story– we will look forward to your leadership in the search for sustainability and of course the happiness.

Thank you & Tashi Delek!