

**Statement by H.E. Sangay Dorji, Hon'ble Chairperson of the National Council of Bhutan
at the 150th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly
Tashkent, Uzbekistan 5-9 April 2025**

Honourable President

Excellencies

Esteemed Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

Kuzuzangpo la

It is a pleasure to join you today at this 150th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly. On behalf of the Parliament of Bhutan, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the parliamentary authorities of Uzbekistan for their warm hospitality and excellent arrangements. The beauty and culture of Tashkent have made us feel most welcome.

I am honoured to convey the warm greetings of His Majesty the King, the People and the Parliament of Bhutan. It is a privilege to address this distinguished gathering, where we reaffirm our collective commitment to advancing social development and justice through parliamentary action. I extend my deepest appreciation to the IPU for providing this invaluable platform for dialogue, collaboration, and the exchange of best practices.

I also want to congratulate you, Honourable President, on your election. My delegation extends our best wishes and assures you of our full support as you guide us through the proceedings of this Assembly. As we embark on this journey, let us remember that our collective strength lies in our ability to nurture not only the well-being of our nations, but also the happiness of our people and the health of our planet. Together, we can build a future grounded in peace, sustainability, and hope.

The theme of this year's general debate, "Parliamentary Action for Social Development and Justice," is timely and relevant in an era marked by growing social inequalities, economic disparities, and environmental challenges. Parliaments, as the cornerstone of democracy, hold the responsibility of shaping policies that promote equitable opportunities, protect fundamental rights, and ensure access to essential services for all citizens. Social development and justice are not abstract ideals but the foundation of inclusive governance, sustainable progress, and global stability. Without a firm commitment to justice; economic, social, and environmental development remains fragmented and unsustainable. Therefore, parliamentary action must be deliberate, transformative, and responsive to the evolving needs of societies, ensuring that laws, policies, and institutions actively work to reduce disparities, empower marginalized communities, and uphold human dignity.

Bhutan, guided by the philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH), firmly believes that true development must be holistic, balancing economic growth with social well-being, environmental

sustainability, and cultural preservation. GNH is built on four pillars: equitable socio-economic development, environmental conservation, preservation and promotion of culture, and good governance. These pillars guide every policy and legislative action in Bhutan, ensuring that progress is measured not just by economic indicators but by the happiness and well-being of our people.

Bhutan has made significant strides in social development, particularly in healthcare, education, and poverty reduction. We are proud to have achieved Universal Health Coverage, ensuring that every citizen has access to free healthcare services. Our education system provides free schooling up to the tertiary level, empowering our youth with the knowledge and skills needed to contribute to a just and equitable society. One of our most notable achievements is the reduction of poverty. Over the past two decades, Bhutan has reduced its poverty rate from over 24% to less than 12.4%. This progress is a testament to our commitment to inclusive development and social justice.

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted social development and justice worldwide, exacerbating inequalities, disrupting economies, and straining healthcare systems. In Bhutan, under the visionary leadership of His Majesty the King, we responded proactively to ensure that no citizen was left behind. Our timely interventions to support livelihoods, safeguard public health, and maintain social cohesion and measures such as economic relief packages, free vaccinations, and the provision of essential services to vulnerable groups reflected our unwavering commitment to justice and equitable development.

Beyond the pandemic, Bhutan is also addressing the global challenge of climate change. As a carbon-negative country, we are deeply committed to environmental justice. We recognize that climate change disproportionately affects vulnerable communities, and we advocate for global efforts to ensure that these communities are not left behind. Bhutan takes great pride in being part of the G-Zero initiative, a coalition of carbon-neutral and carbon-negative nations dedicated to leading the global effort against climate change. The G-Zero initiative serves as a call to all nations to join us in a unified commitment to advance global climate action, which is imperative for the well-being of future generations. The G-Zero Forum provides an essential platform for advancing nature-based solutions, improving climate finance mechanisms, and fostering innovation in clean energy technologies. Through collaborative efforts, we aim to influence global climate policies and expedite the transition to low-carbon, sustainable economies.

Gender equality and youth empowerment are central to Bhutan's vision of social justice. Gender equality remains a critical pillar of social justice and sustainable development. In this regard, Bhutan welcomes the IPU's priority theme for 2025 'Advancing gender equality' as a timely and necessary global commitment. While Bhutan has made significant progress in empowering women through policy reforms and leadership initiatives, we recognize that challenges persist in ensuring full gender parity in political participation, economic opportunities, and social representation. To bridge these gaps, we are strengthening gender policies, enhancing support for women entrepreneurs, and expanding programs that nurture female leadership at all levels. We believe that inclusive governance, where women's voices shape policies and decisions, is fundamental to a just society. Bhutan stands ready to collaborate with the IPU and international

partners to further this agenda and share best practices in fostering gender-responsive parliamentary action.

Our youth empowerment programs focus on fostering entrepreneurship, leadership, and civic engagement. There are many initiatives both by the government and civil society to provide young people with the resources and support they need to turn their ideas into reality. We believe that empowering our youth is essential to building a just and equitable society.

Bhutan is pioneering innovative approaches to sustainable and mindful development. His Majesty the King has envisioned the Gelephu Mindfulness City—an ambitious initiative aimed at creating a hub of well-being, environmental harmony, and economic opportunity. The Gelephu Mindfulness City will serve as a model for sustainable urban development, combining cutting-edge technology with traditional values of mindfulness and community well-being. It is a testament to Bhutan's belief that development must be both innovative and inclusive.

In an increasingly interconnected world, global challenges require global solutions. Bhutan is committed to working with our international partners, including through the IPU, to address issues such as inequality, climate change, and conflict. We believe that only through solidarity and collaboration can we build a more just and equitable world for all.

Parliaments must not act in isolation. The IPU serves as a powerful conduit for fostering international cooperation, legislative innovation, and policy exchange. Bhutan remains committed to engaging with global partners to share best practices, learn from successful legislative models, and contribute to collective efforts in achieving social justice and sustainable development.

In conclusion, let us remember that parliamentary action is not just about enacting laws; it is about ensuring that those laws translate into real change for the people we serve. It is about fostering trust in institutions, amplifying the voices of the unheard, and upholding the principles of justice and fairness.

May this Assembly strengthen our shared commitment to building a world where every individual, regardless of background, enjoys dignity, equality, and opportunity. Let us work together to transform parliamentary action into meaningful progress for humanity.

Thank you, and Tashi Delek!