

Statement by H.E Mr. WangchukNamgyel, Hon'ble Speaker of National Assembly of Bhutan, at the 140th IPU Assembly's General Debate on the theme: *Parliaments as Platforms to enhance Education for Peace, Security and the Rule of Law.*

1. His Excellency, Mr. Ahmed Bin Abdullah Al Mahmoud, Hon'ble Speaker of the Shura Council of Qatar, Her Excellency, Madam Gabriela Barron, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.
2. On behalf of His Majesty the King, Parliament and the People of Bhutan and on my own behalf, I would like to extend warm greetings to the distinguished parliamentarians attending the 140th General Assembly here in the beautiful city of Doha. I would also like to express our deepest appreciation to the President and the Secretary General of Inter-Parliamentary Union for inviting and giving us the wonderful opportunity to participate in this Debate.
3. It is a great honour for me and my delegation to be a part of this Debate on an important theme, *'Parliaments as platforms*

to enhance Education for Peace, Security and the Rule of Law.’ I am confident that the rich composition of delegates to this Debate with diverse background and experiences will provide greater value and diversity for a successful debate on enhancing Education for Peace, Security and the Rule of Law.

4. We all believe that progressive democracy sustains peace and promotes security and the rule of law. In Bhutan, democracy is given and not demanded – a unique approach to democracy. His Majesty the Fourth King bestowed the power of governance to his people by introducing democratic constitutional monarchy with full conviction. This simply demonstrates a strong political will to promote peace, security and the rule of law for the greater wellbeing of the people. I feel this is a unique transformation that people across the world envy and look up to. We all know or must have experienced that where democracy is demanded and resisted, civil strife is bound to happen and it is happening even now causing miseries to the lives of the people. Bhutan in its own small way has been committed towards contributing to the larger peace and security in the planet.

5. Let us look at the development philosophy of Bhutan. Our development philosophy is maximizing Gross National Happiness (GNH). This development approach makes a fine balance among material growth, conservation of environment, preservation and promotion of culture and good governance. All public policies are subject to GNH policy screening tools and it is to be understood that any developmental activities must ultimately culminate to happiness of the people.

6. In terms of Parliament's role as a platform to enhance Education for Peace, Security and the Rule of Law, I am happy to report here that Parliament of Bhutan has always accorded highest priority to the Education sector. Basic education as enshrined in the Constitution is provided free by the State. Even secondary and tertiary education are funded by the State on merit basis. Annual budget allocation for education and health has always been above 20% of the total budget. As a result, enrollments at the Primary Schools increased manifold and the literacy rate increased to 71.4%.

7. Seeking wisdom from our country's happiness development philosophy, the parameter of education sector has been set as

Educating for Gross National Happiness which focuses on value education. Beside the knowledge and skills, our children are to imbibe value laden learning. In a nut shell, we call it holistic education. This initiative links very well with target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals. It would not have been possible without the support of the parliament.

8. **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen**, starting 2019 academic year, the Royal Government of Bhutan has taken a bold initiative to raise the basic education till grade 12 much against the country's resource constraints. A student by grade 12 would turn 18 years old which is the threshold for adulthood, participation in the world of work and political life. Researches around the world have shown that, an additional year of schooling has both social and economic benefits too. Higher education will also lead to meaningful participation in democratic process and pursue sustainable livelihood.

9. **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen**, let me share a profound Bhutanese saying, translated as "*A king loves his people; His people desire happiness; the source of all happiness is the rule of law*". Living by this Bhutanese saying, the Parliament of

Bhutan in the past ten years enacted and amended several legislations on domestic violence prevention, child care and protection, narcotics, drugs and substance abuse, to name a few to ensure progressive peace, justice and strengthened rule of law towards greater peace and happiness in the country.

10. Bhutan is steadily rising up on the Global Peace Index scale and ranked as 19th in 2018. Amongst many other factors, the impact of legislations passed by the Parliament can also be counted as positive contributing factor. Based on the resolution initiated by Bhutan, the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2012, proclaimed 20th March as the International Day of Happiness recognizing the relevance of happiness and well-being as universal goals and aspirations in the lives of human beings.

11. On the justice system in Bhutan, I would like to quote the wisdom of His Majesty the King of Bhutan and, I quote, *“failure of justice persecutes an individual, but the lack of adherence to rule of law persecutes an entire nation.”* I unquote. Judiciary is independent of legislature and executive.

In an approach to make judiciary more close to the people, Parliament have also enacted Alternate Dispute Resolutions Act whereby, arbitrators, mediators and conciliators settle cases that do not merit court proceedings.

12. When we talk of peace, security and rule of law, Bhutan has its own challenges. In politics, women's participation remains low both at local and national level despite the multi-pronged awareness and sensitization carried out by the Government and the Civil Society Organizations to promote women participation. The third Parliament has 15% women Parliamentarians including one woman cabinet minister. In the years to come we would like to see an increasing number of women in the Parliament and local governments.
13. As parliamentarian, it is our collective responsibility to promote and strengthen security and the rule of law. We must collaborate and work together with unified efforts towards fulfilling our common goal to enhance education for peace, security and the rule of law. After all, it is a fundamental right of every individual to enjoy peace, security and to be governed by the rule of law and to lead a respectable life.

14. Finally, I urge all delegates for a very interactive and successful session and pray, that whatever we discuss here will benefit every individual around the globe. The delegation from Bhutan is very excited to engage in debate and I am optimistic that this debate will contribute to our shared aspirations of enhancing Education for Peace, Security and the Rule of Law through Parliaments as platforms. We feel very privileged and humbled to get this opportunity and once again thank the President and Secretary General of Inter-Parliamentary Union for inviting us here.

15. Last, but not the least, my delegation and I would like to thank the Government and People of Qatar through the Shura Council for the warm hospitality extended to us. In conclusion, I offer our humble prayers and best wishes for a successful conduct of the **Qatar** 2022 FIFA World Cup and congratulate your country for being the first Arab state to host the World Cup.

Thank you and *TashiDelek*