

**Statement by H.E. Dr. Pema Gyamtsho
Minister-in-Charge of National Environment Commission,
& Minister for Agriculture and Forests,
Royal Government of Bhutan**

at

**The High Level Segment of the 17th Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC
Durban, South Africa, 7 December 2011**

Madam President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset I would like to express our deep appreciation to you Madam President, the government of South Africa, and the city of Durban for the warm welcome and hospitality during this conference.

My delegation also associates with the statements by Gambia on behalf of the Least Developed Countries, and Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 & China.

Madam President,

As a small, landlocked least developed country, Bhutan faces immense challenges for development with very limited capacity to respond to the impacts of climate change. Furthermore, as a mountainous country we are also deeply concerned about the impacts of climate change on mountain ecosystems and communities.

The recent IPCC Special Report on Extreme Events re-confirms the vulnerability of mountain regions, a fact recognized by the convention and also emphasized by many parties in this process. The IPCC report states that "*there is high confidence that changes in heat waves, glacial retreat and/or permafrost degradation will affect high mountain phenomena such as slope instabilities, movements of mass, and glacial lake outburst floods*".

Another concern of mountainous countries is that the rate of temperature rise increases with altitude, leading to greater and faster climate change in mountainous areas compared to lower lying areas.

Madam President,

With the impacts of climate change already visible in the Eastern Himalayas, from rapidly increasing temperatures, disappearing glaciers, drying of water sources and increasing climatic disasters, we cannot afford to delay action. We also believe that communities which share a common ecosystem can benefit from cooperative action to address the impacts of climate change.

With this conviction, Bhutan hosted the "Climate Summit for a Living Himalayas" on 19 November 2011 for the members of the "Eastern Himalayan Quadrangle" comprising of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal, where a Ministerial Declaration was adopted to endorse a "Framework of Cooperation" to build resilience to Climate Change by:

- Ensuring energy security and enhancing alternative technologies;
- Securing the natural freshwater systems of the Himalayas;
- Ensuring food security and securing livelihoods; and
- Securing biodiversity and ensuring its sustainable use.

Madam President

It is deeply worrying that current mitigation pledges under the Cancun Agreement are not consistent with the required emission pathways to meet the temperature goals, and we risk increases in global temperature of greater than 2 degree Celsius to as much as 5 degree Celsius. Such increases in global temperature will be catastrophic for Least Developed Countries and all mountainous regions.

We therefore call for more ambitious action within the two track negotiation process for a balanced outcome including;

- a legally binding outcome on the scale of emission reductions by Annex I Parties through a second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol, and
- a legally binding outcome on the various pillars of the Bali Action Plan in accordance with the Bali Roadmap

Madam President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

I would like to reaffirm Bhutan's commitment to the objectives of the UNFCCC, and keeping in line with our development philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH), Bhutan has taken concrete steps, such as maintaining 70% of our land as forests, and pledging that our emissions will not exceed the capacity of our forest sinks. We call on all parties for an equally ambitious action that will safeguard our common future.

I thank you for your kind attention.

Tashi Delek.