

LAUNCH OF “BHUTAN AT THE UNITED NATIONS”
REMARKS BY HON’BLE FOREIGN MINISTER, MFA THIMPHU, 15TH MARCH
2015

Lyonpos, Dashos, Aums, and Dear Colleagues,

1. Thank you for joining us this morning. On behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it gives me great pleasure to launch, “Bhutan at the United Nations”, a compilation by Lyonpo Dago Tshering of statements delivered by Bhutan’s delegations at the United Nations since joining the Organization 45 years ago in 1971.
2. This year, we have many reasons to celebrate. Amongst all of these, foremost in our minds is the birth of HRH the Gyalsey, imbuing us with not only a sense of deep joy and gratitude, but also inspiration for ever greater national cohesion and strength. In 2015 we celebrated the 60th Birth Anniversary of HM the Fourth Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuk. His Majesty has been the architect of Bhutan’s foreign policy and visionary for much of Bhutan’s interactions with the international community. This compendium is therefore a fitting tribute, which we take pride in launching today.
3. The work, contained in two volumes, spans over four decades of our engagements at the United Nations from 1971 to 2014. The compilation begins with the debate in the UN Security Council on the consideration of Bhutan’s request to formally join the comity of nations. This for all Bhutanese, and especially those of us in the foreign policy establishment, is particularly emotive. As we review the statements by Permanent Representatives of UNSC member states, bearing in mind the historical backdrop for the Council’s debate, the undertones of cold war real politick are apparent. We are reminded that interstate relations are fluid and can be unpredictable, as are the procedural maneuverings within UN mechanisms. This makes us value our admission into the United Nations as a sovereign state on equal footing with other member states all the more.

4. The statements delivered by our delegations at UN Headquarters on a broad spectrum of issues over a 43 year period provide insight into the foreign policy priorities that preoccupied Bhutan. They track the gradual expansion of our engagements at multilateral fora from social and economic issues, political and security matters, to some of the pressing issues confronting the world today, including climate change and sustainable development. These are punctuated by reflections provided by some of our past Permanent Representatives in New York on the events and engagements that defined their respective tenures.
5. While having served as Home Minister from 1991 to 1998 during perhaps one of the most challenging periods in our country's history, most of Lyonpo Dago's 47 years in service to the Nation has been associated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Twice Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, Lyonpo served as Bhutan's Ambassador in Bangladesh, as well as in India where he was also the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps. In addition to having established our Embassies in New Delhi, Dhaka, and Geneva, he has vast experience in both bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. This present undertaking is a demonstration of Lyonpo's enduring commitment and support to Bhutan's foreign policy, and to advancing the interests of the nation on the world's stage.
6. I would like to thank Lyonpo Dago for producing this anthology. While in the public realm, this is the very first time Bhutan's statements at the UN are made available in a single comprehensive publication, and made so easily accessible to all. It is a storehouse of information for those interested in learning more about our foreign policy, how Bhutan has engaged on the world's stage, and of the issues that kept our diplomats at the UN and at Head Quarters often burning the midnight oil. The compilation is a valuable contribution to the institutional memory of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
7. I would on that note, like to express our appreciation to the Literary Sub Committee of the 60th BCC headed by the Education Secretary,

Aum Sangay Zam, for supporting the publication of Lyonpo Dago's book.

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

8. Bhutan as a small, least developed state, still confronted with many challenges, cannot afford to lose sight of the fundamental compulsions that led us to seek admission into the Organization four and a half decades ago. Our sovereignty cannot be taken for granted. We must continue to strive to effectively engage at the global level, on issues and within international frameworks that will eventually impact us and shape our future. With 45 years of membership in the United Nations, we have crossed an important milestone. It is an opportunity for us in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, both in Thimphu and our diplomatic posts overseas, to reflect on achievements, but perhaps more importantly, also to reflect on the road ahead: what we need to do, and how to do so better, in our constant efforts to fulfill the sacred mandate entrusted to us by our beloved Monarchs.

Long Live Their Majesties the King and Queen, Long Live His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, and Long Live our precious Gyalsey!

Tashi Delek.
