**STATEMENT BY H.E *DASHO* TSHERING TOBGAY
PRIME MINISTER OF BHUTAN AT THE SIDE EVENT ON
USING THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX TO
TRACK PROGRESS IN THE SDGS**
*1100 hrs to 1300 hrs, 19th September 2017, Conference Room 2,
UN New York*

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**Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates.**

In the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, we have made a firm commitment to eradicate poverty and advance sustainable development.

SDG 1 takes on this challenge head on: to end poverty in all its forms everywhere.

Using the Multidimensional Poverty Index to track progress on the SDGs is not just useful but it is critical.

Therefore, I thank the President of Honduras and the Multidimensional Poverty Network, and Dr. Sabina, Director, OPHI for organizing this important event.

Distinguished delegates,

All countries continue to make tremendous efforts on the twin goals of poverty eradication and sustainable development.

I am happy to share my country's experience today.

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In Bhutan, we have always approached development from a holistic perspective based on our development concept of Gross National Happiness. This is consistent with the 2030 Agenda.

Under that broad development framework, Bhutan has been using the national Multidimensional Poverty Index for the past 7 years as an official measure of poverty to assess the needs of our people and to formulate appropriate policies and effective interventions.

Bhutan's MPI considers 13 indicators of poverty in the three dimensions of health, education, and living standards. If a person is deprived in a third or more of the (weighted) indicators, they are identified as poor, multidimensionally poor.

Bhutan released its first global MPI in 2010, where it was estimated that 25.8 percent of the population were multi-dimensionally poor. In 2012, when the first national MPI report was published, the multidimensional poverty rate was estimated to be 12.7 percent.

So, within a short span of time, Bhutan was able to bring down the poverty rate by 50 percent.

We are obviously happy with this achievement, particularly when the SDGs call on governments to reduce their MPIs in the next 15 years by 50 percent.

We recognize the importance of using MPI to measure poverty as a complement to measuring income poverty. As such, we have set the target of reducing MPI rate to less than 10 % by 2018.

Further, in the 12th Five Year Development Plan, which starts next year, Bhutan has set the target of reducing MPI rate to below 5 percent.

Much of our success in our efforts on poverty reduction has been achieved due to our strong social development policies. Education and health care is free and we invest heavily on sustainable rural development. For this, local governments have been strengthened.

In Bhutan, the national MPI is also used as a policy tool and used as basis to allocate resources across sectors, districts and villages effectively.

We have used it to identify peoples' needs for infrastructure and social services in remotest areas.

And we blend the MPI data with photographs, GPS and administrative information, making the best use of technology for poverty eradication.

Going a step further, just this year, we included the MPI in our national census so that actual MPI at the household level can be measured. Again, this will enable the government to identify the poorest households for targeted poverty interventions.

Under targeted poverty initiatives, we currently implement two programs. In both the programmes, the MPI was used in identifying the poorest villages and the poorest households to develop appropriate interventions for them.

Alongside the MPI, we also use the same underlying methodology to measure the nine domains of Gross National Happiness (GNH). We released our first GNH Index in 2008, 2010, 2015 and use it to ensure equitable social and economic development.

In the era of SDGs, when the quest is for transformational change and shared prosperity, we need comprehensive tools and framework that help us identify the most vulnerable and poorest so that they are not left behind. But we need to make sure that we

continuously measure our progress. The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs provide us with a comprehensive framework and the MPI help us measure and manage our efforts to ensure that we are on the right path towards poverty eradication and sustainable development.

Thank you and Tashi Delek!