

**STATEMENT BY MR. KARMA CHOEDA, CHARGE D' AFFAIRES
PERMANENT MISSION OF THE KINGDOM OF BHUTAN AT THE GENERAL
DEBATE OF THE HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT CONVENED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF ECOSOC
20th July, Trusteeship Council, UN**

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**Mr. President
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates**

Bhutan recognizes the important role of HLPF as the main body for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Bhutan looks forward to presenting its national voluntary review in the next HLPF in 2018.

Eradication of poverty in all its dimensions remains an overarching goal in our national development plans based on our development concept of Gross National Happiness or GNH.

We have been able to reduce the number of people trapped in poverty by almost half - from 23 per cent in 2007 to 12 per cent in 2012.

And efforts continue to bring this number further down.

All policies are subject to a GNH Screening Tool, which assesses the perceived impact of a particular policy on 22 variables, which includes living standards, material wellbeing, equity, health, and education amongst others.

While Bhutan has made remarkable gains in reducing extreme poverty, sections of our people remain vulnerable to falling back into poverty.

This calls for a range of policies and economic measures in order to sustain our significant achievements in poverty reduction over the longer term.

Mr. President

Bhutan is one of the early mover countries for SDG implementation in the Asia-Pacific region.

Given the similarities between our development philosophy of GNH and SDGs, integration of the SDGs into our development plans and programmes has been easy.

Of the 17 SDGs, 14 are aligned and integrated with the 16 National Key Result Areas of our current 11th Five Year Plan.

Bhutan will be launching the 12th Five Year Plan in 2018, which incidentally coincides with our national parliamentary elections.

We continue to make good progress on social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

We have pledged to remain carbon neutral at all times, we continue to maintain 72% of our land under forest cover as mandated by our Constitution.

It is in the economic dimension of sustainable development that we need to do more to achieve transformation.

Therefore, economic goals within the SDGs – Goal 7 through Goal 10 – are going to be game changers for us to enhance our productive capacity, to transform our economies and to developing resilient and sustainable infrastructure

Mr. President

Bhutan is one of the countries that have been found eligible for graduation from the LDC category.

This is obviously a source of great encouragement. But graduation does bring its own share of concern.

Bhutan would like to graduate on a confident and sustainable footing so that we do not risk backtracking on hard-earned development gains.

Therefore, Bhutan would like to reaffirm the importance of smooth graduation and transition as called for in various resolutions and most recently in the Mid Term Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

Towards this end, we look forward to the continued support and assistance of our development partners.

Lastly, I align my statement with that of G77&China, LDCs and LLDCs.

I thank you.
