

**Statement by H.E. Ms. Doma Tshering, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of
Bhutan to the United Nations**
**High-Level Thematic Debate on “Putting sustainable and resilient tourism at the heart
of an inclusive recovery”**
(Wednesday, 4 May 2022)

ROUNDTABLE 2: For Planet: Accelerating a climate-friendly transformation

Thank you, Madam Moderator.

1. Speakers today have already eloquently addressed the pivotal role of tourism within the global economy, and in particular, to the economies of LDCs and SIDs. Tourism undoubtedly has been devastated over the past two years as a result of the pandemic and related disruptions.
2. The stark reality is that the pandemic takes place against the backdrop of the triple crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. These endanger not only the tourism sector, but the long term viability of human existence and that of our planet. This compels us all to rethink and reset the relationship between tourism and nature, climate and the economy.
3. Sustainability has always been at the heart of Bhutan’s tourism policy, and is encapsulated in our policy of High Value Low Volume tourism. Driven by the holistic development approach of Gross National Happiness, Bhutan has always recognised that tourism in its full cycle, must be harnessed sustainably, with minimum impact on the natural environment, to local communities, value systems and culture. At the same time, opportunities for participation in the sector must be inclusive, and benefits reaped from the industry distributed broadly and fairly across society.
4. In the wake of the pandemic, Bhutan introduced specific measures to mitigate the effects of the crisis and accelerate recovery, including fiscal and monetary policies, followed by policies to support jobs and training.
5. In January last year, the 2021 Tourism Policy was adopted, consolidating our efforts to promote Bhutan as ‘a green, sustainable, inclusive and a high value tourism destination.’
6. To cite an example, one landmark undertaking operationalising this policy, is the restoration of the 430 km Trans Bhutan Trail, which served as the main artery of communication across our country upto the first half of the 20th Century before the introduction of the first motor roads in the country.

7. Such diversification to nature based eco-friendly products such as the Trans Bhutan Trail leverages innovation, digitization, sustainability and partnerships and are important components of our efforts to resuscitate the tourism industry. It will support Bhutan's efforts to safeguard our natural environment and biodiversity while also engaging our youth, creating jobs and livelihoods for local economies. And of equal value to Bhutan from a Gross National Happiness perspective, the project restores important cultural and historical vestiges of our past to their former glory, strengthens connectivity between scattered communities along the trail ensuring that no one is left behind.

Thank you for this opportunity to share Bhutan's perspective.