



Statement by H.E. Mrs. Kunzang C. Namgyel,

**Ambassador/Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Bhutan
to the United Nations**

**at the debate on the Follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International
Conference on Population and Development**

on Thursday, 9 October, 2014

at the United Nations General Assembly,

New York.

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank you Mr. President for convening the debate on the Follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014, and for providing the opportunity for my country to share our experiences as well as challenges faced in its implementation.

Mr. President,

The Cairo Summit marked an important shift in our approach by placing the individual at the center of population and development policies. It also focused our attention on relevant issues including economic growth and sustainable development; empowerment of women; urbanization; education, and technology. In addition, as highlighted in the Secretary General's report, we have made significant gains in population health and life expectancy, protection of human rights, and moved an estimated 1 billion people out of extreme poverty. However, much still needs to be done.

In my own region, the detailed analysis by the UN reveals that significant challenges still remain in the implementation of ICPD. And, while it is reassuring that the Programme of Action on ICPD has been extended beyond 2014 and that this review process will inform and shape the post-2015 development agenda, many of these challenges require urgent attention if the progress and achievements since the Cairo Summit are to be sustained.

Mr. President,

The Secretary General has aptly underscored the challenges of inequity and sustainability in his Report, and I quote:

“Our greatest shared challenge is that our very accomplishments, reflected in ever-greater human consumption and extraction of the Earth's resources, are increasingly inequitably distributed, threatening inclusive development, the environment and our common future.” Unquote.

In this context, my Government is committed to ensuring that development is both inclusive and sustainable. Bhutan is committed to remaining carbon neutral even as we strive to overcome multidimensional poverty and meet the special needs of the most vulnerable groups. In order for us to succeed, the continued support and cooperation of our development partners, particularly in building the necessary infrastructure and our productive capacities, will be crucial.

Mr. President,

Bhutan is experiencing rapid demographic change. With about 65 percent of its population in the age group of 25 and below, the potential for a “demographic dividend” is at its peak. Access to quality education and vocational training responsive to the demands of our social and economic development process is therefore a key priority. Related to this is the need to create jobs for which the Government has been increasingly engaging the private sector. Skills development, promotion of FDI and development of small and medium enterprises are part of our endeavours to enhance employment opportunities for the youth.

Rapid urbanization due to rural-urban migration has also proven to be an increasingly complex challenge for Bhutan. With 60 percent of our population still in rural areas, the pace of urbanization will inevitably intensify in the near future and outpace our current capacity to provide basic infrastructure and public services to urban residents. Ensuring access to land, housing, water, sanitary and waste management services and livelihood, particularly for the urban poor are new dimensions to the development challenges that we face.

Mr. President,

Gender equality, equity and empowerment of women must continue to receive the highest priority if we are to realize the full implementation of the ICPD. In this regard, Bhutan continues to promote women's rights and facilitate their full participation in the socio-economic development and the political and decision-making processes. The current 11th FYP has placed high priority on monitoring and data generation by gender as well as interventions on gender equality in the Local Governments. It will address visible gender gaps in the areas of education, employment, political representation, and violence against women.

We also note and welcome the strong role of civil society for realizing the agenda of ICPD and have taken concrete measures to encourage their participation. While we had just a couple of CSOs in 1994, Bhutan now has 38 registered CSOs consisting of 29 Public Benefit Organizations and 9 Mutual Benefit Organizations.

Mr. President,

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the support of all our development partners and the efforts of UNFPA and the Commission on Population and Development towards the achievement of the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that Bhutan remains resolute in its commitment to the ICPD Programme of Action and to further incorporating all its aspects into our national planning process. We hope that our renewed political commitment to the ICPD Programme of Action will be backed by a strong commitment from our development partners to provide the financial and technical assistance that are necessary for full achievement of its goals and objectives. My delegation looks forward to working to ensure that the ICPD Programme of Action remains a high priority in the post-2015 development agenda.

Thank you, and Tashi Delek !