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The Delhi Sustainable Development Summit (DSDS) is an important platform for discussions on the climate change mitigation. What are your expectations from the summit?

This is my first participation in this forum. My government wanted me to attend and I am glad that I have come here, mainly because here there is a lot of meaningful interaction. One meets many people with different voices but with a common objective to fight climate change to ensure a sustainable future. Also, DSDS is a very timely event because after Rio 20, there is a huge mandate for the future we want and this summit is a good platform for the build up towards that objective. I am particularly happy that I could speak to many important persons and build connections with them. Being a part of the National Commission (Bhutan), we have lots of challenges on climate change and sustainability issues.

Bhutan is still a carbon neutral country, a status that is almost unique today. But as a developing country what are the other challenges faced by Bhutan in terms of the environment?

Bhutan is benefiting a lot from being carbon neutral. Today, because we are carbon neutral we have a lot of potential for hydropower. Our fragile ecosystem is being

maintained and is intact even though it is very vulnerable to the impact of climate change. If you disturb the forests, the whole architecture of the ecosystem can be destroyed. In Bhutan, the agricultural system is still indigenous, compared to other countries, and we still use local seed. So, these are some of the benefits we derive from being carbon neutral. But, now with transport sector, energy sector, and pollution, we are bound to face daunting challenges in remaining carbon neutral. But, at the same time we have been fortunate because we have been learning from others' experiences on tackling pollution issues, sequestering carbon, developing strategies, and so on. In order to maintain carbon dioxide levels as low as possible, we are going for cleaner production of technologies. We are also consciously developing low-carbon strategies. Carbon neutral is the overall policy but now have come up already with low-carbon strategies and this is being mainstreamed in all aspects of development. That way we have phased our short-term, medium-term, and long-term low carbon strategy development, including transport, protection of forests, logging, ropeways, and so on. As of now, about 2/3rd of the

potential remains untouched. We are only using 1/3rd of our resources to sequester carbon. Bhutan is a very small country and we want to contribute very sincerely whatever we can do towards.

Sustainability is part policy and part values. How do we bring back a culture of conservation in place of the use and throw culture that is being followed?

This is a critical juncture for policy-makers, decision-makers, and developers. The GDP approach did not work and now there should be another term and it has taken about 20 years for the global community to realize that GDP, as an economic paradigm, is not working. There should be some other parameter. And Bhutan has been fortunate enough to be able to embrace the concept of Gross National Happiness. This concept is propounded by our fourth king in 1974 and now this concept of happiness has been embraced by the UN as of 2011. Technical expert working from Bhutan and many countries are working on a conceptual



framework for a new development. Happiness is a very subjective concept but we want to measure it now, that is why we need to come up with measurables — what are the elements that can contribute to happiness because money alone is not working. What are the other contributing factors that can sustain sustainability?

Also, in Bhutan right now we are in a comfortable position, in a way that our population is good, environment is good, we have lots of pristine water, air quality is good, and the tourism is quite high value. I think we have to be very careful, especially in mainstreaming, not just in the environment, but all the indexes and alignments that can mold sustainable development practices. I don't know how it will be, we are just in the process.

A world governed by greed not need. Your comments please.

I think it has already been proven that money alone is not everything. Other things like good health, culture, tradition; all these elements contribute to happiness. Nowadays people say in this world that there is a disease called 'affluentitis' — the affluent society! There is no limit to our needs! We know that we have used, especially this generation, at least half of the natural resources that is meant for the next generation and we are still exploiting. We know that there is a limit, it is finite. So, there has to be a sustainable path and there has to be a certain framework or formula for judiciously using our resources. In a country such as Bhutan, for example in agriculture — we are between two giants and India



has fortunately been very supportive — we have very good market in India, if we grow lots of organic food. We don't have intensive farming but what we have is the necessary environment for growing organic food, and that I believe is one of the sustainable approaches that can contribute to sustainable development.

What are your views on the policy versus action debate as far as the environment is concerned.

Most of the stuff (related to climate change) is quite generic, known to everybody now. Last year was the 18th negotiation year for climate change — 18th COP was held at Doha, Qatar. Eighteen years of negotiation — powerful countries, rich countries, small countries, affected countries, and so on; all together 185 countries negotiate there. But negotiation has been very slow; coming up with legally binding documents has been slow. Now, there should be action at local level, national and international levels. And, in fact even at the individual level. I feel that the time is highly ripened and everybody should act together. From the way things are progressing, it is not very encouraging but at the same time, a country, such as Bhutan can try and contribute and show some kind of

illustration on how we can go about addressing climate change. But, the real leaders of powerful countries, I think they should show the leadership, they should demonstrate. If climate change will not excuse poor or rich, powerful or

not. It is high time that the whole global community unite and unless we do that there is no way we will escape from the shackles of climate change. There should be decisive action on limiting and cutting down emissions. And this should begin from the rich and highly industrialized countries. Otherwise I think there is no hope for humanity to survive because even if we completely stop emission right now, it is envisaged that it will remain in the system for years because of the lack in the system.

The IPCC report is very useful to give caution/warning and scientific guidance to the international community and the decision makers in the negotiation process. They say that the temperature rise currently is about 0.7 above the level. With this rise itself, in Bhutan, for example, we are facing glacier retreat, the snow is melting; the adverse impact of climate change is being felt in every sector of the environment. And now we are saying we will be happy with 1.5 degree Celsius which is not accepted by the industrialized countries! So what would happen? The rate of extinction of species of animals and plants is increasing. And a country like ours is dependent on climate sensitive factors such as agriculture and hydropower! So this is something that needs to be understood; although it is a rhetoric understood but not implemented! In Bhutan we are totally innocent in terms of contributing to climate change because we do not produce any pollution that we cannot sequester. So, it is up to the powerful countries. Just now it appears as if only the developing countries will suffer; indeed we are suffering because we have dual challenges: socio-economic progress and adapting to climate change, whereas richer countries only have to worry about one thing, but when the final call of climate change comes it will not spare anybody. The final catastrophe will ferociously attack everybody and we must not reach that irreversible stage! ■

