



**34<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF  
THE UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE  
GENERAL POLICY DEBATE**

**STATEMENT BY  
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**MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND  
CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO**

**ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN**

**Paris, 10<sup>th</sup> October 2007**

**Mr. President, Mr. Director General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman,**

I can admit amongst friends and colleagues, that despite my many years of association in various capacities with the works of UNESCO, the principles that embody the Organization's mandate, as enshrined in the Constitution, continue to inspire me. One phrase in particular, is iconic and familiar to us all:

“since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.”

Today, one can not but reflect over the global developments of the past few years, and note that these words, written over 62 years ago, encapsulate so aptly, some of the key challenges at the heart of present international conflict and insecurity. ‘Ignorance of each other's ways and lives....suspicion and mistrust between the peoples of the world’ are among the forces ripping apart not only countries and their peoples but also communities and families across artificial cultural and religious fault lines.

In growing recognition of cultural diversity as a human right, and the rightful importance of dialogue amongst and between cultures and civilizations towards promoting a culture of tolerance, respect for diversity, and enhance international cooperation in this field, there has been an increase in international initiatives and efforts to mainstream the issue in the international agenda. Bhutan welcomes and fully supports these developments. As a small, least developed and land locked country with a small population, Bhutan firmly believes that cultural diversity, as a human right and the common heritage of mankind, must be recognized and affirmed for present and future generations.

However, we would like to see a broader, more coordinated approach at the global level, spearheaded by the Organisation uniquely and best poised to serve this purpose, which is UNESCO. An additional concern is the need to avoid diffusion of limited international resources across competing and sometimes duplicative processes. As a performance based, well managed,

state driven intergovernmental UN agency, now closer than ever to universal membership, UNESCO alone enjoys the political legitimacy and broad international support to successfully advance, “through the educational and scientific and cultural relations of the peoples of the world, the objectives of international peace and of the common welfare of mankind for which the UNO was established.” UNESCO’s lead role and support to other global initiatives in the area of promoting greater cultural understanding and cooperation amongst regions, countries, and communities will be critical. We are confident that UNESCO can build upon the synergy between all actors dealing with cultural rights and the issue of cultural diversity.

**Mr. President,**

UNESCO’s recognition of cultural diversity as one of the roots of development, understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence as contained in the 2003 Declaration on Cultural Diversity, finds deep resonance in Bhutan’s development philosophy, known as Gross National Happiness or GNH. GNH was first introduced nearly three decades ago by Bhutan’s Fourth King, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck. We are pleased and humbled to note that this uniquely Bhutanese paradigm is now drawing increasing global attention. GNH attempts to balance the pursuit of economic and industrial growth and prosperity against the preservation and promotion of the spiritual and cultural needs of a society. It therefore places greater importance on the holistic development of the country and its people, rather than on the achievement of only barren numerical indicators. It is no mistake, that promotion and protection of culture and traditions, is one of the four main pillars of GNH, along with sustainable and equitable socio-economic development, environmental conservation, and good governance.

At this point, allow me to mention that the Royal Government and the Bhutanese people were immensely pleased when the ‘Dremetse Ngachham’ or the Mask Dance of the Drums of Dremetse was included in UNESCO’s Third Proclamation of Intangible Masterpieces in 2006. We are grateful to

UNESCO, and many friendly countries for supporting Bhutan's efforts to safeguard an expression of one of Bhutan's most precious and irreplaceable assets, our cultural heritage. We look forward to continuing to share such treasures with others, in the spirit of contributing towards a vibrant, pluralistic, and culturally diverse global context.

Good governance is the critical ingredient that can determine the success or failure of any well intended policy initiative. Guided by the philosophy of GNH, Bhutan has embarked on the path of irreversible change, transforming the kingdom into a democratic constitutional monarchy. In the forthcoming year, the people of Bhutan look forward to the adoption of our first written Constitution, as well as the convening of the first nationwide parliamentary elections with the exercise of universal adult suffrage. In 2008, Bhutan will also celebrate the formal coronation of His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and the centenary of the Wangchuck dynasty. As we stand at the threshold of these momentous developments, the people of Bhutan look to our friends and well wishers, and the global community at large, for continued support and inspiration.

Allow me, Mr. President, to take this opportunity to thank our Director General, His Excellency Mr. Koichiro Matsuura, for his unremitting efforts and guidance to the Organisation over the last seven years, during which UNESCO has seen many major reforms, particularly in the areas of decentralization and management. In the field integrating more seamlessly within the One United Nations, country teams will benefit countries like Bhutan where UNESCO has no resident representative. Successful cooperation with UNESCO, particularly in the sectors of education and culture, have contributed significantly towards the strengthening and the consolidation of the Royal Government's developmental efforts.

**Mr. President,**

In conclusion, I wish to extend a very warm welcome to both Montenegro and Singapore, who join our fold as the 192<sup>nd</sup> and 193<sup>rd</sup> Member States of

UNESCO respectively. My congratulations to you, Mr. President, and to other members of the Bureau on your election. Allow me to assure you of my delegation's continued support and cooperation, towards successful and fruitful deliberations during the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Conference

Thank you and Tashi Delek .

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