

Statement by Hon'ble Secretary, Dasho Penden Wangchuk, Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, Bhutan

2nd Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (7-8 November, 2007)

High Level Round Table I: Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction in National Policies and Programmes

Hon'ble Chairman, Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen!

A very good afternoon and good tidings to you from the land of Gross National Happiness, Bhutan.

At the outset, I would like to commend and extend my deepest appreciation to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India and the conference partners for taking the initiative to host the 2nd Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction here, in the historic city of Delhi.

I would also like to applaud our host for the excellent arrangements put in place for the conference. I believe that this will go a long way in facilitating the successful deliberations of the conference. I might be found wanting, if I did not make a special mention of the warm hospitality extended to me and my delegation by the Government of India. In fact, you have left no stone unturned to make us feel at home, away from home. The warmth of your hospitality has been indeed overwhelming. For this, we thank you so very much.

For the very fact that there are so many countries being represented in the conference, it indeed speaks volumes of the importance shown towards disaster risk reduction and the commitment to save lives and livelihoods during times of disaster. It is, both heartening and encouraging.

In terms of disasters, I must say that Bhutan has been very fortunate and blessed not to have experienced major disasters, resulting in enormous loss of lives and property. However, in view of our geo-physical location, being one of the most seismically active regions in the world and increasing pressure on the environment from population growth, urbanization and economic development, the government realizes the importance of mainstreaming disaster risk reduction concerns in all development activities

and in developing a comprehensive disaster risk reduction strategy for the country.

Also, with the emerging trends pointing towards climate change and global warming, another imminent danger facing Bhutan is the threat from glacial lake outburst floods. We also face recurrent damage to property and sometimes to lives, due to flash floods, wild forest fires and landslides.

With the endorsement of the National Disaster Risk Management Framework in 2006, Bhutan has just begun the process of institutionalizing disaster risk management in the country. We in Bhutan want to adopt a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach to disaster risk management and we are hopeful that with the strong political will and commitment expressed in the framework, we will be able to mainstream disaster risk reduction in our national policies and programmes.

In our efforts to mainstream disaster risk reduction concerns in Bhutan, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Japan for the full support rendered by them.

While I wish the conference a resounding success, I would also like to wish all the participants good health and happiness in all their future endeavors.

Thank you and Tashi Delek.