

**DRAFT STATEMENT BY H.E. D.N. DHUNGYEL, FOREIGN
MINISTER, ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN
SECOND WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
5 November 2025 (*Duration: Five Minutes*)**

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

1. I bring to you the warm greetings of His Majesty The King and the people of Bhutan.
2. At the outset, allow me to express our deep appreciation to the United Nations and the Government of the State of Qatar for the excellent arrangements and gracious hospitality in hosting this milestone summit.
3. It is an honour to address this Second World Summit for Social Development. This summit is not only a platform to celebrate the remarkable achievements since the landmark Copenhagen Declaration of 1995, but more importantly, to reflect on the challenges that lie ahead in our collective pursuit of a more inclusive and equitable world.
4. Today, as we gather amidst growing global inequality, economic uncertainty, and social fragmentation, the enduring relevance of the Declaration's principles - poverty eradication, decent employment, and social integration - remains clear. For Bhutan, these are not abstract goals but core values that guide its pursuit of a just, inclusive, and sustainable future.

Excellencies,

5. Since Bhutan's first planned development in 1961, led by visionary monarchs and supported by our development partners, we have achieved significant progress in both economic and social fronts. Our development philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) seeks to achieve economic prosperity and social advancement in equal measures. As a result, Bhutanese have access to free healthcare and education, life expectancy has increased to 72, youth literacy is currently at 97.7 percent, and poverty has declined sharply to 12 percent.
6. GNH has not only shaped our national policy but also inspired global frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.
7. Further, under the visionary leadership of His Majesty The King, Bhutan is embarking on building the Gelephu Mindfulness City - a transformative model of sustainable urban development inspired by GNH. The GMC is Bhutan's response to the call for a renewed approach to development, one that centers sustainability and mindfulness at its core, and highlights the interdependence of our shared humanity.
8. Our social progress is also the result of adoption and implementation of targeted national policies by the government, covering areas such as health, education, social protection, gender equality, youth, children, senior citizens, housing, and land management. Bhutan continues to provide free health and education to all its citizens. Further, 87.6 % of the public schools are benefiting from the school feeding programme ensuring that children get nutritious meal
9. Bhutan is finalizing the National Social Protection Strategy, a key initiative to advance social inclusion, resilience, and equity through integrated social insurance, social assistance, and labour market measures to safeguard all citizens, ensuring no one is left behind.

10. Realising that societal advancement cannot be pursued independently of economic growth, our ongoing 13th Five-Year Plan envisions making Bhutan “*A High-Income GNH Economy*”. Under this vision, Bhutan seeks to transform our economy into a robust and reliable structure with high productivity across sectors, and a strong private sector as the engine of growth.
11. The 13th Five-Year Plan will also foster “*a healthy and productive society founded on equitable and high-quality health, education and social protection.*” These social development outcomes will be driven by three key national programmes, the Healthy Drukyul Programme, the Education Transformation Programme and the Transformational Governance Programme focusing on health, education, and social protection respectively.
12. These Programmes collectively aim to enhance the quality of life of all Bhutanese including the most vulnerable by focusing on improving their health and education outcomes through enhanced infrastructure, capacity and governance.

Excellencies,

13. Since the First Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995, its spirit has endured through successive global efforts; the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 mobilised the world to address poverty, health, and education, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 laid out a comprehensive roadmap for a more sustainable and equitable future. In 2021, *Our Common Agenda* called for renewed, inclusive multilateralism, and in 2024, the *Pact for the Future* reaffirmed our shared commitment to intergenerational solidarity and global cooperation.

14. Yet, the world continues to grapple with deep inequalities in income, opportunity, and access to essential services. The digital divide and systemic barriers continue to marginalize vulnerable groups, while climate change and conflict threaten to reverse our past achievements. In the face of these enduring challenges, this moment calls not for celebration, but for renewed resolve and collective action.
15. Excellencies, there is no doubt that true progress can be made when we move forward together guided by collaboration, not by unilateral agendas.

In closing, Excellencies,

16. As we adopt the *Doha Political Declaration*- a new period of commitment for the world, Bhutan pledges to work in a collaborative spirit to achieve a vision of a world free from poverty, hunger, and discrimination.
17. Let this summit be transformative—a catalyst for concrete action that places people at the centre of development and reaffirms our shared humanity.

I thank you.

Kadrinche la.