

**Remarks by Ms. Esha Srivastava, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of India,  
Thimphu: 13<sup>th</sup> Round Table Meeting of Development Partners: Thimphu,  
Bhutan: March 16, 2017**

Lyonpo Damcho Dorji, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan,

H.E. Haoliang Xu, UNDP Assistant Secretary-General, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Regional Director, Asia and the Pacific,

Distinguished Delegates,

Government of India is happy to participate in the 13<sup>th</sup> Round Table Meeting that has brought together Bhutan's policy makers with representatives of various donors and multilateral organizations. I thank the organizers for the opportunity to speak briefly on the India-Bhutan development partnership.

2. Government of India has been associated with Bhutan's planning process since its inception in 1961. Over the years, the India-Bhutan development partnership has been supporting the Royal Government of Bhutan's economic priorities, plans and programmes. Cooperation in the hydropower sector between India and Bhutan is a true example of mutually beneficial relationship, providing clean electricity to India, generating export revenue for Bhutan, and further strengthening the bilateral economic linkages. The two countries have successfully concluded several power sharing agreements.

3. In recent years, the main vehicles of channeling assistance have been Project Tied Assistance or PTA projects and the Small Development Projects or SDPs. The SDPs, in particular, have made a direct impact in the lives of the communities where they are implemented with full peoples' participation. Overall, our experience has been that the Royal Government of Bhutan implements projects effectively and in a time bound manner, leading to considerable socio economic development, particularly in rural areas.

4. A clear vision of Bhutan's development priorities, based on the concept of Gross National Happiness, and objectives and good governance are key reasons behind the rapid strides Bhutan has made over the past many years. We heard yesterday from the Prime Minister about the commendable progress Bhutan has made in developing its social and physical infrastructure. Economic growth is taking place side-by-side with balanced and inclusive development that has reached the last citizen. An important facet of Bhutanese society is the relatively high degree of gender equality. Nonetheless,

the Government is taking extra steps in this regard and it is noteworthy that gender mainstreaming is a priority in both 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plans

5. We have noted the guidelines for preparation of the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan that seek to address the emerging challenges that face a rapidly changing Bhutan. The objective of the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan is building “a just, harmonious and sustainable society through enhanced decentralization”, and we hope that this National Development agenda will guide and inspire all stakeholders engaged in the task of nation-building.

6. The theme of this year’s meeting is ‘Gross National Happiness for Global Goals’. There is increasing international interest in Bhutan’s social and economic development model. Bhutan’s success has been to effectively mainstream the principles of GNH within its governance structure and processes. Therefore, the Round Table Meeting serves as a platform not only to hear what others have to say about Bhutan but also what Bhutan has to offer to the world.

7. I wish to place on record the tremendous cooperation that we have received, in particular, from the Gross National Happiness Commission which is the nodal agency for most of our development partnership programmes, and also from all other Ministries and agencies connected with our bilateral programmes.

8. In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm our commitment to continue to work closely with the Royal Government of Bhutan in the spirit of the unique relationship that our two countries share, drawing upon geographical proximity and cultural, economic and people to people inter-linkages.

Thank You and Tashi Delek!

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