

[Your Majesty?) Honorable Prime Minister Dr. Lotay Tshering, H. E. Mr. Achim Steiner, Honorable Ministers, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by thanking for inviting Israel to participate in this important and inspiring conference for the first time. I am extremely proud to represent Israel here in Bhutan. From one small country to another with appropriate structure of development at the heart of its priorities, we extend our hand in partnership and friendship.

I commend the Kingdom of Bhutan, His Highness the King, and the Bhutanese government on the vision with which you have decided to take Bhutan forward. As an economist, I fully understand the challenges involved in transitioning from a developing country to a middle income country, but I firmly believe you are bravely taking the right steps in the right direction.

As a nation who faced great developmental challenges in a variety of fields in its early days of nation building, Israel has developed a wide and diverse collection of breakthrough technologies, practices and know-how. All the solutions Israel created to answer the country's needs were designed to be sustainable, knowing Israel could not rely on its immediate neighbours to answer its needs. Our sustainability was and remains crucial to our national resilience.

Today, Israel is happy to share its sustainable development solutions with its neighbours and friends around the world. Bhutan, of course, is among the nations with which Israel has shared its knowledge and with whom Israel is keen to share even more. I believe that what Israel has done for its survival, Bhutan can do for its development.

I am proud to say that for many years now, Israel has been cooperating with Bhutan in agriculture and education. Together, we have focused both on the immediate needs of the population as well as the economic needs of society in the modern era. Both these areas are stepping stones in Bhutan's transition into a middle income country, and we believe there is so much more we can do together for the future of prosperity of Bhutan. Further areas of cooperation we would be happy to explore together with Bhutan include water, advanced agricultural technologies and practices, as well as innovation and high tech, as a start.

In today's world, state governments do not need to carry the burden of development alone. This is true not only thanks to bilateral cooperation but also through multilateral cooperation and international organisations. Israel is happy to work with the United Nations in Bhutan as well, as part of its commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This commitment to the positive power of the international community can be seen in Israel's resolution on entrepreneurship for development, a force we believe can contribute to Bhutan and many more countries around the world.

Finally, on a personal note, this has been my first visit to Bhutan, but I already feel at home in this wonderful country. It bears so many similarities to Israel in the importance it gives to family values and ensuring basic human rights and personal needs while protecting the environment in our small corner of the world. It seems clear to both countries that all of the above are necessary for wellbeing, happiness and true national resilience.

However, there is still much for Israel to learn about the like-minded people and country of Bhutan. Israelis are extremely interested to learn about the novelty of the Bhutanese Gross National Happiness

Commission and I am personally inspired by this concept. It comes as no surprise that Israelis are so curious about Bhutan and keen to know it better.

I truly hope that my presence here today is a promise of the growing interaction to come between Bhutan and Israel in the near future, as we join hands to make the happiest nation in the world even happier.

Thank you.