

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Daw Penjo
Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bhutan to Canada**

At the Opening Ceremony of the Conference

**“Rethinking Development: Local Pathways to Global Well-being Second
International Conference on Gross National Happiness”**

20 to 24 June 2005

St. Francis Xavier University, Nova Scotia, Canada

Co-Chairpersons (President Reoch of Shambala, Ms. Coyle of Coady International Institute)

Hon'ble Ministers (Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, His Honour Lawrence Freeman, Hon'ble President of St. Francis Xavier University,

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants and Guests

It is an honour for me to participate in the opening ceremony of the international conference on Gross National Happiness. I am particularly happy that the conference is being held in Canada, a country with which Bhutan enjoys very close and growing relations. As Bhutan's first Ambassador to Canada, it is both my responsibility as well as my personal desire to further promote relations between the two countries. I have no doubt that this conference will greatly contribute to my efforts.

The presence of the Honourable Home Minister of Bhutan, H.E. Lyonpo Jigmi Y. Thinley with a large delegation is evidence of the importance the Royal Government places on this conference. The presence also of the high officials of the Canadian Government and Province of Nova Scotia and other dignitaries demonstrate the wide interest in the conference. With many eminent scholars present we can look forward to stimulating presentations and discussions.

The theme "Rethinking Development: Local Pathways to Global Wellbeing" is most appropriate as the global community today is challenged more than ever before to seek innovative approaches to development. The goal of a just

and peaceful world has remained largely elusive, despite five decades of efforts. What is critical now for development thinkers and policy makers is to take stock of the past development approaches and search for new ideas and lasting solutions to the challenges and problems of our times. This will require fundamental shifts in development thinking at the national and international level and calls for sharing of experiences.

Gross National Happiness as a development path that Bhutan has been pursuing is a local pathway but one that should have global relevance. Indeed, international interest in GNH is growing. UNDP's annual report since 1990 called the Human Development Report recognizes that the basic purpose of development is to enlarge people's choices; that human development is much more than increasing income and that economic growth is only a means to enlarging people's choices. In GNH, the individual is at the centre of development and happiness is his ultimate goal – a goal that can be achieved through a balanced promotion of his material, spiritual and emotional needs.

While Bhutan has not been able to provide a basis to chart and measure GNH, and I am not sure that it can be done, Bhutan is gratified that it has generated an international discussion. In the coming days, we will have the opportunity to listen to diverse views and ideas on GNH. His Royal Highness Chhoetse Penlop Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck in his address at the closing session of the First International Conference on Gross National Happiness held in Thimphu in February 2004 said and I quote “while Gross National Happiness is inherently Bhutanese, its idea may have a positive relevance to any peoples or communities – wherever they may be”

unquote. The task of the conference here in Antigonish, in my view, would be to see how its relevance could be promoted beyond Bhutan's borders.

In concluding, I would like to express the Royal Government's deep appreciation to our hosts, St. Francis Xavier University, Shambala, Coady International Institute and all other organizers who have helped in putting together this conference. I would also like to express our sincere appreciation for the very warm welcome this evening to the Province of Nova Scotia and for the generous hospitality extended to us all.

I wish the Conference every success.

I wish you all Tashi Delek!

Thank you!
