

**Statement by Hon'ble Speaker Jigme Zangpo on Human rights abuses as precursors of conflict: Parliaments as early responders at the 135<sup>th</sup> IPU General Assembly  
(Geneva, Switzerland, 23-27 October 2016)**

Your Excellency, Mr. Saber H. Chowdhury, President of the IPU,

Your Excellency, Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General of IPU,

Honourable Speakers and fellow Parliamentarians,

Ladies & Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to convey the warm greetings and good wishes of His Majesty the King and people of Bhutan.

My delegation and I are truly honoured to participate in this important discourse on human rights which for centuries have been the single greatest setback for a peaceful world. Strongly believing that deprivation of human rights leads to deterioration of a nation's health, the Royal Government of Bhutan's policy, which is built on the principal of

sustainable peace and happiness, has always been to ensure inclusive development both through governance and legislation. This endeavor of the government is clearly reflected in our unique but profound development philosophy of Gross National Happiness.

Recognising the key role the parliamentarians play in the promotion and protection of human rights, Bhutan's Parliament has established the Human Rights Committee which is mandated to review the human rights developments, including existing laws and policies related to human rights in the country, and report to the Parliament with recommendations. In this regard, we strongly feel that a Parliament which has a standing committee for promotion of human rights will be in a better position to monitor, assess and provide solutions for issues concerning violations of human rights.

Similarly, the Parliament of Bhutan has always recognized the special and inevitable role of women in shaping the political and social domain of our country. We have extensively invested in the empowerment of

women to be leaders in all walks of life including politics. To this effect, the Parliament has instituted a committee which specifically deals with vulnerable sections of society such as women, youth and children. In addition, we have set up close networks with women and youth organizations to make ourselves available to render legislative assistance in protecting their rights.

Women are oppressed, marginalized and discriminated for the mere fact of being a woman. This undoubtedly puts women at the center of human rights vulnerability. Thus, more than ever before, the international agencies including the IPU must further enhance their role in strengthening the capacity of women.

With a genuine spirit of promoting human rights, Bhutan has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child including its two additional protocols. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with

Disabilities is currently under review and it is hoped that the Parliament will be able to ratify it.

I am also very happy to report that right to free health care, education and other opportunities form the spirit of the Constitution of Bhutan. The Parliament to this effect has been an umbrella observer in ensuring that these rights of the people are guaranteed with quality for a holistic development guided by human values.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union as an apex body of lawmakers must continue its good work of organizing international forums on the promotion of human rights. Similarly, in order to further enhance the role of the IPU in promoting human rights, it must come out with concrete resolutions which will find support from the international community and the United Nations.

Having witnessed great innovations and achievements, the twenty-first century should never have been a century of oppression and conflicts, yet our world continues to be plagued by them. The reason is we fail to

see ourselves as one and are blinded by greed, selfishness and superiority complex. This eventually results in violation of human rights and sparks major conflicts. Thus, it is of paramount importance to have constant and continuous monitoring of rights not just by human rights groups but by governments and parliaments.

### **Ladies & Gentlemen,**

Parliaments must take the center stage in promoting human rights and preventing conflicts by building a path that leads to international harmony. This is absolutely possible! A nation's parliament is a signature of that country and the face of a society. In this context, if a parliament is not silent and dares to initiate social change through the utilization of resources in good faith- a strong international revolution could be triggered with a free world as its trademark.

Despite being a young democracy, Bhutan has so far been treading on the path of peace and harmony. And, we strongly feel that issues such as human rights violation should neither be ignored nor be given a chance

to burgeon into chaos. On this note, the Parliament of Bhutan would like to reaffirm our commitment for a world that upholds the worth, dignity and right of every human person.

As responsible members of the United Nations and the IPU, I urge all my fellow lawmakers to do whatever possible to protect and ensure human freedom and justice. I would like to conclude by quoting Nelson Mandela who said and I quote ‘To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity’ unquote.

**THANK YOU & TASHI DELEK!**

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