

KUZU ZANGPOLA!

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. It is a great pleasure for my delegation and me to participate in the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) in this historic city of Ulaanbaatar. I would like to express our appreciation to the Government of Mongolia for hosting this important event, and for the warm hospitality extended to us.
2. The Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction 2018 is very important platform for us to take stock and reflect on the initial progress we have made in DRR after the New Delhi Declaration.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

3. Despite the continued efforts and initiatives by individual countries, and regional and international organizations, frequency and intensity of natural disasters are on the rise globally. The Royal Government of Bhutan stand in solidarity with the countries who have suffered enormous losses and pain due to recent natural disasters around the world.
4. In spite of being a carbon negative country, Bhutan continues to bear the brunt of increased incidences of extreme weather phenomenon and growing instances of flash floods, windstorms and landslides further exacerbated by climate change. Past disaster events have shown that the strict environmental laws we followed have reduced exposure to tragic situations compared to losses and destruction sustained in other parts of Asia Pacific region.
5. Given the fragile mountain ecosystem and its location in one of the seismically active zones of the world, earthquake is the most feared and imminent hazard in Bhutan. We have experienced two major earthquakes in the past six years, one in September 2009 and another in 2011 with extensive damage to infrastructures and loss of lives.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. In view of impending threats from disasters and our rugged topography, Bhutan has made sustained efforts towards enhancing our disaster management and risk reduction capacities which includes diverse capacity building programs like the Search and Rescue trainings, Safe school program, Health in Emergency programs and the Community based disaster risk management programs.
7. Further, I am happy to report that Disaster Risk Management is now included as one of the National key Result Areas of the 12th Five Year Plan of the Royal Government of Bhutan.
8. One recent development which I am happy to report to this august gathering is that with support from the UN and the WFP we have successfully conducted the National Level Table Top Earthquake Simulation exercise in Thimphu just last week which is first of its kind in the country. This will be followed by numerous hazard specific simulation exercises in all the 20 districts.

9. In line with the target (e) of the Sendai Framework, we have held the first round of consultation with 15 districts in the country to develop local DRR strategies to manage and reduce disaster risks.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

10. In addition to these efforts by the Royal Government, it is with great pride that I share about His Majesty the King of Bhutan's initiative in the establishment of the *De-Suung* or Guardians of Peace program. The program encourages citizens to contribute to a larger goal of nation building through a spirit of volunteerism, community service and civil responsibility during disasters.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

11. As a Developing Country, Bhutan faces challenges arising from the lack of financial, human and technical resources to deal with the disaster impacts.
12. Nonetheless, we are committed to fulfilling the commitments of the AMCDRR, and the Target (e) of Sendai Framework to reduce disaster risk and to sustain our development gains. While doing so, we look forward to working closely with our development partners for financial and technical support.
13. In conclusion, I would like to mention that there is direct co-relation between the Sendai Framework priorities and the 4 pillars of GNH – Bhutan's holistic development philosophy- a policy that transcends conventional development and strives to provide an enabling environment that ensures the safety, well-being, and happiness of our citizen from natural disasters.
14. I wish this landmark AMCDRR a great success.

Thank you and *Tashi Delek!*