

**COUNTRY STATEMENT DELIVERED BY
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BHUTAN**

SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NUTRITION
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Your Majesty, Royal Highnesses, Director Generals, FAO and WHO, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

I bring to you all warmest greetings from His Majesty the King, the government and people of Bhutan. I offer my heartfelt gratitude to the organizers for inviting us here.

Our delegation is delighted to be a part to this Global Intergovernmental Conference on Nutrition which will put food security and nutrition high on international and national development agenda.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

With the implementation of a series of plans and programs aimed at increasing domestic food production, improving social services and infrastructure, substantial progress has been made in terms of overcoming transient food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty in the country.

Food and nutrition security situation in the country has improved since the first ICN in 1992. The population under poverty has reduced drastically to 12% from over 31% a decade ago. The national average energy consumption exceeds 2500 Kcal/person/day. On the nutrition front, the status of the under fives have improved with stunting rate reduced from 56% in 1988 to 33.5% in 2010 and underweight from 24% to 10.4% in the same period. Over 96% of the rural population has access to safe drinking water. Iodine deficiency disorder has been eliminated. Vitamin A deficiency is no more a public health problem.

Life expectancy at birth has gone up to 68.5 years. The gross primary enrolment rate for education is estimated to be 95.5%.

Although these are remarkable achievements, there are still major issues that need to be addressed. The current stunting rate of 33.5% in children under 5 years of age indicates deeper underlying issues of food and nutrition security, poor feeding practices and chronic or recurrent infections. Anaemia has been a persistent problem, especially for women and children. The last national survey in 2002 found prevalence rates of 54.8% in women and 80.6% in children.

While we are struggling with the problem of malnutrition, we are now confronted with another aspect of malnutrition, that of overweight and obesity.

Nevertheless, the Royal Government of Bhutan is committed to undertaking actions for overcoming challenges associated with food insecurity and malnutrition. In line with this, one of the most recent achievements is the development of the "National Food and Nutrition Security Policy", where we have taken upon ourselves to implement vital policy reforms and legislations for promoting food and nutrition security in the country.

The greater challenge, however, for countries like Bhutan is resource gaps, both financial and human capacity. Therefore, building global partnership and capacity in these priority areas will result in benefits for all nations, especially the developing countries.

In keeping with "41 Conference on Food Security" held here at Rome in October this year, Bhutan will develop a strategic plan to help implement the new Food and Nutrition Security Policy which will mainstream "nutrition" into agriculture development. Given that nutrition-related problems are directly correlated to inadequate consumption, poor quality, and less variety of food, this is of great importance.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

All of us gathered here have a huge task to discuss and realize some important issues on food security, Nutrition and poverty. It is imperative that we combine the best aspects of our experiences in regards to policy making for the wellbeing of the society and truly achieve a prosperous and long-lasting cooperation on global food and nutrition security.

In closing, I would like to inform you all that Royal Government of Bhutan recognize food and nutrition security as basic human rights, and therefore reaffirm our commitments towards fighting food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms.

I and my delegation also look forward to learning from the experiences of other countries and also garnering international support towards enhancing food and Nutrition security.

Thank you and Tashi Delek!