

**STATEMENT BY HON'BLE MINISTER LYONPO LEKEY DORJI,
MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF
BHUTAN**

at the

Regional Workshop

On

**Opportunities and Challenges in Using Evidence-based Trade
Policy for the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals**

15-17 June 2016

Hotel Namgay Heritage, Thimphu

Distinguished Guests,
Eminent Resource Persons,
Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Today is a very auspicious day for us Bhutanese. It is the Birth Anniversary of Guru Rimpoche, known as the “Precious Master”. He is highly revered as the founder of the vajrayana Buddhism and Buddha of our time.

It is a great honor and privilege for me and my Ministry, to welcome all distinguished the participants and the resource persons to this important **Regional Workshop on “Opportunities and Challenges**

in Using Evidence-Based Trade Policy for the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)” on this very auspicious day.

We have participants from eight countries in the region, including Bhutan and a team of qualified and extremely talented Resource Persons. We are indeed very happy to have you in Bhutan and I hope that you will have an enjoyable stay.

The Ministry of Economic Affairs is pleased to host this workshop in collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). We would like to thank the UNESCAP, particularly Dr Mia Mikic, Head of Trade Policy and Analysis Section, Trade and Investment Division of the UNESCAP for presenting us the opportunity to host this important capacity building workshop.

I gather, that the main objective of the workshop, is to enhance the capacity of the least developed and landlocked developing countries in collection and use of data to support the holistic and evidence-based trade policy making to achieve the SDGs.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development & the GNH

In September 2015, at the Sustainable Development Summit in New York, world leaders unanimously adopted the “Transforming Our

World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is the 15 year global plan of action to end poverty, reduce inequalities and protect environment.

In essence, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to advance economic and social development and environmental sustainability in tandem; and it recognizes the interdependence of human wellbeing and healthy ecosystems.

I am delighted to mention, that this concept, is not new to Bhutan. Since the 1970s, under the enlightened leadership and patronage of our Benevolent Kings, Bhutan's development is guided by the principle of “Gross National Happiness (GNH)” that strives to balance material and spiritual advancement through - sustainable socio-economic development; preservation of tradition and culture; conservation of environment; and good governance. We strongly believe that focusing on happiness was a holistic approach to development that improved the well-being of people by balancing material growth with social inclusiveness and environmental sustainability.

The UNDP country Office in Bhutan found that, out of the 169 SDG targets, 134 are already reflected in Bhutan’s policy frameworks. Further, an assessment of Bhutan’s legal and policy framework against SDG targets showed a high level of integration between the

SDG targets and the country's laws, regulations, policies and plans. This simply illustrates the philosophical alignment between our development framework of GNH and the principles of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030.

Role of Trade

Bhutan as an LDC, is cognizant of the fact, that trade is an indispensable driver of sustainable development; and that, it lies at the heart of unlocking our potential towards addressing the challenges of economic growth, poverty, and wellbeing. Bhutan supports the need to address the special needs and vulnerabilities of the least developed and landlocked countries in all these areas and recognizes the fundamental role of trade in advancing the SDGs.

For Bhutan, trade is central to economic growth and national development, pursued within the overall development framework of GNH. Bhutan continues to put in place enabling regulatory and policy instruments including the institutional structures to enhance economic growth; through diversification of economic base with minimal ecological footprint; value addition and management of natural resources in a sustainable manner; increasing and diversification of exports; enhancement of productivity; and promotion of Bhutan as an organic brand. We recognize and uphold the importance of **transparency and predictability of trade** policies, regulations and

procedures as an essential element for economic growth and development.

For the LDCs, including Bhutan, trade has been an engine of economic growth and a source of financial and non-financial means for development. The role of trade features prominently across 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. SDGs seek to ensure that trade plays its part in boosting growth, tackling poverty and promoting sustainable development. There are about 20 targets under different SDGs that are related to international trade. It treats **trade as “an engine for economic growth and poverty reduction”** and a means to achieve inclusive and sustainable development in the coming decades.

Importance of Evidence-based Trade Policy

Nevertheless, **how trade is managed and the trade policy crafted will be crucial to the achievement of this new agenda for sustainable development.**

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