



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY LYONPO YESHEY DORJI, THE  
HONOURABLE MINISTER, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND  
FORESTS, ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN**

**AT**

**THE 10<sup>TH</sup> ASIA-PACIFIC CO-OPERATIVE MINISTERS' CONFERENCE  
"VISIONING AHEAD TO 2030: PROMOTING STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS  
BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND CO-OPERATIVE STAKEHOLDERS IN  
REALIZING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS."**

**18<sup>th</sup> APRIL TO 21<sup>ST</sup> APRIL, 2017**

**HANOI, VIETNAM**

1. Mr./Madam Chairperson, Hon'ble Ministers, Cooperative Leaders, other Distinguished Dignitaries, Ladies, and Gentlemen: A very good morning.
2. I have the distinguished privilege and honor to convey to this conference the very warm greetings from the People and the Royal Government of Bhutan.
3. Kindly accept my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Government of The Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Vietnam Cooperative Alliance for extending such warm reception and hospitality to me and my team. Thank you so much.
4. I would also like to convey my appreciation to the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) and ICA Asia Pacific based in New Delhi for their continued support towards the development of Cooperatives sector in Bhutan.
5. With your support, Bhutan was able to participate in the 9<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Co-operative Ministers' Conference for the very first time. We learned valuable lessons and experiences and these experiences and lessons helped us steer the Cooperative Movement in my country. I thank the organizers for giving us this wonderful opportunity again and look forward to learning more from it.
6. Bhutan has come a long way since the last Ministers Conference. As pledged during the 9<sup>th</sup> Minister's Conference, with the support of all other members, we are happy to inform the august gathering that we are now here as an associate member of ICA. We pledge to become full-fledged member very soon with the strengthening of our cooperative group.

7. We are proud to report that Bhutan has now 52 primary Cooperatives registered representing 1% of the total population and operating in diverse fields of economy. As committed in the 9<sup>th</sup> Minister Cooperative Conference, Bhutan organized and hosted an International Seminar on Cooperatives in 2012 to celebrate the UN International Year of Cooperatives 2012. We also celebrate International Day of Cooperatives every year. We now understand the value of Cooperative more than ever and this small celebration shows our commitment to the cooperative fraternity.
8. The conference theme **“VISIONING AHEAD TO 2030: PROMOTING STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND CO- OPERATIVE STAKEHOLDERS IN REALIZING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS”** is timely and relevant, more so to small countries like ours.
9. The concept of sustainable development is ingrained in the Bhutanese development philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH), first enunciated by His Majesty the Fourth King of Bhutan in the early 1970s. We Bhutanese believe that there is more to life than just material development. It is based on the premise that true development takes place when social, economic, spiritual and environmental well-being occurs side by side to complement and reinforce each other.
10. Accordingly, our country development plans are guided by this philosophy and are aimed at creating and promoting social, cultural, economic and environmental qualities, enhancing gender equality and ensuring peace and prosperity.
11. Cooperative in Bhutan started in the field of traditional areas and mainly focused on the sectors such as agriculture, livestock and financial

cooperatives. It's been only five years now since the onset of the cooperative movement in the country and cooperatives are not fully developed. Nonetheless, with the help of the Royal Government of Bhutan and our few NGO development partners, co-operatives are becoming stronger by the day.

12. The cooperative enterprise in agriculture sector is more focused on organic and natural farming and community forest development. In doing so, the cooperatives contribute not only towards enhancing the livelihood of the members but also in conserving the natural environment, which we are so proud of. Our development ethos is that in pursuing economic development, we must NOT degrade our environment, weaken our culture and break the strong bonds of our society. We believe strongly in inter-generational equity for the benefit of our posterity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

13. In Bhutan, cooperatives are considered as a viable platform for promoting active people's participation in the nation-building and socio-economic development process. In particular, the active participation by the youth is given importance. In fact, our His Majesty in his Royal Addresses repeatedly commands that our youths are the future of our country. In order to engage and empower young people, youth cooperatives are actively promoted. It is also seen as a strategy towards addressing youth unemployment, provide livelihood opportunities and address youth related social issues and problems. We are also in the process of developing strategies that would attract youth into agro based

cooperative enterprise and the political will to address these issue is very positive

14. We are also keenly aware that to reap full benefits of co-operatives, we need to move into other non-traditional sectors such as education, health, housing, and other types of co-operatives. However, for this we will need time for our co-operatives to mature. Side by side we will have to put a proper legislative framework and create an enabling environment for co-operatives to grow and thrive.
15. The cooperative movement is still very much new in Bhutan. We still face a lot of challenges- in terms of sustainability and growth since they are still dependent on government support and subsidy, governance and leadership, small membership size affecting their scale of economy to name some common issues and challenges.
16. Having recognized these issues and challenges, concerted efforts such as capacity building of co-operatives, policies on government support and subsidies, consolidation of co-operatives, diversification of co-operative sector and group marketing are being worked upon and re-looked.
17. Further, we would still solicit support from ICA especially in areas of capacity building, assistance in networking with other co-operative entities and other areas as and when required. Having said this, we would like to put on record our sincere appreciation to ICA for all the support especially the capacity building support extended to us till date.
18. Lastly, Mr. /Madam Chairperson, Hon'ble Ministers, Distinguish Cooperative Leaders and Practitioners, Ladies and Gentlemen – thank you very much for your kind attention and look forward to a very fruitful and successful conference.

19.Mr. /Madam Chairperson, let me once again thank ICA HQ Brussels (Belgium), ICA-AP, New Delhi and the People and Government of Vietnam for giving us the opportunity to participate in this conference and also for your warm welcome. Thank you very much for your kind attention.

20.Thank you and TRASHI DELEK

