



UN DAY : Time for renewal of our commitment to the UN Charter

Thimphu, BHUTAN: 24th October 2008: Bhutan's Prime Minister Lyonchen Jigmi Y. Thinley participated in a butter lamp ceremony and prayers for world peace to commemorate UN Day in Bhutan. Senior government officials, representatives from the international organizations working in Bhutan and the UN staff took part in the ceremony held at the Tashichhodzong.



Lyonchhen Jigmi Y. Thinley expressed a special Tashi Delek on behalf of the people of Bhutan to all the staff of the UN who have contributed to making Bhutan a better place. He reaffirmed the Government's commitment to work together with all other nations to reform the organization "so that it becomes even more democratic, responsive and effective as a united endeavour in fulfilling its great ideals against ever growing challenges".

The UN Resident Coordinator in Bhutan Mr. Nicholas Rosellini in a statement to mark the day said that the commemoration this year is special as it coincides with the Coronation of the fifth King and the centenary celebrations marking one hundred years of monarchy. He highlighted that the next milestone, globally and nationally will be 2015, when "we will assess global progress on the MDGs and to what extent the living conditions of millions of poor people around the world have been improved". He added that while Bhutan has made good progress and is on track to achieving most of the MDGs, special attention would be required to address certain development challenges such as reducing poverty, increasing employment, addressing high maternal mortality rates and ensuring improved numbers of girls making the transition to tertiary education.

Mr. Rosellini lauded Bhutan's unique approach whereby a democratic Bhutan was born not out of compulsion but "out of the genuine belief in its rich attributes". He however emphasized the need for checks and balances for a vibrant democracy and highlighted the roles and strengthening of emerging civil society organizations and the independent media.

In the afternoon, the UN country team had an informal meeting with a group of rural women, who are part of the VOICES project being implemented by RENEW, a non-governmental organization which works for the empowerment of women. These 50 women representing all 20 districts (from very remote villages) will be the focal persons of RENEW and support the work of RENEW in their respective communities. Upon their return, they will establish a women support network in the rural communities, through Non-Formal Education (NFE) teachers and community support groups. Some of the participants are NFE instructors and NFE learners. The VOICES project is supported by the UN through the UN Human Security Trust Fund project. The discussions included an overview of the work of the UN in relation to women's empowerment and a question and answer session with the women to learn more about their needs and challenges in the communities.

The UN Day in Bhutan was also celebrated in Tsirang district where the final of the Inter-School Quiz competition was held coinciding with the day. The quiz which is focused on the United Nations and its work in Bhutan is an annual event organized in schools across Bhutan since 2002 to commemorate the day in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. Till date, more than forty lower and middle secondary schools from eight districts have participated in the programme. Coinciding with the Coronation and



Centenary celebrations, the quiz included a special centenary round reflecting on the reforms of the Monarchs. Students also participated in an art exhibition on “Hundred years of monarchy – through the years of the children”. Speaking at the event, Mr. Bakhodir Burkhanov, the deputy resident representative of UNDP reiterated the continued support of the UN to Bhutan and its people towards balanced economic and social development. The event was attended by students of Tsirang dzongkhag including representatives from the dzongkhag administration.