

**Address on The World Population Day, 11<sup>th</sup> July 2006**  
**by**  
**Toshihiro Tanaka, UNRC a.i .**

Your Majesty, Ashi Sangay Choden Wangchuck  
Honorable Secretary, Dr. Gado Tshering,  
Dasho Dzhongdas,  
Dzongkhag officials,  
Distinguished guests and Colleagues  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
and boys and girls,

Kuz Zampo la

It is indeed a great honour for me to be invited to deliver a remark to commemorate the World Population Day in this beautiful valley of Bumthang, on behalf of the UN system in Bhutan.

I would like to start my brief remark with a quote from the statement of Ms. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Executive Director of UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, on the occasion of World Population Day 2007:

*(quote) World Population Day is a time to focus on commitment and action to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect". (unquote)*

Your Majesty's selfless efforts as [UNFPA's](#) Goodwill Ambassador have been a lighthouse for many people in remote communities of Bhutan, men and women, adults and youth, to understand the importance of improving maternal health and advancing gender equality. The initiative of Your Majesty traveling to all corners of the country, interacting with the people, women and youth as well

as the people at the decision making level, has greatly increased the national awareness on and commitment to reducing maternal death, combating the spread of HIV/AIDS and breaking the silence surrounding gender-based violence through providing counseling and shelter to the victims.

Your Majesty, we cannot thank you more for your being our continuous source of inspiration and encouragement, which helps keep the nation on the right track towards creating a healthier and more equitable society for both women and men with dignity and mutual respect.

*The theme of this year's World Population Day is Men as Partners in Maternal Health.*” More than a half million women dies each year of pregnancy related causes, 99% of them in developing countries. Men's involvement and participation can make a tremendous difference in reducing such human tragedies, by discouraging early marriage, promoting girls' education, fostering equitable relationships, and supporting women's reproductive health and rights.

The Royal Government has never failed to recognize the importance of health and education of the people in Bhutan, for instance, by allocating more than a quarter of its resources to social sector development. Commendable progress has been made in increasing net enrollment in the primary education for both girls and boys, enhancing awareness on HIV/AIDS among public including youth, and reducing maternal death through the initiative of achieving 100% institutional delivery.

While Bhutan is on track to achieve most of the Millennium Development Goals, during my community visits, I came across a small teen age girl who dropped out from primary school when she was in class 2 to help her parents and a sister who has disability; she got married and already has a child. It is obvious that there are

still challenges ahead of us, and we all, particularly men, have responsibility to reach the unreached and eliminate future occurrence of such unfortunate cases. And let us do all what we can to promote the rights of every girl and woman, to enjoy a life of health, dignity and equal opportunity, which will lead to achieving the country's vision of Gross National Happiness.

Now, in this very important occasion of the World Population Day, with Your Majesty's permission, it is a great honor and pleasure for me to present UNFPA's "the State of the World Population Report 2007", which will kindly be launched by Your Majesty.

According to the Report: In 2008, for the first time in history, more than half of the world's people will be living in urban areas. And by 2030, urban population will become almost 5 billion, 60% of the world population.

Urbanization including rural to urban migration is an inevitable trend in the world, and it has been a growing concern in Bhutan. In many developing countries, half of the urban population are under age of 25. And in Bhutan the proportion of young population is even higher posing new social, economic and political challenges.

Contrary to popular belief, most urban growth now is the result of natural increase rather than migration. We all know that poor people will make up a large part of future urban growth globally and Bhutan is not an exception. In response to this reality, the Report suggests the policy makers to shift the emphasis from slowing the pace of migration to undertaking realistic and participatory planning, investing in education and health, including reproductive health and voluntary family planning, and empowering women as the best way to address population growth and poverty, which is increasingly urban based.

UNFPA and other UN agencies in Bhutan are committed to continue our engagement and cooperation with the people and the Government of Bhutan in the efforts to creating a more equitable, healthier and happier society, both rural and urban, and achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the message of the World Population Day: “No Woman Should Die Giving Life”. And as the UN Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon said, (I quote) “Let us all encourage men to become partners and agents for change, supporting human rights and safe motherhood, in every way possible, thus contributing to creating the world of greater health and opportunity for all.” (unquote)

Thank you  
and  
Tashi Delek