Statement by H.E. Dr. Pema Gyamtsho,
Minister-in-Charge of National Environment Commission, & Minister for Agriculture and Forests, Royal Government of Bhutan
at
The High Level Segment of the 16th Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC
Cancun, Mexico, 8 December 2010

Madam President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen

At the outset I would like to express our deep appreciation to you Madam President, the government and people of Mexico for the warm welcome and excellent arrangements here in Cancun.

While I will be speaking on behalf of my country Bhutan, and on behalf of the SAARC and its eight member states, I would also like to associate with the statements from Lesotho on behalf of the Least Developed Countries, and by Yemen on behalf of G77 & China.

Madam President,

Bhutan, as a small landlocked and least developed country, with a very fragile mountain ecosystem, is all too aware of the dangers of climate change and the threat it poses to our future security. It is highly vulnerable to catastrophic glacial lake outburst floods, drying water sources, increasing landslides and flashfloods, freak windstorms, decreasing snowfall and unpredictable rainfall patterns to name just some of the adverse impacts of climate change.

In view of these eminent threats that we face, Bhutan has made concerted efforts towards pursuing the goal of the UNFCCC. We have increased our forest cover to over 70% of our land during the last few decades and placed over 50% of our land area under parks and protected areas. Last year at COP15, we have committed to ensuring that our emissions do not exceed the sequestration capacity of our forests. To this end, we have adopted a green economic development policy in addition to further enhancing the protection of our forests. However, we are only too aware that our efforts are not enough and that we need both regional and global support to cope with the adverse impacts of climate change.

Madam President,

Having briefly touched upon Bhutan's position, may I now move on to highlight the concerns of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) comprising of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The 16th SAARC Summit held in Thimphu, Bhutan from 28-29 April with "Climate Change" as the central theme adopted the "Thimphu Statement on Climate Change" as a means to further regional cooperation and action on climate change. Our leaders also decided that a "Common SAARC Position" would be formulated for COP16 and thereafter. The full text of this Common SAARC Position is being circulated on the floor but I would like to present a few key points.

With regard to the enhanced implementation of the UNFCCC and strengthening its Kyoto Protocol, the Member States of SAARC reiterate and emphasize the importance of the principles of "equity", and "common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities". They feel that it is equally important to ensure that such negotiations are conducted in an open, transparent and inclusive manner. SAARC believes that any effort at

addressing climate change must take into account historical responsibility, and must be in accordance with the principles of the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol and the Bali Action Plan.

To move forward, SAARC calls on the international community to:

- Provide adequate, new and additional resources easily accessible to address the full incremental cost of tackling climate change;
- Allocate at least 1.5% of the GDP of Annex-I countries to meet the adaptation needs of all developing countries;
- Ensure effective access to and funding assistance for the transfer of climate-friendly technologies;
- Provide adequate and full support for conservation of forests as an integral part of the REDD Plus mechanism;
- Agree on deep and legally binding greenhouse gas emission reduction commitments by all developed countries with effective timeframes as recommended by the IPCC.

Finally, SAARC expects concrete and action oriented outcomes at COP16 and CMP6, and pledges its full support to the President of the Conference and the secretariat of UNFCCC in achieving the expected outcomes.

Madam President,

Before I conclude, let me also bring to your attention the Dhaka Declaration on South East Asia Regional Health Concerns for Climate Change Negotiations. We associate with the declaration's call for more involvement of the health sector in the climate change debate and allocation of adequate resources for protecting human health from climate change.

Madam President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

I would like to reaffirm Bhutan's deep commitment to fulfill the UNFCCC's mandate. In sync with our development philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH), we will do whatever we can to save our nation's future from being held hostage to the insatiable greed for material wealth at the expense of our ecological integrity. Certainly, it would be morally wrong for us to use delays in reaching legally binding agreements at the global level to be an excuse for delaying actions on our own at national and regional levels. With this conviction, Bhutan will be hosting the "Climate Summit for a Living Himalayas" in October 2011 for the members of the "Eastern Himalayan Quadrangle" comprising of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal. The Summit is aimed at developing a regional roadmap for medium and long term adaptation plan that would encompass addressing the impacts of climate change on biodiversity, food security, water resources and energy security. We hope that we will receive the full support of the UNFCCC parties and secretariat as well as all our development partners in making this initiative a success.

I thank you for your kind attention.

Tashi Delek!