

Acknowledge

Distinguished Guests

Committee Members of the Volunteers in Bhutan (VIB),
International Volunteers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

On this auspicious occasion of the celebration of the "International
Volunteers Day" for the year -2005, I feel privileged and honoured
to be invited as the Chief Guest. I would like to offer my gratitude to
the organizing committee of VIB for their kind consideration.

First of all, on behalf of the Royal Government and people of
Bhutan, I would like to take this opportunity to express our deep
appreciation to the Volunteer International Organizations for
providing humanitarian support to Bhutan by sending Volunteers
to enhance the progress and self reliance of our Kingdom. On this
International Volunteers Day, may I also take this opportunity to
pay special tribute to the noble contributions made by the
Volunteers around the world. We in Bhutan recognize their selfless
sacrifices helping the people of lesser developed countries.

It is appropriate to mention here that since the early stages of our modern development, many expatriates came to Bhutan to offer their services to the nation building process. Some of them had even devoted their entire lives. Two International Volunteers are shining examples that Bhutan will never forget for their outstanding contributions. Dasho Keiji Nishioka, a Colombo Plan Expert from Japan who made an immense impact to development of the Agriculture Sector and Father William Mackey, a Jesuit priest from Canada, who was a pioneer in the field of modern education in Bhutan. Both of them became one of us and both were recognized and honoured by His Majesty the King. Both Dasho Nishioka and Fr. Mackey are inspiring legacies of how Volunteerism can make a Big difference to the lives of thousands and millions of people in need.

The International Volunteers Program in Bhutan as we know today, started with the arrival of 10 UNVs in 1980. To sustain rapid socio-economic growth and overcome shortage of skilled manpower, the Royal Government diversified the Volunteer program and today various Volunteer Agencies like UNV, JOCV, VSO, VSA, SVO, etc. are in Bhutan. In the near future, we expect to see more

volunteers from Thailand and South Korea. Currently we have a total of 65 International Volunteers working in Bhutan.

On this I V Day, the Royal Government and people of Bhutan salute all the International Volunteers who sacrificed their lives helping the Bhutanese to achieve progress and a better life. Volunteer services is present in almost all the important sectors such as Agriculture, Education, Engineering, Health, Communication, and Information Technology etc.

The Volunteers have an important role in helping us to bridge the human resource gap, transfer new skills and technology and develop our human resources. More importantly they have become lifetime friends of Bhutan and help us to promote a better understanding of Bhutan's development philosophies and its unique culture with the rest of the world.

In the traditional society, communities placed high importance to volunteerism to build and maintain infrastructure and preserve social traditions and values. Today the need for volunteerism is no less in a changing society towards urbanization and globalization.

For this reason, the Royal Government acknowledges the important role of the Civil Society such as the NGOs to be a proactive partner in the future development of our country. This recognition is enshrined in the Draft Constitution under **Article 9 under Principles of State Policy.**

The Good Governance Plus Document, which was released by the Government less than a month ago, also recognizes the need to promote volunteerism as a priority activity to be implemented in 2006.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The development philosophy of Gross National Happiness can be pursued and achieved if we can all become followers of the Buddhist principle of compassion contributing for the good and welfare of society. I strongly believe that the spirit of Volunteerism embodies these noble ideals to promoting peace and progress in the World.

For these reasons, I would like to congratulate Ms. Ilona Leskinen and other distinguished members of the VIB Committee for their selection of the 2005 IVD theme as "Everyday is a Volunteer Day"

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the RGOB and on my own behalf, once again to acknowledge and pay tribute to all the International Volunteers who have worked in Bhutan. And for those International volunteers currently serving in various parts of our Kingdom, I wish them Tashi Delek on this special day and for our Bhutanese Volunteers abroad, we wish them well in their assignments and endeavours.

Tashi Delek !