

People's Democratic Party

On 1st September 2007, People's Democratic Party (PDP) got registered as the first political party in the country. As we celebrate our 10-year journey and service to *Tsa-wa-Sum*, it gives us an opportunity to reflect on our past and look at our present and the future: where we came from, where we are now and where we want to be. We also take this opportunity to introspect and look at our own values, ideology, priorities, achievements—and our hopes and aspirations.

Vision, Values, and Ideology

In Gross National Happiness (GNH), we already have a long-term vision for our nation. Within the guiding philosophy of GNH, our long-term goal for Bhutan is a nation with secured sovereignty that is economically prosperous and vibrant, environmentally rich, socio-culturally just and harmonious, and politically united that allow the pursuit of happiness by every Bhutanese. Our aspiration for Bhutan is a prosperous and peaceful nation with highly educated and economically and spiritually rich people, living happily and harmoniously under the compassionate leadership of *Wangchuck Juedzin*.

We believe in our timeless value of *Tha Damtse*. We believe in prosperity and social security for all. We believe in liberty, justice, and equal opportunity for all. We believe in hard work, integrity, humility, and compassion.

Our ideology, *Waangtse Chhirpel*, like GNH, is a precious idea that emerged from the selfless compassion and wisdom of His Majesty The Fourth Druk Gyalpo. We believe *Waangtse Chhirpel* is the best pathway to GNH. We believe we can make our democracy a great success through *Waangtse Chhirpel*. We believe the most meaningful and sustainable development and democracy is the one that takes place through decentralisation of power and shared responsibility, which is the real essence of *Waangtse Chhirpel*.

History and Past Achievements

Bhutan is what it is today—a special nation—because of our great kings. Since 1907, our Kings ended all internal conflicts, united the nation and took us on a journey of unprecedented peace, progress, and development. As a political party and citizens of this blessed nation, we remain grateful to our Kings and *Wangchuck Juedzin*. And we move forward with unwavering faith and confidence that, under the continued guidance

of our King, we will unleash the great promise of our nation and people. The result of the first parliamentary election in 2008 was a huge disappointment. We secured only two seats in a 47-member National Assembly. Most people felt the party had no future. But we never lost hope and our commitment to serve. We kept the party going—and gradually rebuilt it from the ground up. Despite being the world’s smallest opposition party, we worked hard, provided checks and balances, and stood for the *Ts-wa-Sum*. We kept the government accountable to the people—and ensured that everybody followed the democratic process, rule of law, and the constitution. At the same time, when the government’s actions and policies were in the interest of the nation and people, we provided full cooperation and support.

In 2013, we got elected to form the government. Since then, we have worked hard and have achieved huge progress in all aspects of our nation’s socio-economic development. When we took over the governance, our economy was in deep trouble and there was no fund for implementation of the 11th Five-Year Plan (FYP). We were facing severe Indian rupee shortage and banks had stopped giving loans. Our immediate challenge then was to mobilise funds for the 11FYP and rescue our economy from going into a deep recession.

Under His Majesty The King’s guidance and support from highly committed civil servants, and our well wishers and friends, we managed to mobilise funds we needed for the 11FYP. And, within last four years or so, we have successfully completed almost all 11FYP projects. Our economy has not only recovered but is growing at an unprecedented pace. Today, we are the third fastest growing economy in the world with an average growth rate of more than 8 percent. And the International Monetary Fund recently forecasted that our GDP would grow by 11.2 percent in 2018, making Bhutan the second fastest growing economy in the world.

We have also resolved the rupee problem and have taken immediate measures to not only open bank loans but also, with support of Royal Monetary Authority, reduced interest rates on loans. And within the last few years, we have built a substantial amount of rupee and USD reserve and have cleared most rupee loans that were availed for short-term consumption. While non-hydropower debts have gone down substantially, the total national debt went up due to several ongoing hydropower projects. To ensure future governments maintain national debt within responsible limit, we have put in place a public debt policy, which does not allow the government to have more than 35 percent of the total debt as non-hydropower debt. While hydropower debts are self-liquidating soft loans, we must be careful of the non-hydropower debts.

With special focus on rural development, we have reduced poverty and improved the lives of people in every remote corner of the country. At the same time, we have also invested a lot in developing our thromdes. Some of the major projects we have undertaken outside the 11FYP include widening east-west highway, establishment of central schools, and collateral free special loans from Rural Enterprise Development Corporation Limited for our farmers and unemployed youth, and a special housing project in Phuntsholing for thousands of our people living across the border.

In order to encourage tourism in eastern Bhutan, for the next three years, we have waived off the royalty for international tourists visiting the east. And the helicopters are saving precious lives and properties on a daily basis. We have also made substantial investment in creating employment opportunities, including overseas employment, and skills training and entrepreneurship development programmes. And today, as reported to the National Assembly at its last session, we have more jobs than registered job seekers. We have also made meaningful progress in other sectors like the healthcare, disaster management and foreign relations. Among others, we have doubled the capital fund of Bhutan Health Trust Fund and have improved relation with our neighbours including the Indian states of West Bengal and Assam.

Priorities

In the next five years and beyond, we'll continue to invest in rural development to end poverty and make our villages economically vibrant and prosperous. We will also continue to invest and empower our thromdes to make life in our cities safe, comfortable, healthy, and enjoyable. Our other important priorities will continue to be: Economy, Education, and Employment.

When the economy gets into trouble, it affects everybody: the rich, poor, shop-keepers, traders, contractors, industrialists, property owners, civil servants, farmers, and students. Through *Waangtse Chhirpel*, we'll build a strong and broad-based foundation for our economy. We'll continue to empower our entrepreneurs and private sector to make them the real engine of economic growth and job creation. We will continue to build infrastructure and create opportunities for entrepreneurship in agriculture and renewable natural resources, tourism, ICT, arts and crafts, and other knowledge-based industries.

The long-term future of our nation depends on the quality of education we provide to our children. Under our compassionate King, we'll ensure that education and healthcare remains free for all time—and we'll continue to focus on improving the quality. We'll continue to empower our teachers,

educationists, doctors, and health workers. We already see a lot of improvement in the quality of education with the establishment of 60 central schools, and we will establish 60 more. With 120 central schools, we'll be able to provide admission to every child who wishes to study in a central school. We will work hard to ensure every Bhutanese child receives the best possible education. We'll also work hard to ensure all our people receive high quality healthcare services. And we'll continue to raise funds for Bhutan Health Trust Fund to make sure that no Bhutanese will ever have to pay for their healthcare services and medicines.

We'll continue to do everything possible to make sure that every person looking for a job gets one. We'll continue to provide skills development trainings and effective employment programmes and initiatives. We'll also continue to invest a lot more on entrepreneurship programmes for self-employment. In the long run, we would like the private sector to be the main engine of job creation. We also believe that, in the long run, our efforts in improving the quality of education and investment in vocational and technical training programmes will help our people compete and find meaningful jobs, not only within the country but also in the global job market.

Through our efforts in the above areas, together with other direct and indirect measures, we will deal with the existing and emerging social problems, especially those related to our youth.

Policies

Our policies will be guided by the principles of GNH, *Waangtse Chhirpel* and the Middle Path. We'll continue to build a society that is fair, just and equitable. We'll continue to pursue policies of socio-economic development that are inclusive, regionally balanced and sustainable. And our economic development policy will have special focus on developing a socially, culturally and environmentally responsible private sector.

In line with *Waangtse Chhirpel*, we'll continue to empower our local governments and local leaders. We'll also continue to empower our civil servants and build an effective system of meritocracy that recognises and rewards individuals and organisations, based on their actual performance.

Our policies will continue to empower our youth and women. We'll continue to fight corruption, and be always respectful and supportive of all important institutions of democracy, including the media and judiciary. And we will continue to strengthen our relationship with all our neighbours.

Strength

Our strength lies in our past achievements, both as the opposition and government. Our strength lies in our vision and aspirations for Bhutan's future—and our commitment to make that future possible. Our strength lies in our values and beliefs. Our strength lies in our ideology of *Waangtse Chhirpel* that focuses on empowering our people and institutions. Our strength lies in our hard work and commitment to serve *Tsa-wa-Sum* (king, nation and people) with utmost loyalty and *Tha Damtse*. Our strength lies in the trust we have gained as a responsible party that delivers on its promises, and our intolerance and commitment to fight corruption. Our strength lies in being the government of all people—for not causing division within our small society. Our strength lies in the proven leadership of our president and other leaders. Our strength lies in our party organisation with established presence and grassroots network in every 20 dzongkhags and 205 gewogs. And our strength lies in a group of highly qualified and experienced candidates joining us for the upcoming elections.

Under the enlightened leadership and guidance of our King, we have a rare opportunity to make Bhutan a great nation and home-grow a democracy that truly benefits all our people. Whether it remains an unfulfilled dream or becomes a reality will largely depend on the government and leaders we elect. We need to elect a government and leaders who can clearly see Bhutan's promising future and follow the vision of our great King. We need to elect a government and leaders who can make us proud, both within and outside the country.

When we reflect on our past, we find joy and happiness in the fact that we have served our *Tsa-wa-Sum* well—both as the opposition and serving government. And we look into the future with hope and optimism that our people will keep *Tha Damtse*, put the interest of our nation first, and elect a government and leaders who can best serve our *Tsa-wa-Sum*, from day one. We remain hopeful that in the forthcoming elections, we will be given the privilege and honour to serve another term.