

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Response to questions and comments on CSOs by the Dy. Executive Director of Youth Development Fund, Mrs. Dorji Ohm, at the Human Rights Council on 30 April 2014 under the UPR mechanism

Thank You Your Excellency,

As stated in the National Report and given the importance of this review mechanism, I am pleased to inform that the Government conducted extensive consultations with us, the CSOs, in the preparation of this report.

Following the enactment of the Civil Society Act in 2007, and the establishment of Civil Society Organisation Authority in 2009, CSOs have been recognized as an important player in creating the necessary balance in the development of our society, and in particular to promote social welfare and improve conditions and quality of life for all. Currently, there are 38 CSOs listed with the Civil Society Organisation Authority and more are emerging, particularly at the grass roots level.

Most CSOs in Bhutan work to protect and promote human rights through social welfare of the people who are socially and economically marginalized and exist to complement the efforts of the Government to meet the needs of the people. Organizations such as RENEW, is dedicated to the empowerment of women and girls in Bhutan, especially the victims and survivors of domestic violence and plays a very important role in creating awareness on early child marriages and other forms of abuse.

The Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy is another organisation that focuses on young people to nurturing a culture of democracy by strengthening media, expanding public discourse and providing essential training and education. Besides individual mandates of the CSOs, we have also advocated for policies and interventions in the areas of promoting human rights in the country.

The Civil Society that I work for 'the Bhutan Youth Development Fund' specifically focuses on disadvantaged youth, substance abuse prevention and treatment, special education, child protection care services, and empowerment of youth through entrepreneurship skills and youth participation in community building.

One of the most important works of CSOs in the area of advocacy is its contribution in the formulation of the Youth Policy 2010, which was initiated by the Ministry of Education that addresses the needs of all young people in the country.

The National Youth Policy provides a broad framework for all stakeholders to contribute in a coherent and coordinated manner to youth development. It builds on the interventions implemented by existing agencies since the inception of development in Bhutan, in keeping with our developmental philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH). Towards this end, the Ministry of Education is drafting a National Action Plan for the Youth Policy and CSOs are playing an important role in defining and in incorporating important elements in the draft policy.

While we continue to complement and supplement activities and efforts of the government to meet the needs of the people, we commit to protect and promote human rights and actively engage with the Government in

the UPR mechanism and contribute to the implementation of the various recommendations received in this session of the UPR Working Group.

Thank you.

