

Hon'ble Chair, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, my delegation would like to thank the UN-ESCAP and the Ministry of Energy, Government of Thailand for co-hosting this very important event and for welcoming us take part at this fruitful engagement in our collective quest for meeting the SDG7 and building up the resilient communities in the region.

Your Excellencies and distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Recognizing the critical importance of access to energy for socio-economic development of any country, the Royal Government of Bhutan too, under the visionary leadership of our Kings, has and continues to accord the highest priority to provide affordable, reliable and sustainable energy to all in the Country. Despite rugged terrain and sparse nature of human settlements, which make the accessibility and transportation very challenging, we are proud to report to his gathering having achieved almost 100% electrification rate (99.8%), which would not have been possible without the strong political commitment and well designed implementation strategy including the institutional structure put in place. This, indeed, has significantly improved the lives of our people in terms of economic prospects, health, sanitation and education.

The electricity generation in the country all comes from hydropower, which is renewable and environmentally friendly as they are all run-of-river-scheme. Currently, the Country exports more than 70% of its generation to neighboring India. However, the nation is cognizant of our vulnerability to adverse effects of the impending climate change. Due to global warming and should there be an extensive period of draught, it could have significant impact in our ability to generate electricity and hence our economic resilience. Therefore, the Royal Government of Bhutan accords equally high priority for the diversification of the energy supply mix, using other renewable energy technologies and embraces energy efficiency measures in all levels of supply chain as integral part of our energy access policy. To sustain these efforts, the RGoB has adopted Renewable Energy Policy in 2013 and Draft National Energy Efficiency Policy is under consideration by the Government.

With regards to universal access to energy, regional cooperation on energy and energy connectivity, we recognize the challenges identified by the ESCAP Secretariat in the document titled Energy Transition in Asia and the Pacific- Pathways to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. In Bhutan too, these challenges are much too similar making the Country difficult to strike a optimal balance of energy mix while the need for import of petroleum products continue to grow, offsetting the benefits of our hydropower exports. Therefore, solutions or regional efforts to meet such challenges collectively need to be discussed, agreed and implemented in order to leave no one behind.

Our anecdotal experiences also show that the provision of access to energy services alone does not necessarily ensure economic and social development and reduce the poverty as desired, unless accompanied by other complementary interventions. Therefore, there is a urgent need for the improvement of the existing technologies to be made affordable, appropriate to a national context and to explore innovative business models integrating the capacity building measures that will enhance the productive use of energy and ensure socio-economic development in true sense of the word.

To this end, we would like to call upon all the member states and UN-ESCAP for increased collaborative efforts and engagement, and creation of a platform that can provide peer-to-peer learning opportunities, technology transfer, avoid duplicating of efforts-or reinventing wheels and be able to take full advantage of unfolding opportunities to meet our changing needs.

Thank you and Tashi Delek!