STATEMENT BY MR. DAWA TSHERING, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN TO THE 68TH SESSION OF UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, UNDER AGENDA ITEM 65 (B): PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AT THE THIRD COMMITTEE, 17 OCTOBER 2013, NEW YORK.

Mr. Chairman
Distinguished Delegates

1. It is Bhutan’s national conviction that in the hands of our children lies the future of our nation. The rights of children continue to form a core value of Bhutan’s development philosophy geared towards creating the conditions for its people, particularly children, to achieve lasting happiness.

2. Bhutan strongly believes that investment in the social sector, precisely education and health, is the investment in our future. As such, the highest priority has been accorded to social development in all its five-year development plans. Addressing the challenges of the social sector and improving the nutrition levels, particularly among children are key priorities of the current 11th Five-Year Development Plan. And in the current financial year from 2013-2014, the education sector has been allocated the highest budget outlay.

3. Being State Party to important and relevant international and regional conventions on protection and promotion of the rights and welfare of children, Bhutan has reinforced and strengthened its resolve to concentrate on implementing measures to promote and protect the rights of children at the national level. After all, no commitment could be greater than those enshrined in the Constitution. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan guarantees free education to all children up to standard ten as well as pledges to take appropriate measures to ensure that children are protected against all forms of discrimination and exploitation. Bhutan has also made good progress towards realizing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to achieving universal primary education and ensuring gender equality in education.
Mr. Chairman

4. In keeping with the State Policy, Bhutan has made significant progress in creating the legislative framework for children. Laws that directly or indirectly concern with the rights and welfare of children have been enacted and amended. To create a uniform child justice system with adequate provisions for dealing appropriately with all aspects of children, in the context of changing economic, social and cultural conditions, the Child Care and Protection Act was enacted in 2011; Child Adoption Act in 2012; and the Domestic Violence Prevention Act in 2013, among others. The National Youth policy, which provides guidelines for streamlining youth development programs and services, was adopted in 2011. The Penal Code and the Civil and Criminal Procedure Code of Bhutan have explicit provisions for child-friendly procedures on cases involving children. Both houses of Bhutan’s parliament have committees that look into issues related to children.

Mr. Chairman

5. Bhutan has also developed capacity and promoted awareness on children related international conventions. The National Commission for Women and Children, entrusted with the mandate to address the concerns and well-being of women and children, has organized a number of trainings and sensitization on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and CEDAW for parliamentarians, bureaucrats, civil society, and the media. The establishment of Women and Child Protection Unit within the Royal Bhutan Police has strengthened the safeguard of the rights, welfare and interests of women and children.

6. Much of what Bhutan has achieved in advancing the rights of children have been due to the support from our development partners. It is our hope that the rights of children will feature as an integral and essential part of any post-2015 development agenda. And as we continue to pursue many important development programs geared towards protecting and promoting the rights of our children, we will count on the support of our development partners.

I thank You, Mr. Chairman.