APPENDIX 8

Paro Resolution on Environment and Sustainable Development

We, the senior officials of the Kingdom of Bhutan and other participants in the Workshops on Environment and Sustainable Development, meeting here in Paro on the fourth and fifth of May 1990, solemnly declare our commitment to a sustainable development strategy for our nation.

During the past three decades, the Kingdom of Bhutan has pursued a course of gradual economic progress. Living standards have improved and Bhutan's unique natural environment has been preserved. While we are pleased with the health of our environment, we note with alarm the environmental devastation in other countries, where in these few short decades forests have been stripped, soils eroded, and people impoverished.

The Kingdom of Bhutan now stands at an important crossroads, we believe, with the future health and prosperity of the nation at risk. In the years immediately ahead, the Kingdom will face rapidly growing local environmental problems, as well as new global threats such as ozone depletion and greenhouse warming. We will soon face a question that others already confront: whether we can maintain a development path that allows us to meet pressing current needs without compromising the prospects of future generations.

This is the challenge of sustainable development: to raise the material well-being of all our citizens and to meet their spiritual aspirations, without impoverishing our children and grandchildren.

We recognize the potential of new technology and industries, but wish to affirm the central role that the natural environment and accompanying resources will continue to play in the future development of the Kingdom. No amount of technology or monetary assets can make up for a razed forest, depleted soils, polluted waters, or ravaged climate.

Continuing growth in Bhutan's population will inevitably place increased stress on the country's natural resources. We therefore urge the Royal Government to accelerate its efforts to slow population growth and thereby preserve the balance between people and resources. No other programme is so critical to a sustainable future for the nation.
We fear that the balance between crop land, forest land and livestock population is in danger of being lost with serious risks for the natural environment and economy. New extractive industries will likely add additional threats. As a consequence, the country's environmental problems will require increased attention from Bhutan's Government and the society at large.

We believe that preserving, indeed strengthening, Bhutan's natural resource base is central to a sustainable and prosperous future for the country. We urge the development of a National Environmental strategy that will ensure the careful stewardship and sustained use of these natural resources. It is particularly important that this strategy include an integrated approach in the design of all development programmes, so that policies in one sector do not damage the resource base of another.

Sustainable development does not imply a stagnant society. Indeed, we believe that the Kingdom of Bhutan has some major human challenges before it, particularly in reducing infant mortality and providing more comprehensive health care. A healthy and happy population is essential to the creation of a sustainable society. But while our Society changes and evolves, it must continue to meet the basic challenge of sustainable use of resources.

The key is to find a development path that will allow the country to meet the pressing needs of the people, particularly in terms of food, health care and education, without undermining the resource base of the economy. New industries, new agricultural markets and new forestry products need to be carefully developed, with respect to their broader environmental ramifications. In the attached reports of our three working groups we have developed more detailed set of guidelines for sustainable development of Bhutan.

Sustainable development, we believe, is a concept that is in harmony with the cultural and religious traditions of Bhutan. Our nation already has a strong conservation ethic, and indeed, respect for the natural world is a central tenet of Buddhism. It is therefore essential that the traditional culture be kept strong so that its values can guide our sustainable development path.

We urge the nation to build on this ancient wisdom, to pursue a Middle Path of Development for the Kingdom, and thereby ensure the sustained happiness and prosperity of our people. This is an effort that can productively involve all levels of our society, including the dzongkhag administrations and non-governmental organizations, as well as our Royal Government. Let the effort begin.