

Welcome Speech

By

Dasho Kunzang Wangdi,

Chairperson of the Ability Bhutan Society (ABS)

(On the occasion of the World Autism Awareness Day 2nd of April 2018)

**His Excellency Gerald Daly,
Resident Coordinator for UN Systems in Bhutan,
The Hon'ble Chief Guest,
Excellencies,
Chirman CSO,
Benefactors,
Distinguished Guests,
Our Children from across the Kingdom,
Parents,
Members of Board of Trustees of ABS,
Dedicated colleagues of ABS headed by ED Ugen Wangchuk, and
Ladies and gentlemen.**

A Very Good Morning!

On behalf of the persons living with disabilities in Bhutan, the Ability Bhutan Society and on my own behalf, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all, and in particular to H.E. Mr. Daly, our Chief Guest. Who has with his many years in the service of the humanity, as an international civil servant, is well versed on issues of “autism and empowerment” better than all of us here. We look forward to continue to receive the support of the UN systems in our efforts to lighten the burden of disabilities on individuals and their families. We are thus gratefully indebted to each one you for sparing your valuable time to be here with us.

Today, the 2nd of April is observed as the *World Autism Awareness Day* around the world as declared by the United Nations in 2007. The World Autism Awareness Day is a ‘*Light It Up Blue*’ Day.

It is observed around the world by lighting up important monuments and towers Blue, symbolizing the color for autism. It is an effort towards making an inclusive society and render support to individuals with Autism.

Today we are all gathered here to join the world for the sixth time since 2013.

In the previous days, as per the Royal Command of Her Majesty The Gyaltsuen, our Royal Patron, the Ability Bhutan Society observed this day by lighting up blue the Buddha Dordenma at Kuensel Phodrang, Clock Tower and the Memorial Chorten etc..

This evening we will LIGHTING IT UP BLUE the National Memorial Chorten.

As we all know the theme this year is “*Empowering Women and Girls with Autism*”. It is with the intention to highlight the importance of the need to improve the quality of life of women and girl-children in particular, those who are living with autism. Women, it is proven, that, they make the difference in creating a better society.

The basis for the International intention of observing the Day is that early intervention can help persons with autistic conditions to achieve significant gains in their abilities. Thus, let us all realize and take to heart to work for building a more inclusive society where individual will be empowered and have opportunity to realize and tap both their potentials and talents for the common wellbeing of Bhutanese society.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On this day today, I wish to call on the Royal Government of Bhutan, political parties, media, Civil Society Organizations, private sectors to adopt inclusive employment, education and human resources policies that include empowerment and employment of persons with autism. It is proven that investment of efforts and resources for employing persons with autism to be sound investment policies. I am happy to share with all, that Persons living with autism have proven to be dedicated and most reliable employees as long as we help create enabling environment for them.

Therefore, there is no denying the reality, that ABS and like-minded NGOs together with politicians, bureaucrats, corporators, general citizens and civil societies and religious organizations, parents, empathizers and persons living with autism, can help realize the Vision of Their Majesties and Her Majesty The Gyaltsuen, Our Royal Patron, in building a Bhutan, one where:

1. every individual cherishes his/her dream of a full life; and
2. every individual is endowed with capability to contribute meaningfully his or her share to the community,

no matter what ever big or tiny the deficiency: physical or mental one may be afflicted with, given there is the human will and the fire burning within, every woman or girl living with Autism will live and let live full lives.

Welcome once again and Kadrin chhe la!