

## **GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS: A WAY TO PRESERVE BIO- AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

We would like to meet here at the Planet Diversity conference with people who look for creative pathways to change the conventional development paradigm. One creative approach comes from Bhutan a country in the Himalayas as big as Switzerland but with less than one million citizens. The King of Bhutan proclaimed in 1972 Gross National Happiness in his country.

Bhutan is according to the UN standards a Least Developed Country. But the people of Bhutan rejected a stream of offers from consultants, UN, development organizations, to develop the country. They decided to follow their own track.

We had the privilege to organize the 3<sup>rd</sup> international conference on Gross National Happiness in Thailand. The first GNH conference took place in Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan. And the second conference in Nova Scotia, Canada.

In Thailand we started in a Buddhist temple in the forest. And with more than 500 people, including farmers, community leaders, Young people and many others, we went to the borders of the Mekong river in the North near Laos to celebrate Loy Krathong festival. To pay respect to the spirits of the river.

Later we went to Bangkok where we organized a Green Fair and many activities around it.

We do not want to stop development but we look for new directions. Progress of societies measured by GDP makes us not happier. We seek to guide progress by Gross National Happiness.