

## **5th International Conference on Gross National Happiness and Law**

*Theme: “The Small-State Leadership & GNH”*

Venue: Jigme Singye Wangchuck School of Law, Paro, Bhutan

Date: 12-13 November 2026

### **Background and Rationale**

In an era marked by ecological crises, deepening inequalities, geopolitical rivalries, and the erosion of democratic trust, the moral voice and developmental philosophy of small states have become increasingly vital. Bhutan, guided by the visionary leadership of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, introduced to the world an alternative paradigm, Gross National Happiness (GNH), that placed human well-being, ecological harmony, good governance, and cultural integrity at the heart of national progress. Today, under the visionary leadership of His Majesty The King, Bhutan once again inspires the world through the transformative vision of the Gelephu Mindfulness City: A model of mindful urbanization that fuses spiritual depth with technological innovation, cultural integrity with global openness, and sustainability with human flourishing. This initiative positions Bhutan not merely as a practitioner of GNH but as a global thought leader in designing future-ready, compassionate, and inclusive societies. The 5th International Conference on Gross National Happiness and Law will therefore explore “The Small-State Leadership & GNH”: An inquiry into how small nations can lead by example in shaping a just, compassionate, and sustainable world order. The conference will convene world leaders, jurists, scholars, economists, policymakers, and spiritual thinkers to reflect on the lessons Bhutan offers and the pathways it can chart in the decades to come.

### **Objectives of the Conference**

- To examine the moral, constitutional, and policy dimensions of small-state leadership through the lens of GNH.
- To draw comparative insights from other small states including but not limited to Singapore, Scandinavian countries, and G-Zero countries on leadership, resilience, and well-being.
- To explore how Bhutan’s GNH framework can inform global governance, climate negotiations, and peacebuilding.
- To discuss the vision of Gelephu Mindfulness City as a living example of GNH-infused urban design and planning.
- To engage international scholars and practitioners in reimagining law, leadership, and development through holistic and humane values.
- To strengthen Bhutan’s position as a global thought leader and convener of ethical and sustainable governance dialogues.

### **Proposed Conference Structure**

- 1. Leadership, Vision and Moral Power of Small Nations: *Bhutan’s Global Voice: Leadership Rooted in Values and Vision***

- (a) *Keynote: The Moral Power of Small Nations: Bhutan’s Global Leadership Through GNH.*
- (b) *Session I: Rethinking Leadership in the Age of Uncertainty: Exploring moral authority, diplomacy, and leadership as service; Bhutan’s monarchy as a model of self-less leadership. (Speakers by invitation)*
- (c) *Session II: Constitutionalism, Law and Happiness (Scholarly Research Based): Embedding GNH in constitutions and governance systems; experiences from Bhutan, and Small State countries. (Speakers through open call)*

## **2. GNH in Policy, Urbanism, and Global Sustainability: *Designing Mindful Futures through GNH***

- (a) *Session III: Gelephu Mindfulness City and GNH: Reimagining Urban Futures: Bhutan’s visionary approach to urban development infused with mindfulness, sustainability, and innovation. (Speakers by invitation)*
- (b) *Session IV: Economy of Happiness and Sustainable Development (Scholarly Research Based): “Beyond GDP” models of progress: inclusive economies, circular growth, and green taxation and other relevant topics. (Speakers through open call)*
- (d) *Session V: Spirituality, Culture, and Inner Leadership (Scholarly Research Based): Interlinking compassion, ethics, and public policy; the role of mindfulness in law and governance. (Speakers through open call)*
- (e) *Leaders’ Conversation: “Can Small States Lead the World?”: Dialogue among global leaders, diplomats, and Bhutanese policymakers. (Speakers by invitation)*

## **3. Global Cooperation, Youth, and the Future of GNH: *Bhutan’s Global Responsibility and the Next Generation of Leadership***

- (f) *Session VI: GNH, Climate Justice, and Global Governance (Scholarly Research Based): Small-state leadership in climate negotiations; ecological jurisprudence and Bhutan’s carbon neutrality vision. (Speakers through open call)*
- (g) *Session VII: Youth, Education, and the Future of GNH Leadership: Integrating GNH into education, youth policy, and law. Case studies and student dialogues. (Speakers through open call as well as invitation)*
- (h) *Global Roundtable: GNH and the Future of International Law: UN experts, jurists, and scholars explore happiness and well-being as global legal principles. (Speakers by invitation)*
- (i) *Closing Plenary: The Future of GNH Leadership: Reflections on Small-State Leadership & GNH. (Speakers through selective speakers from different sessions)*

## Abstract and Paper Submission Procedure and Timeline

Interested individuals in speaking at the conference on the abovementioned sessions must submit an abstract of up to 250 words, along with a brief bio of up to 150 words to [gnhlaw@jswlaw.bt](mailto:gnhlaw@jswlaw.bt). Abstracts for non-scholarly presentations must be submitted latest by 30 August 2026. For scholars and researchers who are interested in scholarly research-based sessions as indicated above must adhere to the following timeline:

Date	Activity
10 <sup>th</sup> July 2026	<b>Submission of your abstract:</b> All presenters are required to submit a brief abstract and bio
10 <sup>th</sup> August 2026	<b>Feedback on abstract:</b> All presenters will be informed whether their paper is accepted or not, and if accepted with feedback and paper submission guidelines
30 October 2026	<b>Submission of full draft papers:</b> All presenters will submit full draft papers
12-14 November 2026	<b>Conference:</b> Paper presentations
30 November 2026	<b>Feedback by other presenters and editors:</b> Full draft papers will be circulated to two other presenters in the conference who will be asked to provide written feedback to the author. The author will also receive feedback from editors
2 January 2027	<b>Submission of paper for publication:</b> Presenters will improve their papers based on editorial feedback and incorporate comments received during the conference as they deem fit
30 January 2027	<b>Editorial feedback:</b> All papers will be subject to a final round of feedback from editors
21 February 2028	<b>Publication of the third Volume of the Journal GNH &amp; Law</b>

## Publication

Selected papers from scholarly research-based sessions will be published in the JSW Law's fourth volume of *GNH and the Law Journal*. Therefore, your participation is subject to agreeing to this publication requirement and to your paper not being published elsewhere without the prior permission of the editors of the *GNH and the Law Journal*.

## Registration Fees

The following registration fees shall apply:

- USD250 for paper presenter
- USD350 for other attendees

The fees will cover administration costs, meals and refreshments served at the conference. A range of hotel accommodation at discounted rates will be offered to attendees.

\*Students and attendees from the Global South may apply for waiver or discount of the registration fees.

### **Conference Coordination and Editorial Team**

Nima Dorji, [nima.dorji@jswlaw.bt](mailto:nima.dorji@jswlaw.bt)

Sonam Tshering, [sonam.tshering@jswlaw.bt](mailto:sonam.tshering@jswlaw.bt)

Karma Choden, [karma.choden@jswlaw.bt](mailto:karma.choden@jswlaw.bt)

Khenpo Tshering Dhendup, [tshering.dhendup@jswlaw.bt](mailto:tshering.dhendup@jswlaw.bt).