CHAPTER 6

**ENVIRONMENT**

The conservation of environment is one of the four pillars of Bhutan’s development philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH). Accordingly, the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) has been putting concerted efforts in protecting the environment and the priority has been on the sustainable use of natural resources in all its policies, plans and programs.

Bhutan’s economy is dependent on the environment and natural resources primarily through agricultural production and hydropower. Within this context, sustainable development requires management of the complex array of forces on the natural environment that have accompanied economic development in recent years. These forces include, population pressure, agricultural development, land use change, hydropower development, mineral development industrialization, urbanization, tourism, competition for available land, road construction and provision of other physical infrastructure associated with social and economic development. Such forces have given rise to a number of key environmental issues that Bhutan now faces.

The major environmental issues currently faced are: land degradation, loss of biodiversity, increased pollutions, waste management, urbanization and industrial development. Addressing these issues to achieve sustainable development is a major challenge to the country. In order to address these issues, the comprehensive statistics on environment is crucial for proper planning and formulation of policies to improve the state of Environment in the country.

The chapter on Environment Statistics gives some general statistics on atmosphere, land cover and use, climate and weather, hydrographic characteristics, geological & geographic information, biodiversity and forests. It also gives statistics on extraction & trade of minerals, production & use of energy, land use, timber resources & their use, crops, livestock, water resources, emissions of greenhouse gases, occurrence & impact of natural extreme events & disasters, urban & rural population, water & sanitation, other urban habitat concerns and government environmental protection & resource management expenditures.