



**SPEECH BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE PRIME MINISTER, DR.
MOEKETSI MAJORO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE VIRTUAL 40TH SADC HEADS OF STATE AND
GOVERNMENT SUMMIT**

HOSTED BY THE REPUBLIC OF MOZAMBIQUE

17 AUGUST, 2020

- **Your Excellency, President John Pombe Magufuli, President of the United Republic of Tanzania,**
- **Your Excellency, President Emmerson Mnangagwa, Chairperson of SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation;**
- **Your Excellency President Filipe Jacinto Nyusi of the Republic of Mozambique, the Incoming Chairperson of SADC and our gracious host;**
- **Your Excellency President Mokgweetsi Eric Masisi, the Incoming Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation;**
- **Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government;**
- **Your Excellency Dr. Stergomena Lawrence - Tax, SADC Executive Secretary;**
- **Distinguished Delegates;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen.**

2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

2.1 It is my singular honour and privilege to address this SADC Assembly on this auspicious day. Please allow me at the outset to applaud the Government of the Republic of Mozambique for so ably hosting this Summit amidst very challenging circumstances imposed upon us by the devastating and deadly Corona Virus (Covid-19) pandemic, which practically prevents the whole world from holding meetings in a conventional manner.

2.2 Permit me, at this juncture, to express my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude, for the messages of goodwill and best wishes from Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government of this regional body, following my appointment as the new Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

2.3 This signifies the support and trust that Your Excellencies have placed on me as Premier of the Kingdom of Lesotho until the next elections scheduled for 2022.

2.4 In the same vein, let me take this opportunity to assure Your Excellencies of my cooperation and full support for this organization and to Your Good selves, throughout my tenure of office as Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho. As a long-standing Member of SADC, Lesotho attaches great importance to this organization, not only because this Regional Economic Community has remained steadfast with its mediation efforts in my country, but because we fully subscribe to SADC's aspiration for improved socio-economic conditions for all SADC citizens which the organization is clearly targeting.

3. THE CURRENT COALITION GOVERNMENT OF LESOTHO

Chairperson,

3.1 Following my appointment as Leader of the current coalition, Government swiftly identified the following pillars, which amongst others, aim to render this Government functional, with concrete deliverables for the benefit of the entire Basotho nation:

- i. The Fight against COVID-19;
- ii. Food security;
- iii. National reforms, reconciliation and national unity; political stability and
- iv. Rescuing our economy from the ravages of Covid-19 and the creation of jobs for our youth and people.

Chairperson,

**Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
Distinguished Delegates,**

3.2 I beg your indulgence to dwell on a few of these pillars of our policy trajectory.

4. THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

Chairperson,

4.1 This Government comes into office at a very challenging and difficult time as the whole world is fighting the deadly COVID-19 pandemic, which uproots livelihoods and could virtually transform human life forever. Given the ease and pace at which people get infected by this virus and recognising at the time that we may have been behind the curve, we have as Government sat down and mapped out strategies on how best to fight this pandemic. We concluded that with weak health systems and lack of resources to mobilise therapeutic care rapidly, our strategy had to rest on prevention of infections.

4.2 As I address this august Assembly this August, the Government of Lesotho has put in place mechanisms and clear guidelines aimed at flattening the curve as well as mitigating the adverse effects of this pandemic amongst our citizenry. We believe that achieving this objective will put us in the right trajectory to successfully manage and defeat this pandemic.

4.3 Among other measures undertaken to date, the Government of Lesotho has recently launched the COVID-19 Testing Centre in the capital, Maseru, which is spearheaded by the newly established National COVID-19 Secretariat, working hand-in-hand with the Ministry of Health. This facility has the capacity to conduct 2,000 tests every 24 hours and has enabled the country to undertake more tests than was previously possible.

4.4 We have also crafted and adopted a Risk Management Framework for Decision Making in the Fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, which serves as a guiding tool for decisions relating to this pandemic. In the interest of time, Chairperson, allow me to spare you the details of this framework.

Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

4.5 Despite our determination, there remains daunting challenges. Rising infections, have exposed the fragility of our health systems. Lack of adequate financial resources, together with inadequate global PPE supplies have continued to hamper our fight against this pandemic. We thank the African Union and President Ramaphosa for the initiatives to mobilise funding and PPE for the continent.

4.6 The porosity of our borders with the Republic of South Africa permits unmonitored human traffic between the two countries, which in turn amplifies the risk of both importation and exportation of the virus. This also makes contact tracing very difficult; and contact tracing is at the heart of our infection prevention strategy. We, are however, working hard with our South African counterparts to develop a strategy to address this challenge.

5. Food Security

Your Excellencies

5.1 Our food security has up to now depended disproportionately on food imports. Recent data suggests that we grow only a quarter of the cereals we consume. But Covid-19 has shown in stark terms of the fallibility of such a strategy. As food production falls across the globe, countries will likely de-prioritise food exports, as happened with medicinal and PPE exports. We have now taken a decision that Lesotho must produce a significant portion of its food needs.

5.2 We are presently mobilising the resources that we will need to increase both the land mass grown to food crops as well yields per area planted. We are investing in procuring seeds, fertilisers, and farm implements. We have invited our private sector to increase their investments in food production and they have welcomed this initiative. But for Lesotho to succeed in this initiative, which is completely in tune with SADC's own goals of raising regional food production, cooperation with members of our organisation and of the secretariat will be critical.

6. Comprehensive National Reforms

6.1 Implementation of the National Reforms is a very crucial process for the overall stability of our country, which is a key cornerstone of the socio-economic development of any country. As a result, the Government has committed itself to inheriting and building on the milestones that have been achieved by the previous Government. We are also in full support, both financially and politically, of the already established National Reforms Authority (NRA).

6.2 The NRA replaced the National Dialogue Planning Committee (NDPC) at the end of Plenary II of the Multi-Stakeholder National Dialogue (MSND) in November 2019, in line with the reforms Roadmap of '**The Lesotho We Want**'. The NRA is a multi-stakeholder body with authority to implement national reforms.

6.3 The Multi-stakeholder National Dialogue is a platform on which all stakeholders made decisions on issues undermining political and security stability in Lesotho under the seven thematic areas of National Reforms, namely; Security, Constitutional, Parliamentary, Judicial, Public Sector, Media and Economic Reforms. Currently efforts are focused on engaging the NRA CEO and Deputy CEO, as well as the thematic experts and staff, in accordance with the Act establishing the NRA, to begin work in October 2020.

6.4 Notwithstanding the challenges posed by the Corona Virus pandemic (COVID-19), it is the aspiration of this Government to conclude the National Reforms Agenda by mid-2021.

7. MOVING TOWARDS A COMMON FUTURE AMID ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

7.1 Our domestic economy is set to suffer the brunt of the pandemic with growth expected to contract by 6 per cent in 2020. This development is a result of weak external demand worsened by the COVID-19 containment measures.

7.2 This rather gloomy economic conditions undoubtedly put our region's efforts to move towards a common future in a very delicate position.

Mr. Chairperson,

7.3 As a small economy, Lesotho stands to gain the most from the advantages promised by economic regional integration. We fully uphold the region's vision of a peaceful, middle to high income industrialized region, where all citizens enjoy sustainable economic well-being, justice and freedom. Potential benefits, including expanded markets as well as a better chance at resource mobilization, presented by our membership in a regional bloc cannot be overemphasized.

7.4 We therefore, fully support and aspire for the speedy implementation of the SADC Industrialization Strategy and Road-map 2015-2063, which advocates for the beneficiation of the region's natural resources as well as for the creation of regional value chains. Mr. Chairperson, our economies cannot afford the delayed identification of the sectors in which we can create the value chains aimed primarily at increasing trade amongst ourselves. We need to move with speed.

Chairperson, Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government, Distinguished Delegates,

8.0 CONCLUSION

8.1 As I conclude my remarks, allow me, on behalf of the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Lesotho, and indeed on my own behalf, to reiterate our commitment to collaborate with SADC and all its structures in its mission to realize regional integration and sustainable development of the region. The Government of Lesotho fully acknowledges the strategic technical expertise offered by this organization.

8.2 We will, to an extent possible, endeavour to subscribe to the policies and strategies of SADC, which are geared towards the acceleration of Regional Integration and Sustainable Development.

Your Excellency Chairperson

8.3 There is nothing as heart-warming, assuring and soothing as the act of being welcomed into a big happy and united family.

8.4 Thank you very much Mr. Chairperson and Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government, for welcoming me into this gracious family with warm and open arms.

I SUBMIT!!!