



**Remarks by Guest of Honour, Mr. Lisema Lekhooana, Principal
Secretary ai, Ministry of Water, Government of Lesotho
At The 10th SADC Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue
Avani Maseru, Lesotho, 5th – 7th September 2022**

Protocol

- His Majesty King Letsie III
- The Right Honourable the Prime Minister
- Honourable President of the Senate
- Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly
- His Lordship the Chief Justice
- Honourable Deputy Prime Minister
- Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers, in particular the Honourable Ministers of - Water; Energy and Meteorology; and Agriculture and Food Security
- Their Excellencies Heads of Diplomatic Mission and International Organisations, in particular Ms. Paola Amadei, European Union Ambassador to the Kingdom of Lesotho
- Honourable Members of the Senate and Principal Chiefs
- Honourable Members of the National Assembly
- Principal Secretaries
- Chairpersons of the Committees of Senior Officials responsible for Water, Energy and Food Security;
- Senior Officials from Member States;
- Church Leaders
- The Acting Commissioner of Water
- Heads of Departments, Parastatals and Public Institutions
- The Guest Speaker, Prof. Marake
- Director of Infrastructure and Services at the SADC Secretariat, Ms. 'Mapolao Mokoena,
- Executive Secretary of the Global Water Partnership – Southern Africa, Mr Alex Simalabwi;
- Heads of SADC Implementing Agencies including River Basin Organisations;
- Our International and Regional Cooperating Partners in the Water, Energy and Food Sectors
- Distinguished Guests,
- Colleagues from SADC Secretariat
- Representatives of Media Houses;
- Ladies and Gentlemen;

1.1 It is of greatest honour and privilege to stand before you on this great occasion where we will be engaging extensively and deliberating on WEF Nexus on ***Bolstering regional productive capacities for water, energy, food security and ecosystem resilience to achieve inclusive and sustainable industrial transformation.*** On behalf of the Ministry of Water, the Government of Lesotho and Basotho, let me yet again, extend a warm welcome to you all to the Kingdom of Lesotho and hope you are already enjoying your stay. Indeed, the Commissioner of Water, has already welcomed you, but I wish to reiterate, as we say in Sesotho that “*Ntja li fasitsoe*” meaning *the dogs are tied*, hence you can be free and enjoy your stay in our beloved Country.

1.2 Let me first start by expressing my sincere gratitude and thanks to the SADC Secretariat and their partners, Global Water Partnership Southern Africa (SADC), for jointly organising the event with the Government of Lesotho. This 10th SADC Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue would not have been possible without the kind financial support from the European Union, through the SADC-WEF Nexus Dialogue Project and the Lesotho Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) Project, “ReNoka”, which is financed by the EU, the German Federal Ministry for Economic

Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and the Government of Lesotho.

1.3 This three-day dialogue is critical in getting the region water secure, food secure and energy secure, and only then can we talk about a socially and economically developed region. The Southern African region, just like other regions in Africa, is in the process of recovering from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Devastating as it was, Covid-19 has taught us to adapt, and meet virtually. However, I am sure you will all agree with me that virtual meetings are no substitute to physical meetings. The energy we share and gather together, the networking and the relaxed but critical discussions are irreplaceable.

1.4 In recent times, our region has also felt the impact of the war in Ukraine. We have already witnessed how the disruption of the supply of the food commodities has driven up prices of commodities and exacerbated food insecurity in the region. Of course in the long term this presents us opportunity to, in line with this dialogue's theme, review our food production capabilities and draw up practical strategies on how the region can become self-reliant and even improve its export capacities around the food commodities and more.

1.5 Ladies and Gentlemen, the challenges I have outlined here so far are emerging ones. Allow me to delve into the more traditional challenges that the region is dealing with on water, food and energy.

1.6 The Southern African region continues to face water challenges regarding access and quality. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that water scarcity affects 1 in 3 people in the African Region. The situation is being exacerbated by population growth, urbanization and increases in household and industrial uses. These problems are compounded by periodic floods and droughts. Just this April, South Africa experienced one of the worst floods where about 306 people were killed and infrastructure destroyed. Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Madagascar and Namibia have all experienced these devastating floods where lives were lost and infrastructure destroyed. Lesotho was no exception as we also experienced these floods in 2021 where a number lives were lost, livestock, water and road infrastructure destroyed.

1.7 The fact that water is critical to poverty alleviation cannot be overemphasized and the region recognizes the crucial role of

water in the achievement of socio-economic development goals. The WHO further warns that in three years' time, 2025, half of the world's population will be living in water-stressed areas and our region is not spared. I am glad that Africa and our region are already doing something about this through implementation of the Africa Water Vision for 2025 at continental level which seeks to stimulate a shift in approach towards a more equitable, sustainable use and management of water resources for poverty alleviation.

1.8 Ladies and gentlemen, most Southern African states are facing energy challenges. It seems common for a country in the region to experience frequent blackouts or for governments to implement Demand Side Management (DSM) programmes such as loadshedding. According to ***The Energy Progress Report 2021***, 570 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa still lacked access to electricity. The report states that Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for three-quarters of the global population without access. The COVID-19 crisis, further slowed down progress in the region according to the report which states that in Sub-Saharan Africa, the number of people without access to electricity actually increased in 2020. With only the current policies and investments 670 million people globally will still be without access to electricity in 2030; where 80 percent of these being people in rural areas, severely limiting development prospects. It is therefore imperative that this forum take such

data seriously and deliberate on what could be done to help member states and the region improve its performance on SDG7 targets which include ensuring universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services.

1.9 Ladies and Gentlemen, food also remains a challenge in our region. We already heard from the SADC Chair, how his country continues to struggle with hunger - 27 million people are currently food insecure. We are also aware of the terrible drought that the South of Madagascar has suffered, leading to hunger in the area. Others have classified this worst drought in 40 years in Madagascar as the first to be caused by climate change.

In Lesotho, an estimated 15% of the population in rural areas are said to be classified facing acute food insecurity and from October 2022 to March 2023, an estimated 22% of the population in rural areas is projected to face acute food insecurity according to the IPC analysis. Several other Southern African countries are facing food insecurity due to emerging factors such as climate change. The region will require urgent action to reduce food gaps, protect and restore livelihoods and prevent acute malnutrition; both in the short and long term.

1.10 Ladies and gentlemen, resolving these challenges one by one will obviously be expensive and will take time, which is why SADC is championing the WEF Nexus Approach which we need not only adopt, but put into practice. Without water, food cannot be produced, without energy, in most cases even if water is available, it may not reach farms and food production facilities. Similarly, without water, hydropower generation is impossible. Furthermore, threats in any of these WEF sectors impact other sectors such as the Health sector. These interlinkages call for joint, coordinated and integrated planning and implementation among the WEF sectors, within and among our SADC Member States for optimising resources and benefits for improved socio-economic situation while maintaining environmental integrity. It is time therefore, to mobilise inclusive WEF Nexus entrepreneurial capabilities within and among Member States as a vehicle towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and to build climate resilience, while preserving the integrity of our ecological systems.

The region has 15 major river basins shared by at least two countries; 13 of these river basins are fully located in the SADC region. These present an opportunity for regional transboundary

projects which would help address challenges in the three WEF sectors. Collaboration to manage transboundary resources is key to building resilience, promoting sustainable development and tackling issues of peace, sovereignty and security.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests and Participants, in Lesotho we embrace the WEF Nexus Approach. We have a number of projects and programmes that reflect application of the approach, as highlighted by the Acting Commissioner of Water, in his welcome remarks. We are optimistic that we are in the right path to face challenges of Water, Energy and Food Security through this approach.

1.11 Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to appeal to you that, as we discuss strategies to improve our region's capabilities to achieve water, energy and food security let us remember the **363 million people** whose livelihoods we need to protect and improve in the region, through better water resources management and in turn improve energy and food security for better socio-economic situation of the region.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the Joint Regional/Local Organising Committee for the hard work that have made this Dialogue a reality. To us as the Government of Lesotho, we are humbled to be afforded the opportunity to host this significant Dialogue, and optimistic that it will exceed expectations.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and declare the 10th SADC Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue officially opened.

I thank you for your attention.

Merci
Obrigado
Khotso! Pula! Nala!