



**STATEMENT BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE PRIME
MINISTER OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO**

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**President of the 72nd Session of the General Assembly,
Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
Your Excellency, Mr Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of the
United Nations,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me to begin by congratulating you, **Mr. President**, for your election to the Presidency of the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly. Your illustrious career as a diplomat assures us of a successful session. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation during your tenure of office. Let me also hasten to commend your predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, for his distinct leadership of the 71st Session of the General Assembly. He handled the great responsibility of leading this august body with commendable skill and devotion.

During the last session we also witnessed the election of the new Secretary General, Mr. Antonio Guterres, whose impeccable credentials and distinct service within the UN, coupled with the wealth of knowledge and experience that he possesses, leave us hopeful that he will handle the challenges of his new position with commendable dexterity. We, therefore, congratulate you, **Mr. Secretary General**, on your well-deserved appointment and wish you success in the long journey ahead. In the same breath, we pay tribute to the former Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki – Moon, for a job well done. He performed the duties of his high office with consummate diplomatic skill and honour.

Mr. President.

We meet once again for the 72nd time in the history of the United Nations in order to make an appraisal of the world political, security and economic situation. We do so at a critical juncture in human history, indeed this is the time for a true reflection on the role

of our Organization in the 21st Century – the United Nations upon which humanity places much faith and hope for a better life for all.

The pall of despair that had descended upon the world following the Second World War was eased with the adoption of the lofty ideals by our forebears when they came together in San Francisco and resolved to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war; to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small; and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom”.

Sadly, today we speak of a world that is slowly regressing to the one that existed seven decades ago. The multifaceted and complex challenges that have besieged us are threatening to erode the laudable strides that the UN has made since its formation. Inter and intra-State conflict characterizes the modern day world. From the global refugee crisis to the spread of terrorism, the ability of the UN to effectively resolve conflict is put to the test. The heightened tensions in the Korean Peninsula, coupled with the flagrant violation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions as well the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, speak to the brewing arms race in that part of the world.

As if this is not enough, respect for Human Rights and the rule of law, the very principles that speak to the very fiber of the United Nations, continue to be flouted with impunity. Women and children, in particular, face the worst brutal forms of abuses in this world, especially in conflict ridden countries. Poverty also continues to be a dreadful affliction on the developing countries. It undermines the developing countries’ efforts to re-orient their economies towards significant gains in real growth. The result of this scenario is that most poverty stricken populations are left with no option but to sometimes employ unorthodox economic survival methods to sustain their livelihoods.

Mr. President,

It is in the above context that we welcome the theme for this Session: **“Focusing on People: Striving for Peace and a Decent Life for All on a Sustainable Planet”**.

The theme resonates squarely with the very principles underpinning the formation of the United Nations. That is what this organization stands for. The complexities and dichotomies that characterize humanity’s existence on this planet and the inequalities that prevail between the developed and under-developed countries would be a thing of the past if we were to remain true to our mission and focus on people in our development path.

Whereas the SDGs embrace the concept of universal prosperity for all societies, we are all aware that, in essence, this ideal is still far from being realized. We need to cooperatively move forward in the endeavor to achieve peace and a decent life for all. It is, indeed incumbent upon the entire international community to act in unison, as we strive to restore peace and deploy a universal response to our said ideal. To that end, the immediate challenge is to come up with a new strategy which will encapsulate the SDGs and integrate them, multi-dimensionally, into the concept as outlined in the theme.

Mr. President,

We are cognisant of the fact that our destiny, in Lesotho, is in our hands; and that the chief responsibility for sustainable and equal development recites with us. As a newly inaugurated Administration, we have set for ourselves very lofty goals to restructure all the important institutions of Government. In this regard, we intend to embark on an ambitious, yet achievable reforms programme. We are committed to full implementation of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) decisions, and indeed to taking Lesotho in the path of inclusive reform process comprising Constitutional, Parliamentary, Electoral, Public Sector, and Security Sector Reforms. This is an exercise that will involve all stakeholders who must engage in a genuine and total

commitment to establish a stable political order, which is conducive to economic development.

Our resolve and commitment to implement SADC decisions as the new Government of Lesotho signifies our commitment to work together with our regional Body in pursuit of lasting peace and security in our country and indeed in the whole SADC Region. We have made good progress in the implementation of SADC decisions following the recommendations of Judge Phumaphi Commission of inquiry in Lesotho after the brutal assassination of the then Army Commander, Lt. Gen Mahao in June 2015. I stand before this house today with sadness and great humiliation to report once again the assassination of the Lesotho Army Commander, Lt. Gen Khoantle Mo'tso-Mot'so less than three weeks ago on the 5th of September 2017 by two senior army officers, who were in turn shot and killed by the General's bodyguards. Despite these daunting challenges of political and security instability that seem to be rocking our small Mountain Kingdom, SADC as a regional bloc is standing firm behind us to restore peace, political stability, security and rule of law in Lesotho.

On this note, **Mr. President**, I wish to thank SADC, our development partners and friends of Lesotho, the African Union and the United Nations for their unwavering support in ensuring that Lesotho's democracy is protected, in pursuit of its economic growth and stability of her Nation.

On the development front, I am happy to report that the Government of Lesotho is committed to maintaining strict fiscal discipline in order to stabilize the national economy, stimulate growth and business activity, while preserving the environment. At the same time, we are relentlessly committed to combatting crime and corruption at all levels of our society, in accordance with Goal 16 of the SDGs, which recognizes that corruption undermines efforts to combat poverty and gender equality. It further acts as a tax to the poor when it comes to accessing their right to public services. We are

aware that on our own, without the support of our cooperating partners, our efforts to root out corruption cannot yield the desired results hence our glaring call to them to join forces with us in this crusade.

Mr. President,

We believe, as a Least Developed Country (LDC), that the concept of development is only meaningful when it bestows tangible benefits to communities in a sustainable manner. It is an indisputable fact that the youth are a thread that holds together the fabric of every nation and can, at the same time, be eminent agents of change. It would be unwise and a serious miscalculation not to recognize the youth as partners of today and leaders of tomorrow. In this regard, we emphasize the importance of the youth's participation in decision making at all levels. Further, job creation for the youth remains a priority. In reference to goal 8 of the SDGs, global strategy for youth employment is to be operationalized by the year 2020. Therefore, countries have to develop strategies for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization (ILO). In light of this, the Government of Lesotho remains committed in its resolve to harness the energy of the young Basotho men and women for the advancement of the economy of our country.

Moreover, Lesotho continues to deal with the scourge of the HIV/AIDS pandemic which is more prevalent among women, who are the backbone of our economy. Empowerment of women is a focal point of our development policy; and we believe that the elevation of women to positions of leadership, both in the private and public sectors, will lead to a more equitable and prosperous society in Lesotho. We recognize that poverty and the AIDS pandemic go hand in hand; and therefore our poverty eradication policies are targeted at the most vulnerable groups, being the elderly, AIDS orphans, women and youth. We remain steadfast in ensuring that these are tackled for they are key components of the SDGs.

On the economic front, Lesotho like other Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC's), continues to face challenges inherently linked to its unique geographical position. The burden of high transport costs, cumbersome and slow export processing procedures continue to impose serious impediments to our external trade. Suffice it to mention the need for increased international assistance in infrastructure development, institutional capacity building as well as industrialization and enhancement of productive capacity, not only for the Least Developed Countries but for all Developing Countries.

**Mr President,
Distinguished Delegates,**

Lesotho continues to be a proponent of maintenance of international peace and security. We are deeply disturbed by the ongoing violence in Syria, some African and other parts of the Middle East. The rise of ISIS has added another dimension to the scourge of international terrorism. It has become a force of destruction and renders mayhem on a global scale. We are encouraged by recent efforts aimed at shrinking the boundaries of the territories controlled by ISIS in Iraq and Syria. As a result of the ongoing violence in the Middle East and elsewhere, the world refugee population has risen to more than sixty five million displaced persons, including those fleeing from hunger. This situation is intolerable as it has created an environment in which young people have become vulnerable to recruitment by terrorist movements and human trafficking.

Mr. President,

In recent years Lesotho has been facing prolonged droughts due to the El Nino effect, which gripped the entire Southern African sub-continent leading to food shortages and other hardships. The recent hurricanes that devastated the Caribbean and other parts of the United States and torrential rains witnessed in many countries, including floods of Biblical proportions, are a stark reminder that climate change is here with us and that an urgent action is required in accordance with the Paris Climate Change Treaty concluded more than a year ago.

We reiterate our appeal that small countries like Lesotho, including Small Island States, be empowered with technologies to deal with and adapt to climate change challenges. Attainment of sustainable development will elude us if there is no genuine commitment by all including our Development Partners. Indeed, the principles of common but differentiated responsibility and economic might and capability between the developed and the developing nations, are critical for our success in building a sustainable world. We, therefore, call on the international community to continue mobilizing and providing additional financial resources to Africa for climate friendly technologies to address, both the urgent adaptation and mitigation needs of Africa, and other developing countries. In the same vein, we urge countries that have reneged on their support to the Paris Agreement to reconsider their position and come back to the fold.

Mr. President,

One of the most notable achievements, accomplished by the International community, through the United Nations, is the eradication of colonialism. However, this business remains unfinished. The questions of Western Sahara and Palestine have defied solution for a long time. We reiterate our support for Western Sahara in its struggle for self-determination.

Each day that passes without a change in the lives of the People of Western Sahara is a reminder to the world that we must renew our determination to fight the injustices perpetrated against the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic. History will judge us harshly if we silently watched the unjust treatment meted out on the People of that African country. Our silence and inaction would leave an indelible mark of failure on our character as a collective.

The modern day world has no place for practice of colonial tactics. In this connection, we call on the United Nations to remain resolute on its determination to rid the world of the scourge of colonialism. The agreement by the Polisario Front and Morocco to resume negotiations in order to reach a long term solution has not gone unnoticed. We

commend them for that bold step and assure them of our support in their noble endeavours.

The Question of Palestine has been on the UN agenda for decades. We continue to believe that the two states solution, on the basis of the 1967 borders, whereby Israel and Palestine will co-exist, side by side in equal sovereignty, is the most viable proposition for a permanent resolution to this vexing problem. The Palestinians too deserve to enjoy the Right to Peace, Development and Sanctity of Life.

Mr. President,

On the Nuclear Disarmament landscape, the UN made significant progress a few months ago with the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as the first legally binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons, with the goal of leading towards their total elimination. This is a historic achievement of our time, especially in light of the on-going tensions in the Korean Peninsula. The argument that Nuclear Weapons are a deterrent is a fallacy, these weapons are a threat to human existence and their possessors should do the right thing and renounce them in line with their international obligations. This Treaty should not remain on paper only, but it must be ratified and implemented by all.

As I conclude my statement, **Mr. President,** allow me to point out that we should continue to resist all attempts to undermine the global consensus that the UN has built around many issues of importance to our Peoples. We remain convinced that the United Nations is the only universal institution that can safeguard world peace and ensure the survival of all and sundry. But, for it to do so, the reform agenda of the UN must proceed without further delay, including the reform of the Security Council. A Council that is transparent, representative of all regions, including Africa, will go a long way towards fulfilling the ideals for which the UN was formed. Unilateral actions that defy civility and international law belong to the past. Let us march forward with unity of

purpose while focusing on our People and striving for peace so that we can all have a decent life.

I THANK YOU!