



**NATIONAL STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE
KINGDOM OF LESOTHO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SAMUEL NTSOKOANE
MATEKANE**

**DELIVERED DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 78th
SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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**Your Excellency the President of the General Assembly,
Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
Your Excellency Mr. Antonio Guterres, Secretary General
of the United Nations,
Distinguished Delegates.**

For the past 78 years, the world leaders have gathered together in this assembly hall in September every year because of their deep rooted conviction that the nations of the world can and should cooperate to resolve conflicts peacefully and to change people's lives for the better. This vision of our forebears - that of a united, peaceful and prosperous world, continues to resonate with us and shall, indeed transcend countless future generations. This is so because the strides of the United Nations (UN) are too glaring to deny.

From preventing the third world war, to buttressing the foundations of global security, as well as advancing global economic development, the UN has left an indelible mark in the annals of history. Despite these remarkable achievements, the UN's path towards full realisation of its aspirations has always been beset by numerous challenges. The world is currently in a state of turbulence, with intersecting crises growing in scale and severity.

With the conflicts and insurgency in the Sahel, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, and Ukraine, and the rising global tensions between Nuclear Weapon States, the UN's capacity to maintain global peace and security is put to the test. Climate change, poverty and hunger, diseases, lack of employment, mainly for the youth, and abuse of human rights, threaten to overwhelm the international system. As if this is not enough, unconstitutional changes of government have resurfaced again, while unilateralism and terrorism continue unabated.

This state of affairs, **Mr. President**, has given rise to perceptions that the multilateral system is no longer fit for purpose. The question now is how do you restore confidence to the world population, that the UN is still as relevant today as it was in 1945 when it was formed. And the answer to this question squarely reposes on us as the current leadership of the world. It is up to us to make this decade a turning point or a decade in which multilateralism lost its way. It is in this context that we hail as most appropriate, the theme chosen for our General Debate; ***"Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity: Accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals towards peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all."***

Mr. President,

At the heart of our problems lies the challenge of an uneven and uncertain economic outlook. The Report of the Secretary General on the Work of the Organisation, aptly captures that promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development has remained a major challenge during the reporting period. It clearly indicates that progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) “has not only stalled, but reversed in terms of poverty, employment, health, education and other areas.” Small and landlocked developing economies, such as Lesotho, bear the biggest brunt as they are yet to fully integrate into the global markets.

Reversing the current economic trajectory requires us to be intentional about multilateral cooperation and to remain true to the principles underpinning the formation of the UN. We need to be purposeful in working towards levelling the playing field with regard to the global financing architecture, and thus speak with one voice in calling for the democratisation and reform of the Bretton Woods institutions.

Moreover, Lesotho continues to fully support the proposal of the Secretary-General on the SDG Stimulus. At the same time, we

would like to add our voice to the call for the G20 countries to provide the SDG Stimulus to the tune of at least \$500 billion per year, to be delivered through a combination of grants, concessional and non-concessional finance. International commitments undertaken must be fulfilled. We also welcome the recent G20 decision to accredit the African Union as its official member.

Despite our challenges as Least Developed Countries, we are not sitting back as spectators in the process of achieving the SDGs. Some of our efforts at the country level include the hosting of the high-level event on nutrition and food security in Lesotho, in March this year by His Majesty King Letsie III. The aim of the event was to promote strong political momentum to mobilize commitments and investments in the fight against hunger and malnutrition on the continent.

We are also making concerted efforts to sponsor the achievement of MDGs through our national fiscal allocations and actions. Two months ago, and in collaboration with the UN Country Office in Lesotho, I launched the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, which is aimed at the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While we hail the UN for this gesture, we, however, wish to indicate that significant resource

gaps still exist. We, therefore, call on our Development Partners to avail more resources towards this endeavour.

Mr. President,

Climate change is also one of the formidable challenges of our time. This is evidenced by the changing weather patterns, hurricanes, storms and catastrophes that we endure every year. The recent earthquake in Morocco and the floods in Libya are a case in point. Allow me at this point to pass our sincere condolences to the families that have lost their loved ones in these disasters. We also express solidarity and support to these sisterly African countries and their peoples as they recover and rebuild.

In the midst of the climate change crisis, we believe that there is a silver lining on the horizon that may enable us to turn the fortunes of our people. In Lesotho, we have water, sunlight and wind in abundance, which provide opportunities for innovation and partnerships in renewable energy generation and creation of jobs. In this regard, I wish to announce that on the 12th and 13th of October this year, Lesotho will host an International Water and Hydrogen Conference and Expo that will showcase the steps we

are undertaking towards becoming the world's first sustainable digital hydro nation. We are open to investments in this sector. I, therefore, take this opportunity to invite You, **Excellencies**, and the private sector in Your respective countries, to attend this ground-breaking event. Our aim is to generate clean energy for domestic use and for export to the neighbouring countries.

At the same time, we urge developed countries to meet their financial commitments of providing \$100 billion a year to developing states for the implementation of the Paris Agreement. We need to work for the implementation that puts people with disability, the youth, women and other vulnerable groups at the centre. We believe that the inclusion of all stakeholders in a programmatic and results-oriented action, will bring about fundamental changes in the livelihood and well-being of our societies.

Mr. President,

We live in a digital age that compels our countries to ensure wide access to digital tools. COVID has taught us that technology is key to fighting diseases and pandemics. The challenges besieging our health systems require improvement in the use of telemedicine and

technology. Global cooperation is key in this area. Even as we cooperate in this area, we need to ensure that access to health and medicine must continue to be a priority and adequately funded.

We are gratified to share that in Lesotho, digital access has raised awareness in the youth, especially in girls and in women, of their rights. This is evident in increased civic engagement and the expression of ideas and opinions by most Basotho women and girls in various sectors.

This notwithstanding, full access to digital tools remains a challenge for our rural communities, due to lack of infrastructure and affordability, further perpetuating inequalities that we strive to eradicate. This is one area that needs close collaboration and cooperation with member states. Even as we hail and support technological innovations such as artificial intelligence and social media, I must add, however, that we need not lose sight of the need to address clear threats to people's rights to safety and privacy.

In our quest to achieve our development aspirations, we are also taking initiatives to stimulate the Medium, Small and Micro Enterprises (MSMEs). This will help accelerate trade and industrialisation, as well as address the prevailing gender

imbalances. Lesotho has also embarked on a comprehensive Constitutional and Legislative reforms process. While not being a one stop solution for all problems, reforms nevertheless, provide hope that people's lives will improve due to a new order of public resources management, improved checks and balances, political stability and a focus on the development agenda. As we transition into the implementation of the reforms, we shall continue to bank on the support of the UN and the international community.

Mr. President,

Consolidation of peace shall continue to be a prerequisite to development. While access to small arms and light weapons, that kill our people on a daily basis, remains unfettered, peace will continue to elude us. While lack of political will to rid the world of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, including biological and chemical weapons, still exist, global peace and security will forever remain fragile.

We call for implementation of the Programme of Action on illicit small arms and light weapons and for the total elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, in line with the international commitments and obligations undertaken. As

part of the global community, Lesotho shall continue to play her role in fostering global peace, including peace in our region. We are grateful to report to this august assembly that our troops in Mozambique, under the umbrella of SADC, have made commendable strides in thwarting the threat of the deadly insurrection in that country.

As we continue to ponder the most pressing issues and challenges facing the international community today, we should not forget the plight of the Saharawi and the Palestinian peoples who continue to live under oppression. Both the General Assembly and the Security Council have recognized their rights to self-determination and independence. Western Sahara should determine its own destiny and live in peace side by side with the Kingdom of Morocco. Equally, the solution to the Palestine question is the implementation of the two states solution with Israeli and Palestine living side by side in peace, security and harmony.

It would be remiss of me not to call for the uplifting of the economic embargo against the Republic of Cuba, as well as the remaining sanctions against the Republic of Zimbabwe.

At the same time, we call for the reform of the Security Council along the lines of the Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration. We

deserve a Council that is more transparent, representative and democratic. We have learned a lesson from exclusion, intolerance, and war that selfishness in world relations is suicidal. We have learned a lesson in the value of collective decision-making and inclusive development.

As I conclude my statement, allow me, **Mr. President**, to indicate that though the world may have changed since 1945, the UN, however, remains the only universal intergovernmental institution that unites us in a global community of states. Yes, the Organization may have shortcomings, but it remains a beacon of hope for humanity. The responsibility to make the UN function optimally falls on all of us and must be discharged with a great sense of responsibility.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!