

**SPEECH BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE
PRIME MINISTER MR. PAKALITHA MOSISILI
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE MEETING
OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT
COMMUNITY (SADC) MINISTERS
RESPONSIBLE FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR
AND SOCIAL PARTNERS HELD FROM 31 MARCH
TO 4 APRIL 2008, MASERU LESOTHO.**

**His Majesty King Letsie III,
Honourable President of the Senate,
Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,
Your Lordship the Chief Justice,
Honourable Deputy Prime Minister,
Honourable Ministers,
Your Excellencies Heads of Diplomatic Missions
and Heads of International Organisations,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Honourable Attorney General,
Government Secretary and Senior Government
Officials,
Distinguished Representatives from Employers
and Workers Organisations,**

**Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

On behalf of the Government and people of Lesotho and indeed on my own behalf, allow me, at the outset, to welcome Honourable Ministers and distinguished Social Partners, and other dignitaries here present, to the Mountain Kingdom as Lesotho is affectionately known.

Let me also extend my invitation to the Honourable Guests to stay a little longer to enjoy the serenity and hospitality of the Mountain Kingdom. Feel free to visit the interior to experience first hand the friendliness of the Basotho and the fresh air of the Maloti Mountains.

Director of Ceremonies,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Social Partners,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I commend you Honourable Ministers and Social Partners for finding it prudent to revive the Southern African Development Community Employment and Labour Sector (SADC ELS). The SADC ELS or Southern African Labour Commission (SALC), as it was previously known, has always been in the forefront in responding to the political, socio-economic and technological developments, challenges and processes which have a direct bearing on the quality of life in the changing world through social dialogue. The Social Dialogue involving the tripartite structures namely; Governments, organized Business and organized Labour.

SADC ELS has been able to exert its influence on the international arena, the African Union and the International Labour Organisation, on issues pertaining to human rights at the world of work, employment, child labour and rights of women,

children, youth and persons with disabilities, HIV and AIDS, the right to employment, enhancing productivity, decent work and fair remuneration to name but a few. This has been made possible by the common vision and goals of Governments, Employers and Workers from the SADC Region through the Employment and Labour Sector. I would therefore urge this meeting to sustain the momentum.

Furthermore, may I address another issue of concern which has been brought to my attention. I have been reliably informed that despite common position taken at sub-regional and Regional Level, SADC and the AU respectively, Africa, (African Union, Labour and Social Affairs Commission), failed to agree on the candidature for the Chairmanship of the International Labour Conference for 2007, during their meeting held in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa and Geneva, respectively.

I am aware it was not as a direct result of Labour and Employment Sector. But we are all liable because of our collective responsibilities. However, I wish to point out that Ambassadors posted to various Stations are there as representatives of Government and should act on the mandate that they receive from the various Government Departments, including Labour and Employment in order to attain consensus on issues at hand. That being the case it is my sincere hope that SADC and Africa as a whole will be in a position to climb to greater heights.

Director of Ceremonies,

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

Africa faces a lot of challenges today as a result of high unemployment, the scourge of HIV and AIDS, stagnating economies to site a few examples. Indeed the SADC sub region is not an exception. We are however, encouraged by the bold steps taken by the

SADC ELS in trying to address and redress these problems.

It is through Dialogue and engagement that we will be able to resolve some of the problems facing us. Dialogue as much as it is not the panacea to everything, at least it provides an environment for obtaining answers and solutions to problems and challenges, if those engaged are genuine, truthful and committed.

Let me challenge the Politicians from Africa, in particular, from the SADC Region to learn from this Sector, that Dialogue is a virtue. It is common knowledge that after the General Elections, instead of conceding defeat with honour, opposition parties often cry foul, even where the ruling party has accepted victory with humility, as a result of free, fair and credible elections conducted by Independent Electoral Commissions or other relevant electoral

authorities. Leaders of such opposition parties incite stayaways, encourage violations of human rights and non observance of the rule of law. Such behavior threatens our fledgling economies because it is counter development and eventually culminates in scaring away local and international investors who are responsible for the creation of employment in our countries.

I would therefore, urge the Leaders of Opposition Parties to engage in dialogue in order to resolve political issues.

Director of Ceremonies,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The revival of the SADC ELS comes at the critical time when Africa, including the SADC, has to transform

and adapt to the realities of globalization. As Ministers responsible for labour and employment, Social Partners, I need not overemphasize the challenges which have been brought by globalization. However, it is significant for us in Africa and the SADC Sub Region not to reject, but embrace it. We have to use globalization to our advantage.

Chairperson, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

With the advent of globalization we witness the world being turned into a manageable global village, decisions being taken promptly. There are those who feel that globalization has made movement of capital to be easy. Why can't we do the same with the movement of labour? It is therefore time that Ministers and Social Partners consider seriously, the SADC Protocol on Migration. This instrument will facilitate movement of labour as well as ensuring that

migrants also enjoy the same rights and protection as those enjoyed by citizens in the relevant social formations.

It is also worth mentioning that the Region is preoccupied with Regional Integration, to the prejudice of labour. **I therefore subscribe to the Words of the 34th President of the United States, President Eisenhower, when he said “neither a wise man nor a brave man lies down on the tracks of history to wait for the train of the future to run over him.”** I therefore urge you to consider the issue of labour migration so that you are not run over by a train of the future.

As I alluded to earlier, it is common knowledge that Africa and the SADC Region in particular, is facing high unemployment and high poverty levels. These problems affect our societies adversely, especially the youth, women, people with disabilities and the

elderly. It is therefore incumbent upon you as Ministers of Labour and Employment to come up with strategies that will reverse the prevailing situation.

You may wish to recall that the Ouagadougou Declaration on Employment Creation and Poverty Alleviation of the African Union calls upon us to ensure that employment is key to our economic strategies. I therefore beseech you to take into cognizance this call by the Declaration, particularly with respect to the employment of the Youth and Women.

Honourable Ministers and Distinguished delegates,

The HIV and AIDS scourge is decimating in high proportions, the able bodied section of our population. This is a cause for concern. I know that the SADC Protocol on HIV and AIDS at the workplace was adopted in 1997. It is my sincere hope that the

Protocol has been domesticated and implemented. The implementation of which, will go a long way in fighting, the HIV and AIDS pandemic and the stigma at the workplace.

The social security in our countries is either fragmented, not all inclusive or limited in scope. We are all aware of the problems that the populations confront because of the inadequate social security. It is therefore mandatory upon you Honourable Ministers to facilitate the adoption of the protocol on Social Security within the SADC.

At this juncture allow me Honourable Ministers to call upon SADC, to ensure representation at the highest levels of international organizations. It is therefore imperative that SADC should strive to have representation at political positions of the International Labour Organisation. This should be a deliberate move from you Honourable Ministers and

Social Partners. I am confident that with your commitment we will be able to achieve it.

Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Social Partners,
Invited Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, allow me to once again welcome you, and wish you a pleasant stay and unforgettable experience of the Mountain Kingdom. I wish you fruitful and successful deliberations of the revived and rejuvenated SADC Employment and Labour Sector. It is now my singular pleasure to declare this meeting officially open.

KHOTSO!!! PULA!!!! NALA!!!!!!