

**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,
THE HONOURABLE MOHLABI KENNETH TSEKOA
AT
THE OPENING OF A STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGEMENT
WORKSHOP OF THE NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR
AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT**

15 – 17 SEPTEMBER, 2008

HIS MAJESTY KING LETSIE III
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE PRIME MINISTER
HONOURABLE MINISTERS
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NEPAD SECRETARIAT
DISTINGUISHED PARTICIPANTS
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

WHEN THE NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT (NEPAD) WAS LAUNCHED BY THE HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN UNITY AT THEIR SUMMIT HELD IN LUSAKA, ZAMBIA IN JULY, 2001, EXPECTATIONS WERE RAISED VERY HIGH THAT, AT LAST, AFRICA HAD FOUND A VEHICLE THROUGH WHICH IT COULD REALISE THE ASPIRATIONS OF ITS PEOPLE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, THROUGH MEANINGFUL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH THE DEVELOPED WORLD.

THE FACT THAT THOSE EXPECTATIONS HAVE NOT YET BEEN REALISED, DOES NOT MEAN THAT OUR HOPES WERE TOTALLY MISPLACED. LOOKING BACK OVER THE PERIOD SINCE 2001, WE REALISE THAT THE MAIN REASON WHY MOST OF AFRICA'S STATES HAVE NOT YET BENEFITTED FROM NEPAD, IS BECAUSE OF THE USUAL INERTIA IN THE TAKE-OFF OF MAJOR INNOVATIONS AS WELL AS AN INITIAL LACK OF UNDERSTANDING ON THE PART OF SOME MEMBER STATES AS TO WHAT NEPAD WAS, ITS MODUS

OPERANDI AS WELL AS HOW TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITIES AND BENEFITS THAT ACCRUE FROM THE ORGANIZATION.

FOR US IN LESOTHO THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT THAT TODAY IS A SPECIAL DAY THAT MUST USHER IN A NEW ERA IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH NEPAD. OUR WORKSHOP DURING THE NEXT THREE DAYS IS INTENDED TO PROMOTE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE PURPOSES, PRIORITIES AND PROCEDURES OF THE NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT.

OBVIOUSLY THEREFORE, WE ARE DELIGHTED TO HAVE AMONGST US, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NEPAD SECRETARIAT WHO HAVE GRACIOUSLY AGREED TO COME TO LESOTHO TO INDUCT US IN THE COMPREHENSION AND APPRECIATION OF NEPAD.

WE NOTE WITH A LOT OF PLEASURE, THE PRESENCE OF DR. HESPHINA RUKATO, DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF NEPAD TOGETHER WITH HER HIGH POWERED TEAM. AMONG THIS TEAM, I AM PROUD TO POINT OUT THAT WE HAVE ONE OF THE SONS OF THIS MOUNTAIN KINGDOM IN THE PERSON OF MR. REATILE MOCHEBELELE. TO ALL OF YOU, WE SAY WELCOME TO THE MOUNTAIN KINGDOM, WELCOME HOME TO LESOTHO.

YOUR EXCELLENCIES

DISTINGUISHED PARTICIPANTS

THE FUNDAMENTAL REASON FOR WHICH NEPAD WAS CREATED BY AFRICA'S HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT WAS TO ADDRESS THE CURRENT CHALLENGES THAT CONFRONT THE AFRICAN CONTINENT. HIGH AMONG THESE CHALLENGES ARE THE UNACCEPTABLE LEVELS OF POVERTY AND THE MARGINALISATION OF AFRICA IN THE WORLD ECONOMIC ORDER. AS BASOTHO AND AS AFRICANS WE DO NOT HAVE TO BE REMINDED THAT ABJECT POVERTY HAS BEEN A PART OF THE UGLY FACE OF OUR EXISTENCE FOR TOO LONG AND THAT, AT THE END OF THE DAY, LESOTHO'S AND AFRICA'S LIBERATION FROM THE PANGS OF POVERTY AND MARGINALIZATION IS IN OUR HANDS. NEPAD WAS ESTABLISHED TO PUT AFRICA IN THE WORLD DEVELOPMENT AGENDA. IT WAS INTENDED TO INCREASE AFRICA'S COMPETITIVENESS AS A TRADING BLOC IN THE CURRENT AND FUTURE GLOBAL TRADE ARCHITECTURE. BUT NEPAD CAN ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES ONLY IF THERE IS ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT OF MEMBER STATES AS SHE FORGES STRATEGIES AND FINE-TUNES AREAS OF FOCUS FOR NOW AND FOR THE FUTURE.

LESOTHO HOLDS NEPAD IN VERY HIGH ESTEEM. AT THE RECENT SUMMIT OF THE AFRICAN UNION HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT IN SHARM EL-SHEIK, EGYPT, LESOTHO WAS

APPOINTED TO THE NEPAD HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE (HSGIC) COMPRISING TWENTY HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT APPOINTED ON EQUITABLE REGIONAL REPRESENTATION. WE HOPE TO SERVE AFRICA WITH DEVOTION IN THAT CAPACITY AND LIVE UP TO THE EXPECTATIONS OF OUR PEOPLES.

DISTINGUISHED PARTICIPANTS

AS I INDICATED EARLIER, LESOTHO HAS NOT, AS YET, BENEFITTED SIGNIFICANTLY FROM NEPAD. IT IS OUR SINCERE HOPE THAT THIS WORKSHOP WILL BE A WATERSHED THAT MARKS OUR DEPARTURE FROM OUR ERSTWHILE RELATIONSHIP WITH NEPAD BECAUSE IT WILL CLARIFY OPPORTUNITIES THAT CAN BE DERIVED FROM THE PARTNERSHIP AND WAYS OF TRANSFORMING THOSE OPPORTUNITIES INTO TANGIBLE DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS FOR BASOTHO.

LESOTHO IS A RELATIVELY SMALL COUNTRY WITH A RELATIVELY SMALL POPULATION AND LIMITED NATURAL RESOURCE ENDOWMENTS. IT IS THEREFORE CRITICAL FOR LESOTHO TO ACCESS INTERNATIONAL FINANCE AND OTHER FORMS OF ASSISTANCE THROUGH GENUINE PARTNERSHIPS IN ORDER TO REDUCE HER DEVELOPMENT DEFICITS. LESOTHO'S DEVELOPMENT

PARTNERS ARE HAPPILY AND PROUDLY WITH US AS WE OPEN THIS WORKSHOP

AND CLEARLY, IT IS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS LIKE WITH NEPAD THAT WE CAN HAVE A LARGER POLITICAL PLATFORM AND A NETWORK OF ALLIES THAT CAN HELP US TO HAVE THE NECESSARY BARGAINING POWER IN THE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AND TRADE ARCHITECTURE.

THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT THAT IF WE ACT IN UNITY AND HARMONISE OUR POLICIES AS A CONTINENT, WE CAN INCREASE TRADE AMONG OURSELVES AND IMPROVE ACCESS TO THE MULTIPLE SOURCES OF FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI).

WE BELIEVE THAT NEPAD IS A PLATFORM FROM WHICH WE CAN SHOWCASE LESOTHO AS A COUNTRY OF CHOICE FOR FDI IN BOTH TRADE AND TOURIM AS WELL AS FOR DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE.

DISTINGUISHED PARTICIPANTS

EFFICIENT TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE ARE A VITAL PREREQUISITE FOR DEVELOPMENT. AS A LANDLOCKED COUNTRY, LESOTHO EXPERIENCES HIGH TRANSIT COSTS AND UNDUE DELAYS IN THE MOVEMENT OF GOODS AND PERSONS DUE TO INFRASTRUCTURE BOTTLENECKS. ALSO, MOST

OF RURAL LESOTHO REMAINS INACCESSIBLE. TOURISM, AN INDUSTRY THAT, TO A LARGE EXTENT, REMAINS UNTAPPED, CAN BE EXPLOITED FULLY ONCE THE ROADS INFRASTRUCTURE IS PUT IN PLACE ACROSS RURAL LESOTHO AND BETWEEN LESOTHO AND THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA. THAT IS WHY OUR PRIORITY AS A COUNTRY IS INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT. IT IS OUR HOPE THAT THROUGH AND WITH NEPAD WE WILL ADDRESS THIS CHALLENGE. NEEDLESS TO STATE THAT THE CENTRAL CHALLENGE THAT BASOTHO MUST NEVER LOSE SIGHT OF IS ENHANCING PEACE AND STABILITY IN OUR LAND. THESE TWO, PEACE AND STABILITY TOGETHER WITH THE RULE OF LAW ARE THE CENTRE-PIECE FOR DEVELOPMENT.

IN CONCLUSION, YOUR EXCELLENCIES AND DISTINGUISHED PARTICIPANTS, WE ARE HOPEFUL THAT AT THE END OF THIS WORKSHOP WE WILL HAVE ACHIEVED THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES AMONG OTHERS, DR RUKATO HIGHLIGHTED SOME OF THESE:

1. REVITALIZATION OF THE LESOTHO NEPAD NATIONAL FOCAL POINT WHICH WAS ESTABLISHED IN 2004.
2. DEVELOPMENT OF OUR CAPACITY IN PREPARING PROJECTS THAT CAN ATTRACT FINANCING THROUGH NEPAD.

3. INTEGRATION OF NEPAD ACTIVITIES INTO LESOTHO NATIONAL PLANS AND PROGRAMMES.
4. EXPANSION OF LESOTHO'S BUY-IN IN OTHER NEPAD PROGRAMMES APART FROM AGRICULTURE.
5. CLARIFICATION OF THE ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN THEIR ENGAGEMENT IN NEPAD PROGRAMMES AND PROCESSES.
6. ACQUISITION OF MORE INFORMATION ON NEPAD PROGRAMMES INCLUDING REGIONAL AND GLOBAL OPPORTUNITIES THAT EXIST.
7. STREAMLINING AND STRUCTURING OF IN-COUNTRY COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION OF NEPAD IN A WAY THAT INVOLVES THE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR.
8. DEVELOPMENT OF FLAGSHIP PROJECTS THAT WILL CONSTITUTE NEPAD INVESTMENT PROGRAMME FOR LESOTHO.

WITHOUT A DOUBT, THERE ARE GREAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR BASOTHO TO BENEFIT FROM NEPAD AND TO REALISE THE ASPIRATIONS THAT ARE REFLECTED IN THE LESOTHO VISION 2020, AND ABOVE ALL, THE ASPIRATION TO REDUCE ABJECT POVERTY AT THE GRASSROOTS OF THE PEOPLE OF LESOTHO.

IT IS WITH A SENSE OF PRIDE AND PRIVILEGE THAT I DECLARE THIS WORKSHOP OFFICIALLY OPENED.

I THANK YOU!!