



**OFFICIAL OPENING REMARKS BY THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE THE PRIME MINISTER
DR. MOTSOAHAE THOMAS THABANE**

**THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) VOLUNTARY
NATIONAL REVIEW (VNRs) REPORT 2019 NATIONAL
VALIDATION CONFERENCE, 06 – 07 JUNE 2019.**

06 JUNE 2019

MANTHABISENG CONVENTION CENTRE

Programme Director,

Allow me to start my key note address by paying homage to

His Majesty King Letsie III

Honourable President of Senate

Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly

President of the Court of Appeal

Her Ladyship the Chief Justice

Honourable Deputy Prime Minister

The Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers

Honourable Judges of the High Court

Excellencies Heads of Diplomatic Missions and International
Organizations

Senior Government Officials

Heads of UN Agencies and Deputy Heads of Missions

Heads of Parastatals, Private sector, Civil Society Organizations
and the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning,

It gives me great pleasure to address you this morning, on this important occasion, where we have come as different stakeholders to reflect on progress we have made as a country since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Agenda and to determine on how to take forward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. My sincere gratitude goes to the Ministry of Development Planning, the United Nations in Lesotho and other development partners for organizing this conference.

The adoption of the SDG Agenda was a watershed moment for global development. Member States reached a major agreement which set the global development agenda for a generation. It also integrated a number of important international agreements, including the Paris Climate Agreement, the Sendai Disaster Risk Reduction Framework, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development. This resulted in a compelling and transformative vision.

What was also phenomenal was the 2030 Agenda consultative process, which was shaped by many voices, fostering connections between governments, women groups, youth, academia, civil society, private sector and other stakeholders. This amounted to an unprecedented global conversation, which we are proud of and should emulate at national levels. Basotho and their Government participated in this conversation and as a signatory to the 2030 Agenda, it means we entered into a social contract with

our people and committed to deliver on this transformative Agenda. The words have to be turned into action and visible impacts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To be able to tell whether we are making progress or not, we have to undertake annual reviews. That is why Lesotho has taken a major step to volunteer to be one of the countries that will undertake the Voluntary National Review (VNR) for the SDGs and present the report at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July, 2019.

The High Level Political Forum, brings together representatives of governments, businesses and civil society to review progress, examine obstacles, exchange best practices, and recommend new actions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Some of you will remember that each year a theme is chosen with a selected set of SDGs to be reviewed in depth at the national and international levels. This year, the High Level Political Forum will address the theme, ***'Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality'*** and it will conduct an in-depth review of the following SDGs:

1. SDG 4 - Quality education;
2. SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth;
3. SDG 10 - Reduced inequalities;
4. SDG 13 - Climate action; and
5. SDG 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions.

6. SDG 17 - Partnerships for the Goals, which is reviewed each year given the importance of partnerships, private investment, trade, and development financing in realizing all the other SDG targets set.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Countries also agreed that every fourth year, the High Level Political Forum will meet under the auspices of the General Assembly at the level of Heads of State and Government, which I am part of. The year 2019 will therefore mark the first General Assembly forum on 24 and 25 September, to follow up and review progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The United Nations SDG Summit should also result in a concise and focused political declaration. The General Assembly will also seek to mobilize further support for action to achieve the SDGs and will encourage voluntary commitments by all the stakeholders to accelerate action. As a result, the Lesotho VNR process came at an opportune time coinciding with this year's United Nations SDG Summit, and could possibly receive the attention we require to show case positive developments and seek the necessary support to make further human and economic progress. We therefore need to prepare very well for it.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let us review the reports to be presented with an objective lens and have frank discussions on evaluating progress and how best we can move forward. I am glad to note that the sessions

will be chaired by the Ministers and I am sure that your voices will be heard and that very bold but pragmatic decisions will be reached on the way forward.

We note that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda happens at a difficult time when global economic growth is sluggish and there are deep uncertainties surrounding the future of the international trading system. In addition, there are climate induced calamities and conflicts that are experienced in different parts of the world, which have to be responded to, and require generous contributions from governments and people around the globe. These factors will affect the direction and levels of investment and development finance flows.

However, as a country, we have to factor in these developments when we draw our development programmes. As you know, We have decided, as stated in the National Strategic Development Plan II, that to accelerate the reduction of poverty on a sustainable basis we need to promote domestic and foreign investment. Our priorities are in agriculture, manufacturing, tourism and technology and innovation. We also need to expand export capacity to create jobs, especially for the poor sections of our society and to realize sustainable economic growth. It is common knowledge now that, jobless growth that perpetuates inequality is not worth sustaining. We should not leave anyone behind.

Furthermore, we want our companies to create wealth and generate profits, but do so whilst taking care of the

environment and the labour that generates the profits. We need to mobilize resources through partnerships, to close the infrastructure gaps that exist and improve the investment climate and integration into global value chains. This will also augment our revenue base that will finance the planned development programmes.

In closing, Programme Director, let me reiterate that the SDGs are connected and inter-linked and therefore there is need to check coherence of policies and programmes across sectors. We have to embrace a whole of society approach, where everyone's voice and input in planning and implementation counts, whilst connecting and coordinating efforts efficiently across sectors and institutions.

We count on the support of our development partners to implement the Agenda and develop robust and effective monitoring and evaluation systems. HOWEVER, we need to improve efficiency in the use of our resources and be much more innovative and come up with creative strategies and platforms for mobilizing investment and development financing.

Thank you once again Ladies and Gentlemen for taking part in this important event. I take this opportunity to wish you very fruitful and engaging deliberations today and officially declare this conference open.

KHOTSO PULA NALA