



SPEECH BY  
HONOURABLE MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT P  
LANNING  
COMMEMORATION OF 2019 WORLD POPULATI  
ON DAY

11 JULY 2019

His Majesty King Letsie III

The Right Honourable the Prime Minister

Honourable President of Senate

Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly

Her Ladyship the Chief Justice

Honourable Deputy Prime Minister

Honourable Ministers

Your Lordship Judges of the High Court

Honourable Members of the Council of State

Your Excellencies Head of Diplomatic Missions and Heads of International Organizations

Honourable Members of Parliament

Government Secretary

Principal Secretaries

Head of Parastatals, Private Sector, Civil Society Organizations and Media

Senior Government officials

Ladies and Gentlemen

## **Good day Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is a pleasure for me to be with you on this special occasion. Before I continue, please allow me to extend a very warm welcome to each and everyone of you participating in this memorable event. Your presence today signifies your unwavering support for the exceptional work being carried out by the United Nations Population Fund. It has already been said that this year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo Egypt in 1994. At the same time, it marks the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of UNFPA into operation.

## **Ladies and gentlemen**

As we celebrate these important anniversaries, we are bestowed with the great privilege of also reflecting on the important work of the UNFPA and to recognize the achievements it has attained over the past five decades. This important milestone cannot be understated. The world has made remarkable gains in reproductive health and rights since the adoption of ICPD Agenda. Over the past 25 years we have witnessed how medical development and innovation have promoted stronger health care systems resulting in reduced mother, infant and child mortality and an increased life expectancy resulting in healthy population growth. It is important to also note that 25 years after the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) consensus, substantial progress has been made in extending reproductive health information and services to more women than ever before. It is crucial to emphasize that the ability of women and girls to make choices about their sexual and reproductive health and rights has significant effects on other areas of their lives, including impact on their education, career and future aspirations.

## **Programme Director,**

The UNFPA has set several targets to meet the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, including eliminating preventable maternal deaths, creating universal access to family planning, and achieving zero tolerance for violent and abusive practices that harm women and girls. Lesotho strongly supports these initiatives and will continue to strive to meet these objectives. Lesotho is well known for its advocacy for women empowerment. There is no greater empowerment of one's right of choice when it comes to reproductive health. Women in Lesotho have the opportunity to control their reproductive choices, pursue an education, employment and a better future for their children. This is why the Government of Lesotho always strives to pursue a people-centered policy that promotes the rights and dignity of our people especially our women and girls.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Great strides have been made to promote access to sexual reproductive health care services for women and youth. Much emphasis has also been placed on education and sensitization as we strongly believe that access to correct information plays a significant role in teaching our population on the available services and choices at their disposal. This is part and parcel of our quest to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and maintain the well-being of the nation. We will, therefore, continue to work with key international partners such as UNFPA to ensure that our citizens continue to have a choice as we believe that this improves health outcomes and achieves socio-economic development of the country.

However, this does not mean that we can now be complacent. The theme for this year's World Population Day commemoration reminds us that our task is not complete. Despite our achievements, we still face certain challenges such as unplanned underage pregnancies, risky sexual practices, as well as drugs and alcohol abuse, which to some degree correlates with some of our nationals not accessin

g the services at hand either due to lack of knowledge or because of a fear of stigmatization. This is why Lesotho remains committed to improve access to health care services including reaching out to all groups in our society.

### **Programme Director, Members of Media Ladies and Gentlemen**

Lesotho welcomes the new 7<sup>th</sup> Country Programme 2019-2023 between Government of Lesotho and the UNFPA. This signifies the strong partnership between UNFPA and Lesotho, which have reinforced our collaborative foundation in the next step of our nation's development. It is a strategic document that is fully aligned with our national priorities, and represents our renewed commitment to work in a concerted and effective manner to address issues of reproductive health, safe birthing and reduction of mother to child HIV/AIDS transmission.

As I conclude, I would like to seize this opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation for the continuous support we receive from the UNFPA as well as the active engagement of the national stakeholders, Lesotho remains devoted to dialogue with each and everyone of you and your vital contributions will further ensure that we achieve our shared ambitions for the benefit of all.

I thank you all for your kind attention.