



**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,
HONOURABLE 'MATSEPO MOLISE - RAMAKOAE
ON THE POSITION OF LESOTHO REGARDING THE QUESTION
OF WESTERN SAHARA**

1 JUNE, 2020

Greetings fellow Countrymen and women,

On the 4th of October 2019, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Relations purportedly wrote to the Kingdom of Morocco signaling change of position by Lesotho Government on the issue of Western Sahara. Indeed, this move was widely construed as withdrawal of the support to the Polisario Front by the Lesotho Government as well as turning a blind eye to the continued suffering of the Sahrawi Arab People whose land has been under occupation by a foreign power for decades now.

The move correctly attracted a lot of uproar and criticism from the international community, including SADC and ordinary Basotho. On the 11th December, 2019, fresh allegations were made in the media that Lesotho had sent a Special Envoy to Morocco to reiterate, her alleged, "*decision to withdraw support for Western Sahara and maintain the so called 'neutrality stance' " on the issue.*

This statement therefore, puts into proper perspective, the long cherished principled position of Lesotho on Western Sahara.

The Kingdom of Lesotho and Western Sahara maintain cordial bilateral relations and successive Governments of Lesotho have

maintained their support to Western Sahara. These relations have been maintained through-out the years and they continue to grow from strength to strength.

Lesotho and Western Sahara have exchanged High Level visits and worthy of note are the official visit to Western Sahara by the former Prime Minister, Dr. Motsoahae Thomas Thabane in 2012 and the official visit to Lesotho by the late President of Western Sahara, His Excellency Brahim Ghali, in 2018. These exchange visits have gone a long way in consolidating the existing warm cordial relations between these two sister African Countries.

Lesotho's Foreign Policy, is premised upon the principle espoused by the Founder of the Basotho Nation, King Moshoeshoe I, namely "*Khotso Ke Khaitsele ea ka*" literally translated to mean "Peace is my sister". It is underpinned by the Principles of Sovereign equality of all states, Peaceful settlement of disputes, Non-use of the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state and the Right to Self-determination.

With respect to the Right to Self-determination, the Kingdom of Lesotho calls for the legitimate right to self-determination of

those countries and nations that still do not enjoy self-determination in accordance with the United Nations principles and resolutions. In this regard the Foreign Policy in Lesotho's case is adopted at Cabinet level and consequently, modifications thereto must be sanctioned by Cabinet as a collective. On the basis of our Foreign Policy, which has remained virtually the same since obtaining independence, Lesotho has maintained her principled position to support the struggle for the People of Western Sahara.

With regard to the October 2019 diplomatic note, there was no Cabinet Decision to change Lesotho's Foreign Policy or position on Western Sahara. As a matter of fact the issue was never submitted for consideration by Cabinet. Therefore, any pronouncements made purporting to change Lesotho's position on this issue are of no force and effect. Indeed, Lesotho exists as a country today because of solidarity with others and her independence and sovereignty shall, to a large extent, continue to depend on solidarity with other states.

It will also be recalled that SADC organized a Solidarity Conference on Western Sahara early in 2019 in the Republic of South Africa and the decisions of that Conference were endorsed by the SADC Summit that was held in the Republic of

Tanzania in August 2019. Lesotho participated in both Summits at the highest level.

Thus, the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho will continue to maintain her principled position on Western Sahara, and reiterates her support to the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic as an independent African country, co-existing side by side with the Kingdom of Morocco in peace and security.

It is regrettable that Western Sahara remains the only colony on the Continent of Africa contrary to the principles of the United Nations Charter. The issue of Western Sahara is a question of decolonization which remains to be completed on the basis of the exercise by the Sahrawi People of their inalienable right to self-determination and independence.

The Government of Lesotho underscores the need for creating conditions that would allow the holding of a peaceful and fair referendum for the self-determination of the People of Western Sahara. The Government therefore, pronounces Lesotho's support for peaceful negotiations, aimed at holding the referendum between Western Sahara and Morocco on an equal footing and without pre-conditions.

Finally, the Government will shortly dispatch a Special Envoy to Western Sahara, the SADC Chair and AU Chair, to dispel these

misrepresentations and distortions regarding the Lesotho position on Western Sahara and to reiterate Lesotho's principled position on Western Sahara.

MOLIMO O BOLOKE BASOTHO LE LESOTHO

I THANK YOU !!!!!