

**STATEMENT BY HIS MAJESTY KING LETSIE III IN HIS CAPACITY AS  
CHANCELLOR OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LESOTHO AT THE  
45<sup>TH</sup> CONVOCATION - 26<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2020**

---

**THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE PRIME MINISTER;**

**HONOURABLE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE;**

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY;**

**YOUR LADYSHIP THE ACTING CHIEF JUSTICE;**

**YOUR LORDSHIP PRESIDENT OF THE COURT OF APPEAL;**

**HONOURABLE DEPUTY MINISTER;**

**HONOURABLE CABINET MINISTERS;**

**HONOURABLE JUDGES OF THE HIGH COURT;**

**YOUR EXCELLENCIES, MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND  
HEADS OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS;**

**CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL;**

**ACTING VICE-CHANCELLOR;**

**MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY SENATE;**

**PRESIDENT OF THE SRC AND THE STUDENT UNION;**

**DISTINGUISHED PARENTS AND GUARDIANS;**

**2020 GRADUANDS;**

**ALL PARTICIPANTS;**

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.**

DEAR GRADUANDS, GRADUATING IS IN ITSELF A BIG ACHIEVEMENT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. WE WERE ALL LOOKING FORWARD TO CELEBRATING YOUR GRADUATION WITH YOU IN PERSON AS WE NORMALLY DO. BUT WE ARE ALL AWARE THAT WE ARE LIVING IN A WORLD OF CONSIDERABLE CHANGE AND UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGES AND HENCE TODAY'S CONFERRAL OF ACADEMIC AWARDS IS FAR FROM WHAT WE ARE USED TO. YOU MAY BE DISAPPOINTED THAT YOU ARE MISSING OUT ON THE POMP AND CEREMONY OF A LIVE GRADUATION OF PAST YEARS, BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS THAT YOU ARE GRADUATING TODAY, THOUGH IN THIS NEW VIRTUAL WAY.

WHAT REMAINS UNCHANGED, EVEN AS YOU GRADUATE VIRTUALLY, IS THAT DURING YOUR TIME AT THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF

LESOTHO, YOU HAVE GAINED VALUABLE KNOWLEDGE, YOUR INTELLECT HAS BEEN STIMULATED AND DEVELOPED, AND YOU HAVE OVERCOME MANY OBSTACLES, MORE SO THIS YEAR. WHEN NUL RECENTLY LAUNCHED OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL) AS A MODE OF LEARNING AT THE INSTITUTE OF EXTRA MURAL STUDIES (IEMS), LITTLE DID WE KNOW THAT ITS IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE WOULD COME TO THE FORE SO SOON IN THIS COVID-19 ERA. THE LIMITED FACE-TO-FACE TEACHING AND LEARNING AND THE PROMOTION OF INDEPENDENT LEARNING HAVE HELPED YOU TO BE MORE SELF-RELIANT THAN YOU COULD HAVE EVER BEEN. THE TEETHING PROBLEMS WE ENCOUNTERED WHEN WE INTRODUCED OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING HAVE PROVED TO BE A NECESSARY AND VALUABLE PREPARATORY PHASE.

**CHAIRMAN OF COUNCIL AND DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN;**

THE 2019/2020 ACADEMIC YEAR SEEMED TO BE PROGRESSING WELL UNTIL MARCH, JUST AS STUDENTS WERE GETTING READY FOR THEIR FINAL EXAMINATIONS TO MARK THE END OF A LONG JOURNEY TO ATTAINING THEIR DEGREES AND DIPLOMAS. THIS IS WHEN THE WORLD WAS TURNED UPSIDE DOWN BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. THE PANDEMIC BROUGHT WITH IT UNPRECEDENTED DISRUPTION TO OUR LIVES. ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES CAME TO A HALT WITH DIRE CONSEQUENCES ON EMPLOYMENT WHICH IN TURN CAUSED A

DECLINE IN HOUSEHOLD INCOMES. REVENUE COLLECTION OF BUSINESSES AND GOVERNMENTS ALIKE STARTED TO SUFFER IMMENSELY. FOR A MOMENT, NOBODY KNEW WHAT TO DO NEXT. BUT BEFORE LONG, IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR, ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING BECAME THE NEW WAY OF DOING BUSINESS. WE ARE WELL AWARE THAT SOME OF YOU MAY HAVE HAD TO OVERCOME EVEN MORE SERIOUS OBSTACLES ALONG THE WAY, BE IT ILLNESS, LOSS OF A JOB BY A PARENT OR A SPOUSE, AND MANY OTHER OBSTACLES, BUT MOST OF YOU HAVE PERSEVERED.

TODAY'S CEREMONY, MARKS YOUR PASSAGE TO A DIFFERENT STAGE OF YOUR LIVES, THE STAGE WHERE, UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES, YOU HAVE TO MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT YOUR PROFESSIONAL AND INDEED YOUR PERSONAL LIFE. WE ARE NONETHELESS FULLY AWARE THAT LIFE IS MORE CHALLENGING THAN IT HAS EVER BEEN. MAKING SUCH CHOICES WILL NOT BE EASY. AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL, SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES HAVE HAD TO BE DIVERTED TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES PRECIPITATED BY THE PANDEMIC WHILE AT HOUSEHOLD LEVEL, FAMILIES THAT WERE COPING WITH DAILY NEEDS ARE NOW DEALING WITH MASSIVE UNCERTAINTIES, AND THOSE WHO WERE STRUGGLING BEFORE, ARE NOW JUST HANGING ON BY A THREAD.

I CONGRATULATE THE UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT FOR ITS EFFORTS IN ENSURING THAT TEACHING AND LEARNING CONTINUED TO TAKE

PLACE DESPITE ALL THE CHALLENGES THEY AND THE STUDENTS ENCOUNTERED IN PROVIDING ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING. WE ARE GRATEFUL TO ECONET LESOTHO AND VODACOM LESOTHO FOR PARTNERING WITH THE UNIVERSITY TO ENSURE THAT STAFF AND STUDENTS COULD DO THEIR WORK IN AN AFFORDABLE MANNER. WE ARE NOW AWAKE TO THE REALITIES OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTRURY WHERE ONLINE LEARNING IS THE NEW NORMAL. AND BY THE LOOK OF THINGS, THIS NEW FEATURE IN OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM WILL STAY WITH US FOR MANY YEARS TO COME IF NOT FOR EVER.

**DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN;**

COVID-19 HAS SHAKEN UP THE STATUS QUO AND LAID BARE A LOT OF OUR COUNTRY'S DEEP-SEATED PROBLEMS, FROM MASSIVE ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES TO INADEQUACIES OF OUR BASIC HEALTH CARE. IT HAS WOKEN UP A LOT OF YOUNG PEOPLE TO THE FACT THAT THE OLD WAYS OF DOING THINGS CAN NO LONGER WORK. WE ARE NOW MORE AWARE THAT THE LEVEL OF YOUR PERSONAL WEALTH COUNTS FOR LITTLE IF EVERYONE AROUND YOU IS HUNGRY AND SICK; AND WE ARE AWARE THAT OUR SOCIETY AND DEMOCRACY CAN ONLY WORK IF WE PUT THE NEEDS OF OTHER ABOVE THE NEEDS OF SELF. IN THIS REGARD WE APPLAUD THE EFFORTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF NURSING IN THE FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES TO BUILD CAPACITY FOR SERVICE NURSES AT QUEEN MAMOHATO MEMORIAL HOSPITAL THROUGH LEADERSHIP

WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING OF TRAINERS ON STRENGTHENING INTER-PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION FOR HIV (STRIPE HIV). OTHER PRAISEWORTHY EFFORTS ARE THOSE OF THE FACULTY OF LAW AS IT PREPARES TO OFFER TRAINING TO POLICE OFFICERS IN CYBER LAW IN COLLABORATION WITH THE FRENCH EMBASSY IN PRETORIA, AS WELL AS THE INTRODUCTION OF A COURSE IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP BY THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES. THESE ENDEAVOURS ARE EVIDENCE THAT THE UNIVERSITY IS CONSCIOUS THAT THINGS CAN NO LONGER CONTINUE TO BE DONE THE WAY THEY USED TO BE DONE. THE STEADY GROWTH IN ENROLMENTS AND GRADUANDS FROM THE FACULTY OF THE HEALTH SCIENCES GIVES US HOPE THAT WE ARE ON THE RIGHT PATH TO PRODUCING ADEQUATE FRONTLINE WORKERS TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES THAT OUR HEALTH SYSTEM FACES.

THE PANDEMIC HAS ALSO REVEALED ANOTHER HARD TRUTH, WHICH IS NO ONE PERSON OR ONE COUNTRY HAS ALL THE ANSWERS TO THE CHALLENGES THAT WE FACE. IT IS THEREFORE UP TO ALL OF US TO MAKE THIS WORLD A BETTER HOME FOR ALL OF HUMANITY. WHILE THAT REALISATION MAY BE INTIMIDATING, I HOPE IT CAN ALSO BE A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION AND MOTIVATE YOU TO MEET THE CHALLENGES FACING OUR COUNTRY AND THE WORLD WITH COURAGE AND FORTITUDE. NOBODY SHOULD TELL YOU, AS A GRADUATE OF THIS UNIVERSITY, THAT YOU ARE TOO INEXPERIENCED TO COMPREHEND THE CHALLENGES THAT THE WORLD IS ENCOUNTERING. YOU CAN NO LONGER BE TOLD THAT

**“THIS IS HOW IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN DONE”**. THE MANNER IN WHICH WE DO THIS IS BOUND TO CHANGE, AND YOU SHOULD BE THE AGENTS OF THAT CHANGE.

ONE OF THE GREATEST LESSONS THAT I WISH YOU COULD ALL TAKE FROM THIS NATIONAL AND GLOBAL CRISIS IS THE NEED TO GROUND YOURSELVES IN VALUES THAT WILL PUT A GOOD STEAD FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIVES. VALUES SUCH AS HONESTY, INTEGRITY, HARD WORK AND RESPECT FOR OTHERS. YOU MAY NOT GET THINGS RIGHT ALL THE TIME, YOU WILL MAKE MISTAKES LIKE MOST OF US DO. BUT IF YOU LISTEN TO THE TRUTH THAT IS INSIDE YOU, EVEN WHEN IT IS HARD AND INCONVENIENT, PEOPLE WILL NOTICE. YOUR CONSCIENCE WILL GUIDE YOU IN THE RIGHT PATH AND YOU WILL BE PART OF THE SOLUTION INSTEAD OF BEING PART OF THE PROBLEM.

WE HAVE NOTED WITH MIXED FEELING THE FACT THAT TWO MEMBERS OF STAFF FROM THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION WERE TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY PROGRAMME IN LATVIA THAT WAS TO BE FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION. HOWEVER, THE TRIP DID NOT MATERIALISE DUE TO TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS IMPOSED ON ACCOUNT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. STUDENTS FROM THE FACULTY OF LAW WHO QUALIFIED TO REPRESENT NUL AND AFRICA AT THE PRESTIGIOUS PRICE MOOT COURT COMPETITION THAT WAS HELD AT OXFORD UNIVERSITY IN MARCH 2020 ALSO FAILED TO ATTEND DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. DESPITE THE

FAILURE OF THE TRIPS, THE FACT THAT THE STUDENTS AND THE STAFF HAD QUALIFIED AND REACHED THE POINT OF DEPARTURE SHOULD IN ITSELF IGNITE THE FEELING OF PRIDE AND ACHIEVEMENT IN YOU AND YOUR PROUD LECTURERS WHO ASSISTED YOU TO REACH SUCH HEIGHTS.

IT IS GRATIFYING TO NOTE THAT IN SPITE OF THE CHALLENGES BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE LACK OF ADEQUATE RESOURCES TO SET UP AND MAINTAIN THE REQUIRED LABORATORY FACILITIES AND ENGAGE THE BEST QUALIFIED LECTURERS, OUR UNIVERSITY HAS NOT STOPPED IN PROVIDING QUALITY EDUCATION TO OUR STUDENTS. THAT IS WHY TODAY'S GRADUANDS ARE ABLE TO HOLD UP THEIR HEADS HIGH WITH PRIDE FOR ACHIEVING THIS GREAT MILESTONE.

AT THIS MOMENT OF CELEBRATION, IT IS ALSO FIT AND PROPER TO PAUSE, AND BOW OUR HEADS WITH SORROW, AS WE REMEMBER THE UNTIMELY PASSING OF A MEMBER OF THIS CLASS OF 2020 – MS MAMOHOU THETSANE – WHO WAS ALSO DUE TO GRADUATE TODAY WITH A FIRST CLASS LLB DEGREE. THIS IS A GREAT LOSS TO HER FAMILY, THE UNIVERSITY AND THE COUNTRY AT LARGE. I WISH TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO CONVEY OUR HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES TO HER FAMILY FOR SUCH A DEVASTATING LOSS. HER DEGREE WILL, NONETHELESS, BE CONFERRED POSTHUMOUSLY.



## **DISTINGUISHED GRADUANDS OF 2020, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN;**

IN TODAY'S WORLD WHERE WE ARE CONFRONTED BY A MYRIAD OF CHALLENGES, THE OTHER LESSON THAT I WANT YOU TO TAKE HOME IS THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING YOUR COMMUNITIES AND WORKING IN PARTNERSHIPS WITH THOSE YOU SHARE A COMMON VISION. MORE AND GREATER THINGS, CAN BE ACHIEVED IF WE WORK TOGETHER AS TEAMS. IN THESE TIMES OF GREAT UNCERTAINTY, MANY OF US MAY FIND IT EASIER AND MORE DESIRABLE TO LOOK OUT ONLY FOR OURSELVES AND OUR FAMILIES. BUT I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT IN ORDER TO GET THROUGH THESE DIFFICULT TIMES, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE SHOULD WORK TOGETHER, IN A SPIRIT OF CO-OPERATION AND COLLABORATION, WITH THE AIM OF CREATING INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH, AND ALSO WITH THE AIM OF IMPROVING OUR ENVIRONMENT; IN SO DOING WE WILL IMPROVE OUR ABILITY TO DEFEAT THIS PANDEMIC AND OTHER PANDEMICS THAT MAY COME IN THE FUTURE.

IT IS PLEASING TO OBSERVE, IN THE SAME VEIN, THAT ALMOST ALL FACULTIES AND THE INSTITUTE OF EXTRAMURAL STUDIES OF THE UNIVERSITY HAVE ENTERED INTO STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANISATIONS IN ORDER TO GAIN AND SHARE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND RESOURCES IN THEIR FIELDS OF STUDY. LOOKING AT THE REPORTS FROM THE FACULTIES OF LAW,

HEALTH SCIENCES, AGRICULTURE, EDUCATION, SOCIAL SCIENCES, AND SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, MOST PARTNERSHIPS THAT HAVE BEEN FORGED ARE GEARED TOWARDS ADVANCING RESEARCH, ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF STAFF, STUDENTS AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR THE COMMUNITIES.

I FIND IT EVEN MORE ENCOURAGING THAT NUL HAS MANAGED TO SECURE GRANTS OF NOTABLE WORTH THROUGH SOME OF ITS COLLABORATIONS. WE ARE GRATEFUL TO THE BURDET TRUST FOR NURSING (UK) FOR SUPPORTIING THE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT OF NURSES AND MIDWIVES IN LESOTHO THROUGH NUL. A WORD OF APPRECIATION ALSO GOES TO THE LESOTHO INSTITUTE OF ACCOUNTANTS (LIA) FOR PROVIDING SUBSTANTIAL MONETARY SUPPORT FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF THE BACHELOR OF COMMERCE (ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE).

### **GRADUANDS OF 2020,**

AS YOU LEAVE UNIVERSITY LIFE AND JOIN THE WORLD OF WORK, BE PREPARED TO PLAY A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN BUILDING YOUR COMMUNITIES. BE ALIVE TO ONE ANOTHER'S STRUGGLES AND STAND UP FOR EACH OTHER'S RIGHTS. FREE YOURSELVES FROM ALL THE NEGATIVE WAYS OF THINKING AND BEHAVIOUR THAT A HARMFUL TO YOURSELVES AND SOCIETY, SUCH A GREED,

DISHONESTY AND DISCRIMINATION; INSTEAD SET YOUR SIGHTS ON BUILDING A COUNTRY THAT WILL BE A BETTER HOME FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN.

IN CONCLUSION, I WISH TO REMIND YOU THAT YOU WILL BE CONFRONTED WITH A NUMBER OF CHALLENGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR CAREERS OR WHICHEVER CALLING YOU MAY WISH TO PURSUE. WHAT WILL DETERMINE YOUR WORTH WILL BE YOUR TENACITY, RESILIENCE AND YOUR ABILITY TO PERSIST AND STAY THE COURSE AGAINST ALL ODDS. THE FACT THAT YOU HAVE OVERCOME THE 2020 OBSTACLES IS A GREAT TRIBUTE TO YOUR RESILIENCE, TO YOUR DETERMINATION AND TO YOUR ABILITY TO FIND YOUR WAY IN THIS NEW WORLD.

THE JOURNEY TO THE FINISH LINE HAS BEEN ANYTHING BUT NORMAL FOR YOU THE GRADUANDS OF 2020, AND I CONGRATULATE YOU FOR HOLDING ON AND REACHING THIS MOMENTOUS MILESTONE. CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU ALL AND I WISH YOU THE VERY BEST IN YOUR FUTURE ENDEAVOURS.

**KHOTSO!**

**PULA!**

**NALA!**