



**LETSIE III**  
**THE ROYAL PALACE MASERU - KINGDOM OF LESOTHO**

**REMARKS BY HIS MAJESTY KING LETSIE III – FAO SPECIAL  
GOODWILL AMBASSADOR FOR NUTRITION ON THE OCCASION  
OF WORLD FOOD DAY CEREMONY AND FAO 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
16<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2020**

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**DISTINGUISHED PARTICIPANTS,  
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

IT IS INDEED AN HONOUR FOR ME TO ADDRESS YOU ON THIS SPECIAL AND HISTORIC DAY MARKING THE 40<sup>TH</sup> OBSERVANCE OF WORLD FOOD DAY AND ALSO CELEBRATING THE 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANISATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS.

THIS YEAR'S CELEBRATION IS BEING HELD UNDER THE THEME: **“GROW, NOURISH, SUSTAIN. TOGETHER. OUR ACTIONS ARE OUR FUTURE”**. TO ME, THIS THEME READS AS A CLARION CALL TO MEMBER STATES OF F.A.O. TO WORK TOGETHER, THROUGH REGIONAL AND GLOBAL INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMMS, TO



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BUILD MORE RESILIENT AND ROBUST FOOD SYSTEMS WHICH WILL ENABLE US TO DEFEAT THE SCOURGE OF HUNGER, FOOD INSECURITY AND MALNUTRITION IN OUR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES AND COMMUNITIES.

**DISTINGUISHED PARTICIPANTS,**

AS WE ALL KNOW, THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS HAD A DEVASTATING IMPACT ON FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION. THE GOAL OF ENDING HUNGER BY 2030 IS A DAUNTING CHALLENGE, AND PROGRESS BEING MADE TOWARDS ACHIEVING THAT GOAL IS PAINFULLY SLOW. PUTTING IT PLAINLY, WE ARE NOT ON TRACK TO MEET THE GOALS OF ENDING HUNGER AND ENSURING ACCESS TO FOOD FOR ALL. SOME OF THE EVIDENCE OF THIS DIRE SITUATION IS CONTAINED IN THE 2020 REPORT OF THE STATE OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN THE WORLD WHICH INDICATES THAT IF RECENT



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TRENDS CONTINUE, THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE AFFECTED BY HUNGER WILL SURPASS 840 MILLION BY 2030 – THIS CONSTITUTES A STAGGERING 9.8% OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION.

WHEN WE INTRODUCE THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 TO THE CALCULATIONS, A PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT SUGGESTS THAT THE PANDEMIC MAY ADD BETWEEN 83 AND 132 MILLION PEOPLE TO THE TOTAL NUMBER OF UNDERNOURISHED IN THE WORLD DURING THIS YEAR. THIS ALARMING SCENARIO MEANS THAT THE NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF THE MOST VULNERABLE POPULATION GROUPS IS LIKELY TO DETERIORATE FURTHER AS A RESULT OF THE DESTRUCTIVE HEALTH AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19.



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**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

THE COST AND AFFORDABILITY OF NUTRITIOUS FOODS ARE KEY FACTORS THAT AFFECT FOOD SECURITY AND CONSEQUENTLY THE QUALITY OF THE DIET THAT PEOPLE EAT. GENERALLY, PEOPLE ARE FORCED TO CONSUME WHAT IS AVAILABLE AND WHAT THEY CAN AFFORD. UNFORTUNATELY HEALTHY DIETS REMAIN UNAFFORDABLE FOR MANY POOR PEOPLE IN ALL REGIONS OF THE WORLD. WE ARE TOLD THAT, IN 2017, MORE THAN 3 BILLION PEOPLE IN THE WORLD COULD NOT AFFORD A HEALTHY DIET; AND MOST OF THESE PEOPLE LIVE IN AFRICA AND ASIA. THESE FACTS ARE A CLEAR INDICATION THAT WE ALL HAVE TO MAKE A CONCERTED EFFORT TO BRING DOWN THE COST OF THOSE NUTRIOUS FOODS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO A HEALTHY DIET, PARTICULARLY VEGETABLES, FRUITS, DAIRY AND OTHER PROTEIN RICH FOODS, IN ORDER FOR THEIR CONSUMPTION TO INCREASE. WE HAVE TO RECOGNISE AND ACCEPT, AS GOVERNMENTS AND NATIONS,



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THAT A GREATER SHIFT TO HEALTHY DIETS WOULD LEAD TO A SIZEABLE REDUCTION IN DIRECT AND INDIRECT HEALTH COSTS, THUS CREATING SIGNIFICANT SAVINGS THAT COULD BE INVESTED TO LOWER THE COST OF NUTRITIOUS FOODS.

**DISTINGUISHED PARTICIPANTS AND GUESTS,**

WE KNOW THAT WE ARE CELEBRATING THIS YEAR'S WORLD FOOD DAY AND THE F.A.O.'S 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY IN THIS UNUSUAL MANNER BECAUSE OF THE DISRUPTIONS CAUSED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. A PANDEMIC THAT HAD DRASTIC AND ALL ENCOMPASSING IMPACTS ON GLOBAL HEALTH SYSTEMS AND ECONOMIES. ITS ADVERSE EFFECT ON FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION HAS BEEN FELT MORE STRONGLY IN POOR COUNTRIES WITH WEAK AND FRAGILE MARKET STRUCTURES AND FOOD SYSTEMS.



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I STRONGLY BELIEVE, THEREFORE, THAT THIS IS THE TIME TO REMIND COUNTRIES AND THEIR LEADERS, AS THEY BEGIN TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT COVID-19 RECOVERY PLANS, TO USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ADOPT INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO REBUILD BETTER AND IMPROVED FOOD SYSTEMS THAT WILL BE MORE ROBUST AND RESISTANT TO SHOCKS. THIS COULD BE DONE BY SPEEDILY INSTITUTING POLICY MEASURES AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS THAT SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS THAT DELIVER HEALTHY DIETS, ENSURE DECENT EMPLOYMENT AND PROTECT THE SOIL. OUR GOVERNMENTS COULD ALSO EMPLOY CLIMATE - SMART, ENVIROMENTALLY FRIENDLY AND MORE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES THAT PRESERVE THE EARTH'S NATURAL RESOURCES, OUR HEALTH AND THE CLIMATE.

**DISTINGUISHED PARTICIPANTS,**

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**



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LET ME CONCLUDE MY REMARKS WITH A PLEA TO GOVERNMENTS, THE PRIVATE SECTOR, AND CIVIL SOCIETY, TO BUILD GLOBAL SOLIDARITY TO HELP ALL VULNERABLE POPULATIONS OF THE WORLD TO RECOVER FROM THIS DEBILITATING CRISIS OF HUNGER, FOOD INSECURITY AND UNDERNUTRITION. LET US ALL REDOUBLE OUR EFFORTS TO MAKE FOOD SYSTEMS MORE RESILIENT AND ROBUST SO THAT THEY CAN WITHSTAND INCREASING VOLATILITY AND CLIMATE SHOCKS, WHILE ENABLING US TO DELIVER AFFORDABLE AND HEALTHY DIETS THAT CAN NOURISH GROWING POPULATIONS AND SUSTAIN OUR PLANET.

FINALLY, ON BEHALF OF MY COUNTRY LESOTHO AND HER PEOPLE, AND ON MY OWN BEHALF, I WISH TO CONGRATULATE AND THANK THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANISATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR THE INVALUABLE SERVICE IT HAS RENDERED TO HUMANITY OVER THE PAST 75 YEARS. I HOPE AND PRAY THAT ALL THE COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD, AND ALL



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PEOPLE OF GOODWILL, WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THIS GREAT ORGANISATION SO THAT IT CAN SUCCESSFULLY CARRY OUT ITS NOBLE MISSION OF DEFEATING HUNGER, IMPROVING NUTRITION AND FOOD SECURITY.

I THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION.