



SPEECH BY
THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

THE HONOURABLE MRS. 'MATSEPO MOLISE-
RAMAKOAE

ON THE OCCASION
COMMEMORATING THE ANNIVERSARY
OF THE EUROPE DAY

9 MAY, 2021

Allow me to pay my respects to:

His Majesty King Letsie III;

The Right Honourable the Prime Minister;

The President of the Senate;

The Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly;

Her Ladyship the Acting Chief Justice;

The Honourable Deputy Prime Minister;

Honourable Ministers;

Your Excellency Ambassador Christian Manahl, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Lesotho;

Excellencies, Heads of Diplomatic Mission and International Organizations;

Religious Leaders;

Distinguished Guests;

Good evening viewers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am pleased today to be celebrating in solidarity with the European countries and peoples the commemoration of Europe day. Usually, we would have come together in person to physically celebrate this important event but the COVID-19 pandemic has compelled us to

adopt new and innovative ways of doing things collectively without being physically together.

Given the long standing relationship that the European Union has had with the Kingdom of Lesotho, we feel it is right that we join you in celebrating this journey and wishing the Countries and the peoples of the European Union happy celebrations. We cherish the good relations that mutually benefit both the peoples of the Kingdom of Lesotho and the European Union. Excellency, we held our breaths in anticipation as we followed the BREXIT process. We are impressed by the manner in which it was handled

Your Excellency,

Just three weeks ago, on the 21st April, 2021 we held an annual EU-Lesotho National Political dialogue at which topics of mutual interest were discussed. We touched on important issues, both bilateral and multi-lateral; like the implementation of National Reforms Agenda, Regional Integration and Post COVID-19 Recovery strategies among others. We were excited to be able to convene the dialogue unhindered by the prevailing pandemic which denied us an opportunity in 2020 by causing unprecedented lockdowns.

The hazardous impact of the Corona Virus on our peoples and economies worldwide cannot be ignored. Like other economies, we

been hit hard by the pandemic and it's going to take extra collective effort from Government and its partners to recover from the damage caused.

The global drive by governments to administer vaccines to their citizens, seen as the best way to achieve herd immunity is also the aim of the Lesotho government. We therefore appreciate the Covax initiative from which we have already benefitted. The Government of Lesotho has already procured some vaccines while the rollout vaccine has already begun; front liners and vulnerable people have and continue to receive the vaccine. We remain wary of the anticipated "third wave" of the pandemic and are therefore committed to put in place policies that will ensure protection of our citizenry and restore the economy.

The whole world has seen rapid change in the manner in which things have been usually done we are now used to new phenomena in a blink of an eye like social distancing, wearing of masks, new ways of greeting each other.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to mention that with the conclusion of the negotiations of the Post-Cotonou Agreement which heralded this much anticipated new Agreement; our relationship with the EU has been

further enriched and strengthened. The New Agreement between the OACP and EU Countries is seen as a major political achievement which is expected to be “game changing” in strengthening the EU bilateral relations with each one of the OACP member states. This new agreement, which is expected to be signed in the next half of 2021 is inclusive of an emphasized new regional focus and governance structure tailored for each region’s needs.

We are very proud of the hard work and tireless efforts by our negotiating teams who ensured that they put together a professional and commendable legal framework. We look forward to further engagements that lead to the signing.

Excellency,

It would be remiss of me not acknowledge the overwhelming support we have been receiving from the EU in the energy; water and governance sectors, including to the Ministry of Social Development; Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations. We appreciate all these continued efforts and partnership in ensuring the success of all major programmes and projects that enhance the livelihoods of Basotho more especially in the rural areas, more particularly in the COVID 19 era.

Moreover, we appreciate the role which the EU has and continues to play in the implementation of the Reforms Recommendations by the Southern African Community Development Organization SADC. We hope to conclude this process within the expected timeframe.

Your Excellency, Ambassador Manahl,

Your contribution in our daily work is highly valued and appreciated. I would like to assure you of the unwavering support that my staff and I, will continue to give to you personally and through you, to your staff as you continue with your tenure. I know that what you say with reference to your stay here in Lesotho is indeed from the bottom of your heart. You have taken the time and interest to learn about our beautiful country and its people, you have hiked our difficult terrain, you have seen first-hand how a simple Mosotho lives, a feat most us would find difficult.

Finally Excellency, let me, on behalf of the Government and the people of Lesotho, wish you, your staff and all the European citizens all over the world all the best as you celebrate this landmark occasion.