



**STATEMENT BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE PRIME
MINISTER – DR. MOEKETSI MAJORO, DELIVERED AT
THE 76TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

23 SEPTEMBER 2021

**Your Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the 76th Session of the
General Assembly,**

Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,

**Your Excellency Mr. António Guterres, the Secretary General of the United
Nations,**

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government and people of Lesotho, I extend our most sincere congratulations to you on your election to preside over the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly and wish you every success in the discharge of your duties. We are confident that your personal, diplomatic and leadership qualities will guide us through the session. My delegation assures you of our full support and cooperation. Let me also pay a well-deserved tribute, and express our thanks and gratitude, to your predecessor, His Excellency Volkan Bozkir. We thank him particularly for his statesmanship, sterling guidance and effective organization during the difficult times of the seventy fifth session.

To Secretary General Antonio Guterres, we are deeply indebted for your continued dynamic leadership and commitment to our organization, and for your

relentless efforts in achieving the Organization's goals. We particularly commend you for tireless efforts during an arduous time when COVID-19 reared its ugly head and upended our world. We also congratulate you on your re-election for a second term and assure you of our utmost support.

The convening of the High-level week of the General Assembly is yet another opportunity for world leaders and policy makers to demonstrate their resolve and political will to further advance the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations through concerted multilateral efforts. It is also an opportune moment for the UN system entities to demonstrate their continued commitments in support of national efforts.

Mr. President,

Allow me to thank you for advancing a very befitting theme for this session of the assembly, namely, “***building resilience through hope—to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainability, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people, and revitalise the United Nations***”.

The United Nations was born 76 years ago when the brutality of war impressed itself on all far beyond human comprehension and tolerance. The Organization became a source of hope, founded as it was on the inalienable, interlinked and mutually interdependent pillars of development, human rights and security. The resolve to form the United Nations was propelled by a determination to create a world of peace and prosperity.

In his address to the United Nations General Assembly on 28th January 2021, the Secretary General described a world in danger and warned of the consequences of the failure to work together. He stated that **“2020 was a year of death, disaster and despair.”** He called for bold action to overcome the devastation in 2020 resulting from the global COVID-19 pandemic. It gives great pleasure to pay a deserving tribute to the Secretary General for galvanising support and mainstreaming the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic in the work of the United Nations system. His leadership in spearheading the mobilization of resources through international partners is commendable.

This Session of the General Assembly comes at a critical time and momentous juncture in human history; indeed, this is the time when circumstances compel us to reiterate our plea to the international community to adopt an expanded and comprehensive response to the COVID 19 pandemic. Such a response would

complement individual countries on concerted efforts to halt the continuing spread of the pandemic.

We recall the COVID-19 Omnibus Resolution entitled: “**Comprehensive and Coordinated Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**”, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly last year in September 2020, underscored the need to tackle health inequities and inequalities within and among countries through political commitment, policies and international cooperation. The World Health Organisation recently promulgated an unpleasant warning that unless nations act urgently to slow the spread of the coronavirus, the world could log another 100 million infections in the course of this year.

Apart from posing a significant threat to health, the pandemic is also a serious threat to development; it is disrupting the functioning of domestic economies, global travel, tourism, and trade. Locking down our economies is no longer an option many countries can exercise; we must therefore come together as the members of this August body to guarantee simultaneous access to vaccines by all countries. In this respect, my delegation fully supports long-standing and yet to be concluded proposals by South Africa and India for a temporary TRIPS waiver at the World Trade Organisation and call on all members of the United to recognise that progress in vaccinating everyone means protection of all people on earth.

My delegation expresses sincere appreciation for all initiatives recently taken through COVAX to address the needs of developing countries, especially in the development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments and vaccines. I welcome all the commitments by President Biden yesterday to donate 500 million doses of vaccines to the rest of the World and call on others for continued solidarity and timely support.

Mr. President,

Exactly six years ago, the UNGA adopted a comprehensive set of universal and transformative sustainable development goals and targets aimed at ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. Now with nearly nine years remaining, the prospects of the world reaching these forward-looking goals remain on the distant horizon. What is even more worrisome is the Secretary General's Report, covering the period ended in July this year, which reveals that by the beginning of the pandemic, the world was already off-track to meet the sustainable development goals and their targets.

The situation now has been exacerbated by the devastating impacts of the pandemic on sustainable development, with the most vulnerable countries,

particularly the landlocked least developed countries such as Lesotho being the hardest hit. These countries, which expended their financial balance sheets on coping with the pandemic in the last two years now require financial stimulus to restart their post-covid economies and to accelerate progress towards the full implementation of the 2030 agenda.

As we are heading towards the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in Doha, Qatar next year, we only remain hopeful for the consensus adoption of an ambitious new Programme of Action that should properly focus on LDCs and above all that will be geared towards ensuring that the severely struggling are not left behind in achieving the SDGs.

Again, as we begin the decade of action and try to build back better, Lesotho remains steadfast in calling on the international community to significantly increase funding for sound health services, increased investment in physical infrastructure, scientific and technological development, research and agricultural extension services in LDCs. We believe that such bold steps would help us get back on the trajectory of realizing the full implementation of the SDGs in this tight remaining period.

Mr. President,

With concern over climate change, creating a global coalition to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 should be high on the UN agenda ahead of COP26 in Glasgow later this year. The recently published Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reveals that it is now certain that hot extremes have become more frequent and more intense across most regions of the world, while cold extremes have become less frequent and less severe, thereby confirming that human-induced climate change is the main driver of these aberrations. The report further asserts that some recent hot extremes observed over the past decade would have been extremely unlikely to occur without human influence on the climate system. This greatest challenge of our time manifests through excessive rainfall, desertification, hurricanes, land degradation and so forth thus diminishing our capability to eradicate poverty and improve livelihoods.

It is equally important to note that biodiversity losses and ecosystem degradation just like climate change are also among the top threats facing humanity today. It is therefore clear that now more than ever, there is need to take urgent and bold global actions to combat climate change and its impacts on humanity. Similarly, the onus is on us as leaders of the world to ensure that our mother earth does not lose its biodiversity as this poses a threat on food security and livelihoods of people across the world.

To ensure conformity with the Paris Agreement protocols over some years now, the Kingdom of Lesotho has joined efforts with the rest of the world to increase climate change resilience and improve the well-being of the Basotho nation, through mainstreaming climate change into our development programs and implementing concrete measures for adaptation and climate risk reduction, mitigation and low-carbon development to achieve green growth.

Furthermore, there are several initiatives and programmes implemented by the Government of Lesotho to address the impacts of climate change. For instance, Lesotho submitted her Nationally Determined Contributions Report to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in June 2018, outlining initiatives to be undertaken to reduce greenhouse gases and adapt to climate change.

In addition, some of the noteworthy initiatives are the Integrated Catchment Management, improvement of Early Warning System, formulation of the National Adaptation Plan, and improving adaptive capacity of vulnerable and food insecure populations in the country. Again, Lesotho intends to unconditionally lower her net greenhouse gas emissions by 10% by 2030 and to further push for an additional 25% greenhouse gas emission reduction, provided that external support including capacity building is made available to us to cover the full cost of implementing the adaptation and mitigation actions.

Guided by the principle of leaving no one behind, Lesotho continues to call on the international community and other regional and international organisations to support climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts and strengthen resilience, particularly to vulnerable countries, thus bringing the attainment of the SDGs within reasonable reach.

Mr. President,

It is the obligation of all Member States to promote and protect the rights of all. We are therefore pleased that this important factor has over the years remained on the agenda of every session of the UNGA. The International Human Rights Instruments provide a clear path and a legal framework for all States to fully advance the status of vulnerable groups in a quest to ending inequalities in our communities. My own country Lesotho is a long-standing party to International Human Rights treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Rights of the Child to mention just a few.

It remains a responsibility for all Member States, to pursue a common goal of ensuring the effectiveness and enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. It is however, disturbing that in conflict-stricken regions,

particularly in armed conflict, civilians still endure inhumane treatment that is in violation of laws and regulations established to protect humankind. Lesotho condemns all forms of attacks on civilian populations and urge parties involved in any form of conflict, to cease aggressions and engage in talks genuinely aimed at achieving long-lasting solutions and promoting human rights for all.

Mr. President

Trafficking in Persons continues to be a chronic challenge affecting the globe. Member States are facing challenges on how to translate the international efforts to combating all forms of trafficking-in-persons into reality. Lesotho fully supports the 2021 Political Declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and therefore calls upon all Member States and all Stakeholders to accelerate implementation of all guiding tools as contained in the outcome document.

This year we celebrate twenty years since the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, which together with relevant outcome documents, provide an inclusive United Nations framework and solid foundation to fight the scourge against racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance. Lesotho acknowledges progress achieved in other parts of the world to fight against racism, however, it remains a major concern that the plague persists in all parts of the world and a vast number of human beings continue to

be victims to this date. Lesotho therefore urges all Member States to collectively promote and protect rights for all and restore dignity of peoples who have experienced the worst brunt of the evils of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance.

Mr. President,

Revitalization of the United Nations General Assembly merits our attention and should remain high on our agenda especially at this time that there is dire need for solidarity and unwavering commitment to multilateralism and to the UN. Lesotho would therefore like to echo other Member States in calling for an inclusive UN system which encompasses equal representation of all regions in all the major organs of this august body. Strengthening of the UN organs particularly the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council would also ensure that all the political and socio-economic challenges that humanity is currently facing are tackled collectively in an efficient and effective manner, thus leaving no country behind.

Mr. President,

Member States of this Organization have increasingly yearned for its reform in order to make it more democratic and responsive to the needs of all nations, rich and poor, big and small, strong and weak. We should recall that the last reform of the United Nations was in 1963; over five decades ago. We are convinced that

this is the opportune time to raise critical issues regarding the reform of this world body to enable it to meet the challenges and threats of the twenty-first century—a daunting task indeed.

We regrettably note that some Member States have relegated to the back burner critical issues of development, giving priority instead to security issues. To move in unison, the international community should strive to advance the global development, human rights and security agendas simultaneously. Terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors, the existence of nuclear weapons, and armed conflict top the list of global security issues. On this note, we commend the Secretary General for convening the Second United Nations High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States in June this year with the overarching theme “***Countering and Preventing Terrorism in the Age of Transformative Technologies: Addressing the Challenges of the New Decade***”. The Conference provided a significant and timely opportunity for participants to consider the practical implementation of relevant aspects of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

The Kingdom of Lesotho considers it the responsibility of the international community, with the United Nations playing the central role, to put in place effective measures aimed at preventing genocide, ethnic cleansing and the

atrocities perpetrated on women and children caught up in armed conflict. Consequently, my delegation considers the enhanced role of the major organs of the United Nations, particularly the General Assembly, to be of paramount importance. Lesotho is supportive of any effort that will bring about lasting and sustainable peace in the Middle East, in conflict areas in Africa, and other parts of the world.

In today's globalized world, it is indefensible and incomprehensible that decisions which bind us all are left in the hands of few Member States. Reform of the Security Council, which takes into account the aspirations of Africa, as espoused in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration cannot be postponed any longer. Transparency, inclusivity and democracy must inform the work of the entire United Nations System. The Ezulwini Consensus provides a progressive implementation of a fair and prudent reform of the Security Council, which is crucial for the African Continent's representation in this new multilateral world order.

Mr. President

It is in this twenty-first century that peace, security, the right to self-determination, respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms must be guaranteed as the norm rather than the exception. Hence, our call for the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people and complete withdrawal from their

occupied territories, as well as the independence of the Saharawi people. We also renew our call for the lifting of the unilateral economic embargo against the people of Cuba. These matters must be addressed and resolved urgently, comprehensively and honestly, without fear or favour, and without malice to anybody.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been going on for far too long. It is about time that individual interests gave way to compassion and reason so that the People of Palestine can enjoy their inalienable right to self-determination in our lifetime. The road to lasting peace is paved with pain and hardship, difficult concessions will have to be made in order to satisfy the desires of both sides. It is our view that the conflict must be ended through negotiations that are based on the respect of sovereign equality and the recognition of the rights and legitimate concerns of all Parties involved.

The people of Western Sahara yearn for peace, freedom and the attainment of a right to determine their own destiny. For many years now, efforts by the United Nations to facilitate transition to independence have not yielded any concrete results. It is regrettable that the continued denial of the Saharawi people's exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination remains unresolved. We look forward to the conclusion of the process in Western Sahara so that the people of that country can freely determine their own future.

Over the past three decades, the U.N. General Assembly has consistently voted against unilateral coercive measures through economic, commercial and financial blockade of Cuba but to no avail. As a result, the people of Cuba have been subjected to undue suffering, which was further exacerbated by COVID-19. We renew our call for the lifting of this embargo that has had an adverse impact on its economy and brought untold sorrow and agony to the Cuban people. Similarly, unilateral coercive measures continue to be applied on the people of Zimbabwe despite repeated resolutions against same by the community of nations. We renew our call for removal of these sanctions.

Mr. President

The real test for the United Nations in this century is how far it is prepared to go in addressing all these challenges and how far it will go in turning promises into reality, thus enabling a large majority of the people of the world to fulfil their potential and realize their aspirations. While we appreciate the magnitude of these challenges, we continue to have faith in the United Nations capacity to solve global problems, its broad universal support and its ability to uphold and reaffirm our shared values of peace, equity, social justice, democracy and human rights.

I wish to conclude by pointing out that, we often come here to set lofty goals for members of the United Nations but fail to walk the talk. History will judge us harshly if we continue to defer the aspirations of people across the world in their quest for equality, freedom, peace and prosperity. Such is the call and challenge staring in the face of the United Nations in the 21st century.

I THANK YOU