

Working together for a bright future



THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE PRIME MINISTER, DR MOEKETSI MAJORO

YOUTH JOBS SUMMIT

17-18th November 2021

My dear fellow citizens,

It is an honour to address you at this **YOUTH JOBS SUMMIT organised by the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit.**

I am not addressing you as the “youth” or “the future generation” but as citizens of our country and the world. I intentionally make that distinction because it speaks to the urgency of the monumental problems we face as a country. Calling you the “youth” or the “future generation” gives an impression of a people whose time is yet to come.

As a leader and father, I am aware that you are the leaders of today and tomorrow. Your challenges have to be met now and not tomorrow. You represent the present.

Believe me, I surely understand your frustration with high unemployment, lack of opportunities and rampant poverty. A few years ago His Majesty the King described youth unemployment as a ticking time bomb. Those words have continued to haunt me because they aptly capture the true nature of the colossal challenge we face as a country. It is a problem that should keep every leader awake at night and spur them into action.

The letter you wrote to me four months ago was only a reminder of what I have always known and witnessed with my own eyes for years. Indeed, we as the leaders have failed you as the young citizens. Our policies have fallen short of solving your challenges. And in doing so we have failed the country.

That is why we urgently need a dramatic shift in gears if we are to recover the time and opportunities lost. No longer can we pretend that it's business as usual.

This summit is the beginning of a partnership on a journey towards the transformation of our country. A country in which the young people can reach their full potential and fully participate in the economy. A country that rewards hard work, merit and innovation.

A country that thrives to open rather than shut doors for the young people. A Kingdom whose government has the young people as the core of its development agenda. A country in which the young people are partners rather than 'a by the way'.

We need to take Lesotho into the 21st century driven entirely by young, innovative and creative minds that are central to the achievement of a digital, prosperous & sustainable economy.

This summit is rooted in the understanding that this prosperous future cannot be shaped by the government alone.

I am alive to the fact that the government's role is to create an enabling environment for young people to thrive and achieve their dreams. Our role is to remove the obstacles that impede that growth. We are only facilitators of a process that should rightly be driven by you.

As such I and other government officials participating in this summit are not here to dictate to you but to listen and get your advice and guidance on developing policies that will positively shape our shared future. You don't have "to take my word for it" but urge you to create tools to monitor our common progress and to hold me accountable for it.

I also expect this to be a dialogue whose outcomes are jointly owned and implemented by the forum. I say this because your government, your country,

your nation needs your passion, energy, creativity and innovation. This partnership is a matter of necessity because the world is transforming at an exponential rate that current existing government and administration tools cannot keep up with.

Technological advances are also changing the world faster than we thought – we must therefore continuously adapt. It is no secret that you understand this world much better than us. “Us” means people of my generation, your parents’ generation, and most of our public servants.

Previous governments and indeed some within the current one have made the fatal mistake of believing that they need to keep on doing what we have been doing and that we just must do it more efficiently. There is a tendency to believe that we can solve ever-evolving problems using the same old solutions, methods and mindset that had dismally failed in the past.

As I told you, you know this world better than your parents’ generation, therefore I would like to follow you rather than them. But at the same time, you should help me not to leave your parents and our administration behind.

Let’s together show them the new Lesotho that you are dreaming of and work together to build it.

You must be asking yourselves how this will happen.

I can tell you that I only have part of the solution, but holistic and sustainable solutions will come from you. My thinking is that we need to focus on concrete, measurable, timely policies that we commit to delivering together.

Let me give you a few concrete policies/issues that we need to work on together:

1. We are about to finalize the MSME Policy which covers the whole spectrum for individual enterprises. I have requested the Minister of Small Business, Cooperatives and Marketing to share the draft policy paper with you so that you can review and improve it before it gets approved. Your input is crucial. You must own the policy.

2. **Start-up Policy:** There is a lot of energy around this new “species “of entrepreneurs. What should we do to develop a thriving ecosystem of startups in Lesotho? Are we doing the right things for startups? What innovative financial tools and products do we need to build to support startups? Do we need new legislation? So, let’s set up a Task Team to see what needs to be done within 3 months. I have no intention to leave Lesotho and Basotho nation behind.

3. De-cashing: paper money is a thing of the past; we should soon be a cash-free country. Adopting digital wallets is one step in the right direction - but is it fast enough. Secondly, we cannot simply watch the emergence of new digital currencies and pretend that they do not exist. Should we go for an e-Loti (our own Central Bank Digital Currency). Would that help move us forward? Let's have a de-cashing Public-Private Task Team to work on these issues.

4. What are we going to do for the less fortunate among us, who do not understand the new world? Should we leave them behind? Absolutely not! Our common plan to get Lesotho into the 21st century should be inclusive of everyone: those who understand the 21st century and those who don't understand it yet. Everyone means Everyone!

These are some of the real decisions I need to take as the prime minister. I need your full support to build the right policies and take appropriate actions for the future of this country.

I know you have more recommendations that will be presented during the summit. I am ready to listen and act on them with you.

The future belongs to those who work together to solve their problems.

Your future, your call, your call!

Khotso, Pula, Nala

DR MOEKETSI MAJORO