



*PERMANENT MISSION OF THE KINGDOM
OF LESOTHO TO THE UNITED NATIONS
KHOTSONG*

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STATEMENT

BY

**THE RIGHT HONOURABLE MR. PAKALITHA BETHUEL MOSISILI MP
PRIME MINISTER
OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO**

TO THE

**HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON THE MIDTERM REVIEW OF THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE LEAST
DEVELOPED COUNTRIES FOR THE DECADE 2001-2010**

**18 SEPTEMBER, 2006
NEW YORK**

Please check against delivery

**Your Excellency Ambassador Haya Rashed Al Kalifa,
President of the 61st Session of the United Nations General
Assembly,
Your Majesties,
Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
Your Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the
United Nations,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.**

At the outset, allow me to join previous speakers in congratulating You on Your election to the presidency of this session. In the same breath, to extend our compliments to Your Predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson of Sweden and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for a job well done.

Thirty-five years ago, when the group of Least Developed Countries was first established, there were 24 countries classified as "Least Developed". Today, the number has increased to 50. Perhaps this sharp increase indicates the failure of the international community to take urgent and effective action, to arrest and reverse the deterioration in the socio-economic situation of the Least Developed Countries and to revitalize their growth and development. For their part, the Least Developed Countries undertook to deepen the process of economic reform which they had begun about two decades ago, whilst their development partners undertook to make available a significant and substantial increase in the aggregate of external support.

Madam President,

The High Level Meeting constitutes a unique opportunity for introspection, following commitments made in the implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations summits and conferences in the economic, social and related fields including the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). It is a fitting opportunity to consolidate the gains made in the past and to take stock of this collective journey by sharing our concerns and valuable insights.

In line with the theme for the Midterm Comprehensive Global Review, namely, "Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010: Redeeming the Commitments", we aim to contribute to the debate by sharing with you the issues Lesotho considers critical to the current international effort to eradicate poverty.

Madam President,

The war on poverty and inequality is far from being won. Many developing countries, particularly the Least Developed countries, continue to be marginalized. We in Africa are at the cross-roads and continue to register the highest number of poor people. Sub-Saharan Africa, home to 34 LDCs, is the only region of the world where poverty has in fact deepened in recent years. Although 13% of the world's population live in Africa, the continent shoulders 28% of world poverty.

For us in Lesotho, the single greatest obstacle to the development of our nation, and indeed to reaching the objectives of the Brussels Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), is the scourge of HIV and AIDS. We are overwhelmed by the high levels of morbidity and mortality, especially among the working

groups. HIV and AIDS has emerged as a major threat to development, reversing all the gains that have been made, and ushering in the new socio-economic phenomenon of orphans on an unprecedented scale.

Despite the foregoing, Madam President, we wish to put on record of this august session that, with the cooperation that the Government of Lesotho is enjoying from Basotho across the spectrum, as well as the support from our development partners, we are convinced that we will win the war against this pandemic.

Madam President,

My delegation once again reiterates the call for increased support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). NEPAD is the framework for achieving both the Brussels Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals in Africa. It is a mechanism that will enable African countries to fight the HIV and AIDS pandemic, to reduce high unemployment and to eradicate poverty.

Madam President,

We commend the efforts of the donor countries that have achieved the 0.7 and 0.2 percent target of gross national income for Least Developed Countries as Official Development Assistance (ODA). We also commend initiatives by some of these countries to set up timetables for fulfilling their ODA targets. However, we wish to once again, reiterate our appeal that the developed countries abide by their commitments to help developing countries in all the relevant areas. In this context, special mention and, indeed, commendation must be made of the U.S. Government's initiatives such as Africa's Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA) and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). Without new inflows of external resources, the pace of development in Africa will forever remain elusive.

We also wish to express our sincere appreciation for all initiatives recently taken to address the needs of developing countries, especially debt cancellation extended by the G8 to Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC). We however, appeal for debt cancellation for all Least Developed Countries, in order to enable them to redirect their meager resources into their economies. The fact that countries like Lesotho were able to service their debts efficiently, and therefore, do not fall within the category of Highly Indebted Poor Countries, cannot be used to their disadvantage. Real economic growth can only be realized if we all benefit from debt cancellation.

Madam President,

We will recall that over the past decades, conferences similar to this one were convened and all identified the constraints facing the Least Development Countries as comprising acute vulnerability to external economic shocks, natural and man-made disasters, communicable diseases, limited access to information and communication technologies, and inadequate access to financial resources. These vulnerabilities still characterize the Least Developed Countries now as they did then. To be effective, strategies aimed at eradicating poverty should seek to address these weaknesses while taking into account the special needs and problems of each country.

Madam President,

Both the MDGs and the Brussels Programme of Action for LDCs are intertwined. Indeed, most of the MDG targets such as poverty eradication, improved health and basic education are also embedded in the Brussels Programme of Action. We are therefore, deeply concerned that the 2005 Millennium Review Summit outcome document did not focus on progress relating to the achievement of the MDGs or issues of

development, which in our view, are the main concerns for Africa and Least Developed Countries in particular.

It is our strong conviction that for the Least Developed Countries to eradicate poverty, the international community should give the development agenda the attention it deserves. Without their special needs being addressed by all concerned, Least Developed Countries will not be able to achieve the objectives of the Brussels Programme of Action and the MDGs by 2015.

I THANK YOU