



**KINGDOM OF LESOTHO**

**Statement by the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Natural Resource, Mr. Lisema Lekhooana During the United Nations Water Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action on “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028**

**United Nations Headquarters, New York**

**23 March 2023.**

**His Majesty, King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands,**

**His Excellency, Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan,**

**Mr. Csaba Körösi. President of the 77<sup>th</sup> period of sessions of the United Nations General Assembly,**

**Excellencies,**

At the outset, I wish to state that this statement is aligned to the one delivered by Cuba on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

**Mr. President**

Known to be the “Water Tower” of the Southern Africa because of its geographic location and the strategic importance of its water resources to the region, the Kingdom of Lesotho is no exception to other developing Countries around the World that are faced with enormous challenges, both natural and anthropogenic. Among them climate change, environmental degradation affecting the water quality, increasing water demands due to increase in population and many others that impact negatively on the management of the water resources. Access to safe and affordable water and sanitation services is a challenge that threatens the livelihoods of the people. However, the country is taking initiatives to address the above through various means such as implementation of integrated water resources management as well as water supply infrastructure development to ensure sustainable and reliable supply to its people.

The country on average sits at 86.6% water supply coverage and is intended for 100% coverage in the year 2030 in line with the SDG 6. To cover the 85% of the population residing in the Lowlands of the Country, the Government conceptualised the Lesotho Lowlands Water Supply Scheme in 2002 that is divided in different Zones from 1 to 8. Zones 4 and 5 (Phase I) of the scheme was completed in 2015 that entailed construction of the Metolong Dam and conveyance system to the capital city Maseru. Currently the Country is implementing Phases II and III in Zones 2 and 3, and 6 and 7 respectively of the scheme through assistance of international financiers working towards 100% coverage by 2030.

## **Distinguished Guests**

Yesterday the world was commemorating the world water day with the theme “Accelerating Change to solve the water and sanitation crisis.” This theme talks to individual countries to look at water differently with the view of the role it plays as an essential commodity and a human right. The Kingdom of Lesotho is taking management of water resources and provision of water and sanitation services very serious in an effort to drive towards achieving the SDGs, particularly SDG6. As we celebrate the world water day this year, my Country is engaged in an ambitious initiative of trying to manage our catchment areas through a programme called Integrated Catchment Management (ICM). This programme employs different tactics to rehabilitate and reclaim the degraded catchments which are sources of our rivers. This programme is ambitious because of the condition of our catchments that one may say they are almost beyond repair, and the economic status of our country does not allow for the overall coverage and that forces for the piece-mill interventions.

## **Mr President**

Water is the main stem for food security as well as energy. This is demonstrated by the adoption of the water-energy and food (WEF) nexus by the international community which is one of themes in this conference. The Kingdom of Lesotho aligns itself with this approach and does not shy away to take the leading role to demonstrate our support to it. This past year in September, my country volunteered to hold the 10<sup>th</sup> SADC Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue focusing on the Water, Energy and Food (WEF) Nexus Approach under the theme; ***“Bolstering regional productive capacities for water, energy, food security and ecosystem resilience to achieve inclusive and sustainable industrial transformation.”*** This was our way of demonstrating to the SADC Region and the world alike our commitment towards realization and implementation of the nexus approach.

The Head of State of the Kingdom of Lesotho, His Majesty King Letsie III has been honoured with the champion of the African Continent on food and nutrition by the African Union. As we speak the country is hosting the

African Nutrition Summit in which African countries will be discussing challenges of food security facing the continent.

As this year's Water Conference theme says, changes that are accelerated by the water sector in Lesotho are quite noticeable. Economic, social and cultural water activities that contribute immensely to the Country's GDP drive for improvement in implementing transboundary water resources projects such as the ongoing *Phase II of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project* that delivers water to the Republic of South Africa, particularly Gauteng Province which is one of the African economic hubs and the planned Lesotho Botswana Water Transfer Project.

Finally, Lesotho calls for investment and financial assistance as there is vast investment opportunity in Lesotho through water resources as well as financing assistance to address the gaps in between prioritised areas for the entire scheme infrastructure development and construction of planned lowlands multipurpose dams intended for water security of the country.

**THANK YOU!!!**