



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

BY

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(OPERATIONS)
ON EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE, AND BEST
PRACTICES OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT
WEAPONS PROJECTS.**

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NEW YORK**

Mr President,

Since my delegation is taking the floor for the first time, allow me to begin my intervention by expressing my most sincere congratulations for your election as President of this Review Conference. I am sure that your extensive experience will contribute to the progress of our work.

Mr President,

1. About a quarter of Lesotho's total land area, averaging 1,500 metres above sea level, covers the lowlands in the western part of the country and constitutes the main agricultural zone. The rest of the country is traversed by the Maloti Mountains, which form part of the Drakensburg range. The Maloti Mountains reach heights of more than 3,000 metres above sea level and are a reservoir of Lesotho's "White Gold" (water), the only other major resource besides human resources, which Lesotho has in abundance. Based on the geographical and topographical features as well as vegetation and agricultural activities, Lesotho is divided into four major regions or zones namely: the lowlands, the foothills, the mountains and the Orange River valley.

2. The importance of mentioning this kind of background, is to illustrate the terrain of Lesotho and its relevance to the problem around the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Mr President,

3. Lesotho's problems caused by illegal firearms are major and rather unique in the sense that they are not due to a long-term serious conflict situation, but to decades of a volatile and mostly violent political history.

4. The challenge facing Lesotho is cattle rustling. According to tradition, a Mosotho measures her/his wealth in terms of the number of livestock in her/his possession. This has resulted in theft of livestock amongst villages or between districts. The practice has grown significantly, as now rustling is being carried out by organized groups across the common borders of Lesotho and South Africa.

5. The Police Service in Lesotho is very small in terms of ratio to the population. It is increasingly becoming very difficult to have physical presence of police in every foothill or mountain village in Lesotho. The terrain is rugged and there are no conventional roads at some places. Communication is very difficult even in these days of cellular networks, as receivers are not installed in these remote areas.

Mr President,

6. Since the bulk of the illicit trade and proliferation of small arms occurs in these remote areas, Lesotho pleads for assistance/technical assistance, which will capacitate police stations in the rural areas or inaccessible areas of Lesotho. The police need to have communication equipment, transport suited for the rugged terrain (presently they rely on horses), a helicopter could assist to access even those areas where walking is not possible. It also becomes a security nightmare for the police to either walk with or load a truck, which will be driven at 20km/h because of the roads, with loads of confiscated firearms to a central point. Cattle rustlers do not use conventional routes with their loot.

7. There is also an urgent need to assist government to construct more police stations in the remote areas to enable whistle blowers to quickly and with ease, alert law enforcement of illicit trade of firearms. There is also a need for assistance in Record keeping, and funding for public awareness campaigns.

8. Lesotho also needs technical assistance in capacity building for law enforcement personnel. This will bring about effective policing along borders and points of entry as well as to be able to secure stockpiles.

Mr President,

9. The Kingdom of Lesotho has the necessary political will demonstrated by the number of singular and joint operations to eradicate the illicit trade in small arms. It is making this plea to the developed and countries of good will to provide the necessary technical assistance to enhance her efforts to fully implement her international obligation around issues of disarmament. That taken care of, she can allocate all her resources on issues of development for her people.

10. Countries with small economies like Lesotho, need resources to better the lives of their peoples. However, development cannot be sustained in an environment made insecure by either conflict or high levels of armed crime. In these situations of insecurity and uncertainty, livelihoods are destroyed and opportunities to escape poverty are lost.

Mr President,

11. The world can no longer afford to separate the issue of proliferation of Small Arms and hindrances to development. The process of destruction of these confiscated arms is expensive and needs capacity at appropriate levels. On 09 June 2006 a total of 2,455 small arms were destroyed. This was the first time destruction was carried out in Lesotho. Following recommendations from an environmental impact assessment (EIA), the method of destruction was an open-pit detonation.

12. The site for destruction was inspected and the explosives were not bioaccumulate. There is a need to develop this site to convert it into a permanent destruction site. Therefore funds are needed to the achieve this goal. We further need capacity building for personnel to be engaged for future destrucion exercises.

I thank you, Mr President.