



*PERMANENT MISSION OF THE KINGDOM  
OF LESOTHO TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
KHOTSONG  
204 East 39th Street  
New York, NY 10016*

## **STATEMENT**

**BY**

**H.E. MR. MOTLATSI RAMAFOLE  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO**

**TO THE**

**FIFTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE  
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

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**Please check against delivery**

**Chairperson,**

I wish to first of all congratulate you and other members of the bureau for the excellent manner in which you are guiding the work of this 55<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission.

We align ourselves with the statements delivered by the delegations of Argentina, Mozambique and Namibia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China the African Group and SADC respectively.

We commend the Commission for the theme chosen for this Session and we thank the Secretary General for the reports submitted thereto.

**Chairperson,**

The importance of education, training, science and technology and their contribution to the socio-economic development of our countries cannot be overemphasized. The benefits of enhancing the inclusion of women and girls **“to education, training, science and technology, full employment and decent work”** are well articulated in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). To that end, the Government of Lesotho remains committed to improving the lives of women and girls by ensuring their access to proper training and education.

Today, I wish to share with you some of the modest strides made by the Government of Lesotho in promoting access to education by women and girls, and their full employment and decent work. Education in Lesotho is protected by the Constitution, which is the supreme law of the Nation. Section 28 thereof provides for education for all. It further provides for the adoption of policies aimed at ensuring that “education is directed to the full development of the human personality and sense of dignity and strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms”. In this regard, the Government of Lesotho has taken specific measures to eliminate discrimination and universalize education. The vision of the Government of Lesotho is to see Basotho as a functionally literate society with well-grounded moral and ethical values; adequate social, scientific and technical knowledge and skills by the year 2020.

**Chairperson,**

In 2003, the Government of Lesotho adopted the Gender and Development Policy. This Policy seeks to eliminate socio-cultural barriers with respect to girls and boys’ education, as well as ensure gender sensitive career guidance at all levels of education. In line with the Policy, trainees and in-service teachers and curriculum developers undergo gender training and sensitization. In 2005, the Government undertook an education gender audit of all education sectors focusing on the curricular, inspection and enrolment. This has enabled the Ministry of Education and Training to come up with an education sector development plan whose implementation addresses the identified gaps.

**Chairperson,**

The Government of Lesotho adopted the Education Sector Strategic Plan 2005-2015, which among others, strives to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education, and achieve gender equality in education by 2015. Specifically, the Strategic Plan focuses on 6 core areas: i) Integrated Early Childhood Care (IECC), ii) Basic Education, iii) Secondary Education, iv) Technical and Vocational Institutions, v) Higher Education and vi) Life Long learning and non-formal education.

The Government has progressively made basic education free, accessible and now compulsory to all. Lesotho has exceeded gender parity in access to primary education, achieving 82% for girls and 75% for boys, with higher completion rates for girls. In addition to the provision of formal education, life-long learning and non-formal education have been instituted for the less privileged. There is also the child sponsorship programme which targets children at secondary and high school levels. The Government offers non-refundable educational grants to children who have been identified by the Social Welfare Department and teachers as needing financial assistance to pursue their studies. Furthermore, there is also the bursary loan scheme which awards loans to persons who study at a technical and higher education level both in and outside Lesotho.

**Chairperson,**

Turning to employment creation, in particular for women, we wish to underscore that, as a general rule, the Government of Lesotho is committed to creating employment as a means of eradicating poverty. Mindful of the urgent need for “*women’s equal access to full employment and decent work*”, the Government of Lesotho has reformed the Country’s legislation in order to guarantee equal opportunities for all and equal remuneration for equal work. Maternity leave is also mandatory under the labour laws of Lesotho. Support services in the form of women’s entrepreneurship and skills training, as well as access to credit have also been initiated. This has gone a long way in boosting small, medium and micro enterprises, at the helm of which are women.

**Chairperson,**

In conclusion, I wish to point out that these results would not have been possible without the support of our development partners and civil society organizations. We therefore call on their continued support for the betterment of the lives of women and girls.

**I thank you.**