



STATEMENT BY

**HONOURABLE MR. SELIBE MOCHOBOROANE
MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT PLANNING, LESOTHO
AT THE AFRICA REGIONAL REVIEW MEETING ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ISTANBUL PROGRAMME
OF ACTION – 22-26 FEBRUARY, 2021**

Please check against delivery

H.E. Dr. Lazarus Chakwera, President of Malawi, and Chairperson of the LDC Group

H. E. Mr. Volkan Bozkir, President of the United Nations General Assembly

Her Excellency Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, and Secretary-General of LDC5 Conference

Mr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of World Health Organization

Distinguished Ministers from African LDCs and Haiti

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and privilege for me, to address this Africa Regional Review Meeting in preparation for the Fifth United Nations Conference on LDCs which is envisaged to be held in January 2022. I would like to thank the Government of the Republic of Malawi, for organizing this important meeting that will eventually create a pathway towards achievement of not only the LDC agenda but of the SDGs as well.

Mr. President,

I am hopeful that this meeting will afford us an opportunity to reflect on how far we have come since the Istanbul conference ten years ago, and also to share experiences, and work closely together to chart the way forward in ensuring that more countries graduate out of the Least Developed status.

Mr. President,

In the case of my country, Lesotho, I wish to inform you that the Government has been making deliberate effort to drive our country towards sustainable economic growth and as a result, get it out of the LDC

status. This is being done through the implementation of the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP).

Lesotho did not approach implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) by developing an independent graduation strategy but rather developed NSDP strategic goals in line with IPoA objectives. In that regard, graduation is therefore more desirable as one of the impacts of sustainable development rather than an independent aspiration on its own.

Aligning itself with the objectives of the IPoA, Lesotho through the NSDP sets out to pursue Economic and Institutional Transformation for Private Sector-led Jobs and Inclusive Growth by; Enhancing Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth and Private Sector Job Creation; Strengthening Human Capital; Building Enabling Infrastructure; and Strengthening National Governance and Accountability Systems.

The country has actively engaged the private sector in formulating and implementing strategies that will drive economic development and sustainable job creation. We have redoubled our efforts to improve the investment climate through the Investment Climate Reforms Process that is aimed at increasing private investment in the economy to promote financial resources mobilization for development. We continue to receive invaluable support from our development partners including the World Bank, WTO and UN agencies, to mention a few.

Allow me to highlight performance on the graduation criteria. Lesotho has not achieved any of the criteria. Its Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of around \$ 1, 296 is above the graduation threshold of \$ 1, 230 but still much lower than the income only graduation threshold of \$2, 460. The Human Asset Index (HAI) is 61.6 which is below the graduation

threshold of 66 or above, and the Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI) is at 42 which is higher than the graduation threshold of 32 or below.

Mr. President,

Although we did not meet the graduation criteria, significant progress has been made in Lesotho's effort to graduate out of this category, though we still face challenges that continue to limit our productive and absorptive capacity, growth in our export base; adequate trade and investment flows, as well as eradication of our health care challenges.

Literacy rates have been improving over time through the introduction of free and compulsory primary education as well as high level of secondary enrolment and adult education. Furthermore, the Government of Lesotho, through the Ministry of Education and Training, has developed a Curriculum and Assessment Policy aimed at harnessing and developing the necessary skills that are better aligned to our economic strategy.

In the case of the Under-5 mortality rate, there has been a significant decline from 117 per 1000 live births to 86.4. One of the major factors that could be attributed to this positive development is the improvement in immunization coverage and child nutrition. We will work to ensure that we improve the health outcomes in order to promote a healthy human resource base towards an enhanced productivity and overall economic development.

Mr. President,

Our economy like the rest of the world is now experiencing negative impacts of COVID-19. The pandemic has created a strain in our economy as a result of its immediate policy response requirements such as, border closures, manufacturing plants shutdowns, schools' closure, travel restrictions to mention a few. To date, Lesotho has imposed two nation-

wide lockdowns which have added more pressure to the already frail economy, leading to loss of jobs and lowered economic productivity.

It is my sincere belief that we will work together to pursue the LDC agenda in the context of Covid – 19, addressing not only the challenges but also tapping into the opportunities that may have been brought on by the pandemic. Lesotho has already worked on a plan towards building and recovery of the economy. Government proposes acceleration of the implementation of its National Strategic Development Plan II (NSDP II) through further prioritization of key sectors and actions that will create jobs and stimulate economic growth.

Mr. President,

It is our fervent hope that the United Nations, development and trading partners will continue to support our efforts towards meeting graduation targets with concrete actions and adequate financial resources. It is now more critical than ever to join our hands in order to build productive capacity of the LDCs and build resilience of our economies to other shocks and pandemics that we may come across in the future.

May I conclude by mentioning that Lesotho's National Vision 2020 implementation ended in the year 2020 and we are in the process of defining the succeeding National Vision. This is, therefore, an opportunity to further streamline our strategies, to ensure synergies with new global perspectives; which include Sustainable Development Goals, The African Union Agenda 2063, Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) and LDC development Agenda.

I wish all of us fruitful deliberations in the coming week as we prepare for a successful Fifth United Nations Conference on LDCs.

I THANK YOU.