



STATEMENT BY

Honourable Lejone Mpotjoana

**Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations, of the
Kingdom of Lesotho,**

**During 22nd Annual Ministerial Meeting of Ministers of Foreign
Affairs for Land Locked Developing Countries (LLDCs)**

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10 am- 1pm

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**Global Chair of the Group of LLDCs,
President of the 78th Session of the UN General Assembly,
The United Nations Deputy Secretary-General,
President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC),
Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Chairman,

At the outset, please allow me, to commend you Mr. Chairman for your forward-looking stewardship for our group that has among other things been evidenced by the recent successful holding of three regional meetings of our Group in preparation for the new program of action for LLDCs. As you continue to steer this ship on our behalf, I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation. We further take this opportunity to endorse extension of your tenure of office which will ensure continuity in our work, ahead of an important conference of our group next year.

As the curtains draw towards closure on the chapter for the Vienna Programme of Action, and a time for opening of the new chapter for a new programme of action approaches, we need to swiftly increase the momentum towards a new decade of action for prosperity and transformation of LLDCs.

Mr. Chairman

We welcome the report that has just been presented to us by Her Excellency Ms. Rabab Fatima, which provides an overview of the progress so far achieved in implementing the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs. Her

presentation, read together with the United Nations Secretary General's 2023 Report on the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) for LLDCs for the Decade 2014-2024, paint a totally different picture from what we envisioned almost 10 years ago. For instance, the statistical indicators from the Secretary General Report reveal that during the 10-year period under review, inflation in LLDCs rose from 6.2% in 2015 to 20.5% in 2022, while the GDP growth rate on average dropped from about 6.8% in the previous decade (2003-2014) to an average of 3.8% between 2015 and 2023. Again, the average growth rate in LLDCs' exports of goods and services is said to have fallen by 53% from 8.6% for the period 2003-2013 to 4% in the 2014-2023 period.

With these revelations, it is evident that the combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, geo-political tensions, and climate change, affected progress in the implementation of the six priority areas of the VPoA.

Mr. Chairman

Despite these challenges, which are common in all LLDCs, our country report for the VPoA reveal that there has been noticeable progress in the implementation of VPOA in Lesotho. The report highlights considerable strides in the areas of transit policy issues, maintenance of the existing infrastructure and development of new ones in some instances, improved international trade, trade facilitation, regional integration, and international cooperation.

In addition, the construction and upgrading of roads between Lesotho and the Republic South Africa have substantially improved cross-border trade between the two countries and presents my country with a platform for

investment opportunities. I should perhaps also, underscore as part of the SADC inter-country regional corridors, that we are nearing the completion of the construction of the Mokhotlong to Sani Top Road, and the reciprocal maintenance of the patch of that road on the South African side.

Secondly, by ratifying the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA) in 2020, the Kingdom of Lesotho committed to full implementation of the Agreement, which is, by the way, the largest Free Trade Area in the world. To this end, in 2021, Lesotho dully developed the trade strategy focusing on textiles and apparel, Agro-processing and light industries sectors.

On the energy front, Lesotho continues to experience energy deficit. However, the government has developed a scaling-up Renewable Energy (RE) Programme Investment Plan 2017 aimed at supporting investment in the Renewable Energy technologies. The program will contribute to the development of a commercial Renewable Energy (RE) market in Lesotho, facilitating the development and investments in on-grid and off-grid Renewable Energy (RE), development of markets and an enabling environment to promote Renewable Energy (RE).

Mr. Chairman

As we embark on another decade long journey, kicking off with extensive negotiations for the successor programme of Action here in New York, please count on the full engagement of Lesotho throughout the deliberations towards its successful conclusion. Success which, will also depend on the implementation and fulfillment of commitments by the development partners.

In this connection, we call on the development partners, including Member States comprising the Group of friends of LLDCs, the United Nations Development System, private sector, and other international organizations to strengthen their support measures for the full and timely implementation of the new programme including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to ensure a better future for all the LLDCs.

Mr. Chairman

I wish to conclude my remarks by joining others in expressing our deep appreciation to the government and the people of Rwanda for agreeing to host the LLDC3 conference and for the role they are already taking in supporting the substantive preparations for the conference.

Thank you for your attention.