



**STATEMENT BY HIS MAJESTY KING MSWATI III, HEAD OF
STATE OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI
PRESENTED BY H.E. THE RT HON PRIME MINISTER
MR. AMBROSE MANDVULO DLAMINI
AT THE UN HIGH LEVEL EVENT ON
“FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE ERA OF COVID
19 AND BEYOND”
THURSDAY 28 MAY 2020**

Mr. President,
Heads of State and Government,
The Secretary-General of the United Nations,

I bring with me warm and fraternal greetings from His Majesty King Mswati III, King and Ingwenyama of the Kingdom of Eswatini as well as from the Queen Mother and the entire nation.

It gives me great pleasure to partake in this High-level event to discuss concrete solutions to the COVID-19 development emergency and set a pathway to finding solutions to financial and related issues.

COVID 19 came at a time when the Kingdom is continuing with the fight against HIV, Malaria and TB. These have caused a big strain on our National Budget. As we address the issue of COVID 19, the country has been following all the guidelines of the World Health Organisation.

In an effort to fight this pandemic, we have also identified health facilities and procured appropriate PPEs and equipment for our patients and health workers. We have also established other programmes of distributing food and financial support to cushion our people during this time of need since this has immensely affected those that are employed and the business sector, especially SMEs.

It is a pity that this pandemic has come at a time when we had already passed our E24 billion annual budget for the year 2020/21. The pandemic has forced us to divert and re-align our budget so that we can address this coronavirus challenge. Economic growth is projected to contract by 6.7%. The fiscal deficit has increased from 4.3% to 9.1% and arrears grew to USD312 million. This immediate disruption has impacted our macro-economic balance and calls for new strategies to reignite economic growth.

We are equally concerned that the closure of businesses will have a negative effect in our tax collection activities. We join hands with the rest of the World in that we have to come together and find ways and means of addressing the financial and economic challenges post COVID 19.

As a small economy, the Kingdom of Eswatini does not have huge reserves from where we can draw funds to finance our budget. The only Reserves we have is the 3-month import cover. We appeal to the UN to do everything possible to mobilise resources for countries like us. We also urge the UN to speak for all countries of the World, particularly developing countries, to be assisted during these challenging times.

For us in the Africa region, the coronavirus pandemic will negatively reverse the gains of economic development which we had set for ourselves as a continent, particularly our Vision 2063, an agenda which creates an enabling and inclusive environment for all.

Mr President, our Kingdom has a national objective of developing our country towards the attainment of a developed status. We therefore hope, with the support of the UN, we can access financial assistance to support our budget for the next financial year 2021/22 to enable us to address our social and economic landscape.

Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has always been a priority for the medium term and has been done with the assistance of development partners. I wish to appeal to the UN and other development partners to continue to assist Eswatini to finance SDG implementation.

May I commend the positive response of international organisations who are offering concessional funding to all countries and waiving their stringent conditions so that countries can have immediate access to funding, irrespective of their economic status. I wish to implore these

organisations to suspend debt service obligations and waive interest payments during this period to allow countries to re-constitute their affairs and develop appropriate plans for adjustment.

Middle income countries are also challenged by their economic classification and treatment. At this point in time, we are in the same category with low income countries and Eswatini being a low middle-income country has social challenges that have to be met.

In conclusion, may I appeal to the UN to facilitate resources for the SDGs implementation and other partners to assist with improving resilience to climate change. We also appeal for assistance from the private sector to create incomes, employment opportunities and ultimately fight poverty.

I thank you.