



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

BY

**THE HONOURABLE MRS. 'MALEBITSO RALEBITSO
MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS OF THE
KINGDOM OF LESOTHO, HEAD OF DELEGATION**

AT THE

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

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Madam Chair,

I wish to congratulate you and other members of the Bureau for the excellent manner in which you are guiding this 57th Session of the Commission.

We align ourselves with the statements delivered by the delegations of Fiji, Chad, and Malawi on behalf of G77 and China, African Group and SADC respectively. We thank the Secretary General for the reports submitted thereto.

The Beijing Platform for Action and the outcomes of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly are guiding instruments through which the international community has resolved to strive towards the empowerment of women and to protect their rights. Lesotho welcomes the priority theme for this session “**Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls**”. This session offers us a valuable opportunity to share experiences and gains made by individual Countries.

Madam Chair,

Allow me to share with you some of the modest strides Lesotho has made in the prevention of violence against women and girls. The Government of Lesotho is committed to enactment of legislation, social transformation through mobilization of men and boys, and supporting collection, analysis and dissemination of national data on prevalence, causes and consequences of violence against women

and girls. This is evidenced by Chapter II on Bill of rights of the Constitution; Sexual Offences Act 2003 that also encompasses issues of HIV / AIDS; Legal Capacity of Married Persons 2006; Land Act 2010; Anti – Trafficking in Persons Act 2011; Children Welfare Protection Act 2011; Penal Code 2012; establishment of a **One-Stop-Centre** for victims of gender based violence; and 365 days National Action Plan against Gender Based Violence.

Madam Chair,

The inclusion of women in government and in all decision making positions is an imperative of our time. Lesotho has taken further steps in policy, legislation, and programmatic interventions to improve the numbers of women in decision-making positions. In this connection, the Country has adopted the SADC quota setting a target of at least 30% of parliamentary seats to women. Again, in 2011 Lesotho amended the Elections Act to allow for a 'zebra' listing of Proportional Representation seats. As a result Lesotho registered 26% of women in Parliament.

Madam Chair,

Turning to the impact of HIV/AIDS, in particular on women and girls, we wish to underscore that, the pandemic remains a daunting challenge Lesotho is seized with. Its impact is being felt across sectors. The consequences of sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, compounded by sexual violence are far reaching. They

extend beyond women's health related matters, hamper their economic advancement and affect their maternal responsibilities as mothers and caregivers. Lesotho is relentlessly engaged in the fight against this pandemic evidenced by the recent completion of the "National Action Plan on Women, Girls and HIV/AIDS 2012 - 2017". It is therefore, in the light of the foregoing that, we wish to recall the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS, adopted two years ago. In this connection, we call upon the international community to accelerate efforts to expand access to affordable and quality medicines in order to achieve the goal of universal access to comprehensive HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care.

It is however a sad reality that despite the efforts made to implement the Beijing Platform for Action, violence against women and girls remain one of the most pervasive human rights violations. The stronghold on gender-stereotypical attitudes, norms and values stall progress towards implementation of our noble policies and programmes. It is time to confront these challenges and break the chains of fear.

Madam Chair,

In conclusion, I wish to thank all development partners, UN agencies and civil society in supporting the Government of Lesotho to eliminate and prevent all forms of violence against women and girls. We continue to be committed to the full implementation of the

Beijing Platform for Action and the outcomes of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly.

I thank you for your attention