



LESOTHO

**STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF JUSTICE,
HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE CORRECTIONAL SERVICE AND OF
LAW AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS OF THE KINGDOM OF
LESOTHO, HONOURABLE MRS. MPEO MAHASE – MOILOA AT
THE HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT FORUM OF MINISTERS
RESPONSIBLE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS HELD IN GENEVA,
SWITZERLAND FROM 12TH TO 30TH MARCH, 2007**



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**YOUR EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT
OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

EXCELLENCIES

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

Allow me, Mr. President, to bring you very warm greetings from the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho. My delegation and I would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to you for having afforded us this opportunity to make some observations and contributions, and to share some thoughts and pertinent experiences during the institutional building process of the Human Rights Council. Permit me also to commend you and your able team, Mr. President for steering this Council so skillfully, and being able to make major strides despite stormy and rocky conditions in its formative stages. Worthy of praise also are members of the Inter- sessional Working Groups, active Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives and their staff who worked tirelessly, making invaluable contributions and forging compromises so that convergence and consensus could emerge on critical issues. All these efforts have not gone on unnoticed.

A statement made and a comprehensive report circulated by the High Commissioner for Human Rights have laid good ground for discussions during this Session of the Council. Her efforts are fully acknowledged and appreciated in assisting institutional building process of the Human Rights Council. Noteworthy among the inputs can be mentioned the strengthening of special procedures, supporting substantive participation of mandate holders, coordinating special procedures, and assisting with review of complaints procedures, Universal Periodic Review mechanism, expert advice, and over and above that the establishment of a rapid response Unit with geographical desks, the decentralization of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and many other efforts. One of the few remaining challenges is to achieve geographical balance in the staffing of the office of the High Commissioner without compromising quality.

Mr. President, let me point out from the onset that as my delegation intervenes on some critical principles and mechanisms regarding the Human Rights Council, it associates itself with the statements made on behalf of the African Group and the Non – Aligned Movement.

Indeed one notes with gratification the good progress that has been made towards meeting the requirements of resolution 60/251. At the core of, and of particular importance to, the work of the Human Rights Council is the thrust of the agenda. My delegation, Mr. President, would like to echo that the new agenda of the Council should be structured in a manner that would provide certainty, and clarity on those critical issues of concern that the Council would deliberate upon in each session.

My delegation concurs that the Council should adopt an agenda that is predictable, transparent, objective, non-selective, and enables

accountability. We join those who yearn for an agenda that provides for the interdependence and the indivisibility of civil and political rights with social and economic rights, in particular the right to development and the elimination of widespread abject poverty. This is imperative if the least developed countries are to make significant strides towards the socio - economic betterment of their people. The agenda issues tabled for discussion should ideally focus solely on items intended to promote and protect human rights standards.

MR. PRESIDENT

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LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

My delegation welcomes wholeheartedly the initiatives that are underway to review mandates and the working procedures of the Council. The Universal Periodic Review Mechanism meant for enhanced accountability represents a major milestone if all parties concerned cooperate fully. We agree fully with those who urge that the Special Procedures mechanism on thematic and country specific issues be improved and maintained. Human Rights reporting obligations under the various United Nations international human rights instruments need to be harmonized and rationalized. This would allow a unified reporting treaty body mechanism that eliminates duplication and overlapping to be put in place. The 1503 complaints procedure needs to be retained with slight modifications. The confidentiality nature of this procedure requires change. Furthermore, it needs to be used as an early warning signal to the Universal Periodic Review.

We wish to add our voice to that of some previous speakers that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action against racism be put on the centre stage and be fully implemented. In particular the strengthening of the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination must be done through complementary standards. It would be commendable if by the time of the Durban Review Conference in 2009 tangible results could be shown.

MR. PRESIDENT

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Lesotho held general elections on the 17th of February, 2007. These elections were as usual conducted by the Independent Electoral Commission in a transparent and accountable manner. The elections were certified as peaceful, free and fair by both local and international independent observers. The highly systematic electoral process of the 17th of February, 2007, has further nurtured and consolidated our democracy.

As a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Lesotho has made a milestone in enhancing the promotion and protection of children's rights through institution building and legislation. The Gender and Child Protection Unit has been established to protect those who are suffering from abuse in one form or another, especially children. The Child Protection and Welfare Bill which represents domestication of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is complete and shall be tabled soon before the seventh session of parliament.

Lesotho is in its eighth year of implementing the Free Primary Education Programme as part of an effort to fulfill the child's right to education spelt out in the CRC and the Declaration on Education for all. The programme is now at a critical stage whereby enrollment of those who have gone through it are a step higher at the first level of secondary school. It is desirable to mount Free Secondary Education as well, as the next logical step. Such a noble endeavour can only be implemented to the extent that resources at Lesotho's disposal will permit.

The "know your status" (KYS) campaign on the fight against HIV and AIDS, "turning a crisis into an opportunity" is a programme that is being steered by the Right Honourable the Prime Minister. Government's commitment to fight Aids is further demonstrated by the programme on access to testing and counseling, and treatment through the provision of anti retrovirals. Efforts are also underway to upgrade hospitals, and rehabilitate a network of clinics nationwide. Plans are afoot to afford the aged free medical services. A policy to further improve the lot of people with disabilities is in the pipeline.

Democracy, human rights and the rule of law remain the core principles of good governance in Lesotho. Government is made up of the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary, each body maintaining separate membership, and performing different functions but keeping a fair interplay in accountability and oversight on each other. There are a number of independent statutory commissions on various facets of public life as a means of ensuring a system of checks and balances. To this, one can add the existence of the ombudsman. Worthy of special mention is the fact that the Human Rights Commission is being instituted.

The further transformation of the police and the correctional services to truly civilian, professional and humane bodies is one of the remaining challenges.

Capacity building, technical assistance, advisory services, relevant infrastructure and equipment, are all necessary for Lesotho's journey towards best practice in the field of human rights. In this regard, we invite all cooperating development partners to join hands with Lesotho in the effort to fulfill these commitments.

In conclusion, Mr. President, May I urge that constructive attitude, spirit of cooperation, consensus building, compromise, flexibility, with genuine compassion for the victims of the violation of human rights placed at the centre stage, guide this session. That way the chances of all of us emerging as winners will be enhanced. The real winners will be the victims of the violation of human rights.

Finally, Mr. President, let me wish this august gathering, under your able guidance, success in its deliberations, together with the Bureau and the Secretariat of the session. May I express my fervent hope that what will be achieved during this session will go down in history to be cherished by generations to come.

**I THANK YOU MR. PRESIDENT, I THANK YOU EXCELLENCIES
FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION**