



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

Remarks by EU Ambassador Dr. Michael DOYLE

on the occasion of

EUROPE DAY 2016 celebrations in Lesotho

held in Maseru on 4th May 2016

Greetings to you all – Lumelang bo 'm'e le bo ntate

Allow me firstly to pay my respects to:

His Majesty King Letsie III

The Right Honourable the Prime Minister

Honourable President of the Senate

Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly

Her Ladyship the Chief Justice

Honourable President of the Court of Appeal

Honourable Deputy Prime Minister

Honourable Ministers

Members of the Council of State

Honourable Leader of the Opposition

Their Lordships Judges of the High Court

Their Excellencies Heads of Diplomatic Missions, Heads of International Organisations

Honourable Members of the Senate and Principal Chiefs

Honourable Members of the National Assembly

Religious leaders

Senior officials, and all other officials and dignitaries here present

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

All Protocol observed.

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all here today to celebrate together **Europe Day**. We are a few days early, as Europe Day is officially on 9th May. It was on 9th May 1950 that Robert Schuman called on the nations of Europe to unite and make war on the continent impossible. This year marks the 66th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration. Over the years, the European project has evolved into the current European Union of 28 Member States, with over 500 million people *united in their diversity*.

As we celebrate **Europe Day 2016** here in Maseru, we also celebrate **40 years of EU-Lesotho partnership**. Over the four decades since the opening in 1976 of what was then the European Commission Delegation, the strong and enduring bonds of friendship and partnership between the European Union and Lesotho have stood the test of time.

In the run-up to today's reception celebrating both Europe Day and these **40 years of EU-Lesotho Partnership**, the EU Delegation organised in recent weeks a programme of project visits, lectures and other events as part of our celebrations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The EU-Lesotho partnership encompasses **political and policy dialogue, development cooperation and trade relations** - and engages a wide range of Basotho stakeholders from across government and civil society.

Our **political and policy dialogue** is ongoing throughout the year and takes the form of regular meetings and exchanges at different levels. The principal event is the annual formal session of political dialogue between the Government of Lesotho and the EU. The most recent session took place last November and was co-chaired by Hon Minister Sekhamane and myself. Seven Ministers participated on the Lesotho side, while I was joined on the EU side by the Ambassadors / High Commissioners and other representatives of 14 EU Member States accredited to Lesotho. This political dialogue provided the opportunity for a very frank exchange of views on the various challenges that Lesotho has been confronted with since the 2014 crisis. Our

dialogue also covered Lesotho's reform agenda, our development cooperation and other topics of mutual interest such as climate change. Coinciding with the formal political dialogue, the EU Heads of Mission also held a range of consultations with representatives of the opposition, civil society and other international partners.

Since 2014 the EU has been very supportive of the various SADC engagements in Lesotho. Last year we welcomed that the Government invited SADC to establish the *Commission of Inquiry* and we now encourage Government efforts to take forward the implementation of the report's recommendations and also the wider reform agenda, including those reforms set out in the '*Coalition Agreement for Stability and Reform*'. We look forward to seeing progress in the implementation of sustainable reforms in the political, constitutional, security sector, public service and economic domains that will address the various challenges the country faces. The EU stands ready to continue supporting reform processes wherever we can be helpful.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our **development cooperation** has been a very important and enduring aspect of the partnership between the EU and Lesotho over the last 40 years. The overall aim of this cooperation is to help reduce poverty and improve the standard of living of Basotho. The scope of our current development cooperation is set out in the 11th EDF National Indicative Programme which covers the period 2014 to 2020 and has a funding envelope of 142 million Euros - which is around 2.3 billion Maloti. In agreement with government, and following extensive stakeholder consultations, **water, energy and governance** were identified as the three priority sectors for support under the 11th EDF, which aims to help Lesotho realise its development agenda as enshrined in Vision 2020 and the National Strategic Development Plan. In implementing our development cooperation partnership with government, civil society and other stakeholders, the EU also values very much the very good cooperation we have with other development partners present in Lesotho.

Please allow me to expand on the three priority sectors for EU support. Under the **water sector**, our support aims to help increase access to safe drinking water and

improved sanitation - this is critical to sustainable development. While water exports are a source of revenue for Lesotho, over a quarter of the country's population is living without easy access to a clean and reliable water supply. It is the joint aim of government and the EU that the funds earmarked for the water sector will enable government to significantly expand the access of the population, and also the private sector, to water and sanitation services.

A few weeks ago I was pleased to join Honourable Minister 'Mokose in addressing a Water Sector Coordination Meeting that focused on planning for '**Integrated Catchment Management**', which involves tackling the current extensive soil erosion problems and preserving the wetlands. While Lesotho is often referred to as the 'Water Tower' of Southern Africa, due to the relative abundance of water in the country, widespread soil erosion has been severely reducing water retention capacity in the catchment areas, creating a serious risk of permanent damage and even the loss of Lesotho's white gold – its water. It is the responsibility of this generation to ensure that the economic, social and cultural value of Lesotho's wetlands is safeguarded for future generations to come. Effective Integrated Catchment Management will be critical in going forward - and is one of the key areas foreseen for future EU partnership support in the water sector.

Furthermore in relation to water and sanitation, I should recall the substantial long-term loan financing that the European Investment Bank (EIB) has provided for projects such as the Metolong Dam and Water Supply Programme, where the EIB loan amount was Euro 140 million, and also the Maseru Wastewater Treatment project.

Turning to **energy**, there is a great potential in Lesotho for developing **sustainable energy**, namely solar, hydro and wind power. EU support under the 11th EDF aims to help ensure significantly increased access for the population and productive sectors to modern, affordable, reliable and clean energy supply. The intention is to focus initially on the structure and institutional set-up of the energy sector, so as to help

bring about a conducive environment for larger investments, which then could come from development banks and/or the private sector.

The other priority sector for future EDF support is **governance**. We are currently examining with government the possible areas that EU support may focus on. Among the areas we have previously invested substantially in are Social Protection and the Justice sector. Regarding justice, we are looking into possible further support to help Lesotho in building up a professional, accessible and impartial justice sector, with an independent judiciary capable of enforcing accountability and the rule of law for all citizens.

Critical to the implementation of EU cooperation funding in all these sectors will be making progress in implementing key reforms in Public Finance Management. Here we are assisting government with significant technical support.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Apart from the 142 million euro envelope available under the 11th EDF, Lesotho is also benefiting from substantial EU support provided to a number of thematic programmes, such as the funding that the EU and its Member States contribute through the Global Fund for actions to combat HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria, with Lesotho being a significant beneficiary of these funds for the fight against HIV/AIDS and TB.

Following a call for proposals under the 'European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights' (EIDHR), in January of this year the EU Delegation awarded project grants to three civil society organisations in Lesotho. CSOs are vital partners for the EU and government, as they are well placed to know the population's needs in terms of development. Our EU engagement also focuses on strengthening the capacity of CSOs to become key players in democratic governance processes. The key objectives of this thematic funding instrument of the EU, which supports many actions around the world, are to enhance respect for human rights and fundamental

freedoms and to strengthen the role of civil society in promoting human rights and democratic reform.

Along with other SADC members, Lesotho also benefits from the EU's regional funding envelope in support of various SADC led regional integration actions.

Regarding the severe drought which has affected the country and led to the declaration of a state of emergency by The Right Honourable the Prime Minister, Dr. Pakalitha Mosisili, the European Union is glad to have been able to respond to the appeal for international support. The EU recently mobilised 2 million Euros (34 million Maloti) from its Humanitarian Aid budget to help address the needs of some of the most vulnerable households adversely affected by the drought. This EU funding is being implemented through our UN partners.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Trade is another important aspect of relations between the EU and Lesotho, and one with much potential. Trade relations were reinforced by the finalisation of the negotiations on the SADC Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) in July 2014. Last August, in close coordination with the Ministry of Trade, the EU Delegation held a well-attended information seminar to sensitise Basotho on the EPA between SADC and the EU and the trade opportunities available. Enormous trading potential is offered under the EPA, which provides Lesotho with guaranteed duty-free and quota-free access to the EU market and will surely strengthen trade links and the overall economic and development partnership between the EU and Lesotho.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have touched on the broad range of activities that contribute to the extensive partnership between the EU and Lesotho. Working together in this partnership for the last 40 years we have certainly achieved a lot in improving the lives of Basotho. Meanwhile much remains to be done and there are always new challenges to overcome. As a long standing partner and friend, the EU remains committed to

supporting Lesotho led efforts to achieve sustainable development and a more prosperous future for all Basotho.

On behalf of all the staff of the EU Delegation, my colleagues from the EU Member States, and myself, I wish to thank you all for being with us today to celebrate **Europe Day 2016**. I also take this opportunity to extend very best wishes to all Basotho ahead of the important celebrations later this year to mark Lesotho's 50th anniversary of independence.

KHOTSO, PULA, NALA
