

**Remarks by H.E. Dr. Michael Doyle, Ambassador and Head of Delegation
of the European Union to the Kingdom of Lesotho**

at the handover ceremony of Vehicles and Motorbikes to the Ministry of Social
Development.

Maseru, 12 May 2015

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 in Parliament

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 an honour for me to address you here today at this ceremony to the Ministry of Social Development for the handover ceremony of the ten (10) Vehicles and 34 Motorbikes, funded by the European Union, for the Social Protection programme.

As many of you may know, the European Union started back in 2007 to fund a programme which supported vulnerable children affected and infected by HIV/AIDS. Today, 22 million Euros (equivalent to about 300 million Maloti) have been committed in the Social Protection area, particularly targeting vulnerable children. The commitment of, and strong tripartite collaborative partnership between, the Ministry of Social Development, UNICEF and the European Union has been and remains key to the success of this programme.

I would like to take advantage of today's event to highlight some achievements reached under the Social Protection programme thus far, especially those which have been reached in the last two years. One of the key social protection programmes, the Lesotho Child Grant Programme (CGP), which provides an unconditional social cash transfer, has progressed from being funded to now being fully funded and administered by the government. The government honoured its commitment to take over 100% of the financing of the CGP starting from the fiscal year 2013/2014, when an amount of 36 million Maloti was committed from the national budget to fund the CGP.

Since its launch in 2009, CGP coverage has increased from reaching about 5,000 vulnerable children to some 80,000 children benefitting from the programme. This is tremendous progress. Ladies and gentlemen, as I always mention, this is something that the Ministry of Social Development and indeed the government of Lesotho can be proud of. It is an exceptional example of an effective transition from a donor-led initiative to a national programme. The Government taking full ownership of the programme indeed ensures a sustainable approach, a real achievement and it deserves to be recognised and applauded! UNICEF, as the implementing partner, has contributed immensely to this achievement.

Launching the National Policy on Social Development and the National Social Protection Strategy in January this year was another milestone reached by the

Ministry of Social Development. The National Social Protection Strategy looks at the lifelong cycle and at potential vulnerabilities throughout life. While the launch of the strategy, which sets out a clear framework for social protection in the country is a commendable beginning, the next challenge ahead is to move towards the implementation of the strategy in an integrated and coordinated way.

Also important for success is to ensure the inclusion of all core Ministries in implementing social protection strategies. Mindful that social protection strategies can impact key national outcomes, I would again emphasise the need for strong inter-Ministerial coordination and the integration of different schemes, both at central and district levels.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Each of the ten districts in Lesotho has been allocated a vehicle, and likewise the motorbikes, to be used by social workers, will be distributed between the districts. We are pleased that the vehicles and motorbikes will enable staff of the Ministry of Social Development to, in particular, follow the implementation of Social Protection initiatives. Allow me to highlight that the motorbikes will contribute significantly to the Ministry's capacity to reach remote villages in Lesotho which would have otherwise been inaccessible even by car. This logistical support will enable the strengthening of capacities at community level, a necessary pillar of a strong decentralized social protection system. Ladies and gentlemen, there is great need to focus our efforts on strengthening the delivery of services at community level, involving local authorities and civil society.

I am very pleased that these ten vehicles and 34 motorbikes, funded by the EU, will improve mobility and communication for implementers of the Social Protection programmes. I am certain that the vehicles and motorbikes will contribute and allow for delivery of services to beneficiaries to be more efficient. The vehicles and motorbikes handed over today will help to enhance efforts to support the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of social protection programmes in Lesotho, especially as we enter Phase III of the EU support to social protection in

Lesotho. This Phase III, ladies and gentlemen, is intended to help the Government build a harmonized, more efficient and effective system of social protection.

Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please allow me to stress the importance of sustainability and management of the vehicles and motorbikes. We are confident that the Ministry and its personnel will abide by the guidelines developed and that the vehicles and motorbikes will be well-maintained and go for regular service and that they will be used for their intended purpose. We are pleased that drivers of the ten vehicles have each received training on 'defensive driving' and we are confident that the riders of the motorbikes will ride the motorbikes with great caution.

Let me conclude by stating that the EU remains deeply committed to supporting the Ministry of Social Development and the Government of Lesotho in general. We are confident that all Ministries concerned will remain committed to supporting the implementation of Social Protection programmes in Lesotho and that tangible and concrete results are reached. I want to reassure you that the EU will continue working closely with the all Government ministries to ensure that Social Protection of the most vulnerable remains at the top of the government's agenda.

The European Union has been a long-standing supporter of the Social Protection sector in Lesotho and we will reinforce our commitment in the framework of the 11th European Development Fund (2014 -2020).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The EU is very honoured to be working with the Government, particularly the Ministry of Social Development, to assist the most vulnerable members of society. We also our appreciation to UNICEF as our implementing partner in this tripartite collaboration on Social Protection programme.

We wish the Ministry of Social Development well in its safe use of these vehicles and motorbikes in strengthening Social Protection across the country.

Thank you for your kind attention.

KHOTSO, PULA, NALA!