



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**DELEGATION TO THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO**

*Remarks made by Ambassador Mr. Hans DUYNHOUWER,  
Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the Kingdom  
of Lesotho, at the occasion of the inauguration of the  
Delegation's keyhole garden by H.E. Mr. Ralechate  
'MOKOSE, Minister of Agriculture.*

*MASERU, 17 February 2012*

Protocol;

Welcome to the Delegation of the European Union to the Kingdom of Lesotho.

I am particular pleased to welcome His Excellency, the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, H.E. 'Mokose who, despite a busy schedule, is gracing this occasion with his presence.

I also extend a special welcome to representatives of international organisations and civil society organisations present today. They support the development of keyhole gardens here in Lesotho; they all

have discovered the usefulness and relevance of the keyhole garden concept.

Allow me also to say a special word of appreciation to my own staff, the staff of the Delegation of the European Union. The keyhole garden about to be inaugurated today is the result of a collaborative team effort by our staff. We decided to establish a 'green committee' in charge of the construction and the use of our keyhole garden. The committee has been very successful; it gave the necessary impetus to the construction of the garden and in one single day we managed to construct the garden. In the meantime we have already had several harvests of moroho (spinach), radish, eggplant, peppers etc. The work of the 'green committee' is a recurrent and much-appreciated feature of our regular staff meetings.

Keyhole gardens can play a very useful role in Lesotho's agricultural development. We are however all aware of the challenge facing the country, especially in agriculture:

- about two thirds of Lesotho's food needs are imported putting a drain on the country's scarce resources;
- the relative importance of the agricultural sector is in steady decline; only 8 percent of the country's production comes now from agriculture, compared to 12 percent only ten years ago. Yet, two thirds of the population lives in rural areas, suggesting that

productivity of the agricultural sector is low;

- land for agriculture is scarce in Lesotho; less than ten percent of the total land mass is arable;
- inadequate nutrition is a major challenge facing the country; a matter of both quantity and quality of food. "Wasting", the result of insufficient and poor quality food, continues to affect the country from time-to-time. Many children have to live on a diet of 'papa ka tamati'. Under-nutrition affects even more children, resulting in growth retardation reflected in low height-for-age index. While some improvement has been recorded, it is estimated that more than 13 percent of all children are still affected.

Let's be clear, the concept of keyhole garden is not a panacea to all these challenges. Low productivity and a declining production of the agricultural sector can only be addressed in a concerted effort of farmers and their families supported by professional and civil society associations, the government and international organisations. I do hope that the launching of the country's National Strategic Development Plan this year will give a renewed impetus to this challenge.

Yet the concept of the keyhole garden is very relevant in addressing some of the food security challenges in Lesotho.

The keyhole garden offers a number of distinct advantages.

Firstly, it encourages the involvement of all members of the family in the growing of vegetables; old and young; men and women, boys and girls, the healthy and the less healthy;

Secondly, keyhole garden products contribute to nutritional variation; it allows going beyond the 'papa ka tamati' diet;

Thirdly, the keyhole garden is environmentally sound. It encourages an efficient use of scarce water resources, the green disposal of household waste;

Finally, keyhole gardens are an excellent educational tool. Keyhole gardens do not only have their place in the homestead but also at schools. At schools, keyhole garden can introduce children to vegetable growing and healthy food habits.

The EU's support to keyhole gardens has been very successful in Lesotho. As the EU-funded 'Send a Cow' project in Mafeteng and Mohale's Hoek demonstrates, families with keyhole gardens now grow enough for their own consumption; they can even obtain extra cash through the sale of occasional surpluses. Our projects in the Berea and Leribe districts targeting households affected by HIV/AIDS have also been successful; these projects are implemented by the Red

Cross of Lesotho and Germany.

The keyhole garden that we inaugurate today is a concrete illustration of the EU's contribution and commitment to Lesotho's food security.

With this initiative, we want to demonstrate the EU's and this Delegation's commitment to sustainable livelihood and food security in Lesotho.

Before inviting the Minister to unveil the plaque commemorating this morning's event, let me thank all of you for your presence and your kind attention.

**KHOTSO, PULA, NALA**