

**REMARKS BY THE HEAD OF THE DELEGATION
OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO
THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO,
H.E. Mr HANS DUYNHOUWER,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 2012
EUROPE DAY CELEBRATIONS**

MASERU, 10 MAY 2012

Greetings to you all - Lumelang bo'm'e le bontate -

Allow me firstly to pay my respects to:

His Majesty King Letsie III;

the right Honourable Prime Minister,

the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister,

the Honourable President of the Senate;

the Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly;

Honourable Ministers – especially.....;

Their Lordships, Judges of the Appeal Court and the High Court;

Colleague Members of the Diplomatic Corps and Representatives of
International organisations;

Dignitaries here present;

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

All protocol observed.

It is again a pleasure to welcome you here today to share in our annual celebrations of Europe Day. A tradition we value very much. It is for us a highlight of the year.

This year in Lesotho we celebrate Europe Day around the theme 'recycling and renewable energy'. This theme is also on the international agenda. Here I mention COPS 17, held last year in Durban, and the RIOplus 20 conference in June of this year. The European Union is very committed to these events. We know that we can count on Lesotho as a partner. I hope you found the panel discussion we just concluded refreshing, stimulating and a foretaste of what is possible.

Of course, today we want in the first place to put the spotlight on the 9th of May 1950. It was on that day that Robert Schuman, the then French Foreign minister, made his famous Schuman declaration. A declaration that paved the way for the European Union as we know it today: over 500 million people living in 27 Member States in peace, a common currency, hassle-free travel for the EU citizens and our visitors from abroad, education opportunities across borders for the young, business opportunities without frontiers. In short: more opportunities, wider

choices for the Union's citizens, the result of over 50 years of European co-operation.

Progress has been steady but not without challenges. Here too in Lesotho questions have been asked about the Union's common currency, the EURO. It is true that following the financial crisis of 2008, the Union's monetary union has been under stress. This has had a profound impact, first and foremost on those Member States that were most affected. We witness in these countries lower living standards, higher unemployment (six millions jobs have been lost in the EU since 2008), changes in the leadership etc. Despite these difficulties and challenges, allow me to emphasise that the economic basis of the European Union remains very solid. Indeed, recent events have not put into question the Union's role in the world. We continue to be the most important market for developing countries. We continue to be a leading development co-operation partner. We continue, in partnership, our work on greening the world economy, de-carbonising energy use and addressing climate change.

Honourable minister, ladies and gentlemen,

I said last year and I do not hesitate to repeat it today: the European integration experience may also inspire Lesotho and its neighbours. The EU provides a co-operation model of interest to both large and small countries. We work together in a Union where the population of the biggest Member State is almost 200 times that of the smallest Member State. Engaging, trading, exchanging with immediate neighbours is the

most effective way towards fuller integration into the wider world economy.

It is also for this reason that the European Union embarked on negotiating Economic Partnership Agreements, also known as by their acronym EPAs, with ACP partners. Lesotho signed an interim-agreement EPA agreement in 2007. Yet, we have still not concluded our negotiations with the SADC partners. Time is not on our side. We must confront the stumbling blocks, must advance; must conclude.

Of course, it could be argued that Lesotho's access to the EU market is guaranteed under the 'Everything but Arms' framework. This framework provides for the group of least developed countries duty- and quota free access to the EU market with very generous third country content provisions. It is however our strong belief that a full fledged EPA agreement will be of added-value to regional dynamism in EU-SADC trade. The statistics speak for themselves. The European Union is South Africa's number one trading partner (26 percent of total trade); growing trade between South Africa and Europe is of direct benefit to Lesotho; that is the larger picture which we cannot ignore.

Honourable minister, ladies and gentlemen,

The year behind us has been a good year for EU co-operation with Lesotho. In the area of development co-operation we continued the good pace of work that also characterised 2010. We recorded excellent results. In the last two years we disbursed over 1 billion Maloti (EUR 100 million) in our

bilateral co-operation programme. A large part through budget support, but we also worked on water and sanitation, local government, cash grants and other support to OVCs and road infrastructure. Our co-operation with civil society is growing. We are particularly pleased with our support to the Transformation Resource Centre; a 1.5 million Maloti grant to the TRC supports the creation of a Human Rights Commission here in Lesotho. With the adoption of the 6th amendment to the Constitution, all conditions are now fulfilled for the early creation of a Human Rights Commission.

This year we embark on preparing the EU's co-operation with Lesotho under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) for the period 2014 to 2020. The recently finalised National Strategic Development Plan will guide us. Now more than before, emphasis will be placed on results, impact, and good governance. We are optimistic that under the 11th EDF the EU can maintain its current standing as one of Lesotho's leading co-operation partners.

Honourable minister, ladies and gentlemen,

November last year we resumed our formal political dialogue under our joint chairmanship and with the participation of several Ministers and resident and non-resident EU ambassadors. We are committed to continue this dialogue. We walk in our partnership on two legs: the leg of development co-operation and the leg of political dialogue.

Honourable minister, ladies and gentlemen,

The upcoming elections of 26 May are of great importance to Lesotho. The European Union looks forward to free and fair elections, followed by an orderly transition to a new Government. This will strengthen the international reputation and credibility of the country, to the benefit of all.

Holding elections in Lesotho is a real test for the country, not least from an organisational and logistical point of view. More than 6,000 temporary workers employed by the Independent Electoral Commission, 1,500 voting places, almost 2,700 polling stations of which about 120 are inaccessible by road due to the country's challenging topography. We wish the IEC and its staff, political parties and their candidates as well as observers all success in conducting and concluding these elections.

We appreciate the active involvement of civil society in preparing these elections. In particular the supportive role of the Christian Council Lesotho, the CCL, in reaching an agreement on electoral reform is acknowledged. Also the invitation it extended to Archbishop's Tutu to address political leaders two weeks ago is applauded. His speech inspired all of us. A call for reason, finding common ground, a call for tolerance and peace: I quote; *'Don't raise your voice, improve your argument'*.

We congratulate the Government and the people of Lesotho for the successful local elections of October 2011. It is true that the local elections did not arouse the same interest compared with the general elections. Nevertheless, with these elections Lesotho has embarked irrevocably on a

process of devolution and decentralisation, a process supported by the European Union.

Honourable minister, ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to conclude by thanking you for being here with us today. My sincere thanks are also addressed to the panellists and its chairman for their stimulating ideas. I hope it is "food for thought" for how to address the renewable energy and recycling agenda in Lesotho, not least in co-operation with the European Union. I also thank all with whom we worked throughout the year; our partners, Ministers and officials, colleague ambassadors and Heads of international organisations, the office of the NAO, NGOs, development partners, contractors. Last but not least: Allow me a special word of thanks to the staff of the Delegation. Their efforts and commitment made this week possible. I feel privileged to be part of this team.

I thank you for your kind attention.

Rea Leaboha.

Khotso, Pula, Nala!

I now invite you all to raise your glasses in a toast to His Majesty the King, the Government and People of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Delegation of the European Union
to the Kingdom of Lesotho

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