



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

**Remarks on behalf of the Head of Delegation
of the European Union to Lesotho,
H.E. Ambassador Hans DUYNHOUWER
on the occasion of the
Euro-Africa ICT FP7
Awareness and training workshop**

Maseru, 13 June 2012

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

[Protocol]

I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak briefly at this workshop. This workshop takes place only a couple of days after Lesotho saw a transition to new leadership; a transition that took

place following successful elections. At the start of this workshop, allow me to pay tribute to the people and the leaders of Lesotho. Last week's democratic peaceful transition bodes well for the country's future.

This future will be one in which ICT and ICT research play an increasingly important role. This week's workshop, kindly hosted by Lesotho's Department of Science and Technology, should help in preparing this future.

ICT plays an important role in our daily life; it has revolutionised the way we live, travel, trade, communicate etc. not least in developing countries. Maintenance of water and sanitation infrastructure, managing medicine and blood stocks in distant rural clinics, herd boys finding the best grazing places, farmers receiving up-to-date market information, are just a few examples. This is already a reality in many countries, but a large potential remains untapped.

Unfortunately, access to ICT services is not universal. Many people do not have access to modern ICT services. Many do not yet benefit from the numerous applications that are already available. Access is a problem. The Millennium Development Goals, important as they are, are still from a pre-ICT era; there is urgent need to complement the MDGs with an ICT access objective. It could put ICT on par with other services such as water, sanitation and electricity. It should be

an ambitious objective. It should reflect the relevance, potential and cross-cutting nature of ICT in fighting poverty.

Allow me to emphasise that access to ICT services is also a responsibility of governments. Unfortunately, in many countries access to ICT and mobile technologies is hampered by policies that favour (state) monopolies over competition, limit foreign investment etc. As a result, tariffs are high; access is limited to the urban population, changing from telecom provider is expensive and roaming charges excessive etc. This inhibits the development of a low cost mass market. Addressing these matters must be given due priority.

Today's workshop bears testimony of Europe's commitment to assist in addressing the digital divide in Africa. Our objective is to support the African continent in developing the necessary scientific and technical skills, in mastering the knowledge and technology necessary for development as well as in implementing a relevant research agenda. Opening up the European Research Area (ERA) and developing equitable and effective research partnerships between the EU and African Institutions and their researchers provides an opportunity for Africa's researchers to be recognised. This workshop provides an excellent platform for this as a forum of exchange and dialogue between the researchers of Europe and

Africa. In this initiative the researchers from Europe come from reputable applied research organisations, including EU Member State countries with established and leading ICT records. I encourage our partners from Africa to take full advantage of this window of opportunity.

Let me conclude and with these few words by extending to all of you a word of encouragement. I hope that this two day seminar will stimulate you to go the extra mile; an extra mile in the pursuit of excellence and professionalism in the fight against the digital divide. Know that the European Union is your partner.

Thank you.

KHOTSO, PULA, NALA