



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

**Remarks by Head of Delegation  
of the European Union to Lesotho,  
H.E. Ambassador Hans DUYNHOUWER,  
at the launch of the  
DEEPENING DECENTRALISATION  
PROGRAMME**

**Maseru,**

**31 October 2012**

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

Mr/Madam, MC, allow me to start by paying my respects to:

[Protocol]

Today we launch the Deepening Decentralisation Programme. I am delighted to attend this important event. This is a long awaited programme. We have had many discussions and exchanges, so I am very pleased that today we make a decisive step in implementing this programme.

In recent years we have seen a growing recognition of the importance of local authorities and their role in providing essential public services.

In Lesotho, the 1997 Local Government Act provides the legal framework for community, district and community councils. The first local elections were held in 2005. In October 2011 successful local elections were held for the second time.

Development partners are committed to decentralisation. The Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation of last year, to which we are all partner, is very clear. Local governments need to be supported with a view to *'more assume fully their roles above and beyond service delivery, enhance participation and accountability.'* This is the road we have embarked on as partners: improving service delivery, enhancing participation and accountability. The rationale of decentralisation is both political (i.e. more inclusive democracy, equitable development) and based on efficiency concerns, i.e. better service delivery. That is the challenge we face.

In today's European Union local government plays a key role. In the 27 Member States nearly 300 regions and 91,000 municipalities have major powers in key sectors such as education, the environment, transport and economic development. Altogether, local government in the EU accounts for 2/3 of the total public investment expenditure. Local and regional authorities are therefore vital to the democratic life of the European Union and are key actors in the conception and implementation of common European policies. It is also important to highlight that many surveys show that the public's confidence in local governments is often superior to the confidence and trust in central government institutions. Participation and accountability is best served when decision making is as close as possible to the people affected by decisions.

In Lesotho we have now worked for a number of years on supporting the development of local government institutions. We must however admit that results have not met expectations. Lesotho has made good progress in establishing democratically elected and accountable institutions, but the decentralisation and devolution policy has not yet come to full fruition.

There are two principal reasons for this.

Firstly, local government institutions are often not adequately resourced, both financially and in terms of human resources.

Secondly, there is reluctance with line ministries at the central level to decentralise and devolve their responsibilities. These problems can only be addressed through a political commitment to real decentralisation at the central level. In our project designs we have often failed to give a central role to the Government in guiding the process of decentralisation and devolution. An example in case was the EU-funded LGNSP project; the lack of ownership and insufficient political steer has been identified as main shortcomings of this project.

With the LGNSP project and also UNDP and GIZ funded local government projects, we have cumulated now a wealth of information on efficiency and effectiveness of supporting local government development. The challenge we face today is to make best use of this so that the project we launch today will not fall into the same trap.

That is why I am very pleased that in the preparation of today's project we have seen excellent co-operation between the Ministry of Local Governance and Chieftainship, the NAO, UNDP and the EU Delegation.

The project that we launch today has different components. Firstly, there is the so-called '*deepening decentralisation*' component. This component will be implemented by UNDP under a contract signed with the European Union. We are very pleased that UNDP will make available its recognised expertise to this project under a financing agreement that the Government of Lesotho and the European Union signed last year. With this programme our shared objective is to promote decentralised service delivery for social and economic growth through the development of transparent funding mechanisms and by improving the accountability of local authorities.

Secondly, involving non-state actors in the decentralisation process is essential. For this reason we seek the closest possible association of civil society organisations in this project for which we have made available an amount of LSL 310 million. A call for proposal will be launched today. I invite all civil organisations to consider seriously participating. This is a golden opportunity to contribute to improved governance in the Kingdom.

Finally, the programme foresees a EUR 2 million support to ALAFA. The contract for this component was signed earlier this year. An important objective of this component is to work on the sustainability of the fight against HIV/AIDS for the country's 35,000 textile workers.

I am optimistic for the future. We must however not underestimate the challenges ahead. The political economy of decentralisation is a complicated

one; there will be many obstacles. Leadership is therefore important. The Steering Committee under the leadership of the Ministry of Local Governance and Chieftainship plays a key so as to ensure that our joint efforts pay off.

In these efforts we must work together as partners. The Government of Lesotho as the principle stakeholder. GIZ, German international co-operation, with its longstanding commitment to Lesotho's local development and as an important financial contributor to the programme; UNDP with its valuable expertise, and, finally, the EU as the main funder and as a political and co-operation partner.

Let me conclude by reiterating that good governance and efficient service delivery is a priority for both the Government of Lesotho and the European Union. The European Union is committed to support the Government of Lesotho in these efforts.

Let's work together on this in a spirit of partnership.

I thank you for your kind attention.

KHOTSO, PULA, NALA