



**LESOTHO STATEMENT BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE PRIME
MINISTER DR MOEKETSI MAJORO DURING TRANSFORMING
EDUCATION SUMMIT CONVENED BY THE UNITED NATIONS
SECRETARY GENERAL 19-SEPTEMBER 2022**

**Your Excellency President of the General Assembly,
Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
Secretary General,
Honourable Ministers,
Ladies and Gentleman,**

It is a great honour and privilege to address this august gathering, on an issue that is very close to my heart and crucial for the development of our countries. Allow me at the outset, to thank you Secretary General, for convening this important meeting; particularly now that we need to re-build all societal structures including the education system following the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 impacted all, and for education in particular, it caused extreme disruptions. It is time to work on 'rebuilding' for the sake of the children and to make the education system more resilient to the current and future interruptions or pandemics.

Mr. President,

Education is an anchor for sustainable development and Lesotho has recognized this and has over the years prioritized it. In the year, 2000 Lesotho introduced free primary education to improve school enrolment and provide an opportunity even for the less privileged children. In 2010 this it was legislated into the '*Free and compulsory primary education*' law. Since then, we have seen progress and improvement in the enrolment and completion rate at Primary level, particularly for the girl child.

Mr. President, Lesotho continues to implement the *2020 Education Sector Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus*, for learning recovery, and continuity in safe school environments. On-going strategies include the use of accelerated teaching and learning, provision of learning packs, extended learning time and appointment of COVID-19 focal persons to support the health and well-being of school communities. Additionally, priority actions geared to facilitate the ease of learning in the COVID-19 era include, the implementation of holistic learning and remedial strategies that integrate high and low technology solutions, community learning centres, mobile libraries, and pop-up schools.

Mr. President,

Despite the many initiatives put in place, a few shortcomings still exist. The education sector's readiness to integrate digital learning is restricted by a lack of resources. Most schools do not have access to electricity, telecommunications, and internet network connectivity due to the country's limited coverage of basic infrastructure. However, state-owned enterprises and businesses demonstrate a willingness to provide product and service assistance to accelerate digital expansion across all levels of education.

Mr. President, we also have noted with concern that, while school coverage is wide, children and adolescents including those with disabilities are at risk of exclusion from schools, particularly in rural regions. The root causes range from a lack of inclusive infrastructure, gender-sensitive facilities, as well as lack of motivation and psychosocial support for learners and costs associated with schooling. Moreover, they are exposed to harmful gender norms, which result in school-related gender-based violence. The other challenge further exacerbated by COVID-19 amongst the adolescent girls is the drop out rate due to early

and unintended pregnancies and child marriages. To respond to these, the country is working towards expanding learning opportunities through inclusive pedagogy, alternative pathways, and quality non-formal education programs, capacitating teachers on psychosocial support and strengthening linkages with social protection services.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Lesotho is struggling to absorb her youth in the workforce especially with the youth unemployment rate of approximately 38.3%. One of the reasons for this is that the education system does not match the labour market demands. Graduates lack 21st-century skills, and very few specialize in core science, technology, engineering, and innovation fields. The country is revising the basic education curricula to enhance relevance through alternative pathways into vocational, technical, and academic streams, including in non-formal education settings. Recent accreditation standards have expanded the scope of quality in higher education programming.

Moreover, Lesotho has also recognized the importance of having qualified teachers and continuous refresher trainings to meet the current teaching demands. In this regard, the Government is reforming the teaching profession to produce teachers capable of supporting 21st-century learners and students.

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I conclude, I wish to share with you that Lesotho's education expenditure, falls within the recommended GDP and public budget allocation threshold required to achieve SDG 4 targets. Nonetheless, the lack of cost-efficiency

and effectiveness in programming adds to a growing financial gap across the entire education system. The first step in enhancing the return on education investment is to conduct a thorough sector audit to identify areas of resource waste, and then implement innovative, focused, and sustainable funding arrangements.

Finally, Mr. President Lesotho commits to;

- Transform the educational system away from a classroom-centric method of instruction and toward one that offers learners a variety of learning pathways and incorporates high-to-low technology solutions.
- Expand the scope and coverage of secondary and pre-primary education.
- Establish a comprehensive program for continuous professional development that includes the necessary knowledge, abilities, and skills for teaching in the 21st Century.
- Enhance multi-sectoral coordination to reflect joint stakeholder arrangements in planning, financing, implementation, and evaluation.
- Strengthen strategic information management, including leveraging academic research, to inform investment programming.
- Strengthen education sector coordination and regulation by harmonizing sector-specific and related policies.
- Progressively increase adequate funding to expand the scope of sectoral resource pool through innovative funding arrangements while also strengthening cost efficiency and effectiveness in educational expenditure.

I THANK YOU.

