



STATEMENT BY
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OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO
AT THE
HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT 2021

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President of the ECOSOC

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

It is a great honor and privilege for me to address this 2021 Session of the High-Level Political Forum that has an important task of reviewing progress on SDGs. This statement is aligned to those delivered by Malawi on behalf of LDCs; Kazakhstan on behalf of LLDCs as well as Guinea on behalf of G77 and China. Lesotho also welcomes the report of the Secretary General and aligns herself with the principle that no one should be left behind.

Mr. President,

The Government of Lesotho, like the rest of the world has been hit hard by the Covid-19 which was declared a global health pandemic in January 2020. As the virus spread rapidly around the globe, the whole world went into lockdowns for different periods of time. However, in Lesotho, the situation remained accommodative and it was business as usual for many sectors of the economy until the Republic of South Africa (RSA) experienced a rapid spread of the virus. Noting that Lesotho is completely surrounded by RSA, as number of confirmed cases increased in RSA and the government put in place measures to stop the spread of the virus, Lesotho found itself at the crossroads needing new engines for

growth and managing the spread COVID-19 as well. Besides the USA under AGOA, SouthAfrica remains the major trade partner to Lesotho and a major source of employment for most Basotho Nationals. The recurrence of lockdowns and applicable quarantine in South Africa severely affected Lesotho's economy. The Tourism and Hospitality industry as well as the Wholesale and Retail Trade sector suffered the most. This resulted in significant loss of revenue particularly in both retail and food services. In terms of economic performance, quarterly GDP has been declining steadily over time, from -0.4% with a significant drop to -15% in the second quarter of 2020 due to low production in other industries (wholesale and retail trade) and complete shut-down in others (manufacturing, mining, tourism, etc.). Many other sectors such as the public transport, mining, manufacturing and construction, to name but a few also suffered massively leading to many people losing their jobs, which is their main source of livelihood. The number of households that became food insecure and could also not afford basic needs increased as a result. During this period, unemployment increased by 20%.

Mr. President

On the social front, the education and health sectors were also affected with extended closure of schools which reaped worsened

education outcomes. Similarly in the health sector many people were unable to access the much-needed health services, thus compromising their health status as health facilities had to reduce the number of patient admissions each day. The dire situation continues with the trickling access to vaccines.

Mr. President

To cushion against the current impact of the pandemic and continuing to ensure progress in line with the national agenda and the 2030 Agenda, including other international development frameworks, the Government of Lesotho has expanded social assistance, supporting food production and providing aid to small businesses through a credit guarantee scheme. The Government is further scaling up urgent health spending and is introducing measures to boost social safety nets and ensure access to credit for affected businesses. Furthermore, in an effort to commercialize agriculture and achieve sustainable food security, the Government is providing a blanket 50% subsidy on farming inputs to farmers.

In line with the National Reforms agenda, which has prioritized, amongst other things, building a national and local level peace architecture; peace and stability institutions and platforms at all

levels; strengthening the judiciary; establishing special courts, including a Children's Court and one dealing with those with disability; a public financial management and public sector improvement programme, the Government has put in place the National Reforms Authority mandated to oversee and coordinate the implementation of the reforms processes recommended.

Mr. President

In conclusion, the Government of Lesotho calls on partners to mobilise private productive capacity investment, provide the necessary technical support and close the resource gaps, as well as all measures designed for recovery and resilience from COVID-19 thereby mitigating its impact. Let all be faithful to the principle of leaving no one behind as all build back better.

I thank you.