



Statement

By

H.E Ambassador Matete Nena

Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Lesotho to the United Nations

**During the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
Under the Auspices of the Economic and Social Council.**

General debate: "Building momentum towards the SDG Summit"

New York

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**Mr President
Honourable Ministers
Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies, and Gentlemen**

Our meeting today, coincides with the launch, back home in Lesotho, of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, which is championed by the Right Honourable the Prime Minister Mr Samuel Ntsokoane Matekane. That document, is aimed at committing Lesotho to delivering all the strategic priorities of the country in line with the National Strategic Development Plan II (2023-2027) in order to push forward the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development.

As we converge here today, the world is confronted with a myriad of challenges that make it extremely difficult for all to be on track in meeting the 2030 Agenda. Being a least developed and landlocked country in Africa, Lesotho remains deeply concerned that the negative effects of COVID-19 and those of the war in Ukraine, coupled with weak economic growth, unsustainable debt burdens, and adverse climatic conditions are all threatening to reverse progress so far realised in the implementation of the SDGs. Equally worrying, is the recently released SDG Progress Report 2023, which reveals that, more than half of the world is being left behind. In this connection, Lesotho calls upon the international community to enhance multilateral cooperation and support for the UN development system to address these urgent challenges.

Mr President

With regard to the SDGs under review during this HLPF Session Despite a number of initiatives made, my country still faces a number of challenges.

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

In a bid to meet the targets of this goal, Lesotho through the Lowlands Water project is intensifying efforts to ensure access to clean water and sanitation for all. It is further working with its neighbours to build infrastructure which will facilitate transfer and distribution of water to other countries in the SADC Region under the ambit of the Lesotho Highlands Water project. On this goal, Lesotho prides herself for some commendable progress made so far. However, a lot still has to be done to maintain the momentum leading to 2030.

SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

Despite Lesotho's Vision 2020 goal of connecting 90% of Basotho to electricity by now, only 40% of the population have access to electricity. In order to close this gap, Government is scaling up production of green and renewable energy through solar, wind and hydropower. Investment in these areas is very much welcome. Taking advantage of its high altitude and rugged topography Lesotho is robustly inviting investment in all these areas.

SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

In order to fast track implementation of this goal, the Ministry of Trade and Industry developed the SMME policy for economic diversification which resulted in the implementation of the Private Sector Competitiveness and Economic Diversification Project (PSCEDP) thus leading to creation of the much-needed jobs.

In addition, under the road sub-sector, about 231 kms of roads were upgraded to bitumen standard across the country. However, extreme weather conditions remain a major threat to road infrastructure resulting in their heavy maintenance. In this regard, support towards sustainable and resilient infrastructure in my country is critical.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

In order to enhance FDI, ODA and to ensure efficiency in debt management, Government adopted several initiatives such as the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Policy, the Investment Policy and the Diaspora Engagement Strategy for Trade and Investment. It also strengthened the One-Stop Business Facilitation Centre (OBFC) to enable investors to easily register companies. All these interventions have leveraged investment opportunities for both the private sector and the diaspora in critical areas of our national development. However, access to finance remain a challenge which this forum must seriously address.

In conclusion, my country remains optimistic that the much-awaited SDG Summit in September, and the Summit of the Future in 2024, will bring decisive and ambitious actions, in accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and achievement of the SDGs. To this end, Lesotho joins the clarion call by the Secretary General for a global agreement on the allocation of the USD500 billion Stimulus package for investment in sustainable development.

I thank you for your attention!