



KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING,
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TO

**THE 38TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED
NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL
ORGANISATION (UNESCO)**

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President of the General Conference,
The Chairman of the Executive Board,
The Director General,
Your Excellences, Colleagues,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to be afforded this opportunity of delivering my maiden speech to this auspicious gathering. I bring to you all special warm regards and best wishes for a fruitful 38th Session of UNESCO General Conference from His Majesty King Letsie III, the government, and the people of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Mr. President,

Allow me to congratulate you on your appointment as the President of the 38th Session of the UNESCO General Conference and to wish you every success in your new assignment. I am particularly proud of you coming from the Southern Africa Region. I have no doubt that you will steer this session successfully based on your knowledge of the subject matter and most recently as a member of the Executive Board.

Mr. President,

Lesotho has studied the work done in the preparation of the Medium -Term Strategy document (37C/4) and the Report by the Executive Board on its

activities and implementation of the Programme and Budget (37C/5). We truly are satisfied with the planned strategies, which we believe will turn UNESCO's vision for the post-2015 global agenda in to reality.

Efforts towards achieving Education For All since the year 2000 have yielded unprecedented progress. As we are now at the end of the EFA goals, I am glad to announce that Lesotho fared well in most of the set goals. It is with a sense of pride that I report that in the last biennium progress has been made towards achieving UNESCO's goals as well as the MDG's. Lesotho performed particularly well on three Education For All Goals, attaining 85% on Youth and Adult Learning Literacy and last but not least, 72% on Improving Levels of Adult Literacy. On goal number two (2) of the MDG's, we achieved 80% for Universal Primary Education, an important note is that we have introduced since 2000, Free and Compulsory Primary Education. For this, we thank the UNESCO Family and particularly the countries that provided financial, technical and other forms of support without which all these could not have been achieved. I must mention that Lesotho allocates 23% of the National budget to Education and 13% of its GDP. However this high investment is not translated into an equally high output which therefore requires our full effort on enhancing quality, equity and access; and their sustainability.

Mr. President,

We from the Kingdom of Lesotho understand very well the financial crisis that UNESCO has been experiencing for over six years now. It would therefore be remiss of me not to acknowledge UNESCO's efforts for categorizing Africa as a global priority and its efforts in field reforms despite this difficult situation. My country has for instance been a beneficiary of many supported projects through the Participation Programs

and IPDC. We indeed are thankful to the organisation for this generous support, and hope that robust majors will be taken to ensure that the reforms are implemented timeously and strategically to both deliver the post 2015 development agenda, and those related to regional offices.

Mr. President,

In the past biennium, Lesotho was beneficiary to a number of projects for which we are grateful, these include: Empowerment of Youth Groups in southern districts, Development of Electronic Record Management System for the Teaching Service Department, Distance and Rural Learners/Teachers Support through Mobile Digital Library Model; Science Club Network, A Living Library Approach and last but not least, Capacity building of Lesotho Media Houses. We also appreciate UNESCO's support in the strengthening of Communication and Information initiatives in Africa and the kingdom of Lesotho in particular. Through the financial assistance from UNESCO, the country now boasts the establishment of two community radios operating in the rural areas of Lesotho, thus benefitting the marginalised groups comprising of women and youth who would otherwise still be deprived of the opportunity to have their plight and voices heard by the other sectors of the society. This has indeed shaped the media landscape in the Country, as they were the first community radios ever to be set up in Lesotho.

It would be remiss of me not to applaud UNESCO for the assistance it is providing Lesotho on addressing the HIV and AIDS pandemic at the school level through EDUCAIDS.

Mr. President,

On the North-South and South-South Cooperation you will note with interest that Lesotho and some of the National Commissions of the Sub-Saharan Africa are benefitting a lot from the harmonious cooperation they have established with both the Korean and German National Commissions. As a result of this cooperation, Lesotho has been fortunate not to feel the pinch brought about by the prevailing financial crisis, which has forced UNESCO to reduce its budget for capacity building for the National Commissions.

Today I am glad to inform you that our cooperation with the German Commission for UNESCO has been renewed to focus on staff capacity building and for the establishment of sub regional networks for mutual capacity building as sound and effective mechanisms of knowledge exchange.

Similarly, within the Korea National Commission for UNESCO Africa BRIDGE Programme, three community learning centres in two districts have since 2012 been established in Lesotho to advance literacy and hence accelerated UNESCO's EFA goals to be realised by 2015. On the same note we also boast income-generating activities such as Aloe Vaseline making, poultry and others.

Mr. President,

One other important invaluable resources of Lesotho is water which is not maximally utilized to benefit Basotho. Economically, Lesotho depends to a large extent on its water resources to generate revenue. One of the challenges however, is that many of Lesotho's rural and urban citizens have limited access to safe, clean and drinking water and often have to walk long distances for hours to reach water access points, which may at times not be working.

Mr. President,

Being aware that water will soon be a vital limiting factor in a world's development and therefore an important commodity, Lesotho needs to better position itself to lead in the production, protection, conservation, preservation, maintenance and economics of water through strategic guidance of the University of Lesotho, which is currently planning to set up a division of Water Institute. The assistance of UNESCO in this initiative is highly appreciated; so is its guidance on climate change issues.

Mr. President,

As a State Party to a number of Cultural Conventions including the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, our sole World Sole World Heritage Site, Sehlabathebe National Park was inscribed in 2013. Progress has been made towards bringing this asset to the required standards. Institutional and human resources capacity building programmes will accelerate achievement of this objective. Lesotho supports adoption by UNESCO of the 5th of May as African World Heritage Day in recognition of the place African Heritage holds for humanity.

Allow me to inform this august gathering that the Kingdom of Lesotho recently started the construction of the National Museum and Art Gallery. Our humble request and appeal to those Member States that have in their possession, Lesotho's cultural properties, is to return them. We however, know that some of the artifacts were gifts while others were given out for research purposes. A database of those important items is available.

Mr. President,

As I step down, we have witnessed with a great sense of commitment, the adoption of the framework for the Framework For Action 2030 programme following the successful Incheon World Education Forum. I would like to express our hope as the delegation of Lesotho that the financial constraints that has beset this organisation for some time now shall finally come to pass when negotiations between the Director General and our partners come to function sooner than later.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!