

**STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER  
OF THE  
KINGDOM OF LESOTHO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
MR. PAKALITHA MOSISILI  
AT THE  
HIGH LEVEL CONFERENCE ON THE  
WORLD FOOD SECURITY:  
THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE  
AND BIOENERGY**

**04 JUNE 2008  
ROME, ITALY**

**Chairperson,**

**Excellencies,**

This Conference is of extreme importance because it focuses the world's attention on a major global challenge - the challenge of eradicating poverty and hunger in the face of the threats posed by climate change. Indeed, this Conference serves to remind us that the security of access to food, a resource that is so critical for sustenance of human life, needs to be guaranteed and safeguarded through a coordinated global approach.

Over the past two decades, the world experienced a number of positive trends that opened up hitherto unprecedented prospects for the eradication of poverty, and genuine improvements in the quality of life for millions of people. International initiatives such as the Rome Declaration on World Food Security in 1996 and the adoption of the UN Millennium Development Goals four years later, were accompanied by strong economic growth; by improvement in the Official Development Assistance levels; by new awareness of trade and tourism opportunities, as well as by improved political stability and governance the world over.

But climate change and the rising costs of food and energy, with their negative impact on poverty reduction efforts, threaten to reverse the gains that have been made in the sectors just cited. In Africa, the situation is further compounded by the effects of HIV and AIDS and other pandemics.

It is unfortunate that the developing countries, while they emit the least of the atmosphere polluting gases, are the ones that bear the brunt of the negative effects of climate change, such as the loss of biodiversity, floods and droughts that further threaten food security and health.

I represent a country that has very fragile ecosystems and that is sensitive to climate variability. We have thus had more than our fair share of droughts and high intensity rainfall, severe cold and snowfall. The production of cereals, which is highly susceptible to climatic conditions, has been severely compromised. In fact, in the last thirty (30) years since 1978, agricultural production has consistently declined. Consequently, today it is very difficult, if not nigh impossible, to convince the youth that agriculture is a viable option. Something drastic, a revolution of sorts, needs to happen to change this mindset and attitude towards agriculture.

### **Excellencies,**

To achieve the goals of the World Food Summit in the face of the current challenges posed by climate change, urgent action is required from both developed and developing countries, the UN system and International Financial Institutions in a number of priority areas.

First, the need for higher investments in agriculture has been highlighted by the vulnerability of most countries to the rising food prices which threatens to drive millions of people deeper into poverty, particularly in the developing world. International support is required to help the developing countries to expand their agricultural sectors, focusing on diversification, higher productivity and sustainability.

Second, ensuring the predictability of official Development Assistance is another major priority. The partners from the developed world must honour their promises which they have made on the scaling up of ODA. That must be accompanied by the skills and technological transfers to assist developing countries to mitigate the impact of climate change and to adopt environmentally sustainable production patterns.

Third, it is equally important that efforts towards the acceleration of economic growth, on all fronts, must be advanced because food security is directly related to poverty. However, growth must be guided by policies that ensure equity. Recent events in the world have demonstrated that huge gaps in income, high unemployment and continuing poverty, can shake the very foundations not only of democracy but of humanity itself, and further complicate the efforts to extricate the developing world from poverty. Recent xenophobic tendencies and wholesale migrations in search of greener pastures must be a rude wake-up call to all of us. Desperate situations call for equally desperate measures to redress them.

Furthermore, the production of bio-fuels, though holding bright prospects for the future, must not be embarked upon without assessing its risks. It must be neither at the expense of production of food for basic human sustenance nor the protection of fragile ecosystems.

### **Excellencies,**

All countries must realize that the reduction of the conditions that are responsible for climate change is not a discretionary option but a collective responsibility of all nations. We need internationally binding regimes in the area of climate change. These are necessary to compel all countries to adhere to international conventions and to contribute to the global effort at reducing dangerous gas emissions. This is because the impact of climate change affects all humanity alike and cannot be confined to territorial boundaries. Although the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was signed in 1992, implementation of its recommendations remains very slow. The developed countries need political will to fulfill their obligations while the developing countries need assistance to implement their action plans under the convention.

We must pay tribute to those developed countries that continue to take the lead in helping the world to confront the challenges of climate change. Japan, in particular, must be singled-out for its effective initiatives. These include the latest "Cool Earth" initiative through which the Government of Japan has placed substantial resources at the disposal of the developing countries for climate change adaptation, mitigation and other environment-related activities.

The role of the Nordic countries, among others, is also highly commendable. We urge those countries that continue to pledge contributions to the global effort for the protection of biodiversity and mitigation of climate change to simplify their administrative procedures for accessing the pledged funds, so that the developing countries are enabled to benefit from such resources.

In conclusion, the Government of Lesotho remains committed to improving the livelihoods of the rural poor through sustainable implementation of adaptation strategies in agriculture. We will therefore continue to forge partnerships with the civil society, the private sector, the international organizations and local communities in an effort to free the people of Lesotho from the dehumanizing conditions of hunger and poverty. Let me end where I began: while I underscore and reiterate the importance of this conference to canvas a common understanding, I cannot overemphasize the absolute need for a clear program of action, accompanied by commitment of resources, to implement it.

I thank you.