



**ROYAL PALACE
KINGDOM OF LESOTHO**

**STATEMENT BY HIS MAJESTY THE KING LETSIE III ON THE
OCCASION OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
NUTRITION, ROME, 19-21 NOVEMBER, 2014**

**YOUR EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT OF THE 2ND INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON NUTRITION,
YOUR EXCELLENCIES HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT,
HONOURABLE MINISTERS,
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF FAO,
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF WHO,
HEADS OF THE UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES,
DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

**I AM HUMBLLED BY THE HONOUR AND PRIVILEGE OF BEING INVITED
BY THE DIRECTORS GENERAL OF BOTH THE FOOD AND
AGRICULTURE ORGANISATION AND WORLD HEALTH
ORGANISATION TO ATTEND AND ADDRESS THIS HIGH LEVEL
GATHERING ON THE OCCASION OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL**



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CONFERENCE ON NUTRITION. ONCE AGAIN, WE CONGRATULATE THE CONVENERS OF THIS MEETING FOR THEIR FORESIGHT IN BRINGING TOGETHER HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT AND OTHER EMINENT PERSONS TO DISCUSS THE URGENT NECESSITY OF PRIORITISING FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY. WE ARE ALSO DELIGHTED TO NOTE WITH MUCH APPRECIATION THE PARTICIPATION OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THIS IMPORTANT CONFERENCE WHICH IS INDICATION OF HIS SUPPORT AND DEDICATION TO THE CAUSE OF IMPROVING FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY.

YOUR EXCELLENCIES,

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

IN THE YEAR 2000, THE WORLD LEADERS ADOPTED THE EIGHT "MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS" AND THE ASSOCIATED THIRTY-FIVE MEASURABLE TARGETS, WHICH SET THE VISION OF GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT BY THE YEAR 2015. THE MILLENNIUM



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DEVELOPMENT GOALS INCLUDE, AMONGST OTHERS, HALVING POVERTY AND HUNGER BY 2015.

WITH LESS THAN A YEAR TO GO TO THE TARGET DATE FOR ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS, IT IS PLEASING TO NOTE THAT SOME ACHIEVEMENTS HAVE BEEN RECORDED IN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ACROSS AFRICA. THESE INCLUDE THE IMPRESSIVE REDUCTION IN EXTREME POVERTY; REMARKABLE INCREASE IN PRIMARY SCHOOL ENROLMENT, ESPECIALLY FOR GIRLS; AND INCREASED ACCESS TO IMPROVED DRINKING WATER FOR MANY FAMILIES ON THE CONTINENT, ALL OF WHICH HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF THE MOMENTUM GENERATED BY THE MDGS.

ON THE OTHER HAND, WE NOTE WITH DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THESE ACHIEVEMENTS ARE UNEVEN ACROSS AND AMONGST COUNTRIES ON THE CONTINENT AND THAT AFRICA IS STILL FACED WITH SEVERAL DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES, THE MAJORITY OF



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WHICH REQUIRE URGENT ACTION. AMONGST THESE ARE THE CONFLICTS IN SEVERAL PARTS OF THE CONTINENT AND THE RECURRING PUBLIC HEALTH OUTBREAKS INCLUDING THE RECENT **EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE** WHICH HAVE PUT A SINGNIFICANT STRESS ON THE ALREADY FRAGILE PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEMS AND THREATENED THE FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY IN SEVERAL PARTS OF WESTERN AND CENTRAL AFRICA.

**YOUR EXCELLENCIES,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

MANY COUNTRIES IN AFRICA ARE STILL CONFRONTED WITH MULTIPLE BURDENS OF MALNUTRITION, INCLUDING THE HIGH RATES OF STUNTING, WASTING AND MICRONUTRIENT DEFICIENCIES, EXISTING ALONGSIDE AN INCREASING RATE OF OVERWEIGHT, OBESITY AND DIET-RELATED NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES.



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OUR MEETING TODAY IS FOCUSED ON PRIORITISING ACTIONS REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY, POST 2015. AS THE AFRICAN NUTRITION CHAMPION, THIS MEETING GIVES ME A RARE OPPORTUNITY TO REFLECT ON SOME OF THE LESSONS LEARNED AND ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE AFRICAN LEADERS, SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS SOME FOURTEEN YEARS AGO.

FIRST, IT HAS BECOME MORE EVIDENT TODAY THAN AT ANY OTHER TIME IN THE CONTINENT'S HISTORY THAT NUTRITION IS CENTRAL TO AFRICA'S INCLUSIVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT; AND THAT THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC COSTS OF NOT ADDRESSING MALNUTRITION ARE ENORMOUS FOR AFRICA. ACCORDING TO THE COST OF HUNGER IN AFRICA (COHA) STUDY THAT WAS LED BY THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION, SOME COUNTRIES ON THE CONTINENT LOSE BETWEEN TWO PERCENT (2%) TO SIXTEEN PERCENT (16%) OF THEIR GROSS DOMESTIC



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PRODUCT (GDP) BECAUSE OF POOR NUTRITION. THIS CLEARLY SHOWS THAT WITHOUT IMPROVED FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY, OUR VISION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE POST 2015 ERA, WILL NOT BE ACHIEVED.

THE PAST DECADE ALSO DEMONSTRATED THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND COVERAGE OF THE INTERVENTIONS THAT ARE PROVEN TO HAVE DIRECT BENEFIT ON NUTRITION, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME, MAKING INTERVENTIONS IN OTHER SECTORS SUCH AS AGRICULTURE, SOCIAL PROTECTION, WATER AND SANITATION MORE NUTRITION SENSITIVE. IN THIS REGARD, I WOULD LIKE TO COMMEND INITIATIVES SUCH AS THE LANCET NUTRITION SERIES, THE **SCALING UP NUTRITION (SUN) MOVEMENT**, THE **REACH INITIATIVE** FOR SHEDDING LIGHT ON ACTIONS THAT NEED TO BE UNDERTAKEN IN ORDER TO IMPROVE FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY IN THE CONTINENT. IT IS, THEREFORE, INCUMBENT UPON US AS LEADERS, IN OUR RESPECTIVE JURISDICTIONS, TO



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TRANSLATE THIS KNOWLEDGE INTO CONCRETE AND SUSTAINABLE ACTIONS TO ENSURE POSITIVE IMPACT ON OUR POPULATIONS.

**EXCELLENCIES,
DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

PERUSAL OF SEVERAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES ACROSS THE CONTINENT, DEMONSTRATES THAT NUTRITION IS AT THE CENTRE OF AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT AGENDA. AFRICA'S STRATEGIC ROADMAP FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT OVER THE NEXT FIFTY YEARS, THE AGENDA 2063, ENVISIONS A CONTINENT THAT IS FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURE AND FREE FROM POVERTY. THIS FORWARD LOOKING STRATEGIC DOCUMENT ALSO SETS OUT A VISION TO ELIMINATE ALL FORMS OF FOOD INSECURITY AND HUNGER AS WELL AS TO REDUCE THE LEVELS OF CHILDHOOD STUNTING TO TEN PERCENT (10%) AS EARLY AS THE YEAR 2025. IT IS, HOWEVER, CLEAR THAT THIS VISION CAN ONLY BE REALISED IF



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THERE IS A STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE POLITICAL COMMITMENT BY THE CONTINENT'S LEADERS AND ITS CITIZENS, AS WELL AS INCREASED RESOURCES' FLOWS TOWARDS SOUND POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES IN NUTRITION AND OTHER RELATED SECTORS.

OTHER EQUALLY IMPORTANT POLICY PRONOUNCEMENTS BY AFRICAN LEADERS INCLUDE:

1. DECLARING 2014 AS THE "YEAR OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY", A DECLARATION THAT HAS STIMULATED NUTRITION ADVOCACY AND INITIATIVES ACROSS THE CONTINENT;
2. RENEWAL OF COMMITMENT TO THE COMPREHENSIVE AFRICAN AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (CAADP) WHEREBY IN 2003, GOVERNMENTS COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO ALLOCATE TEN PERCENT (10%) OF THEIR NATIONAL BUDGET TO AGRICULTURE WITH A VIEW TO INCREASING FOOD



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PRODUCTION BY AT LEAST SIX PERCENT (6%)
ANNUALLY;

3. ADOPTION OF A SEPERATE DECLARATION WHICH CALLS ON THE MEMBERS OF THE AFRICAN UNION TO ENSURE THAT FOOD PRODUCTION IS ACCOMPANIED BY OTHER RELEVANT INTERVENTIONS TO IMPROVE NUTRITION, ESPECIALLY DURING THE FIRST 1000 DAYS OF LIFE; AND
4. ADOPTION OF A COMMON AFRICAN POSITION ON THE POST 2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA IN ORDER TO COMPLETE THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS ON THE MILLENNIUM GOALS BY 2025.

YOUR EXCELLENCIES,

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

OUR COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCES TO DATE INDICATE THAT HUNGER, FOOD INSECURITY AND MALNUTRITION CAN BE



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OVERCOME. THE SAME EXPERIENCES ALSO INFORM US THAT IT IS CRITICAL TO HAVE SUSTAINED INTERVENTIONS, GOOD GOVERNANCE, STRONG COLLABORATION AMONGST PARTNERS SUCH AS THE UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES, CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR. ONCE AGAIN, THE SCALING UP NUTRITION (SUN) MOVEMENT AND ITS ACTION ROADMAP, PROVIDES US WITH A BLUEPRINT FOR SUCH COORDINATED ACTION, SHARING OF EXPERIENCES AND MOBILISING AND TRACKING FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO IMPROVE NUTRITION IN AFRICA.

**YOUR EXCELLENCIES,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

IN CONCLUDING MY REMARKS, I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO IMPLORER ALL THE LEADERS AND THE CITIZENS OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENT TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARY RESOURCES AND AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT NEEDED TO



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SUSTAIN THE GAINS WE HAVE MADE SO FAR IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION IN AFRICA. AMONG OTHER THINGS, SUCH AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT, SHOULD INCLUDE STRENGTHENING THE HUMAN RESOURCE AND INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY TO ENSURE THAT TRAINED STAFF WITH APPROPRIATE SKILLS ARE AVAILABLE BOTH AT NATIONAL AND SUB-NATIONAL LEVELS TO DELIVER THE MUCH NEEDED QUALITY SOCIAL SERVICE.

FINALLY, I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO APPEAL TO ALL STAKEHOLDERS TO EMBRACE THE COMMON AFRICAN POSITION ON THE POST 2015 AGENDA AND TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VARIOUS DECLARATIONS ON NUTRITION AND FOOD SECURITY ACROSS THE CONTINENT.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION