



STATEMENT

BY

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PRIME MINISTER OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

AT THE UNITED STATES-AFRICA LEADERS SUMMIT

6 AUGUST, 2014, WASHINGTON D.C.

Your Majesties,

Your Excellency, President Barack Obama,

Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr. Chairman

At the outset, I congratulate You, Mr. President, for Your foresight and leadership acumen in hosting this august Summit where we share ideas and exchange views on very important aspects relating to the United States of America and Africa within an aura of friendship, peace and tranquility.

Our themes for this Summit, **Investing in Africa`s Future, Regional Peace and Stability, and Governing for the Next Generation** are very apt and most relevant in view of the challenges which face our world today. The themes will afford us an avenue to gauge how we can alter the future and bequeath to next generations a peaceful and prosperous world.

Mr. Chairman,

For us, **Investing in Africa`s Future**, entails building resilient and sustainable economies capable of unleashing Africa`s full potential and creating jobs which will free millions of our peoples from the shackles of poverty. It also requires addressing the challenges posed by climate change, desertification and land degradation, drought and loss of biodiversity. It involves harnessing the necessary technology, developing state-of-the-art infrastructure as well as developing our agricultural, industrial and services sectors. Further, for a continent so much endowed with abundant natural resources, **Investing in Africa`s Future**, should, automatically, involve enhanced sustainable natural resource management and value addition. Most importantly, **Investing in Africa`s Future** should be synonymous with youth development and engagement, thus we welcome and appreciate the Young African Leaders Initiative pioneered by the United States Government as a signature effort to invest in the next generation of African Leaders. The youth is indeed the hope of our future.

Mr. Chairman,

Investing in Africa`s Future further requires of us, to improve the capacity of our economies to produce goods and services for regional and global markets while at the same time undertaking reforms to make it easy to trade across our borders. In this regard, we commend the United States of America for the enactment of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) which has become the bedrock of trade and investment on both sides of the Atlantic. AGOA has been the pillar of Lesotho`s development in terms of contribution to Gross Domestic Product, augmenting Foreign Direct Investment and generating employment especially for women in the textiles and garments industry thus igniting hope to prosper for our peoples.

Mr. Chairman,

Lesotho therefore strongly appeals to the current U.S. Congress to re-authorize AGOA beyond 2015 seamlessly and expeditiously for at least a period of 15 years in order to preserve the already prevailing benefits and safeguard the apparel and textile industry from previous devastations. We plead that AGOA's renewal beyond 2015, should also be co-terminus with the Third Country Provision, which has been the backbone of AGOA, since Lesotho's main exports are textiles and garments which account for 90% (38, 741) of employment generated by manufacturing industries in Lesotho.

Mr. Chairman,

Lesotho is also in the process of developing its AGOA National Response Strategy which is focusing on strategic sectors such as Agro- products (horticulture), Leather and Leather products, Wool and Mohair, Handicrafts, Mining and others which the local Entrepreneurs can have potential and comparative advantage while also enjoying the AGOA Preference.

Mr. Chairman,

Investing in Africa's Future also requires of us, to quell the energy crisis which has beset the continent. It is unacceptable in the 21st century that Africa could have a 70 % energy deficit while it has unlimited but yet untapped energy resources. It therefore behoves us to turn the tide and redouble our efforts in exploring with the United States mutually beneficial energy projects. The Power Africa Initiative which focuses on renewable energy power projects, provides an ideal model for cooperation in this area and it is our sincere hope that this initiative will expand to other countries including Lesotho which command enormous potential in renewable energies such as hydropower, wind and solar energy. Further, we applaud the US Congress for passing the Electrify Africa Act which encourages US government agencies' support for the development of low-cost, base load energy resources. We cannot sufficiently emphasize the importance of this kind of approach in our region in terms of improving economic growth, health and education.

Mr. Chairman,

There is no doubt that Africa cannot hope to prosper without **Peace and Regional Stability**. Although the peace and security situation in the continent remains largely stable in most countries, there are still pockets of conflict which need to be addressed. The threat of terrorism is escalating in most parts of the continent and there are emerging linkages between terrorist groups, armed groups and transnational organized crime syndicates. We should therefore, without any delay, deal, once and for all, with these challenges. Amongst others, we need to address the root causes of conflict by tackling economic and social inequalities and exclusion; strengthening good and inclusive governance; fighting all forms of discrimination; and forging unity in diversity through democratic practices and mechanisms at the local, national and continental levels.

Moreover we need to strengthen our cross- border cooperation for the resolution of disputes and the promotion of cross-border security. In this regard we require effective partnership with others including the United States to support capacity building for conflict resolution and stabilization; and promoting the use of mediators for conflict resolution. We further implore the United States

to work hand in glove with us in addressing all these within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). In particular we would like to invite the United States to provide support to the African Union's efforts to reach full operationalization of the African Standby Force (ASF) and its Rapid Deployment Capability (RDC) by 2015 as well as the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC). For us in Lesotho, we will be making our modest contribution toward this goal by hosting on behalf of Africa a field training exercise coined AMANI AFRICA II later this year.

Mr. Chairman,

On the issue of **Governing for the Next Generation**, it is a strong conviction of my delegation that the prevalence of democratic elections in many countries in Africa and smooth transitions bear testimony to the resolve of African countries to bequeath to the next generation an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in global arena. In Lesotho, for instance, 2013 marked the 20th year of the country's return to continuous constitutional democracy while in 2012 we formed the first ever Coalition Government thus bridging the perennial political divisions which had hitherto tormented our country. We have also left no stone unturned in our quest to bridge the gender gap and provide our women the same opportunities as men. Corruption also has been reduced in many countries in Africa and we, in Lesotho, have identified fighting corruption as a major hurdle to our country's prosperity and it has become the major focus of the Government with resounding success. We have also made remarkable advances in areas such as net primary school enrolment, gender parity in primary education, immunization coverage, and reversing the trend of the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Notwithstanding the progress we are making, we are still grappling with challenges which require of us to build democratic institutions and entrench democratic norms in our society for the sake of posterity. We also still contend with challenges in the quality of education, child and maternal mortality, quality of health services, and access to sanitation, amongst others. We therefore need to build partnerships with others including the United States in these areas as it is through coming together that we can hope to overcome the challenges which mankind face.

Mr. Chairman,

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to sincerely register our appreciation, on behalf of the Government and People of Lesotho, to the Government and People of the United States for the sterling support they continue to provide in our pursuit for development. Amongst others, I wish to single out the Millennium Challenge Account which has significantly improved our healthcare systems, water resources and private sector development. Your efforts are really worthy of praise.

I thank You.