

**SPEECH BY HONOURABLE MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES,**

**KINGDOM OF LESOTHO,**

**MR. T. MAKHAKHE**

**. TO THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF PARTIES TO THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK**

**CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

**MADAM PRESIDENT**

**HONOURABLE MINISTERS**

**HEADS OF DELEGATION**

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.**

**IT IS AN HONOUR AND INDEED A RARE PRIVILEGE FOR ME THAT I ADDRESS THIS HISTORIC FIRST CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE.**

**DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES, I REPRESENT A COUNTRY THAT IS POTENTIALLY EXTREMELY VULNERABLE TO AND IS ALREADY BEING RAVAGED BY THE EFFECTS OF THE CLIMATE BEHAVIOUR, MORE ESPECIALLY IN THE LAST FEW YEARS. THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO IS SITUATED IN THE MID-LATITUDES, WITH A CHARACTERISTICALLY VARIABLE CLIMATE THAT EXHIBITS EXTREMES OF WEATHER SUCH AS DROUGHTS AND FLOODS, AND SUB-ZERO AND HIGH TEMPERATURES. IT IS MOUNTAINOUS AND POSSESSES AN EXTREMELY FRAGILE ECOSYSTEM. IT ALREADY FACES MOST SERIOUS PROBLEMS IN LARGE SCALE LAND DEGRADATION AND DESERTIFICATION. AS A LAND-LOCKED COUNTRY, MY COUNTRY IN MORE THAN ONE WAY MEETS THE CRITERIA OF A SPECIAL COUNTRY AS STIPULATED UNDER ARTICLES 4, PARAGRAPH 8 OF THE CONVENTION. IT IS IN PART BECAUSE OF THESE FACTORS THAT WE ATTACH GREAT IMPORTANCE ON THE QUESTION OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS EFFECTS.**

FROM 1978, AND PARTICULARLY SINCE 1991, WE HAVE BEEN EXPERIENCING LOW RAINFALL. THE YEAR 1994 WAS THE DRIEST IN OUR RECORDED HISTORY, AND TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, TEMPERATURES SINCE NOVEMBER HAVE BEEN VERY HIGH. THE DROUGHT IS CONTINUING AND WE ALREADY SEE AND FEEL ITS IMPACTS: PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT AT THE END OF THE CURRENT CROPPING YEAR IS VERY LOW; WATER RESOURCES, INCLUDING THE UNDERGROUND RESERVES, ARE ALMOST DEPLETED; LIVESTOCK IS DYING IN NUMBERS; AND HUMAN LIVES HAVE BEEN LOST THROUGH OUTBREAKS OF DISEASES ASSOCIATED WITH THE DROUGHT AND OCCASSIONAL HEATWAVES. THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT IS DETERIORATING RAPIDLY AS THE DESERTIFICATION PROCESS INTENSIFIES; AND THE LAND'S CARRYING CAPACITY IS DIMINISHING AT AN ALARMING RATE. IN THE LAST TWENTY YEARS THE PERCENTAGE OF ARABLE LAND HAS SHRUNK FROM 13% TO APPROXIMATELY 9% OF THE WHOLE COUNTRY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE ARE TOLD THAT THE DROUGHT AFFLICTING SOUTHERN AFRICA FOR MANY YEARS NOW IS PROBABLY NOT A MANIFESTATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE, BUT A NORMAL CLIMATE FLUCTUATION, AND THAT CLIMATE CHANGE ITSELF WOULD HAVE MORE HARMFUL RESULTS, ESPECIALLY AT THE LATITUTIONAL POSITION OF MY COUNTRY. WE ARE ADVISED THAT WITH CLIMATE CHANGE, THE HYDROLOGICAL CYCLE WOULD INTENSIFY, AND IN MY COUNTRY WE WOULD SEE MORE SEVERE DROUGHTS, BUT ALSO HEAVIER FLOODS WHEN IT RAINED. DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES, THIS MAKES US EVEN MORE CONCERNED ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE, AS WE REALISE THAT CLIMATE IS A FUNDAMENTAL FACTOR IN SUSTAINING EARTH'S NATURAL SYSTEMS, HUMAN HEALTH AND THE ECONOMIES OF NATIONS, AND THEREFORE THAT IT BECOMES IMPOSSIBLE FOR NATIONS TO PLAN THEIR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IF THE FUTURE CLIMATE BEHAVIOUR IS UNCERTAIN. WE

REALISE THAT STABLE CLIMATE IS A BASIC CONDITION FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF LIFE ITSELF.

MADAM PRESIDENT, I THEREFORE WISH TO EMPHASIZE THE POSITION OF THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF LESOTHO BY URGING A SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE. IT IS OUR VIEW THAT THE PLANET EARTH IS HOME FOR ALL OF US, AND THAT CLIMATE KNOWS NO POLITICAL BOUNDARY. WE ADVOCATE COORDINATION AND UNITY OF ACTION AMONGST ALL THE COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD TO PROTECT AND SUSTAIN OUR MOST FUNDAMENTAL RESOURCE, - CLIMATE - A RESOURCE THAT FOR TOO LONG HAS BEEN TAKEN FOR GRANTED BY MANKIND UNFORTUNATELY. ALL OF US, ALL NATIONALITIES, CARRY AN ENORMOUS RESPONSIBILITY FOR SAFEGUARDING THE FUTURE OF THE EARTH AND CLIMATE AS FUTURE GENERATIONS HAVE A RIGHT TO ENJOY A HOSPITABLE CLIMATE.

MADAM PRESIDENT, MY COUNTRY IS TOTALLY COMMITTED TO THE UNFCCC. HOWEVER, OUR CAPACITY TO CONTRIBUTE EFFECTIVELY TO THE INTERNATIONAL EFFORT TO MITIGATE CLIMATE CHANGE IS SEVERELY LIMITED DUE TO INSUFFICIENT FINANCIAL, TECHNOLOGICAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES. IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT I CALL FOR THE INITIATION OF PROGRAMMES BETWEEN DEVELOPED COUNTRY PARTIES AND MY COUNTRY, AS WELL AS OTHER DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. SUCH COOPERATION SHOULD AIM AT LONG-TERM CAPACITY BUILDING TO ENABLE THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO PREPARE AND TIMEOUSLY SUBMIT NATIONAL PROGRAMMES TO MITIGATE CLIMATE CHANGE, AND TO DEVELOP RESPONSE AND ADAPTATION STRATEGIES BECAUSE IF WE CANNOT STOP THE CLIMATE CHANGE, WE SHOULD SPARE NO EFFORT TO HARNESS IT FOR THE BENEFIT OF MANKIND.

WE NOTE THE COMMITMENTS OF ANNEX 1 COUNTRY PARTIES, BUT WE ARE CONCERNED THAT THEY MAY BE INADEQUATE TO SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE

THE RISKS OF CLIMATE CHANGE. AS SUCH WE SUPPORT THE FORMULATION OF EMISSION PROTOCOLS AND OTHER INITIATIVES TO SEEK MORE BINDING AND ADEQUATE TARGETS, TIMETABLES AND FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS UPON ANNEX 1 PARTIES.

TO DATE FINANCIAL SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, THROUGH BILATERAL OR MULTILATERAL CHANNELS IS INSIGNIFICANT TO ENABLE THEM TO MEET THEIR COMMITMENTS UNDER THE CONVENTION. WE THEREFORE SUPPORT A RESTRUCTURED GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY THAT WOULD BE TRANSPARENT, SENSITIVE TO THE NEEDS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRY NEEDS AND ENABLE THEM TO RESPOND FULLY TO IMPLEMENTING THE DECISIONS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO COMMEND THE WORK DONE BY THE WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION (WMO), IN BRINGING TO THE FORE THE QUESTION OF CLIMATE CHANGE. INDEED IT IS NO WONDER THAT THE REPUTATION OF WMO AS A LEADING ORGANIZATION WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS FAMILY HAS GROWN BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS IN THE LAST FEW YEARS. I WISH TO COMMEND ALSO THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP) FOR ITS WORK IN HIGHLIGHTING THE POTENTIAL EFFECT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE ENVIRONMENT. I CONGRATULATE THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE (IPCC), FOR PRODUCING REPORTS THAT HAVE GUIDED NEGOTIATIONS THAT LED TO THE CONCLUSION OF THE CLIMATE CONVENTION. IT IS MY HOPE THAT THE IPCC AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS LIKE THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF SCIENTIFIC UNIONS (ICSU), WILL CONTINUE PROVIDING ADVICE TO GUIDE THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES AND ITS SUBSIDIARY BODIES.

**THANK YOU.**