

**Remarks by UN Resident Coordinator, Salvator Niyonzima at the
Post-Elections National Dialogue in Lesotho: Reforms, Rule of Law
and Nation Building**

Lesotho National Convention Centre, Maseru, 18 October 2017

Bo-Me le bo-Ntate, Khotsong!

ALLOW ME TO PAY MY RESPECTS TO:

HIS MAJESTY KING LETSIE III,

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE PRIME MINISTER,

**YOUR EXCELLENCY CYRIL RAMAPHOSA, THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA,**

HONOURABLE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE,

HONOURABLE SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY,

HIS LORDSHIP PRESIDENT OF THE COURT OF APPEAL,

HER LADYSHIPSHIP THE CHIEF JUSTICE,

**HONOURABLE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER MONYANE MOLELEKI AND
HONOURABLE MINISTERS OF HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT,**

**THEIR LORDSHIPS JUDGES OF THE COURT OF APPEAL AND THE HIGH
COURT,**

YOUR EXCELLENCIES MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS,

HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

LEADERS OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND CHURCH LEADERS,

THE GOVERNMENT SECRETARY,

HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR OF MASERU,

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES,

CHAIRPERSONS OF STATUTORY BODIES AND PRINCIPAL SECRETARIES,

**HEADS OF DISCIPLINED FORCES, SECURITY AND CORRECTIONAL
SERVICES,**

HEADS OF ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS AND PARASTATAL ENTERPRISES,

**REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR, CIVIL SOCIETY
ORGANIZATIONS AND MEDIA HOUSES,**

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

ALL PROTOCOL OBSERVED

1. I would like to begin by thanking the organizers for inviting me to make these remarks on behalf of the United Nations family in Lesotho at this important event which you have called “Post-Election National Dialogue – Reforms, Rule of Law and Nation Building.” I duly recognize that this meeting is the result of the initiative by civil society and applaud them for the vision and the effort to bring it into fruition. The fact that civil society actors can bring together such a diverse group of people is testimony to the positive role that citizens can play in shaping the affairs of their country. In this regard, I congratulate the Lesotho Council of NGOs and the Christian Council of Churches and the Heads of Churches who with the support of the European Union, facilitated the signing of the Reforms Pledge by a majority of the political parties just ahead of the e June election. On my own behalf and that of the UN family in Lesotho, I bring our best wishes to the organizers and all the people of Lesotho as you gather for this important conversation. I join you all in looking forward not only to a success meeting today and tomorrow, but also to a positive application of the idea of dialogue at this juncture in Lesotho’s history as the country prepares to launch momentous reforms.

2. Allow me to specially acknowledge H.E. Cyril Ramaphosa, the Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa and the SADC Facilitator for Lesotho both for his presence here today, and for his tireless effort in support of peace and stability in Lesotho. The UN greatly appreciates the leadership role of SADC and is fully committed to ensuring that its own efforts are fully aligned and complementary to those of SADC. We have had fruitful exchanges with the Executive Secretary of SADC and the Lesotho Oversight Committee and look forward to our continued collaboration. Thank you, Your Excellency.

3. As indicated, the theme of this two-day gathering is “Post-election national dialogue in Lesotho: Reforms, rule of law and nation building. Each one of the ideas in this encompassing theme provides a basis for reflection on issues of fundamental importance to Lesotho,

and I would like to pose a few questions around each one of the ideas in the theme.

4. The first question would be, why post-election dialogue? This gathering comes not long after the 3 June 2017 snap election. My understanding from the organizers is that the idea of 'post-election dialogue' is in recognition that, despite the resounding approval of the 3 June election as free and fair, there have been residual feelings of dissatisfaction among some of the stakeholders in that election. This lingering discontent, if not attended to, could stand in the way of the national consensus needed to steer the country through fundamental reforms that all political stakeholders and citizens agree are needed. I suggest that we need to ask ourselves a further question: Is the post-election discontent, as it has been called, symptomatic of deep challenges in our politics and democracy? If so, these issues need to be explored as part of our dialogue. I therefore see this 'post-election dialogue' as an initial step in national reflection and consensus-building. I am glad for the presence among us today of H.E. Deputy President Ramaphosa, whose country and our neighbor, South Africa, offers useful lessons for consensus-building. I am here talking about the process in 1994 which South Africans called creatively "Talks about Talks" as they grappled with deep-seated issues even as they sought to redefine a new South Africa as it emerged from apartheid. I am sure that, given his close involvement in it, DP Ramaphosa would agree that without these 'talks about talks', agreement about the future and on a constitution for a new South Africa would have been near impossible. The lesson here is that it is important to have the space to put on the table what the issues requiring resolution might be. I see this post-election dialogue as Lesotho's 'talks about talks' which could pave the way for consensus-building on the way forward. I urge that even as we talk about 'post-election' issues, we resist allowing ourselves to be stuck in the past or be caught in a game of finger-pointing. Instead, we should do so as way of bringing closure to the elections, while isolating the issues that need further dialogue and could help us strengthen our democracy and nationhood.

5. The second idea in the theme leads me to the question, what is national dialogue in the context of Lesotho? According to David Bohm "Dialogue is the collective way of opening up judgments and

assumptions.” Its objective is not to analyze things, or to win an argument, but rather, to suspend one’s opinions in order to listen to everybody’s opinions. If we do this, David Bohm suggests, “truth emerges unannounced—not that we have chosen it.” It would be a futile exercise to participate in dialogue and yet remain rooted only in one’s opinion on what is wrong or best for the country. In your own beautiful language, there is a saying that ‘BOHLALE HA BO AHE NTLOANA NGOE’: wisdom does not reside in one household or individual.

6. The idea of ‘a national dialogue’ has now become a part of Lesotho’s discourse. The national nature of the proposed dialogue recognizes the need for it to be inclusive of all Basotho – or at least their interests. This gathering today, bringing together as it does a wide array of Basotho stakeholders, represents a major step towards the proposed national dialogue. It would nevertheless be important for all Basotho to reflect on the question, what really do we want out of our national dialogue? Is it to build consensus on the proposed reforms? Is it to examine our past and bring national healing and reconciliation? Or is it both? How we answer these questions has implications for the design of the national dialogue, its participants, the timelines, and resources.
7. These questions need NOT be daunting, however, given Lesotho’s rich traditional of dialogue and consensus building. I encourage us to look to this rich tradition for ideas about how we may dialogue as a nation. Lesotho has a historical, almost legendary, connection to the concept and practice of peace. The Great Founder of the Kingdom, King Moshoeshoe I, built the nation on a rich history and tradition of consensus, peace and diplomacy among Basotho and between Basotho and their neighbours. Indeed, the peace tradition of the Basotho is encapsulated in the famous words of King Moshoeshoe I who famously said: “KHOTSO KE KHAITSELI E AKA” (“Peace is my sister” – or brother).
8. The rich tradition is further captured in our everyday salutation of **Khotso, Pula, Nala (Peace, Rain and Prosperity)**. As the UN Resident Coordinator, I have been fascinated by the fact that the Global Agenda 2030 and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed by Member States of the United Nations are anchored

on 5 key pillars: **People** – Ending poverty and hunger so as to ensure dignity and equality; **Prosperity** – fulfilling lives in harmony with nature; **Peace** – peaceful, just and inclusive societies; **Partnership** – global solidarity; and **Planet** – protecting our natural resources and climate for future generations. In their entirety, the 5 pillars of the SDGs bear a striking and poetic resemblance to and resonance with the Lesotho national motto of Khotso, Pula, Nala.

9. So, as we gather today to dialogue, I urge that, first, we seek to be guided in our deliberations by the spirit of our Founding Father and recognize each other for who we are: sisters and brothers who need each other. Second, I urge that as we think about national dialogue, we seek wisdom from Lesotho's culture and tradition of peace. What lessons can be learned from Lesotho's traditional institutions and from other societies within and outside of the region that could help our process of national dialogue?
10. With regard to rule of law as reflected in the theme, it is obvious to everyone that a society that disregards or disrespects the rule of law courts its own downfall. Promoting the rule of law requires the building of strong, independent and accountable institutions, as well encapsulated in Sustainable Goal number 16. As we dialogue, it will be necessary to introspect about how we could strengthen our institutions so that justice and human rights are respected at all times. I note that one of the issues of discussion in this forum will be the idea of transitional justice. At the core of this concept is the question of how societies respond to the important questions of ensuring justice, rule of law, human rights and accountability, on the one hand, and ensuring continued stability, national unity and reconciliation, on the other. While there are no easy answers to these issues, there are wrong answers. These wrong answers include when we completely ignore the need to uphold the rule of law in favour of a facile reconciliation; or when we appear to blindly pursue past wrongdoers without due process or attention to its effects to our pursuit for long-term national unity and stability. I hope that this gathering will engage creatively with these dilemmas and how the national dialogue and our rich tradition might help to resolve them.

11. Your Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa, Deputy Prime Minister Monyane Moleleki, bo-mme le bo-ntate,
12. Let me finally touch on the idea of reforms which is part of today's theme. The leadership of Lesotho, across all the political parties, deserves congratulations for the collective recognition that the country urgently needs to prioritize reforms. I want to applaud the strong statements of commitment to reforms that have been made by the Right Honourable the Prime Minister Thomas Thabane and other members of His Majesty's government. There is no doubt that there exists the political will to carry out the reforms. What remains now is to quickly move the reforms forward.
13. In this regard, allow me to indicate that discussions between the Government and the UN are at an advanced stage towards the provision of initial technical support to the reforms. This initial support will entail assisting the government, in consultation with the reforms stakeholders, to develop a common narrative, an overarching framework and detailed actions for the reforms. This support follows a request made to the UN Secretary General by the Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister during the recent 72nd General Assembly of the UN.
14. The UN technical support will be guided by, among others, the principles of complementarity, which includes alignment to the efforts of SADC, the government and Lesotho's civil society; national ownership; and inclusivity.

Your Excellency Deputy President Ramaphosa, Hon. Deputy Prime Minister Moleleki, ladies and gentlemen;

15. Allow me to conclude my remarks by expressing the UN's continued support to the peace, stability and sustainable development of Lesotho. A great future awaits Lesotho. But this is only if we all work together to make the right decisions today, even if difficult ones, in order to secure the future we desire, The Lesotho we want. The reforms provide a great opportunity to design our future. Dialogue is an important part in defining and building a consensus on that future. The dialogue must however be followed by action; action in the best interest of Lesotho. That is how legacies are made.

16. The UN Family in Lesotho and other development partners stand in solidarity with you and SADC as you dialogue and design the future.

I thank you!

Khotso!!! Pila!!! Nala!!