

*Checked against delivery*

**Statement delivered by  
Honourable Mahala Molapo, Minister of Agriculture and  
Food Security of the Lesotho  
on the occasion  
41<sup>st</sup> Session of the FAO Conference, Rome, Italy (22-29 June 2019)  
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Thank you Chair.

Honourable Ministers,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of His Majesty King Letsie III, FAO's Special Ambassador for Nutrition, the Government and People of the Kingdom of Lesotho, allow me to congratulate Mr Qu Dongyu on his appointment as the new Director General of FAO and to wish him well in his assignment. We also wish to reiterate our unwavering support to him in the execution of his mandate to end hunger by the year 2030, and achieve the objectives of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

I also wish to thank Dr Jose Graziano Da Silva who has done a sterling job during his terms at the helm of this Organization. We wish him well in his future endeavours.

Mr Chairperson,

The importance of meeting the Sustainable Development Goals by the year 2030 cannot be overemphasized, and this year's theme of "Migration, Agriculture and Rural Development", could not have come at a more opportune time.

The state of Food and Agriculture is of paramount importance to the Kingdom of Lesotho and its people as a landlocked country which relies on agricultural production for its livelihood. Lesotho faces immense challenges related to the effects of climate change. The irregular weather patterns have adversely affected Lesotho's cropping season, which has inadvertently become shorter due to longer winters and shorter summers, long periods of droughts or heavy rainfall of which at times makes it impossible to plough. This has, therefore, led to the significant decrease in crop production.

The decrease in crop production affects most rural population, which is dependent on agriculture. This has led to massive migration to the urban areas thus overburdening the already overcharged financial resources in urban areas. This migration caused by the negative impacts of climate change further extends to our neighbouring country (Republic of South Africa) of which Lesotho is an enclave.

Therefore, this means that for us, it cannot be business as usual. We need to upscale our efforts in mitigating the climate change effects in rural areas by introducing climate smart agriculture focusing on youth and women who are the back bone of agriculture in rural areas. Lesotho is grateful to FAO for the Technical Assistance extended to us thus far through the FAO country office. We however realise the need to cooperate more in other areas to improve our work in Water and Rangeland Management, Land Degradation and many other areas including but not limited to nutrition sensitive agriculture.

Mr Chairperson, ladies and gentlemen,

In Lesotho we see the need to bring local needs to the centre role of FAO and work together with FAO through its innovative solutions.

Mr Chairperson,

Lesotho welcomes the recommendations made in the *Report on the State of Food and Agriculture: Migration, Agriculture and Rural Development*. We agree that despite the challenges that it presents, migration is indeed part and parcel of economic, social and human development. We however wish to

reinforce our believe that Countries should intensify their efforts to develop rural infrastructure and create creative opportunities in rural areas in order to avoid migration. As a country, Lesotho is implementing Smallholder Agriculture Development and Wool and Mohair Promotion projects, which are meant to improvethe farmers living in the rural areas through establishing piggery, poultry projects, protected agriculture, seedling production, fruit drying production and the production of high quality fibre through production of improved breeds of Merino and Angora goats.

The Government is further assisting farmers through 50 percent subsidised agricultural inputs and primary tillage which have proven to be very costly to the farmers. In an attempt to ensure food production despite the challenging effects of climate change, the Government is also assisting farmers through the establishment of irrigation schemes meant to increase production of vegetables for local consumption and curb high food importation from outside the country.

We wish to conclude by stating that, Lesotho notes the challenges with Budget that FAO is faced with and we welcome the incoming Director General's position to establish an Assistant Director General for Resource Mobilisation as financial resources play a pivotal role in the work of FAO.

Thank you Mr Chair and thank you for your attention.