

Allow me to pay my respects to:

His Majesty King Letsie III;

The Right Honourable the Prime Minister;

The President of the Senate;

The Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly;

His Lordship the Chief Justice;

The Honourable Deputy Prime Minister;

Honourable Ministers;

Your Excellency Ambassador Paula Amadei, Head of the
Delegation of the European Union to Lesotho;

Excellencies, Heads of Diplomatic Mission and International
Organizations;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am honoured to stand before you to deliver remarks, celebrating in solidarity with the European people on this auspicious occasion commemorating the founding of the European Union popularly known as Europe Day. In the same spirit, allow me, Your

Excellency, Paola Amadei, on behalf of the Government and the people of Lesotho, and indeed on my own behalf to convey our best wishes to the President of the European Council, His Excellency Charles Michel and Her Excellency, the President of the European Union, Her Excellency Madam Ursula von der Leyen.

Your Excellency,

From just six countries in 1957 to twenty-seven member states today, the world has witnessed as diverse nations with different cultures, languages and traditions decided to unify and grow together in solidarity for the benefit of their people. The European Union has set a great example of unity based on the mutual respect of fundamental core values like democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

It is truly inspiring not only how these nations mutually co-exist in peace, but how they also maintain strong relationships; both bilateral and multilateral outside of the EU borders, collectively and individually. The establishment of the one hundred and forty (140) European Union delegation Offices worldwide is a clear example of this. It is a system that many look up to, and hopefully will emulate.

Your Excellency,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Lesotho and the European Union enjoy a strong partnership that has grown steadily over the years based on common values, mutual respect and cooperation. Within this partnership the EU has supported Lesotho's development efforts in the following sectors; Education, health, social protection, rural development and governance among others. These interventions have contributed significantly in reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and improving the livelihoods of the people of Lesotho.

Your Excellencies,

One of the biggest challenges the world is facing currently is the issue of Climate Change crisis. Governments, together and individually need to urgently adopt strategies and plans of action to mitigate the negative impacts of climate change. We can all testify to its devastating aftermath; extreme weather, changes in season that affect food production and tsunamis that claim many innocent lives among others. In our case we have had unprecedented heavy rains resulting in loss of life, destruction of

critical infrastructure and private property and negatively affecting many livelihoods.

It is in this light that we applaud the European Union for acting by introducing the green deal which is aimed at transforming the EU into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy.

We commend EU for putting the issue of climate change at the top of its priorities, which is clearly demonstrated by the dedication of a significant percentage of their budget (30 percent) to climate change related initiatives. It is reported that the EU and EU Countries were together the biggest provider of climate finance to developing countries in 2019.

Your Excellency,

As I alluded to earlier, the European Union is partnering with other regions of the world to tackle common challenges for the mutual benefit of all peoples.

This is evident especially in Africa. The presence of the office of the European Delegation office in Maseru, which is the reason we are all here celebrating today, is a clear testimony of the good and growing relationship with the continent of Africa.

As Lesotho, we are party to many of the multilateral agreements between the European Union and the Continent of Africa like the AFRICA-EU Partnership, the EU-ACP partnership, the SADC-EU and the SADC-EPA Agreements.

Your Excellency,

I must mention that it is my first time to celebrate the EU Day with you and the European community in my capacity as Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations, but even before then, I observed the efforts of your office in partnering with successive governments in many areas for the benefit of the people of Lesotho.

This morning, we held a very successful annual Lesotho- EU political dialogue which is one of the channels we use to go back to the drawing table to exchange views on topics of mutual interest to our people, like governance, socio-economic issues, and regional and international affairs.

It is my hope that the Dialogue has contributed to the further understanding and deepening of relations between Lesotho and the EU and we will take home and that implement the conclusions thereof as soon as possible.

Your Excellency,

Ladies and gentlemen.

Last year, in October 2022 history was made when the people of Lesotho went to the polls to elect a Government of their choice. The elections were hailed as free and fair by the local and international community and similarly the transition of power was just as peaceful. We could not have done this without the support of our partners. The presence of the European Union Observer Mission together with other international observers contributed immensely to the transparency and smooth running of those elections. The Reports and recommendations made by these missions have and will continue to help improve Lesotho's election processes and experience. It is now up to the Government that Basotho elected to restore Lesotho to its former glory walking hand in hand with partners like the European Union.

Your excellency,

I cannot leave this platform without acknowledging an impactful contribution of the European Union to the ongoing Comprehensive National Reforms Process. Your office has been a major player in ensuring the success of the long but necessary journey of the

Reforms. The Parliament is in the process of passing some of the bills and hopefully more will follow in the near future.

It is the hope and aim of the Government of Lesotho that at the beginning of the next financial year; 2024/2025 most if not all the reforms will be completed and legislated.

Lastly, Excellency

Just this morning we witnessed the signing ceremony of the three financing agreements namely:

- Renewable Lesotho supported with the amount fifteen (15) Million Euro geared towards renewable energy generation capacity,
- Equitable Lesotho supported with the amount of eight (8) million Euro aimed at strengthening social protection mechanisms and statistical capacity development and
- The cooperation facility and support measures for civil society in Lesotho aimed at providing technical assistance to the public sector and civil society to the tune of six (6) million Euro.

These will go a long way in enhancing the lives of our people. Let me express my appreciation Excellency, on my own behalf and on behalf of the people of Lesotho.

I would like to conclude my remarks by acknowledging the hard work of your office 'Me' Paola and the passion that you display in the issues that affect our country and its people.

Let me take this opportunity to also commend your staff on the support that they give you as you continue with your mandate here in Lesotho. I would like to assure you, your Excellency of the support of the Government of Lesotho and my personal support for your mission here in Lesotho.

Once again please accept Your Excellency, the staff of the European delegation in Lesotho and the entire European population our heartfelt joy and congratulations as we celebrate together this historic celebration albeit days later than everybody else in the world. It is also made special by the presence of the EU envoys who are based in Pretoria.

With this few remarks, may I invite you, Your Excellency and all the Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, to join me in proposing a toast to the everlasting bonds, of cooperation between Lesotho and the European Union. and the good health of the President of the

European Council and to the President of the European Union!
Cheers!! Cheers!!