

A SPEECH BY MR. MOKHETHI SHELILE, THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM AT THE LAUNCH OF THE CALL FOR INVESTORS FOR MARKET DRIVEN IRRIGATED HORTICULTURE (MDIH) PROJECT SUPPORTED BY THE MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION (MCC)

Protocol,

Ladies and gentlemen,

- As already mentioned by the Hon. Minister of Finance and Development Planning, the United States of America, through different development agencies, has over the years supported socio-economic development in Lesotho.
- While the bulk of the investments have gone to the health sector, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) has committed an investment of \$ 118.6M to support Horticulture in selected districts in the country.
- This generous investment, displays an unwavering commitment of the American people towards improving livelihoods of our people. It is also a clear demonstration that the partnership between the Governments of Lesotho and the United States has grown in leaps and bounds and now extends to a wide range of sectors in our economy, for diversification of our economy.

- Ladies and gentlemen, I have noted with great excitement that the theme embedded in the MCC investment in horticulture is **Market Driven, which aligns** to the strategic objectives of the NSDP II, by putting the **private sector at the centre of driving economic growth**, a key objective of the current government.
- I share the excitement of my colleague, the Hon Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, and welcome this investment in the sector that he oversees.
- I fully endorse this initiative and make a clarion call for business to take up investment opportunities that will arise along different value chains in the horticulture space.
- Specifically, we are looking for credible local and international commercial farmers that would establish a mutually beneficial collaboration with smallholder farmers and communities within the irrigation schemes to achieve sustainable rural livelihoods in Lesotho.
- Ladies and gentlemen, as the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Business Development and Tourism, we provide a package of services to facilitate foreign and local

investment across all sectors of the economy including horticulture, in which we have a comparative advantage over other countries in Southern Africa.

- It is our responsibility to resolve hurdles that investors may encounter regarding licensing requirements. We also assist new investors to register companies and prepare project briefs for the Environment Impact Assessment Certification. Most importantly, we try as much as possible to create a conducive policy and legislative environment for investors. For example, we facilitate access to international markets for our investors and offer highly competitive package of incentives compared to our counterparts in the region.
- I recognise MCC efforts to support the Government of Lesotho to create effective mechanisms for improved collaboration between government and business on policy, legislative, and operational matters necessary to promote business development and investment beyond the horticulture space. It has also committed resources for provision of necessary infrastructure to facilitate

sustainable value chain of businesses connected to horticulture products.

- In addition, the MCC support under the MDIH is intended to build the capacity of local farmers in use of modern technology, increase women's ownership productive land as well as to facilitate access to local and international markets by improving the standards regime for horticulture and related products.
- With these few remarks, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to MCC for its generous support in advancing our development priorities. I also wish to thank the MCC delegation that has travelled all the way from the US to witness this moment.
- As I conclude my remarks, I wish to reiterate my support as the Minister of Trade, Industry, Business Development to this noble initiative. Specifically, I strongly encourage the LNDC to partner with MCA and MCC, and use its expertise in investment promotion to ensure that we find suitable investors for successful implementation of the MDIH Project. For as long as I am in office, I will hold the LNDC accountable on this.

BO MME LE BO NTATE, KEA LEBOHOA. KHOTSO, PULA,  
NALA.