

**SPEECH BY MR. THABO MOFOSI, HONOURABLE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION AT THE LAUNCH OF THE CALL FOR INVESTORS FOR THE MARKET DRIVEN IRRIGATED HORTICULTURE (MDIH) PROJECT SUPPORTED BY THE GOVERNMENTS OF LESOTHO AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Protocol,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour and a privilege to be part of this momentous occasion that aims to attract private investment in the horticulture sector through the Market Driven Irrigated Horticulture (MDIH) Project as part of the \$322 million Compact sponsored by the governments of Lesotho and the United States of America.

Ladies and gentlemen, the primary objective of this project is to increase rural incomes related to commercial horticulture, promote inclusive agricultural growth and establish sustainable models for irrigation, water and land management. To achieve this objective, the project targets the structurally disadvantaged populations such as women, youth,

and the rural poor. This objective perfectly aligns with the vision of my ministry and that of the government overall.

The role of government in the agriculture sector should be to catalyse private sector investment, not for the government to be a farmer. It is my responsibility as the Minister to ensure that commercial farmers that we are aiming to attract through this initiative under the project will get the support they need to lead this sector and increase horticulture production.

At this juncture, it is imperative to outline key milestones that the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition has achieved towards creating a conducive environment for investment in the identified irrigation schemes. First, comprehensive consultations have been held with smallholder farmers on the irrigation schemes and in the surrounding communities. These consultations revealed a great deal of interest in this project and smallholder farmers and the communities around the schemes are eager to be part of this initiative.

Second, the necessary policy and legal framework for irrigation is being developed to ensure a mutually beneficial collaboration between landowners and potential investors.

Third, my Ministry is leading regulatory reforms meant to strengthen the current water permitting system and to provide for self-governing water user associations (WUAs). These reforms will ensure that investors have secure access to specified water requirements throughout their leasehold period. To give effect to these reforms, we have drafted the National Irrigation Policy that will be validated on Monday.

Ladies and gentlemen, we truly believe that we are on the right track towards transforming the agriculture sector and invite local and international investors to walk this journey with us.

Ke ipiletsa ho lona lihoai tsa meroho le litholoana, kantle le ka hare hon aha ho nka monyetla ona oa ho tlamahana le beng ba masimo libakeng tsena tse hloauoeng tsa Likhakeng, Manka and Tsoili-Tsoili ka Leribe, le Phamong ka Mohale's Hoek. Ena etlabe ele qaleho fela, joalo kaha le tseba hore lekala laka le entse moralo oa noesetso oa nako e telele (National Irrigation Master Plan), o hlaileng libaka tse ling tse ngata ka hara naha tseo re tlamehang hotla ntsetsa pele merero e tsoanang le ona ho tsona. Ha re ithuteng morerong ona, re nke

tse ntle relo lisebelisa ho ntsetsa pele temo hoohele ka hara naha ea rona.

Bo 'me le bo ntate, etlo re tsehetsa ho bona hore litokelo tsa beng ba mobu li tsireletsehile, e fane ka thepa ea noesetso, ebe e fane ka tsehetso ea lichelete ho fihlela ho USD100,000 ho sehoai ka seng morerong ona ho mo khahlametsa ka litsenyehelo tsa qalong tsa temo, joalo ka lithopo le lisebelisoa tsa temo. Ke utloa ele boitelo bo makatsang boo re tlamehang ho bo amohela ka matsoho a mabeli 'me re etse hore bo siee naha ea rona e fetohile, ebe rona ba fepang Africa eohle meroho le litholoana. Haholo ha Ramaseli a re file mobu o motle le metsi!

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to conclude my remarks by conveying my sincere gratitude to US Government acting through MCC for its support towards improving the livelihoods of our people. I also thank all of you to have honoured an invitation to witness this important occasion. Most importantly, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my Hon. Ministers of Finance and Development Planning as well as the Hon. Minister of Trade, Industry, Business Development and Tourism for supporting this initiative. Your

support in this regard demonstrates the government of Lesotho's commitment to this Compact and for as long as I am in office, I will make sure that my officials and colleagues provide necessary support to ensure successful transformation of agriculture in Lesotho.

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

I THANK YOU