

Remarks by President Cyril Ramaphosa at the closing ceremony of the Multi-Stakeholder National Dialogue Plenary II, Kingdom of Lesotho, 27 November 2019

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Your Majesty King Letsie III,
Right Honourable Dr Motsoahae Thomas Thabane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho,
Representatives of the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho,
Representatives of SADC,
Executive Secretary of SADC,
Members of the Official Opposition and Political Parties,
Religious Leaders and Members of Faith Groupings,
Traditional Leaders,
Representatives of Civil Society,
Distinguished International Partners,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege for me to be part of this final Plenary of the Multi-Stakeholder National Dialogue on national reforms in the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Each of us gathered here should feel a great sense of accomplishment and pride that we have reached this critical stage in the reform process.

I wish to express my gratitude and appreciation.

Irrespective of your political or other affiliations, you have come to the table, and worked with a singular determination to reach consensus for the good of this country.

We know the road has been long, and it has been difficult.

That we have made such great progress thus far is testimony to the strength of collaboration and to the power of dialogue.

I extend my appreciation and thanks to our international partners, in particular the United Nations Development Programme and the European Union Delegation Office in Maseru for their ongoing support.

I also applaud the Facilitation Team led by retired South African Deputy Chief Justice Dikgang Moseneke, who despite his busy schedule made time to engage with us in order to forge a way forward.

Since the inception of this National Dialogue the goal has been clear, to realise the Lesotho that the people of this Kingdom want.

The SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government which took place in Tanzania in August this year applauded the government and all relevant stakeholders for their commitment to the national reform process, and for the progress achieved thus far.

The Summit was also impressed with the facilitation process, and deemed it appropriate for the Facilitator to take matters to their logical conclusion.

The Facilitator is expected to give a report to the next Summit, which is scheduled to take place in Maputo in the Republic of Mozambique in August 2020.

This Second Multi-Stakeholder National Dialogue Plenary has been a critical milestone in forging a political consensus on the multi-sectoral national reforms and reconciliation in the Kingdom of Lesotho.

The Plenary has afforded all Basotho an opportunity to engage and reach consensus on all identified areas of reform.

These include constitutional, parliamentary, judicial, security and public sector reforms as well as reforms in the media and economic sectors.

The choice of the seven thematic areas for reforms ably captures the significant interplay between the political, social and economic factors that impact on stability.

The success of this Multi-Stakeholder National Dialogue Plenary further demonstrates the commitment of the people of Lesotho to building a prosperous, peaceful and united country.

You are to be commended for this commitment.

You have demonstrated that no difficulties you encounter along the way will succeed in reversing the gains you have already made.

In pursuit of the common good and a common goal, political differences have had to be put aside, sacrifices and compromises have had to be made, and patience and tolerance has had to be observed.

Having forged ahead in this spirit, the future of the Kingdom of Lesotho is indeed bright.

The people of Lesotho and the outside world have been watching developments here in Maseru with keen interest.

Everyone wants us to succeed.

I encourage you to maintain the momentum.

I encourage you to retain the spirit of fraternity that prevailed during your engagements in the various National Leaders' Forums.

We have been able to convene here because of the hard work of these leaders' forums, which gave birth to the National Dialogue Planning Committee.

The NDPC has played a critical role in paving the way for both the First and Second plenaries.

The team was tasked with convening public engagements to get the views, opinions and concerns of all Basotho on the future of their Kingdom.

These engagements took place in every district and locality, and involved all sectors of civil society including citizens in the diaspora.

The NDPC is to be commended for its efforts in driving the reform process.

Non-governmental organisations have played an important role in assisting the NDPC to conduct the in-district and diaspora consultations.

These NGOs are to be acknowledged and thanked, as are the local and international experts for the work they have done.

The Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organisations put together all reports that formed the basis of your discussions in the last two days of this Plenary, and for this we thank them.

It is pleasing to note that parties to this dialogue have agreed that the National Reforms Authority will be the body to ensure the implementation of the reforms beyond the Second Plenary.

I call on all of us to rally behind the National Reforms Authority in executing its mandate.

I wish to express our gratitude and appreciation to His Majesty King Letsie III for giving Royal Assent to the National Reforms Authority Bill in order to operationalise the mechanism of implementing the resolutions and the decisions of the Second Plenary.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the foremost aspirations of the African Union's Agenda 2063 is of a continent that is stable and at peace with itself.

Furthermore, the Kingdom of Lesotho, like its neighbours, is on a path to meet the Sustainable Development Goals.

If we are to realise the aspirations of all our countries, we must step up our efforts to strengthen political stability in our respective nations and to drive development to meet the needs of our citizens.

As we are in this room, we carry with us the goodwill of all the people of this great Kingdom, who want us to succeed. And succeed we shall.

Now is the time for both the National Reforms Authority and Parliament to realise the aspirations that have been eloquently articulated throughout this National Dialogue Process.

You should be reassured of my firm support, and of my commitment to accompany you in your quest to finding a lasting solution to your challenges.

This I will do in line with the mandate given to me by the SADC Heads of State and Government as the SADC Facilitator to the Kingdom of Lesotho.

The Kingdom is now on a positive trajectory.

Let us keep it up and let us not falter.

Let us remain resolute.

Let us ensure that the foundation laid today for peace, stability and development in the Kingdom is jealously guarded.

The process you have been through brought to mind the renowned poem by Maya Angelou and I just want to read two excerpts from it: where she speaks about the hope of being able to pick oneself up from a terrible situation and rise and keep rising.

And I quote:

"You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise"

"I am," and I'll read my own interpretation as it relates to Lesotho because she speaks of a black ocean; but with regards to Lesotho I want to read:

"I am like a mountain
I'm a mountain, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the future
I rise
I rise
I rise."

And I say Lesotho rise. This is the time for Lesotho to rise because with all this reform, your time, Lesotho has come to rise.

I thank you.

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Pretoria

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