

**ADDRESS BY HIS MAJESTY KING LETSIE III, OF THE
KINGDOM OF LESOTHO, AT THE WORLD SUMMIT ON
THE INFORMATION SOCIETY – GENEVA,
SWITZERLAND, 9-12 DECEMBER, 2003**

MR. PRESIDENT,

YOUR EXCELLENCIES,

DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

PERMIT ME TO EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE TO HIS EXCELLENCY, MR. PASCAL COUCHEPIN, THE PRESIDENT OF THE SWISS CONFEDERATION, FOR AVAILING ME THIS RARE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS GENEVA PHASE OF THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY. ALLOW ME ALSO TO EXTEND TO YOU, MR. CHAIRMAN, MY DELEGATION'S HEARTY

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR ELECTION TO LEAD THE BUSINESS OF THIS IMPORTANT SUMMIT.

THERE IS A GROWING CONSENSUS GLOBALLY THAT INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES CAN CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT. IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO WISHES TO REAFFIRM ITS COMMITMENT TO AN INFORMATION SOCIETY AND FULLY ALIGNS HERSELF WITH THE GOAL OF A DEVELOPMENT-ORIENTED INFORMATION SOCIETY, GEARED TOWARDS THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY AND HUNGER, AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF A BALANCED AND COMPREHENSIVE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL.

LESOTHO, LIKE MOST DEVELOPING COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD, IS STILL AT AN INFANCY STAGE OF THE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT). THE WIDENING DIGITAL DIVIDE BETWEEN THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH REMAINS A MATTER OF GRAVE CONCERN TO US. IT IS MY GOVERNMENT'S HUMBLE SUBMISSION THAT THE QUEST FOR AN INFORMATION

SOCIETY SHOULD BE PURSUED AS A GLOBAL INITIATIVE IF MANKIND AS WHOLE, IS TO REAP THE FULL BENEFITS THEREOF.

CONNECTIVITY IN THE CASE OF LESOTHO, WITH ITS UNIQUE MOUNTAINOUS LANDSCAPE COUPLED WITH A SMALL POPULATION AND AN EQUALLY SMALL ECONOMIC BASE, POSES UNENVIABLE CHALLENGES. DRIVING A UNIVERSAL ACCESS STRATEGY IN THIS ENVIRONMENT, CALLS FOR A PARALLEL DEVELOPMENT OF SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE SUCH AS ELECTRICITY TO REACH THE RURAL AREAS IN ORDER TO REGISTER A NOTICEABLE IMPROVEMENT TO THE CONNECTIVITY PROBLEM THAT PLAGUE LESOTHO AND THE DEVELOPING WORLD ALIKE.

LOW ICT SKILLS AND AWARENESS IN GENERAL, AMONG OUR COMMUNITIES. HINDER PROGRESS IN THE PROLIFERATION OF THE ICT SECTOR. CAPACITY BUILDING THROUGH TRANSFER OF SKILLS AND OVERALL HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT WOULD GREATLY ASSIST IN ADDRESSING THESE CHALLENGES.

**MR. PRESIDENT,
EXCELLENCIES,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES URGENTLY NEED TO DEVELOP THE CAPACITY TO ADAPT THE COMPUTER SOFTWARES TO THEIR DOMESTIC CONDITIONS. USE OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE ON SOFTWARES DOES NOT PROMOTE THE USE OF COMPUTERS AMONG OUR COMMUNITIES WITH LOW OR NO PROFICIENCY OF A PARTICULAR FOREIGN LANGUAGE. REGRETTABLY, THIS COMPRISES THE MAJORITY OF OUR POPULATIONS. USE OF OPEN-SOURCE AND FREE SOFTWARES THAT PERMIT MODIFICATION AND ADAPTATIONS TO THE DOMESTIC CONDITIONS REMAIN A READILY AVAILABLE SOLUTION. THESE SHOULD BE PROMOTED WHILE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES ARE BEING ACCELERATED TO OFFER A LASTING AND EFFICIENT SOLUTION.

WE ARE AWARE OF THE POTENTIAL OF ICT IN THE BETTERMENT OF THE DAILY LIVES OF OUR COMMUNITIES. THIS TECHNOLOGY PERMITS NATIONS TO COMPETE EQUALLY IN THE GLOBAL MARKET PLACE WITHOUT THE IMPEDIMENTS OF DISTANCES BETWEEN THEIR RESPECTIVE LOCATIONS. MY COUNTRY REMAINS QUITE EAGER TO SEIZE THESE OPPORTUNITIES.

**MR. PRESIDENT,
EXCELLENCIES,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

THE CHALLENGES THAT WE FACE TO ACCELERATE OUR EFFORTS TO BE ALIGNED WITH THE REST OF THE GLOBAL SOCIETY TOWARDS AN INFORMATION SOCIETY LOOK DAUNTING WITHOUT EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE. WE HOWEVER TAKE COMFORT IN KNOWING THAT WE HAVE PARTNERS TO JOIN HANDS WITH IN THIS DIFFICULT TASK. THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO, STRONGLY URGES

AND APPEALS TO THE HEADS OF DELEGATIONS HERE PRESENT TO ADOPT THE DIGITAL SOLIDARITY AGENDA TO FACILITATE THE MOBILISATION OF RESOURCES FOR THE INCLUSION OF ALL IN THE EMERGING INFORMATION SOCIETY.

IN CONCLUSION, THE DELEGATION OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO WISHES TO ASSURE THIS AUGUST CONFERENCE OF ITS COMMITMENT AND MAXIMUM SUPPORT TO THE PROMOTION OF INFORMATION SOCIETY WORLDWIDE.

FINALLY, I GRATEFULLY COMMEND THE INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION AND OTHER PARTIES WHO WORKED TIRELESSLY TO PUT TOGETHER THE ORGANISATIONAL AND LOGISTICAL ARRANGEMENTS IN TIME FOR THIS HISTORIC SUMMIT.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION.