

THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

**STATEMENT OF THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF TOURISM, ENVIRONMENT
AND CULTURE DELIVERED**

AT

**THE 23RD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
(UNEP) GOVERNING COUNCIL**

AND

**THE GLOBAL MINISTERIAL FORUM HELD IN NAIROBI, KENYA FROM 21 TO 25
FEBRUARY 2005.**

WATER, SANITATION

Preamble

The Government of Lesotho is committed to the international initiatives for the achievement of sustainable development and poverty eradication. In particular, Lesotho is committed to the declarations made by Heads of State and Government as articulated in the World Summit Sustainable Development (WSSD), the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This commitment is enshrined in Lesotho's Vision 2020, which is our country's long term planning framework as well as in the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

In pursuance of the national goals and targets for water and sanitation, the government has adopted the necessary policies and has effected the required institutional changes accordingly. These include: Water Resources Management Policy, 1999; Industrial Wastewater Management Policy, 2003 Domestic Water and Industrial Effluent Standards, 1998; The Lesotho Water Partnership (LWP) comprising membership from Government, parastatals, private sector, and NGOs has been established under the office of the Commissioner of Water. The main purpose of the LWP is to advise Government on issues relating to water resources particularly integrated water resources, management.

Water and Sanitation

It is generally acknowledged that Lesotho has water that can meet all its demands in abundance. However, the availability of water varies both spatially and temporally. There is therefore, an urgent need to harness and distribute the available water efficiently to support the development of key economic sectors, such as industries, agriculture and tourism, as well as for domestic purposes.

About 84% of the total population of Lesotho lives in the rural areas, 62% of which has access to portable water, while in the urban areas, the water supply coverage is around 52%.

It is estimated that 52 % of households in the rural areas has no toilet facilities, as opposed to 2.9% in the urban areas. In addition, 9.2% of the urban population have water or flush system, whereas 45.0% use ventilation Improved Pit latrine (VIP). On the other hand only 1.0 % of rural households have access to flush system and 13.9% to VIP.

It is well known that inadequately treated sewage and industrial wastes are some of the main sources of water pollution and are responsible for the introduction of disease causing pathogens and toxic substances into the aquatic environment. In Lesotho, as in all other countries, urban areas generate large amounts of solid waste whose environmentally safe disposal is one of the

biggest challenges to government. There is, therefore, need for investment in sanitation and solid waste management in order to reverse the situation reverse and/or limit risks for disease vectors to proliferate.

Key On-going Programme in the Water and Sanitation Sector

The Government of Lesotho puts high priority in the development of water, it being one of the few natural resources occurring in abundance in the Lesotho. This is evidenced by several ongoing initiatives and programmes intended to identify the need for and to provide short and long-term water supply and sanitation infrastructure.

In its endeavour to ensure sustainable development and management of water resources, government has received support from several donor agencies. The European Union, European Investment Bank (EIB), World Bank, BADEA, Development Cooperation Ireland and Helvetas are supporting various water supply and sanitation programmes.

The Case-Study: Involvement of local communities in water supply schemes

The government of Lesotho recognizes that people are central to the development of water supply systems particularly in the rural areas. Involvement of directly affected communities in rural water supply sector has increased the coverage and reduced costs significantly. Local communities under the guidance of the technicians from the Department of Rural Water Supply (DRWS) of the Ministry of Natural Resources are provided an opportunity to decide the best means of supply system that suits their particular locations.

Normally the request for provision of water supply infrastructure in a given rural area emanates from the rural communities, and is submitted to the DRWS in the district. The community is required to have a Bank account into which to deposit money for maintenance of the system, while government pays for the total capital costs. The district office carries out a feasibility study of the proposal. If the project is found to be viable, it is implemented under the supervision of the DRWS.

In the event of an emergency situation where an epidemic of a water-borne disease has occurred, a request for water supply infrastructure could come from either the Ministry of Health or a Member of Parliament of the locality. Local communities are then mobilized and assisted to have a Bank Account before construction work can begin. In both instances local communities provide labour for the project while government pays for all capital costs.

Generally the success rate of this approach to cheap and quick provision of water to rural areas, whose settlements are difficult to access and are sparsely distributed, is estimated at 50,000 people per year. It is believed that at this rate it is possible to provide clean water and basic sanitation to the majority of rural communities by 2015.

In conclusion I wish to point out that the government of Lesotho is positive that it will be able to meet the goals and targets of the MDGs on water and sanitation. However, we need to intensify our efforts towards increasing coverage in terms of water supply and proper waste management (sanitary services) in collaboration with stakeholders such as development partners, NGOs, Private sector.

Thank you