



**THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO STATEMENT BY THE  
HONOURABLE MINISTER OF HEALTH,  
HON.SEMANO SEKATLE  
TO THE 66<sup>TH</sup> REGULAR SESSION OF THE GENERAL  
CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC  
ENERGY AGENCY**

**VIENNA, AUSTRIA**

**27<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2022**

**The President of the General Conference,**

**Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency,**

**Mr. Rafael Mariano Grossi**

**Excellences'**

**Distinguished delegates**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Mr. President I congratulate you for being elected to the presidency of the 66<sup>th</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) General Conference and the entire Bureau.

**Mr. President,**

Please be assured of my delegation's affirmation of support to you and the Conference secretariat towards the successful and fruitful deliberations amid and beyond this conference.

**Mr. President,**

The Kingdom of Lesotho is currently implementing three projects under Technical Cooperation Program (TCP) 2021-2022 cycle, these projects cover areas of Nutrition, Agriculture (Livestock and Crops), Human Health and Regulatory Infrastructure. The

Kingdom of Lesotho remains indebted to the Agency for the unwavering technical support and provision of equipment during the TCP.

**Mr. President,**

The enactment of the Radiation Protection Agency Act 2018 has paved the way for the establishment of a Regulatory Body with an adequately staffed and skilled Secretariat. Lesotho appreciates the Scientific Visits and the capacity building workshops that the Agency accorded the Ministry of Environment, tourism and culture who will host the Regulatory body.

**Mr. President,**

This year's Scientific Forum theme "Rays of Hope: Cancer Care for All" has come at right time when Lesotho is ravaged by cancer.

Africa is double burdened by both communicable and non-communicable diseases; Lesotho is no exception. With most communicable diseases, the continent is often caught pants down lack of preparedness, prevention, detection, and capacity to respond adequately and effectively. Worse still Africa is always left behind long after a cure for these diseases has been found and the diseases eliminated. Covid 19 points towards the

same end, but over and above, it has reversed most of the gains we had made.

Lesotho has high HIV and TB infections. The resources that go into the management and control of these diseases are remarkably huge. Non-communicable diseases, such as hypertension, diabetics, injuries and mental health are a cause for a major concern as they condemn to death a large part of the nation, young and old without exception. In Lesotho, cancer has reared its ugly head. It kills indiscriminately and to a large extent the women folk, the critical reproductive section of the nation. This does not mean that the men folk are spared, not at all.

The three top-most common cancers in Lesotho are cervical cancer, breast cancer and prostate cancer. Lesotho is by no means folding her hands despite lack of appropriate and adequate infrastructure, capacity, and resources. At the national level a non-communicable disease programme has been established. It is responsible for the development of policies, guidelines, and protocols for implementation at all levels of care. A National Cancer Control Plan has been developed as a result to guide overall multi-stakeholder control strategies in the country. The enactment of the Radiation Protection Agency Act 2018 has paved the way for a regulated environment.

Lesotho has embarked on the following to fight cancer in the country:

- All primary health facilities screen for cancer
- At least four cancer treatment centers have been established
- HPV vaccination programme for 9-13-year-old girls been re-introduced and has attained an 80% coverage so far
- A chemotherapy clinic in the country's main city of Maseru has recently been opened
- A second palliative treatment center has also been opened
- The construction of the cancer treatment hospital in Maseru has commenced with the bulk civil works underway. Thanks to IAEA.
- A few health workers, professionals and cancer specialists have been trained in cancer treatment again thanks to the technical support from IAEA.

Despite these somewhat impressive achievements stark challenges remain:

- Inadequate skilled professionals and specialists to manage cancer
- Inadequate facilities for diagnostic, testing purposes including labs and blood transfusion facilities
- Lack of facilities for cancer treatment, a radiotherapy center and palliative care facilities
- Inadequate financial resources to support cancer treatment
- A comprehensive national cancer registry is required

- A comprehensive and momentous health promotion, education cancer prevention programme and healthy lifestyles is long overdue.

**Mr. President,**

The need for cooperation, collaboration and coordination can not be over emphasized. As they say in my language “Kopano ke Matla, Lets’oele le Beta Poho” Unity is Power and United we are Strong and no one will be left behind.

**I THANK YOU.**