

PRESS STATEMENT BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE PRIME MINISTER
AND OTHER COALITION LEADERS FOLLOWING THE NEW ZEALAND STUDY TOUR

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE PRIME MINISTER

My Coalition partners and I have received the report of the Commonwealth's Special Envoy to Lesotho, Dr Rajen Prasad titled "Governance in Lesotho: Repositioning for Success". We are pleased with the focus on "Repositioning for Success" that is the central theme of this report.

My Coalition partners and I received briefings from Dr Prasad on the contents of the report. I have now presented the report to His Majesty and personally briefed him on its contents.

This report is the culmination of 18 months of engagement between the Government and Dr Rajen Prasad, in his role as Expert Adviser to Lesotho. During the past 18 months, this Coalition Government with the support of the Commonwealth initiated an intensive period of examination of Lesotho's total governance arrangements, including relationships between the various parts of government. During this time, Dr Prasad has conducted consultations and discussions with my whole Cabinet, Government and Principal Secretaries, the Opposition, civil society, our development partners, other diplomatic partners, and a number of other stakeholders. Dr Prasad's role as Commonwealth Expert Adviser entered a new phase with the presentation of his latest report to the Coalition Government.

I am pleased to announce that with the Government's agreement, the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth has now appointed Dr Rajen Prasad as his Special Envoy to the Kingdom of Lesotho. This is an expanded role to that of a Commonwealth Expert Adviser, and this Government welcomes it.

Over the two years that Dr Prasad has been coming to Lesotho he has developed a keen awareness of our governance systems and has developed a special relationship with many of us. He also led the organisation of the recent New Zealand study tour and ensured that the Lesotho delegation had informative briefings and discussions with senior and experienced current and former politicians and civil servants. There is a relationship of trust and we are pleased that his involvement with us will continue in this expanded role.

During his recent visit to Lesotho, Dr Prasad had bilaterals with me as Prime Minister, with my Deputy, and with Minister Molapo who is currently deputising for Minister Maseribane. Dr Prasad also had a collective meeting with all three of us as Coalition leaders.

When Basotho elected a Coalition Government for the first time in May 2012, it ushered Lesotho into a new phase of its democratic evolution. My Coalition partners and I have had two years navigating this new governance dispensation and we have been on a fast and steep learning curve.

We have also made some mistakes along the way but we are not immune to meaningful self-reflection. When my Coalition partners and I recently sat down to discuss the way forward, there was one realisation for which there was complete concurrence: Basotho have entrusted us with this historic and important mandate of leading Lesotho's first Coalition Government. We are the pioneers

of this mature governance model. It is a responsibility that we cannot shirk and one we cannot take lightly.

My Coalition partners and I accept that there will be differences between us, but we will respect the wishes of the electorate for a stable Coalition Government.

Over the next few months, my Coalition partners and I will map a way, so that together, we will be better poised to deliver good governance and service delivery for the people of Lesotho.

We will also be looking at mechanisms that allow us to 'agree to disagree' where necessary, while maintaining a stable government. Coalition governance demands this of us, and we are committed to rise to the challenge.

Accepting the responsibility given to us by the electorate at the last election, I can today announce that it is the intention of my Coalition partners and I, together with our support partners in 'The Block', to work hard as a Government for Basotho for the full term of the election cycle.

I want to acknowledge the support that 'The Block' has given, and continue to give the Coalition Government. I also announce today that together with our support partners in The Block, the Coalition Government will begin the process to initiate a period of reforms that will reshape our total governance arrangements and how Government and Parliament works in our country. In this regard, we will also look to our development partners for support as we begin this important and long-term journey.

Over the next few months, my Coalition partners and I will diligently revisit our Coalition Agreement, taking into account the needs and interests of the people of Lesotho; our experience of the past two years and what we have learnt during this time; we will also draw on international best practice; on the observations and discussions of the delegation to New Zealand; and on the recommendations in Dr Prasad's recent report. We expect to take a little time to diligently work on this Agreement and when it is finalised, it will be made public.

We will also begin a programme to examine and transform the public service into a more professional one with a view that public servants will deliver the will of the Government in a non-political manner. We recognise it will be a significant paradigm shift, but it is an urgent need and call for reform and we are committed to responding so that Basotho will receive improved service delivery. We will appoint a design team to undertake this work and to bring recommendations to Cabinet.

My Coalition partners and I will begin a programme of reform of our parliamentary processes to make it more responsive in a Mixed Member Proportional environment. We will appoint a committee to undertake this work and to report within a reasonable time after its appointment. My Coalition partners and I recognise that Parliament is the people's institution and that the people of Lesotho should be proud of what their elected representatives do in their interests. Our vision is that Parliament will be a place where Basotho can go to present their concerns on a regular basis, on any issue that is before Parliament.

It is our intention that these reforms will ensure that Parliament works more efficiently, that its committees are accessible and effective, and the bureaucracy is held to account. I expect to see a reformed committee system where new laws can be properly examined, where citizens can participate and where the Opposition can play its role more effectively. It is imperative we begin to use Parliament more effectively and better serve the will of the electorate and the interests of the people.

Coalition governance has forced this country to a new level of political maturity and it is highly likely that this will not be the only coalition government given an electoral mandate. It is the view of my Coalition partners and I that the proportionality given by the electorate on election night should not be altered by the actions of a group of Parliamentarians. The political history of Lesotho has been characterised by a practice of floor crossing, and few political parties have been immune from this practice. Our country needs stable Parliament and my Coalition partners and I are determined to make it so. The Committee charged with parliamentary reforms will also consider the issue of floor crossing that frustrate the will of the people as determined by the election results, and the Committee will be expected to consider how to increase the stability of Lesotho's Parliament. In this regard, we call on every single Mosotho to encourage this move towards political maturity.

It is also our intention to ensure that after an election, future coalition partners do not have to form a Government without any technical support. Coalition government formation requires certain technical skills and know how. In this regard, we will commission the preparation of a handbook with information any future party negotiating an agreement can use for guidance. We will also look at any legislative changes that might be required to facilitate the process of Government formation.

When my Coalition partners and I were forming Lesotho's first Coalition government in 2012, we were uncertain of the precise role of the caretaker government and of clear transition arrangements. We will appoint a team to look at the system of rules, practices and conventions that apply to the process of coalition government formation and enact whatever changes are required to give greater clarity and certainty to the transition period after an election.

We will also be looking to further streamline decision making at Cabinet and the transmittal of those decisions to the right place with the right follow up mechanisms. Basotho can expect some positive changes to how Cabinet does its business.

So, this Coalition government will be very busy over the next few months, as we use this time to reposition the Government and begin in earnest to engage the long overdue process of transitioning to an independent and professional public service, redevelop parliamentary procedures and processes for greater accountability and access for the Basotho, and clarify future processes and rules when governments change.

My Coalition partners and I are of the view that politics in Lesotho should be the politics of policy and good ideas, of reform and development, of reducing poverty, of growing our economy and moving Lesotho away from its least developed country status. This Coalition Government is committed to this future.

We are asking all public servants to focus on serving Basotho well and to be assured that their

expertise will be essential to ensure government services are delivered competently and professionally. We are counting on public servants and all Basotho to encourage us as we tackle this difficult issue. We will be counting on all Basotho to dialogue and embrace these changes.

This will not be easy, but my coalition partners and I look forward to the a new dawn of politics in Lesotho, and for the remaining three years of the term of this Coalition Government to be highly productive and responsive for all Basotho.

I am pleased to release the full report of the Commonwealth Special Envoy to Lesotho and it should be digested together with the scoping study he completed in April last year.

My Deputy Prime Minister ably led the Lesotho delegation during the New Zealand study tour and it is fitting that all my partners also speak to the country at this time. Deputy Prime Minister, I am pleased to give the floor to you.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

The Right Honourable the Prime Minister has laid out the plans of this Coalition Government and he has my full support.

On 30 June to 4 July I led a 25 strong delegation from Lesotho to New Zealand and I have previously spoken to you about how beneficial this study tour was for the delegation, and the impact we expect it to have on the way governance in Lesotho is improved.

Indeed, many of the issues we sought insight on, were matters that have been discussed by Basotho for many years. The delegation to New Zealand was able to appreciate that a Coalition Government is perhaps the best opportunity for us to make progress on significant issues such as having a non-political public service and reforming parliament so that it is fit for purpose in an MMP/Coalition environment.

I echo The Right Honourable the Prime Minister's views that the past two years of Coalition governance has been a steep learning curve for us as partners. Indeed, I venture to add that all Basotho is experiencing a political awakening with this new dispensation.

When as Coalition partners we reflected together on the mandate we have been given, and that which we have accepted, we realize that we may be different parties in Government, with differing philosophies, and so there will inevitably be differences, but we understand one thing: Lesotho will have achieved a significant milestone if we completely execute our mandate as stable Coalition partners to the best of our abilities. We understand that if we do this, we send a signal to Africa and the rest of the world that we are moving democracy forward in this country.

We still have a long way to go, and there is much more learning and talking to do. As the Right Honourable Prime Minister said, the Coalition will be using the next few months to revisit our Coalition Agreement and find ways to ensure that this first Coalition Government is stable even

when we must disagree. We already had significant legislation to impact the lives of Basotho in motion, and we will be working to ensure that when Parliament reopens, which we hope will be soon, we will have a solid program of work and reforms to progress.

I look forward to these deliberations over the next few months with my coalition partners, and to working with them to strengthen and enhance governance in Lesotho.

MINISTER MOLAPO, REPRESENTING MINISTER MASERIBANE

On behalf of Minister Maseribane, I can only reiterate the words of The Right Honourable the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister.

Minister Maseribane is honoured and humbled to be a part of the leadership of Lesotho's first Coalition Government. We are committed to the mandate given to us by the electorate, and we will support this Coalition Government for its full term.

Minister Maseribane tasked me to represent him on the New Zealand study tour. It was an eye-opening experience and under the leadership of the Deputy Prime Minister, the delegation was clear that there were certain reforms that we must address with urgency. The Right Honourable Prime Minister has outlined these and we are in full support. We call on the support of all Basotho as we recognise that achieving these lofty objectives will not be easy, but we are committed to doing what we can with your help and that of our development partners.

The past two years have seen successes, and of course, there have been many challenges. Let us not forget that when this Coalition Government first came together in the national interest, there was much hope that we could bridge our differences and better advance the interests of all Basotho. Yes, there was skepticism from some quarters about how long the Coalition could last and how much change we could effect.

However, I am pleased that our recent challenges have brought out the mettle of the leadership of this Coalition Government. Yes there are challenges, but we are committed to staying the course and delivering positive changes to the lives of Basotho. We will not take this mandate lightly.

In this regard, over the next few months we will work with our Coalition partners to revisit the Coalition Agreement and finetune mechanisms so that we can better deal with our inevitable differences. We will also be looking to entrench development policies in these negotiations.

We are confident that with this approach, this Coalition Government will stand together in the next Parliament and build on the foundations we have laid in the past two years, draw on what we have learnt, and take bold steps to take Lesotho forward to a brighter future.

The Right Honourable the Prime Minister, Closing

I thank my Coalition partners and The Block for their support to ensure a stable government for our

nation. With the assurances of their support, together, we will embrace the exciting possibilities for improving governance in Lesotho, deepening democracy, keeping hope alive, and delivering a brighter future for all Basotho.