



*PERMANENT MISSION OF THE KINGDOM  
OF LESOTHO TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
KHOTSONG  
204 East 39th Street  
New York, NY 10016*

## **STATEMENT**

**BY**

**H.E. MR. LEBOHANG FINE MAEMA, KC  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**TO THE**

**FIFTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE  
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

**3<sup>RD</sup> MARCH 2008, New York**

**Please check against delivery**

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you and the members of the bureau for your election into the bureau of the fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women. We commend you for the manner you have been steering the deliberations of the Commission.

My delegation aligns itself with the Statement delivered by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Statement delivered by Zambia on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Mr. Chairperson,

We commend the Secretary General on his initiative on the campaign to end violence against women. This comes at a critical time when many Governments are making a lot of commitments with little action. We believe that with this launch, governments and individuals will be awakened to the seriousness of violence against women. We pledge our commitment to continue in the struggle to fight violence against women and to invest in gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho is fully committed to gender equality and financing by ensuring that gender equality is at the centre of all its development interventions with laws and policies providing a platform for good practices and human development and security for all. This vision is captured in Section 26(i) and Section 30(a) of the Constitution and articulated in the Poverty Reduction Strategy 2004-2007, the National Vision 2020, Gender and Development Policy (2003) and the Millennium Development Goals which emphasize and recognize gender inequality as a major challenge to poverty reduction and the empowerment of women.

To this end the Government of Lesotho has put in place the national gender machinery and the budget allocated has increased by 10.42% in the current fiscal year. Law and policy reforms have been undertaken to create an enabling environment for gender equality and empowerment of women; and the process is continuing under the auspices of the Law Reform Commission and Ministries of Gender and Justice respectively. The Gender and Development Policy Implementation Plan (2008-2012) has also been developed and costed.

To strengthen institutional capacity, gender focal points have been established within line ministries and Gender Officers placed in all the ten districts of the country as well as a Gender Advisor with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Mr. Chairperson,

Deliberate efforts have been made to enhance women's participation and representation in governance and decision making structures especially in Local Government with the enacted 30% quota and has adopted the campaign for 50% representation of women in Parliament. The Ministry of Gender is currently working towards strengthening the women's movement and establishing an APEX body, which is expected to create critical mass and the necessary space for discussing women's issues in the country.

The role of the Legislature in gender equality and women's empowerment cannot be over emphasized; as such the Ministry of Gender with the assistance of UNDP has embarked on a programme to revamp the Parliamentary Women's Caucus and training the body on gender issues for meaningful participation in debates and influencing law and policy from an enlightened position.

In addition, the government is at the end of the Parliamentary Reform process whose objective is to improve the manner in which the House conducts its daily business to make it more effective in the execution of its mandate. Among the proposed reforms is the establishment of Portfolio Committees which will be manned with experts from various fields inclusive of gender and human rights to advise and assist Parliament with technical issues.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Government of Lesotho has implemented the Medium Term Expenditure Framework budgeting system in six Ministries; still in the pilot phase and presents an opportunity for gender sensitive macro economic planning and budgeting. Furthermore, a gender audit of the Ministry of Education was conducted and preparations are underway for implementing recommendations therein. The Bureau of Statistics has launched a Gender booklet as a step towards gender disaggregated data for analysis and planning. The Government of Lesotho in the past year has adopted a policy enforcing mandatory maternity leave with pay ensuring economic security for women.

To address the issue of gender based violence, the Government has legislated the Sexual Offences Act and the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act which address gender equality between men and women, equal reproductive rights and protection against all instances of offences of a sexual nature. An Outreach Center has been set up in the capital city and is to be extended to other parts of the country. The aim is to strengthen the response and the management of victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and to complement the function of Child and Gender Protection Units. The government has also prioritized finalization and the enactment of domestic violence legislation and enjoys the support of PHELA, a civil society organization focusing on issues of violence and a network has been established in this regard as well as a national campaign.

Mr. Chairperson,

Partnerships between the government and civil society organizations working on gender issues have been strengthened and continue to grow. Currently government and civil society partners namely Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Trust and Gender Links will be rolling out a local government gender mainstreaming initiative in all local government structures in the country. Similarly, expert groups such as the Expanded Theme Group on Gender and Reproductive Health have been set up through the collaborative efforts of the Government and the United Nations office. This forum has played a pivotal role in ensuring that gender dimensions are accurately integrated into development plans, frameworks, policies and programmes.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation- Compact Agreement between the Government of Lesotho and the Government of the United States of America presents an array of opportunities for a speedy realization of gender equality commitments in the country. The Agreement has gender equality as one of its condition precedent which has further enabled the review of a significant number of laws with impediments on effective economic participation by women, to ensure gender equality in the allocation of and access to economic resources for economic empowerment and development in general. Under the Compact a gender integration plan will also be developed to ensure that gender considerations are incorporated into the entire project.

Mr. Chairperson,

Despite the above accomplishments, challenges towards gender equality and empowerment of women persist. There is an urgent need for a strengthened national forum to coordinate partners' efforts in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment in line with the principle of harmonization to promote aid effectiveness and reduce fragmentation through coordinated action. Lack of adequate funding and other resources as well as the capacity of implementing institutions remain a serious impediment to our noble goals.

The Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho remains committed to gender equality and the advancement of women. This session with its theme in addressing these issues will make an invaluable contribution in mapping a way forward for individual Members States as well as for collective efforts and initiatives for the achievement of our common goals.

I thank you.