



STATEMENT OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY, BUSINESS AND ACADEMIA ON THE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION

IN

LESOTHO

16TH FEBRUARY 2016

PREAMBLE

Whereas the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho has tabled in both houses of parliament the SADC Commission of Inquiry report led by Justice Mpaphi Phumaphi, there are signs of division within Basotho over the matter and the manner in which it is being handled demonstrated in the National Assembly. This has cascaded into the rank and file of political parties and the general citizenry. There is an urgent need to call for and advocate for the unity of Basotho regardless of their political and religious inclinations. In this connection civil society collective calls upon Basotho to be agents of justice, peace and rule of law from individual to institutional capacities.

As it will be recalled, this civil society collective namely: Academic Forum for Development of Lesotho, (AFDeL), Alliance of Progressive Trade Unions (APTU), Lesotho Congress of Democratic Unions (LECODU), Lesotho Council of NGO's (LCN), Lesotho Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), The Law Society of Lesotho, Lesotho Trade Union Congress (LTUC), Maseru Region Transport Operators (MRTO) and Mejametalana Taxi Association have earlier committed to pursue justice,

accountability and rule of law as a way to attain peace. This stance was reaffirmed in a collective meeting in Maseru on the 16th February 2016.

CONVINCED THAT

The present attitude of government on the SADC Commission report is not helping to bring closure to the pain, fear and trouble inflicted by the tragic death of the former commander of the Lesotho Defence Force in the hands of an institution that was supposed to protect him. The government is failing to lead Basotho into a single unified approach to deal with the matter and sadly Lesotho is likely to miss opportunity to put its house in order;

CONCERNED THAT

The current political tension in the Kingdom of Lesotho is fermenting more divisions among the Basotho nation whose resultant political polarisation can be detrimental if some drastic measures are not taken. This situation shall lead to political chaos, death threats, media repression and loss of property as evidenced by the attacks at Advocate Khotso Nthontho's residence.

NOTING THAT

By deciding to table the SADC Commission Report, in Parliament, The Right Honourable the Prime Minister has prejudiced a Mosotho who earnestly wanted to know the truth because now the contests have turned into political contentions. By this statement in the National Assembly and Senate the Prime Minister has not presented Basotho with the findings rather used the platform to raise issues of concern and critiqued the report, what an unfair conduct to the citizens.

The government of Lesotho should take this opportunity presented by the SADC to open a new page towards creating sustainable stability in the country including to speedily facilitate the process of reforms in the country. The SADC Oversight Committee decided to continuously assess the political environment in Lesotho and has not been present in the country, as such the current tension sustains more injuries to the nation as evidenced by deaths of innocent citizens and the staying of citizens and leaders of opposition in parliament in exile.

THEREFORE

As peace-loving civil society formations, the collective appeals to all political parties in Lesotho to show genuine leadership in addressing the challenges facing the country, specifically call upon the government to refrain from antagonising SADC leadership and further demand that: -

1. Prime Minister popularises SADC Commission Inquiry Report to enable every Mosotho to know and understand its contents before being exposed to political opinions;
2. Prime Minister should show leadership, reach out to the Opposition and ensure that government develops a roadmap on how to implement SADC Commission of Inquiry Recommendations as contained in SADC Communiqué of 18 January 2015 especially point seven and eight which urged the government of Lesotho to:
 - 2.1 To prepare with the support of the Organ Troika and the Secretariat, a road map for the implementation of the reforms as contained in the SADC Facilitator's Final Report. The Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho is to submit a progress report to the Summit in August 2016;
 - 2.2 The Double Troika Summit urged the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho and all political stakeholders to actively contribute to a conducive environment to allow the safe return to Lesotho of the opposition leaders and members of the Security forces who are in exile;
3. And by the same token the collective calls upon the Opposition to contribute meaningfully to the solution of Lesotho problems;
4. Government should give immediate, binding and tangible guarantees for the security of exiled
5. The government of Lesotho should condemn in the strongest ways possible the rampant killings that have marred the country into blood bath recently.

6. Lesotho should restore law and order in the country as to save life and property by engaging in robust and swift investigations and litigating processes where there are cases that threaten tranquillity of citizens and in so doing will win back the confidence of investors.
7. The government of Lesotho should work with all stakeholders to convene a National Dialogue aimed at identifying and discussing ways of securing lasting peace for the people of this country and the region.
8. The Government of Lesotho should desist from intimidating civil society leadership and media houses as doing so is totally against rights and liberties as enshrined in the Constitution of Lesotho and as such erode democratic gains the country has gained over the years;
9. SADC should remain supportive of Lesotho political processes until political normalcy is achieved and deploy the Oversight Committee promptly in line with commitment SADC Facilitator made to the collective in December 2015.
10. Opposition members of parliament should return to parliament to engage government. There is absolutely no way that elected representatives can retract from their responsibility when the nation desperately needs an alternative voice in the national formal structures of its democracy.

In conclusion, we are convinced that it is only through strong political will and genuine leadership demonstrated by Lesotho and the support from SADC that a successful implementation of the road map can be achieved. SADC is requested to continue to engage effectively with the political processes in Lesotho until good governance, rule of law and peace are secured.