

Press Release

Alliance of concerned non-state actors

Maseru, 22 April 2016

A. Background

Civil society and non-state formations in Lesotho (NGOs, Trade Unions, Professional Associations, Community and Religious Organisations) have been at the forefront of

- Highlighting concerns of the public about the deterioration of human rights, safety, security and stability of governance and the economy
- Warning the Government and other stakeholders of the negative consequences of not addressing the concerns of Lesotho's development partners, including the EU, USA, and others
- Seeking to engage Government in dialogue to express these concerns and ways of resolving Lesotho's problems together
- Urging the Government to urgently arrest the evident slide into instability, lawlessness and ungovernability that has gripped the country in the past two years

Our calls to government and international communities in respect of the above have previously been articulated a number of ways, including:

Statement of July 2015, in which we urged the Government of Lesotho to respond to the concerns of the United States of America convincingly "in order to avert potential negative evaluation of the country in the AGOA and MCA" (page 4);

Statement of December 2015, in which we called on the international community to institute targeted sanctions on the government of Lesotho "instead of imposing negative evaluation on the country that shall have potential detrimental implication for the citizenry", in respect of AGOA

However, these appeals and efforts have borne no fruit, and Lesotho continues to be unstable

B. Current situation

In recent months, Lesotho has lost (or has been warned of the possibility of losing) the support of some of our most important partners. The latest developments, namely

1. Suspension/withdrawal of [European Union \(EU\)](#) budget support (Amounting to M460.00 million)
2. Suspension of finalization of Lesotho's second [Millennium Challenge Corporation \(MCC\) -five-year compact \(In December 2015\)](#)
3. Decline in [African Growth and Opportunity Act \(AGOA\)](#)-related orders for Lesotho
4. Warnings from American authorities regarding renewal/continuation of AGOA agreement

are cause for concern. Still the Government has failed to act, and has further failed to take advantage of opportunities such the report of the SADC (Phumaphi) Commission of Inquiry.

C. Our concern

Our concern is with the following governance deficits in Lesotho:

1. Declining respect for the rule of law
2. Declining protection of human rights
3. Security and political instability
4. Government's reluctance of government to receive (initially) and (now) to implement the Phumaphi Commission's recommendations

These threaten our relations with the US, and AGOA among them. Should Lesotho forfeit AGOA, at least 40,000 jobs will be lost directly, with the negative consequences for:

- i) 40,000 workers employed by AGOA-based factories
- ii) Their families and dependents (an estimated additional 120, 000 people)
- iii) SMME operators who depend on them for custom on a regular basis (baitšokoli)
- iv) Landlords from whom many of these people rent accommodation
- v) Transport operators who ferry these workers on a daily basis
- vi) The national purse, which collects taxes from various transactions of these workers

D. Proposed Action

Given the situation, we find ourselves forced to increase pressure on our government to address these concerns.

We will therefore be presenting a petition to government on 12 May 2016 calling on it to protect the economy of this nation, and the jobs of these sectors that are faced with a bleak future by

1. Implementing immediately and in their totality the Phumaphi Commission recommendations
2. Presenting to Basotho immediately its plan/roadmap of implementation; and providing regular updates on progress (these processes are not only for Government and SADC)
3. Responding immediately to the concerns raised by Lesotho's American partners (MCC and AGOA) regarding governance, rule of law and human rights issues
4. Initiating a process of National Dialogue to identify, discuss and resolve Lesotho's pressing political and economic problems

As representatives of various sectors of the public, we believe we have both the mandate and obligation to participate in, facilitate and support efforts to build a stable, secure and prosperous Lesotho.