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## **Statement by the Lesotho Council of NGOs (LCN) on the current political**

### **Situation in Lesotho**

As Basotho will recall, civil society organisations in their own jurisdiction and collectively under the auspices of the Lesotho Council of NGOs (LCN) Democracy and Human Rights Commission have been actively involved in the democracy and human rights processes in Lesotho for the past three decades. LCN's Democracy and Human Rights Commission leadership has learnt of the recent political developments that have led to the **Peace March** contemplated by the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) on Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014.

The Commission leadership has also learnt from the public domain that the Lesotho Mounted Police Services (LMPS) have not issued a permit for the proposed march. On the other hand the Democracy and Human Rights Commission leadership has noted that the LCD has vowed to march with or without the permit. While it is their democratic right to express dissatisfaction, the LCN Democracy and Human Rights Commission leadership calls for a peaceful engagement and exercise of such a democratic right within the law and would like to highlight that in 2010 when the Public Processions and Meetings Act No. 14, 2010 was promulgated, the democracy and human rights civil society organisations challenged the wisdom of that law, which, in the view of human rights defenders took away the rights of association, assembly and expression to the determination of the police as provided for by the Constitution of Lesotho.

The LCN Democracy and Human Rights Commission leadership still affirms its position and belief that Public Processions and Meetings Act No. 14, 2010 is problematic. The decision of the police not to grant permission leaves a lot to be desired.

The call by the LCD to march with or without a permit is unacceptable. LCN Democracy and Human Rights Commission leadership therefore, calls for the following.

1. LCD should be granted with the permission to march peacefully while the LMPS must take necessary precautionary measures to ensure that the march remains peaceful and conducted within the perimeters of the law.
2. LCD should explore all legal means to challenge LMPS's decision not to grant it the permission to march rather than to opt for illegal means.
3. LCN Democracy and Human Rights Commission leadership calls for the amendment of the above- mentioned law.
4. LCN Democracy and Human Rights Commission leadership calls for all parties in government and in opposition to refrain from inflammatory and antagonistic utterances in public.
5. LCN Democracy and Human Rights Commission leadership calls for the coalition partners to keep on engaging in an open dialogue rather than antagonizing one another.

It is the belief of the LCN Democracy and Human Rights Commission leadership that all Basotho in their different status will work towards peace and save their land from potential civil unrest. LCN Democracy and Human Rights Commission leadership recommits itself to the resolution of the current political misunderstanding through constructive engagement. To this effect, the LCN Democracy and Human Rights Commission leadership has formally requested the audience of the Coalition Government leaders. It is the Democracy and Human Rights Commission leadership firm belief that the Coalition Government leaders will find necessary to afford the Commission leadership the opportunity to contribute in the resolution of the political problems of Lesotho. Looking forward, Democracy and Human Rights Commission leadership is planning the multi-stakeholders forum to solicit non-state-actors consensus on how to approach this political challenges.

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