

YOUR MAJESTY THE INDLOVUKAZI,
EMAKHOSIKATI,
YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESSES,
PRIME MINISTER,
PRESIDENT OF SENATE,
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY,
COUNCILLORS,
CHIEFS,
CHIEF JUSTICE,
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER,
CABINET MINISTERS,
MEMBERS OF SENATE,
MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY,
EXCELLENCIES, MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC
CORPS,
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

SIYANIVUSELA
EPHALAMENDE

NONKHE

BEKUNENE

INTRODUCTION

I AM DELIGHTED TO BE HERE TODAY TO OFFICIALLY OPEN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE 12TH PARLIAMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI.

WE EXTEND A CORDIAL WELCOME TO ALL THOSE WHO HAVE TRAVELLED FROM VARIOUS PLACES OF ABODE, BOTH NEAR AND FAR, AS WELL AS OUR ESTEEMED FRIENDS AND PARTNERS IN DEVELOPMENT. WE APPRECIATE YOUR PRESENCE HERE TODAY.

WE ALSO ACKNOWLEDGE ALL THOSE WHO ARE FOLLOWING THESE PROCEEDINGS FROM VARIOUS MEDIA PLATFORMS.

REFLECTING ON THE EVENTS OF 2023

WE ARE GRATEFUL TO THE ALMIGHTY GOD AND OUR ANCESTORS FOR THEIR GUIDANCE AND PROTECTION THAT HAS SEEN US THROUGHOUT THE YEAR 2023.

WE HAVE MANY REASONS TO CELEBRATE THE PAST YEAR, AS IT MARKED A SIGNIFICANT DOUBLE MILESTONE OF 55 YEARS SINCE OUR NATION GAINED INDEPENDENCE AND THE KING'S BIRTHDAY.

WE COMMEND EMASWATI FOR THE SUCCESSFUL NATIONAL EVENT, WHICH WAS HONOURED BY OTHER ESTEEMED LEADERS FROM THE REGION AND BEYOND.

OF SIGNIFICANCE IN THE YEAR WAS ALSO THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE AS IT WAS AN ELECTION YEAR, EMASWATI WERE ABLE TO BOLDLY CHART A WAY FORWARD FOR THE COUNTRY DURING SIBAYA.

WE APPLAUD THE NATION FOR THEIR OUTSTANDING PARTICIPATION AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS EVENTS, WHICH WERE A RESOUNDING SUCCESS.

THE NUMBERS WERE REMARKABLE, AND WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO UPHOLD AND TRANSMIT THIS HERITAGE FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

SUCCESSFUL NATIONAL ELECTIONS

THE 2023 NATIONAL ELECTIONS WERE A WATERSHED MOMENT IN THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI'S HISTORY, WITH OVER 90% OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS REGISTERING AND AN OVERWHELMING TURNOUT THAT VOTED.

UNDER THE MOTTO OF "**NGETE NGASALA NASAKHA LIVE**," EMASWATI RESPONDED TO THE CALL TO VOTE AS PART OF THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL SERVICE.

THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE DESERVES PRAISE FOR THE EXCELLENT TURNOUT IN AN ELECTION THAT WAS IN CONFORMITY WITH ALL REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL APPLICABLE NORMS AND BEST PRACTICES.

WE ARE EQUALLY PLEASED THAT OUR ELECTIONS UNDER THE TINKHUNDLA SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE, WERE FREE AND FAIR. WE PRAISE THE ELECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION (EBC) FOR THE ROBUST CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND FOR FACILITATING THE SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME OF THE ELECTIONS.

IN JULY BEFORE THE ELECTIONS, WE CALLED ON ALL EMASWATI TO ELECT MORE WOMEN AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO PARLIAMENT AND THE NATION RESPONDED POSITIVELY BY INCREASING THEIR NUMBERS. THIS IS COMMENDABLE.

WE ALSO WISH TO THANK ALL OUR MEDIA HOUSES AND THE ROYAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PARK FOR PROVIDING THE NATION WITH UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION DURING THE ELECTIONS AND SIBAYA. THE PLAN STARTS NOW TO WORK ON MORE IMPROVEMENTS FOR OUR NEXT ELECTIONS.

WELCOME NEW PARLIAMENTARIANS

AS WE GATHER HERE TODAY, WE ARE IN THE MIDST OF A DIVERSE GROUP OF POLITICIANS, MANY OF WHOM ARE JUST STARTING THEIR POLITICAL JOURNEYS. WE WELCOME YOU ALL TO THIS DAUNTING TASK AFTER SECURING THE SUPPORT OF YOUR CONSTITUENCIES.

WE WISH YOU SUCCESS IN FULFILLING THIS SIGNIFICANT NATIONAL ROLE, WHICH ENTAILS ENACTING LAWS AND PROVIDING OVERSIGHT TO DRIVE OUR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA.

WE ALSO RECOGNISE THE REMARKABLE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE YOU. THEIR EFFORTS HAVE POSITIONED THE COUNTRY FAVOURABLY FOR A STRONG 2024 ECONOMIC START.

YOU ARE URGED TO ESTABLISH A COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP WITH THE OTHER BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT AND ENHANCE SERVICE DELIVERY TO THE NATION WITH THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF EFFICIENCY AND SPEED.

AS NEW MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, IT IS CRUCIAL TO DEMONSTRATE UNQUESTIONABLE INTEGRITY, CREDIBILITY, TRUSTWORTHINESS, RESPECT AND A FIRM DEDICATION TO NATIONAL UNITY AT ALL TIMES. YOU HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT THE NATION, ITS CONSTITUTION, AND THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE.

YOU HAVE A HUGE TASK AHEAD OF YOU IN ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES THAT LIE AHEAD. IT IS TIME TO ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVES AND PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD TO ENSURE WE ATTAIN OUR ASPIRATIONS OF FIRST WORLD STATUS.

DURING SIBAYA, EMASWATI SHOWED THEIR GRATITUDE FOR THE PEACEFUL ENVIRONMENT AND EXPRESSED THEIR DESIRE FOR PROGRESS.

A TAKE AWAY FROM THE SUBMISSIONS WAS THE AGENDA THEY SET FOR GOVERNMENT, AND IT IS IMPORTANT FOR PARLIAMENT TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON THIS TASK.

THE PRIMARY FOCUS WAS TO ADDRESS THE PRESSING ISSUE OF UNEMPLOYMENT WHICH IS ALSO WITNESSED AROUND THE WORLD. THIS CHALLENGE HAS BEEN EXACERBATED BY THE FAR-REACHING IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

IT IS VITAL FOR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES AND COME UP WITH WELL-ESTABLISHED STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE GOOD ECONOMIC GROWTH FOR THE COUNTRY.

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE AND FISCAL OUTLOOK

THERE ARE SEVERAL ENCOURAGING SIGNS ON THE ECONOMIC FRONT THAT OFFER HOPE FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR. THE ESWATINI ECONOMY DEMONSTRATED STRONG RESILIENCE, EXPERIENCING A SIGNIFICANT GROWTH OF 4.8% IN 2023, FOLLOWING A PERIOD OF SLOW GROWTH AT 0.5% IN 2022.

INITIAL PROJECTIONS INDICATE THAT 2024 IS EXPECTED TO BE EQUALLY PROMISING, WITH A **FORECASTED GROWTH RATE OF 4.9%**. THE COUNTRY HAS ALSO EXPERIENCED **A DECREASE IN THE FISCAL DEFICIT, FROM ABOUT 4.5% IN 2021/22 TO 1.6% OF GDP IN 2023/24.**

THIS POSITIVE CHANGE CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE **FISCAL ADJUSTMENT PLAN** (FAP).

THE NATION WILL BE PLEASED TO KNOW THAT THE NATIONAL BUDGET IS SET TO RECEIVE A BOOST FROM TAXES COLLECTED INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL REVENUE SOURCES.

THIS BODES WELL FOR THE NEW PARLIAMENTARIANS WHO WILL HAVE RESOURCES TO WORK WITH. WE STRONGLY ENCOURAGE GOVERNMENT TO ESTABLISH A STABILISATION FUND AS A PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE FOR POTENTIAL FUTURE DECLINES FROM THESE REVENUE SOURCES, STARTING IMMEDIATELY. **SISU SIBEKELWA NGAPHANDLE MASWATI.**

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

THE PRIVATE SECTOR IS EXPECTED TO INTENSIFY ITS EFFORTS OF EXPLOITING OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED BY REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETS. THE AFRICA CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AGREEMENT AND OTHER BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL AGREEMENTS ARE READY TO LAUNCH US TO THE WORLD.

EMPHASIS SHOULD BE DIRECTED TOWARDS GROWING OUR PRESENCE AND CREATING QUALITY JOBS FOR EMASWATI. WE MUST ACHIEVE OUR GOAL OF BECOMING A GLOBAL COMMERCE HUB AND STREAMLINE BORDER FORMALITIES TO MAKE TRADING EASY.

WE ARE PLEASED THAT THE KINGDOM IS MAKING PROGRESS WITH THE NATIONAL TRADE FACILITATION PROGRAMME, BUT WE URGE URGENT ATTENTION TOWARDS DECREASING BORDER CONGESTION AND SEEK ALTERNATIVE PORTS OF ENTRY TO LESSEN GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN RISKS.

WE MUST ENHANCE OUR ICT INFRASTRUCTURE AND LEARN HOW TO ADVANCE OUR VALUE CHAINS TO STIMULATE INDUSTRIALISATION AND DIVERSIFICATION. GOVERNMENT WILL ENGAGE MORE CLOSELY WITH BUSINESS TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT SUPPORTS SUCH INVESTMENTS.

WITH THE ADVENT OF THE 4TH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION, CHARACTERISED BY DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, WE MUST PRIORITISE WORKER RETRAINING AND UPSKILLING. GOVERNMENT AND THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY MUST WORK TOGETHER TO ACCELERATE THIS PROCESS.

SMES

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES TO STIMULATE ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE EXPANSION OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMES).

THEY ARE THE CORNERSTONE OF OUR ECONOMY, AND ARE PIVOTAL IN DRIVING JOB CREATION, PARTICULARLY IN HIGH-POTENTIAL SECTORS INCLUDING, AGRI-BUSINESS, TOURISM, AND INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT), JUST TO NAME A FEW.

OUR FOCUS MUST BE ON FOSTERING A MORE CONDUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT.

SIMPLIFYING THE PROCESS OF REGISTRATION FOR SME'S SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY IMPLEMENTING DIGITAL SOLUTIONS AS WELL AS REDUCING THE TAX COMPLIANCE BURDEN FOR SMALL, EMERGING BUSINESSES.

PARTICULAR ATTENTION MUST ALSO BE PAID TO INCREASING ACCESS TO BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SERVICES, FOR OUR MINORITY GROUPS TO ENSURE THAT THEY INVEST IN DIVERSITY AND THE WORLD OF OPPORTUNITIES OUT THERE.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

FOLLOWING THE NATION'S SUBMISSIONS AT SIBAYA, IT IS VITAL THAT GOVERNMENT TAKES IMMEDIATE ACTION TO REVIVE THE NATIONAL ECONOMY AND IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY TO ALL AREAS OF THE KINGDOM.

IN PARTICULAR, WE WISH TO POINT OUT THAT IT IS CRITICAL THAT OUR MAJOR CAPITAL PROJECTS AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENTS INCLUDING THE START OF THE PARLIAMENT BUILDING AND DATA RECOVERY CENTRE PROCEED.

THE COMPLETION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE (ICC) AND HOTEL MUST BE PRIORITISED IN THE NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR.

THE NATION WILL BE PLEASED TO KNOW THAT THE STRATEGIC OIL RESERVE CONSTRUCTION WILL COMMENCE IN THE NEXT SIX MONTHS. THIS WILL FULFIL OUR FUEL SUFFICIENCY OBJECTIVES.

GOVERNMENT SHOULD ALSO IMPLEMENT A COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMME TO UPGRADE OUR ROADS, POWER SUPPLY, OFFICES, WATER, AND HOUSING.

THE COUNTRY REMAINS WITH ABOUT 400 KILOMETRES OF ROADS THAT STILL NEEDS TO BE TARRED. THE STATUS OF OUR RURAL ROADS NEEDS IMPROVEMENT, AS MANY OF OUR PEOPLE AND TRANSPORT OPERATORS HAVE APPEALED TO GOVERNMENT TO FIX AND RESURFACE THEM.

WE URGE GOVERNMENT TO USE AFFORDABLE TECHNOLOGIES, WHICH ARE GOOD FOR LOW TRAFFIC VOLUMES TO ALLEVIATE THE PROBLEM FACED BY OUR PEOPLE.

ENERGY THE DRIVING FORCE

IN OUR UNWAVERING PURSUIT OF OUR DEVELOPMENT VISION AS A COUNTRY, THE IMPORTANCE OF ENERGY TO DRIVE GROWTH CANNOT BE EMPHASISED ENOUGH. WE PROUDLY CELEBRATE OUR COMMENDABLE ELECTRIFICATION RATE OF 82%.

HOWEVER, IT IS PARAMOUNT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF OUR ENERGY IS IMPORTED FROM OUR NEIGHBOURS.

THIS REQUIRES THAT WE MUST INVEST HEAVILY IN LOCAL ENERGY GENERATION TO ENSURE SELF DEPENDANCY WHICH WILL BE AFFORDABLE AND SUSTAINABLE IN LIGHT OF OUR 2025 ELECTRICITY CONTRACT WITH ESKOM IN SOUTH AFRICA.

NATIONAL INNOVATION SYSTEM

THE KINGDOM NEEDS A STRONG NATIONAL SYSTEM OF INNOVATION (NSI) AS IT EMBARKS ON A MISSION TO SHIFT FROM A RESOURCE-BASED TO A KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY THAT VALUES IDEAS, DISCOVERIES, AND INNOVATION.

THIS EFFORT REQUIRES THAT WE CULTIVATE COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS TO FULFIL OUR RESEARCH, SCIENTIFIC, TECHNOLOGY, AND INVENTION GOALS AS A NATION.

AGRICULTURE

THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR HAS IDENTIFIED KEY AREAS OF FOCUS TO NOT ONLY CHANGE FARMING PRACTICES, BUT ALSO ENHANCE THE WELL-BEING OF THE COUNTRY'S POPULATION.

THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT CONCERN REGARDING THE INABILITY TO MEET OUR FOOD SECURITY REQUIREMENTS DOMESTICALLY, RESULTING IN A HEAVY RELIANCE ON IMPORTS.

IN ADDRESSING THIS IMBALANCE, GOVERNMENT HAS ADDED A HORTICULTURE SUBSIDY AND INFORMATION SYSTEM TO HELP WITH THE MARKETING OF FRESH PRODUCE AND AGRI-BUSINESSES. THE EXISTING MAIZE, BEANS, AND SORGHUM INPUT SUBSIDISATION AND TRACTOR HIRE SERVICES WILL CONTINUE.

TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO FUNDING, AN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT FUND HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED WHICH IS EXPECTED TO BOOST INVESTMENT AND ENHANCE THE PERFORMANCE OF VALUE CHAINS. LET US NURTURE OUR LAND TO GIVE US MORE VALUE ADDITION.

TOURISM

THE COUNTRY RECOGNISES THAT TOURISM CONTRIBUTES TO OUR ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND GROWTH POTENTIAL.

THEREFORE, GOVERNMENT IS ENGAGING WITH STAKEHOLDERS IN ORDER TO FULLY APPRECIATE THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE TOURIST VALUE CHAIN, FROM TOUR OPERATORS TO FRONT-LINE WORKERS.

GREAT EFFORT IS NEEDED TO INCREASE VISITOR NUMBERS AND TOURISM SPEND, AS WELL AS PROMOTING THE COUNTRY AS A DESTINATION OF CHOICE. WE NEED GEOGRAPHIC SPREAD OF SITES TO ATTRACT ALL TYPES OF TRAVELLERS.

THE INDUSTRY IS ENCOURAGED TO OFFER VISITORS A ROYAL EXPERIENCE IN ESWATINI. WE ALSO ANTICIPATE THAT GOVERNMENT WILL EXPEDITE THE MERGER OF LUBOMBO'S FIVE GAME PARKS TO PUT MORE ON OFFER FOR OUR TOURISTS.

CLIMATE CHANGE

EXTREME WEATHER IS BECOMING MORE FREQUENT AND INTENSE IN ESWATINI, ERODING ECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENTS. LAST YEAR AND RECENTLY, MILD CYCLONES, HAILSTORMS, AND WINDSTORMS DESTROYED INFRASTRUCTURE, CROPS AND ANIMALS ACROSS THE KINGDOM.

THESE OCCASIONAL AND SEVERE CLIMATE-INDUCED DISASTERS HAVE FORCED THE COUNTRY TO QUICKLY CONSTRUCT THE DISASTER MANAGEMENT FUND TO IMPROVE DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE.

GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO STRENGTHENING EARLY WARNING SERVICES, CATASTROPHE RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT TO MITIGATE THE EXTREME WEATHER AND CLIMATE CHANGE EFFECTS.

LET US BUILD ON OUR EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THIS PHENOMENON WHICH HAS EARNED US THE **"BEST URBAN DEVELOPMENT NDC INITIATIVE OF THE YEAR, FOR "STRENGTHENING OF URBAN RESILIENCE"** IN ESWATINI.

QUALITY HEALTH SERVICES

THE KINGDOM'S NATIONAL GOAL IS FOR EVERY LISWATI TO HAVE ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTH CARE AS AND WHEN THEY NEED IT WITHOUT FINANCIAL OR SERVICE DIFFICULTY. THIS IS IN LINE WITH THE PEOPLES' CALL AT SIBAYA TO IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY.

THE COUNTRY WANTS A PEOPLE WHO ARE HEALTHY, PRODUCTIVE AND HAVE A HIGH LIFE EXPECTANCY. AS EMASWATI, WE ARE PROUD THAT OUR KINGDOM WAS AMONG THE FIRST TO MEET THE UNAIDS 2025 TARGETS OF 95-95-95.

WE ALSO CONTAINED COVID-19 AND HAD A 2% DEATH RATE. THANKS TO ALL AWARENESS DRIVES WHICH HAVE EXCLUDED THE DISEASE FROM THE TOP 10 CAUSES OF MORBIDITY.

HEALTH, WELLBEING AND HIV & AIDS

TO ALL OUR ESTEEMED STAKEHOLDERS, INCLUDING OUR DEDICATED GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, CIVIL SOCIETY, PRIVATE SECTOR, AND VALUED DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS.

WE EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE FOR THE REMARKABLE PROGRESS IN ESWATINI'S HEALTH SECTOR. LIFE EXPECTANCY HAS RISEN FROM 45 TO AN IMPRESSIVE 63.5 YEARS, A TESTAMENT TO OUR COMMITMENT TO EMASWATI'S WELL-BEING THROUGH EXPANDED HEALTH SERVICES, LIFE-SAVING MEDICINES, AND SUCCESSFUL VACCINE IMPLEMENTATION.

WHILE CELEBRATING DECLINING HIV/AIDS INFECTIONS AND DEATHS, WE MUST REDUCE NEW INFECTIONS SO THAT ESWATINI CAN REMAIN ON COURSE FOR YET ANOTHER MILESTONE, THAT OF ENDING AIDS AS A PUBLIC HEALTH THREAT BY 2030.

OUR ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO STRENGTHEN OUR HEALTH SECTOR AND PROVIDE SPECIALISED MEDICAL CARE LOCALLY.

WE URGE GOVERNMENT TO EXPEDITE THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE PROCESS OF MOBILIZING RESOURCES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE REFERRAL HOSPITAL AS PROMISED BY THE FRIENDS OF THE KINGDOM.

THIS SHOULD BE DONE IN THE NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR. NO LISWATI SHOULD DIE FROM LACK OF PROPER HEALTH SERVICES.

HEALTH CARE NEEDS THE SUPPORT OF HOUSING WELFARE FOR OUR PEOPLE AND THE COUNTRY NEEDS TO INVEST IN REVIVING THE URBAN AND RURAL HOUSING SCHEMES FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR NEEDY PEOPLE. THESE WILL COMPLEMENT THE ONGOING DEVELOPMENT OF OUR TOWNS ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

AT THE END-OF-THE-YEAR NATIONAL PRAYER SERVICE, I CALLED ON ALL EMASWATI TO JOIN HANDS IN PUTTING AN END TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV).

WE NOTE THE SIGNS OF DECLINE TO THIS PRACTICE AND URGE EMASWATI TO CONTINUE ALONG THIS PATH UNTIL THERE IS NOT A SINGLE CASE.

I REPEAT THIS CALL TODAY AND EMPHASISE THAT WE MUST REMOVE THIS DARK SHADOW OF VIOLENCE THAT IS HOVERING OVER OUR SOCIETY.

THE NATION COMMENDS GOVERNMENT FOR THE ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES TO CONFRONT THIS SCOURGE, AS WELL AS THE SUPPORT OF OUR PARTNERS, TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY ON ENDING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE.

BEYOND THESE RESOURCES, IT WILL REQUIRE A CHANGE OF ATTITUDE BY EVERYONE IN FOSTERING CULTURAL CHANGE AND PROMOTING EQUALITY FOR ALL.

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

OUR YOUTH STAND AS THE ARCHITECTS OF OUR NATION'S FUTURE AND ARE AT THE CORE OF OUR VISION TO MAKE ESWATINI A WORLD CLASS COUNTRY.

HOWEVER, THE DAUNTING SPECTRE OF UNEMPLOYMENT ENGULFS OVER MORE THAN HALF OF THEM, PRESENTING A FORMIDABLE CHALLENGE THAT REQUIRE OUR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION.

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE STEADFASTLY CONTINUE TO FORGE PATHWAYS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR YOUNG PEOPLE. ESWATINI HAS SPEARHEADED NUMEROUS INITIATIVES, SUCH AS THE YOUTH FUND, RURAL DEVELOPMENT FUND, AND SMALL-SCALE AND EXPORT GUARANTEE SCHEMES.

THESE ENDEAVOURS ARE DESIGNED TO FACILITATE ACCESS TO FINANCING, ENABLING YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS TO INITIATE BUSINESSES AND IN TURN, CREATE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

WE CANNOT EMPHASISE ENOUGH THE ROLE OF QUALITY EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN PAVING OUR PATH TO THE SHARED PROSPERITY THAT WE HAVE ENVISIONED.

CREATING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR YOUNG PEOPLE, HINGES ON THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, RIGHT FROM THE LOWEST GRADE TO THE HIGHEST LEVEL.

WE EXTEND HEARTFELT GRATITUDE TO ALL OUR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS WHO HAVE BEEN UNWAVERING IN SUPPORTING GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS.

THE COUNTRY WILL CONTINUE WITH HER FULL PARTICIPATION AND WE SHALL LEARN FROM THE GREAT EXPERIENCES WE GET IN OUR INTERACTIONS FROM OUR INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS.

AGENDA 2030 OF THE SDGS AND AU AGENDA 2063

ALL OUR DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES FALL WITHIN AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE AFRICAN UNION AGENDA 2063.

IN LINE WITH AU AGENDA, WE HAVE REPEATEDLY CALLED FOR THE SILENCING OF GUNS SO THAT WE CAN PURSUE DEVELOPMENT FOR OUR COUNTRIES.

WE WISH TO APPLAUD THE AFRICAN UNION FOR DECLARING 2024 THE YEAR OF EDUCATION, AND ESWATINI WILL REMAIN FOCUSED ON TRANSFORMING OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR CHILDREN.

IN REFLECTING ON OUR JOURNEY TO MEETING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS), WE TAKE PRIDE IN THE STRIDES MADE IN SECTORS SUCH AS HEALTH AND EDUCATION, BUT TO MENTION A FEW.

WE ALSO ACKNOWLEDGE THE PERSISTENT CHALLENGES IN AREAS LIKE POVERTY, FOOD SECURITY, AND EMPLOYMENT, SOME OF WHICH HAVE BEEN IMPACTED BY THE MULTIPLE CRISES FACED ACROSS THE GLOBE IN RECENT TIMES.

OUR GOAL TOWARDS THE SDGS AND AGENDA 2063 IS A COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY. LET US REAFFIRM OUR COMMITMENT TO THIS AMBITIOUS PLAN AND WORK TIRELESSLY TOWARDS A MORE SUSTAINABLE, EQUITABLE, JUST AND PROSPEROUS NATION.

CORRUPTION

CORRUPTION STANDS IN THE WAY OF PROGRESS IN OUR NATION'S PLANS, PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS FOR DEVELOPMENT.

EMASWATI HAVE MADE THEIR VOICES HEARD AT SIBAYA, EXPRESSING FRUSTRATION WITH THE LACK OF TANGIBLE PROGRESS IN ADDRESSING THIS ISSUE.

WE STRONGLY ENCOURAGE GOVERNMENT TO PRIORITISE TAKING ACTION ON THIS MATTER. IT IS HIGH TIME WE WITNESS JUDGEMENTS PASSED ON INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN CORRUPTION, HOLDING THEM ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES AND STRUCTURES MUST WORK TOGETHER IN OUR QUEST FOR ZERO TOLERANCE FOR CORRUPTION IN ESWATINI.

CONCLUSION

THE YEAR 2024 HOLDS GREAT POTENTIAL AND WE THANK ALL EMASWATI FOR THEIR SUPPORT AND PROMOTING PEACE AND STABILITY THAT EXISTS IN THE COUNTRY.

THIS WILL ALLOW US TO CONCENTRATE ON ACHIEVING OUR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES.

WE SHALL REALIZE PROSPERITY IF WE ALL PULL TOGETHER WITH THE NEW PARLIAMENTARIANS IN THEIR EFFORTS TO TACKLE THE CHALLENGES AHEAD AND PAVE THE WAY FOR A PROSPEROUS FUTURE FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.

INSTEAD OF FIXATING ON THE BICKERING THAT HINDER OUR PROGRESS, LET US DIRECT OUR ATTENTION AND ENERGIES TOWARDS DISCOVERING SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS.

THESE WILL FORTIFY OUR ECONOMY, ELEVATE OUR SOCIAL WELL-BEING, PROVIDE JOB CREATION, IMPROVE HEALTHCARE, AND REINFORCE OTHER CRUCIAL SECTORS, THUS PAVING THE PATH FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR THE NATION.

IT IS CRUCIAL THAT WE PUT RESPECT ON A PEDESTAL IN ALL OUR ENDEAVOURS, AS IT IS A CHARACTERISTIC THAT TRULY DEFINES OUR IDENTITY AS EMASWATI.

LET US SPRING TO ACTION AND TARGET AT ATTAINING ABOVE 5% ECONOMIC GROWTH WHILST TACKLING THE PRESSING ISSUES OF POVERTY, UNEMPLOYMENT AND SERVICE DELIVERY. FOR GOVERNMENT TO ADDRESS THESE KEY NATIONAL CHALLENGES **'AKAGIJIME ATSI NKWE!'**

WE CAN OVERCOME IT, AND WE KNOW THIS, BECAUSE WHEN WE COME TOGETHER WITH A SHARED PURPOSE AND EACH PERSON PLAYS THEIR PART, WE CAN MOVE MOUNTAINS. UNITY IS OUR STRENGTH!

WE IMPLORE OUR NEW PARLIAMENTARIANS TO FULLY EMBRACE THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES AND WE PRAY FOR DIVINE GUIDANCE AND PROTECTION THROUGHOUT YOUR TERM.

DECLARATION

IT IS NOW MY SINGULAR HONOUR TO DECLARE THE FIRST SESSION OF THE 12TH PARLIAMENT OFFICIALLY OPENED.

I THANK YOU. MAY THE ALMIGHTY GOD BLESS US ALL.