

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

**SIYANIVUSELA NONKHE BEKUNENE EPHALAMENDE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

IT IS A GREAT HONOUR TO BE WITH YOU HERE TODAY FOR THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI.

WE EXTEND A WARM WELCOME TO ALL HERE PRESENT, INCLUDING THOSE WHO HAVE TRAVELLED FROM FAR AND WIDE TO BE PART OF THIS AUSPICIOUS EVENT. WE ARE COGNIZANT OF THE FACT THAT, SOME OF OUR PEOPLE ARE FOLLOWING TODAY'S PROCEEDINGS THROUGH ELECTRONIC MEDIA PLATFORMS.

## **HONOURING IMIKHOSI YELIVE**

WE ARE GRATEFUL THAT THE COUNTRY WAS ABLE TO HOST A FEW NATIONAL EVENTS, AS SOME COULD NOT BE HELD DUE TO THE PREVAILING COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

WE COMMEND EMABUTFO, LUTSANGO AND IMBALI FOR THEIR CONTINUED PARTICIPATION AT THESE CEREMONIES. WE WERE PARTICULARLY IMPRESSED TO SEE ONE OF THE HIGHEST EVER ATTENDANCES AT THE INCWALA CEREMONY, MAKING IT A RESOUNDING SUCCESS.

OUR INCWALA WAS HELD IN THE FACE OF A COVID-19 PANDEMIC THAT PLACED OUR HEALTH SECTOR ON HIGH ALERT IN MANAGING LARGE NUMBERS. WE THANK THE LORD ALMIGHTY AND OUR ANCESTORS FOR GUIDING AND PROTECTING US THROUGHOUT THE CEREMONY.

WE MUST COMMEND THE HEALTH WORKERS AND ALL THE SUPPORT STAFF, FOR COMING OUT IN FULL FORCE AND WORKING TIRELESSLY TO ENSURE THAT PRECAUTIONS WERE BEING OBSERVED.

EVERYBODY PRESENT WAS TESTED WHILE MANY PEOPLE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET VACCINATED, MYSELF INCLUDED. I AM HERE TODAY PROUDLY INOCULATED AND AS HEALTHY AS CAN BE.

WE URGE THOSE WHO STILL HAVE DOUBTS AND FEARS, TO PUT ASIDE THE MYTHS AND THEORIES ABOUT THE VACCINES AS THEY ARE NOT HERE TO KILL, BUT TO GIVE LONGER LIFE TO OUR NATION.

THE COUNTRY HAS A LONG WAY TO GO IN REACHING HER VACCINATION TARGET AS ONLY 28 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL POPULATION IS VACCINATED.

AS THE NATION ADAPTS TO THE NEW NORMAL OF LIVING SIDE BY SIDE WITH COVID, LET US LEARN FROM THE LESSONS OF INCWALA ON HOW TO ENSURE SAFETY OF PARTICIPANTS IN LARGE GATHERINGS SO THAT WE CAN SOON GET BACK TO NORMALCY. COVID IS NOT GOING ANYWHERE, SO WE NEED TO LEARN HOW TO LIVE WITH IT.

LET US ALSO USE THE INCWALA EXPERIENCE AT UPCOMING NATIONAL ACTIVITIES SUCH AS EMAGANU AND GOOD FRIDAY, AMONG OTHERS. WE ARE NOW MORE EXPERIENCED IN PREVENTING INFECTIONS.

WE MUST CAUTION THOUGH, THAT THE WORST HAS NOT PASSED US. WE STILL NEED TO REMAIN VIGILANT.

THE CEREMONY WAS FURTHER BLESSED BY THE RAINS THAT HAVE BEEN FALLING CONSISTENTLY SINCE INCWALA. THEY ARE A MUCH NEEDED RESOURCE FOR THE COUNTRY'S PLANS TO IMPROVE HER AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT.

## **WATER HARVESTING AND FOOD SELF-SUFFICIENCY**

WE SHOULD TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF THESE RAINS BY HARVESTING THE WATER FOR IRRIGATION, WHICH IS VITAL IF WE ARE TO MEET OUR FOOD SELF-SUFFICIENCY TARGETS.

AT PRESENT, WE STILL FALL SHORT OF THIS GOAL BUT WE REMAIN ENCOURAGED BY THE CURRENT RAINS.

WE ARE AWARE THAT FARMING HAS NOT BEEN EASY FOR SOME AS TRACTORS WERE UNABLE TO PLOUGH THE FIELDS, BUT TILLING IN OTHER AREAS WAS NOT HINDERED.

THE RAINS ALSO BRING TO LIGHT THE NEED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF MORE DAMS TO PRESERVE THIS WATER FOR USE IN SUBSEQUENT YEARS WHERE WE COULD BE FACED WITH DROUGHT SITUATIONS.

WE ARE, HOWEVER, CONCERNED ABOUT THE NEGATIVE IMPACT THAT THE ABOVE NORMAL RAINFALL HAS HAD ON OUR ROADS AND BRIDGES, CAUSING AN INCONVENIENCE TO OUR MOTORISTS AND ALL ROAD USERS. THEY HAVE ALSO AFFECTED THE STRUCTURES OF PEOPLE'S HOMES.

THE ESTIMATED COST TO REPAIR DAMAGES CAUSED THUS FAR, IS IN EXCESS OF E150 MILLION. WE CAN ASSURE THE NATION THAT GOVERNMENT AND ITS AGENCIES HAVE DEVELOPED A COMPREHENSIVE MAINTENANCE AND REHABILITATION PROGRAMME TO RESTORE NORMALITY AS SOON AS REASONABLY POSSIBLE.

## **VISION 2022: ATTAINING FIRST WORLD STATUS.**

AS THE NATION IS AWARE, WE DECLARED 2022 AS THE YEAR OF ATTAINING 'FIRST WORLD STATUS'. UNFORTUNATELY, WE HAVE ARRIVED AND THE DREAM HAS NOT GONE OUR WAY.

THIS WAS DUE TO SEVERAL REASONS, NOT LEAST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC THAT DISRUPTED ECONOMIC ACTIVITY, HALTED TRADE, CAUSED JOB LOSSES AND THOSE WHO HAD HOPE LOST IT. TAX REVENUES DROPPED SIGNIFICANTLY MAKING IT DIFFICULT FOR GOVERNMENT TO DELIVER ON HER OBLIGATIONS.

THE OTHER DISRUPTIONS WERE CAUSED BY THE CONFLICT WHICH RESULTED IN LOSS OF LIVES AND VANDALISM OF PROPERTY. SUCH SHOULD NEVER REPEAT ITSELF AGAIN.

THE COUNTRY HAS SINCE PROVIDED A RECONSTRUCTION FUND TO ASSIST THOSE WHO LOST PROPERTY AND VALUABLE ASSETS. WE TRUST THAT THOSE AFFECTED HAVE SUBMITTED REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE FROM THE FUND.

RECONSTRUCTION WILL NOT HAPPEN OVERNIGHT, BUT WE HOPE IT WILL REVIVE THE CONFIDENCE IN OUR BUSINESS SECTOR AND ALSO CREATE JOB OPPORTUNITIES SINCE WE HAVE A HIGH LEVEL OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE COUNTRY, WHICH IS AN UNDESIRABLE SITUATION.

THE ECONOMIC CHALLENGES EMANATING FROM THE PANDEMIC ARE NOT UNIQUE TO ESWATINI. IT IS A GLOBAL PHENOMENON WHICH HAS MADE IT DIFFICULT TO SEEK SUPPORT FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES AND FRIENDS OF THE KINGDOM AS THEY ARE EQUALLY AFFECTED.

POTENTIAL INVESTORS HAVE BECOME MORE HESITANT TO MOVE OUT OF THEIR COUNTRIES AS THEY CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE COVID-19 SITUATION.

WE THANK GOD THAT HE HAS KEPT US GOING, SO WE NEED TO COME TOGETHER, MEET AND FIND WAYS TO ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES BY CREATING JOBS AT SMALL, MEDIUM AND LARGE ENTERPRISE LEVELS.



IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT WE NEED TO PUT IN A LOT OF EFFORT TO HELP US GET TO A FIRST WORLD STATUS. THIS MUST NOT JUST BE A DREAM BUT A REALITY.

### **ENERGY INDEPENDENCE VITAL FOR GROWTH**

IN OUR QUEST TO BECOME A DEVELOPED NATION, OUR INVESTMENT TARGETS NEED TO AIM HIGHER. WE NEED ENTERPRISES THAT WILL GENERATE A TURNOVER RUNNING IN THE BILLIONS OF EMALANGENI.

WE ARE AWARE THAT SUCH PROJECTS ARE GUIDED BY THE AVAILABILITY OF GOOD ELECTRICITY SUPPLY. HOWEVER, THE ESWATINI CONTRACT WITH ESKOM IS COMING CLOSER TO AN END.

IT IS IMPORTANT AS EMASWATI THAT BY THE TIME IT ELAPSES, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME ENERGY INDEPENDENT. THIS IS WHY WE NEED TO URGENTLY STEP UP OUR PLANS TO INTEGRATE ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF ENERGY SUPPLY TO THE LOCAL GRID.

IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT WE ARE LOOKING TO THE THERMAL POWER PROJECT TO GENERATE ELECTRICITY LOCALLY. WE ARE AWARE THAT THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY IS CONSIDERING PHASING OUT COAL GENERATED POWER.

THIS COMPELS US TO RELY ON EXPERTS TO HELP PUT IN PLACE THE AVAILABLE TECHNOLOGY THAT IS ABLE TO MINIMISE THE IMPACT OF EMISSIONS TO THE ENVIRONMENT.

WE ALSO NEED TO MAXIMISE ON SOLAR ENERGY AS WELL AS WIND TURBINES AND EXPLORE NATURAL GAS OPTIONS. HYDRO POWER GENERATION CAN ALSO MAKE USE OF THE ABUNDANT RAINS. PUT TOGETHER, THESE PROJECTS OUGHT TO PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN THE RESUSCITATION OF OUR ECONOMY. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THIS IS DONE BEFORE THE ESKOM CONTRACT EXPIRES.

## **THE YEAR THAT WAS - 2021**

AS WE ENTER THE YEAR 2022, WE MUST TAKE STOCK AND LEARN FROM THE GAINS AND MISSED OPPORTUNITIES OF THE PREVIOUS YEAR IF WE ARE TO CHART A SUSTAINABLE WAY FORWARD.

LIFE TEACHES US THAT SOMETIMES WE NEED TO FALL IN ORDER TO RISE, AND THAT WE NEED TO FAIL IN ORDER TO SUCCEED.

WHAT DEFINES US BECOMES HOW WE CHOOSE TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES THAT LIFE PLACES IN OUR PATH. WE ENDED THE YEAR WITH ELEMENTS OF DIVISION AMONG THE POPULACE. THIS WILL NOT HELP THE COUNTRY MOVE FORWARD.

AS EMASWATI WE HAVE A WAY OF ENGAGEMENT, WHICH IS TO SIT DOWN AND DIALOGUE. WE NOW HAVE A CONSTITUTION THAT IS A PRODUCT OF NATIONAL CONSULTATION AND IT ALSO PRESCRIBES HOW TO GO ABOUT MAKING AMENDMENTS WHERE THE NEED ARISES.

WE SHOULD NOT SWAY FROM THIS ROUTE. IT PROVIDES THAT RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION CAN START AT SIBAYA, WHICH IS THE ULTIMATE DECISION MAKING BODY OF OUR PEOPLE, THEN TAKEN TO PARLIAMENT FOR ADOPTION AND PROMULGATED INTO LAW.

WE DISCOURAGE THE USE OF FORCE AND VIOLENCE TO INFLUENCE CHANGE AS WE ALL DESERVE TO LIVE IN PEACE. IT IS NOT A CRIME TO HAVE DIVERGING VIEWS BUT ENGAGING IN DIALOGUE CREATES A BETTER OUTCOME FOR ALL, AS EVERY PERSON NEEDS ADVICE FROM TIME TO TIME.

THE NATION WILL RECALL THAT WE EMBRACED THE SMART PARTNERSHIP DIALOGUE BECAUSE WE ARE A NATION WHOSE VALUES ARE ANCHORED IN RESOLVING MATTERS AROUND THE TABLE. JUST LIKE THE TRIPARTITE FORUM FOR LABOUR ISSUES AND ULTIMATELY THE SIBAYA DIALOGUE. ALL THESE FORM PART OF OUR EFFORTS TO PROMOTE PEACE.

HOWEVER, DUE TO COVID, THESE TYPES OF ENGAGEMENTS COULD NOT TAKE PLACE. WE ARE THANKFUL THAT WE ARE SEEING THE PANDEMIC SUBSIDE, WHICH GIVES ROOM FOR THESE CONSULTATION FORUMS TO RESUME.

LET US PUT THE COUNTRY FIRST AND NOT PUSH SELF-INTERESTS. LET US REMAIN THE PEACE LOVING EMASWATI WE ARE KNOWN TO BE.

WE MUST RETURN TO THE PRINCIPLES IMPARTED TO US FROM OUR PREDECESSORS. THIS COUNTRY WOULD NOT BE WHAT IT IS TODAY IF IT WERE NOT FOR THE WAYS OF LIFE WE INHERITED FROM OUR FOREFATHERS.

### **THE ROLE OF ICT IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

ONE OF THE SIGNIFICANT LEARNINGS FROM THE DISRUPTIONS TO THE ECONOMY AND SCHOOLING THE PAST YEAR, WAS THE IMPORTANT ROLE ICT CAN PLAY IN OUR DEVELOPMENT.

IN EDUCATION WE SAW HOW COVID AFFECTED SCHOOLING AND MANY SCHOOLS TURNED TO ONLINE LEARNING, E-EDUCATION.

THIS IS A NORM IN MODERN SOCIETIES WHERE EXERCISE BOOKS ARE BEING PHASED OUT AND LEARNING DIGITALISED. WE ARE ALSO SEEING ICT BEING USED IN WHAT IS CALLED E-MEDICINE.

THIS IS BY NO MEANS A LOW COST INVESTMENT, BUT WE SHOULD NOT COUNT THE EXPENSE OF A TABLET FOR OUR CHILDREN AS A HINDRANCE.

MEDICAL PRACTICE HAS ALSO GONE DIGITAL. ONCE THE COUNTRY SETS A GOAL, ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE. NOTHING COMES CHEAP AND MEETING THESE COSTS IS PART OF OUR OBLIGATION.

ALL THE FIRST WORLD COUNTRIES PAID A PRICE TO BE WHERE THEY ARE. AS THEY MAKE IT HAPPEN, THE MORE INCOME THEY GENERATE. WE NEED THIS MENTALITY IF WE ARE TO CREATE THE BILLIONAIRES THAT WE WISH TO SEE IN THIS COUNTRY.

THE NATION IS ENCOURAGED TO USE THESE MODERN TECHNOLOGIES TO EMPOWER THEMSELVES AND NOT TO COMMIT CRIMES SUCH AS DIGITAL FRAUD. WE MUST ALSO STOP THE CYBER BULLYING AND DEHUMANIZATION OF OTHER PEOPLE.

IT IS PLEASING THAT THE COUNTRY HAS ALREADY PASSED LEGISLATION TO GUARD AGAINST THIS. WE MUST LEARN TO USE ICT TO OUR ADVANTAGE PROFITABLY.

### **SMALL & MEDIUM ENTERPRISES**

THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMES) ARE KNOWN TO BE THE BACKBONE OF AN ECONOMY AND ESWATINI IS NO EXCEPTION.

IT IS PLEASING TO NOTE THAT, GOVERNMENT HAS CREATED SEVERAL ORGANS THAT ARE CHARGED WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY TO DEVELOP AND SUPPORT MICRO, SMALL & MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (MSMES) AND PROVIDE ACCESS TO FINANCE.

KEY ECONOMIC SECTORS WITH A POTENTIAL TO GROW THE ECONOMY HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED TO PLAY A LEADING ROLE IN THIS REGARD, NAMELY; AGRICULTURE, MINING & ENERGY, TOURISM, EDUCATION & ICT AND MANUFACTURING.

WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THESE SECTORS HAVE A POTENTIAL TO CREATE JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMASWATI.

### **ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE AND OUTLOOK**

IN 2021, THE DOMESTIC ECONOMY CONTINUED TO FACE SEVERAL ECONOMIC DISRUPTIONS. DESPITE THESE DEVELOPMENTS, THE ECONOMY SHOWED SOME RESILIENCE WITH THE ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE MOVING TOWARDS A RECOVERY PATH. THE REBOUNDING OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY WAS SUPPORTED BY A RESURGENCE OF EXTERNAL CLAIM – SUPPORTING OUR EXPORT-ORIENTED ECONOMY.

WITHIN THE MEDIUM-TERM, THOUGH HIGHLY UNCERTAIN, ECONOMIC RECOVERY IS ANTICIPATED.



MOREOVER, RECONSTRUCTION AND STRATEGIES REMAIN CRUCIAL FOR SUSTAINED AND EQUITABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

ONGOING INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT, AS IDENTIFIED IN THE RECOVERY STRATEGIES, CONTINUES TO BE A CATALYST TO OBTAINING SUSTAINABLE GROWTH. THIS SUPPORTS ECONOMIC ACTIVITY THROUGH AVAILING THE NECESSARY INFRASTRUCTURE WHICH ARE ALL CRUCIAL TO THE EASE OF DOING BUSINESS AND DEVELOPMENT.

### **CAPITAL INVESTMENT**

IN ORDER TO CREATE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR OUR KINGDOM TO DEVELOP, GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO BUDGET FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS.

THESE INCLUDE, BUT NOT LIMITED TO; INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT SUCH AS ROAD CONSTRUCTION, PROVISION OF POTABLE WATER, DAMS FOR IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE, HEALTH FACILITIES, ENERGY, FACTORY SHELLS AND OTHERS.

AN IMPORTANT NEW ADDITION TO THE LARGE IRRIGATION INFRASTRUCTURE IS THE MKHONDVO-NGWAVUMA WATER AUGMENTATION PROJECT.

IT WILL BRING UNDER IRRIGATION ABOUT 10,000HA OF LAND MAINLY LOCATED IN THE SHISELWENI REGION WITH POTENTIAL FOR MORE LAND IN FUTURE.

### **ACCOMODATING GROWTH OF CONSTITUENCIES**

WE ARE ALSO GRATEFUL TO THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA FOR MAKING THE PARLIAMENT BUILDING PROJECT A POSSIBILITY. THIS COMES AT A TIME WHEN THE COUNTRY HAS EMBARKED ON INCREASING THE NUMBER OF CONTITUENCIES WHICH NOW STAND AT 59 FROM 55.

PROJECTIONS ARE THAT MORE ARE STILL TO COME IN THE NEAR FUTURE SO THAT PEOPLE CAN WALK A REASONABLE DISTANCE TO THE TINKHUNDLA CENTRES. THE ELECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION CONTINUES TO WORK TOWARDS DELIVERING FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS WHERE EACH COMMUNITY IS FAIRLY REPRESENTED IN PARLIAMENT.

WE TRUST THAT ALL THOSE WHO ARE ASSOCIATED WITH THIS INITIATIVE WILL CARRY OUT THEIR EXPECTED ROLES DILIGENTLY.

## **FISCAL DISCIPLINE**

THE COUNTRY EXPERIENCED A SIGNIFICANT SHORTFALL IN THE COLLECTION OF REVENUE COMPARED TO THE PREVIOUS YEARS, WHICH WAS WITNESSED BY MANY OTHER COUNTRIES ACROSS THE GLOBE.

REARRANGING OUR PRIORITIES IS THE CHALLENGE THAT WE SHALL CONTINUE TO GRAPPLE WITH IN THE MEDIUM TERM – THERE IS NO OTHER ROUTE TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

DURING 2022, THERE WILL BE A FOCUS ON IMPROVING INFORMATION MANAGEMENT ON FISCAL DATABASES IN ALL SPHERES OF GOVERNMENT, AS WELL AS FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS IN FISCAL POLICY TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE COLLECTION OF TAX AND NON-TAX REVENUE.

THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THIS WILL HAVE TO BE COUPLED WITH IMPROVED FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND PRUDENT EXPENDITURE TO MAINTAIN A SOUND FISCAL ENVIRONMENT.

ENSURING THAT CORRUPTION IS GIVEN NO ROOM TO INFILTRATE OUR DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN ALL SPHERES, IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE.

### **ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT**

TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES REMAIN THE KEY DRIVER OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT. IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT WE WELCOME THE COMPLETION OF THE LUKHULA-BIG BEND ROAD AND THE PROGRESS MADE ON THE UPGRADES OF THE MANZINI-MBADLANE HIGHWAY.

THE IMPROVEMENTS THAT HAVE BEEN DONE IN THE RURAL AREAS BY INTRODUCING THE PRO-BASE TECHNOLOGY AND THE SINGLE SEAL APPROACH TO ROAD PAVING, HAS ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE COUNTRY'S ROAD NETWORK, INCLUDING ALL WEATHER ACCESSIBILITY.

GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE WITH HER PROGRAMME OF FIXING THE DAMAGED ROADS.

### **TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION**

TOURISM IS AMONG THE KEY GROWTH SECTORS THAT HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN THE COUNTRY WITH GREAT POTENTIAL FOR JOB CREATION, GDP GROWTH AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION.

HOWEVER, THE EMERGENCE AND OUTBREAK OF THE VIRUS CRIPPLED THE SECTOR, AS WE HAVE WITNESSED A SIGNIFICANTLY LOW NUMBER OF TOURISTS VISITING OUR SHORES SINCE 2020.

TO BOOST THE TOURISM SECTOR, GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO PROMOTE PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS (PPP) AIMED AT ENHANCING TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND DIVERSIFICATION.

ALSO, GOVERNMENT IS IN THE PROCESS OF FACILITATING VISAS ON ARRIVAL AS WELL AS ELECTRONICALLY, TO ENHANCE EASY ACCESS OF TOURISTS TO THE KINGDOM.

ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS SECTOR IS THE RECENT LAUNCH OF THE 24 HOUR BORDER FACILITY AT NGWENYA. THIS WILL MAKE TRAVEL TO ESWATINI MORE CONVENIENT. IT WILL FURTHER ENHANCE TRADE AND IMPROVE THE EASE OF DOING BUSINESS IN ESWATINI.

WE APPRECIATE THE GOOD COOPERATION THAT HAPPILY EXISTS BETWEEN THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI AND THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA, WHICH HAS MADE THIS LONG CHERISHED GOAL, A REALITY.

## **INVESTMENT, TRADE AND EASE OF DOING BUSINESS**

AS MEANS TO IMPROVE THE BUSINESS CLIMATE, A REVIEW OF THE INDUSTRIAL AND THE INVESTMENT POLICIES, AS WELL AS DEVELOPING A NATIONAL HANDICRAFT POLICY WILL BE UNDERTAKEN BY GOVERNMENT IN THE COMING YEAR.

ALONGSIDE THESE REVIEWS IS THE CONTINUED PROCESS OF ESTABLISHING AN ELECTRONIC ONE-STOP-SHOP FOR EASE OF DOING BUSINESS IN ESWATINI. THIS FACILITY WILL BE HOSTED AT THE ROYAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PARK AND IS TARGETING AT FACILITATING OPENING OF A BUSINESS WITHIN FIVE DAYS.

## **ESWATINI REVIVES HER NATIONAL AIRLINE**

THE CHALLENGES THE WORLD FACES TODAY REQUIRE THAT COUNTRIES BE SELF-RELIANT ON MANY ASPECTS. THESE INCLUDE AVAILABILITY OF AIR CONNECTIVITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE.

THE COUNTRY IS AT AN ADVANCED STAGE IN RE-ESTABLISHING ITS OWN NATIONAL AIRLINE AS AVIATION IS CRITICAL FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

### **AGRICULTURE IS A MAINSTAY OF OUR LIVELIHOODS**

IT REMAINS GOVERNMENT'S PRIORITY TO ACHIEVE A FOOD SECURITY STATUS THAT ENABLES ALL *EMASWATI* TO HAVE ACCESS TO ADEQUATE, SAFE AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD.

THE SECTOR HAS REALIZED SOME IMPROVEMENTS IN ITS PERFORMANCE AS PRODUCTION OF AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES HAS INCREASED DURING THE PAST YEAR.

GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO PRIORITIZE PROVISION OF SERVICES TO THE FARMING COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION BY PROVIDING SUBSIDIZED FARM INPUTS AND TRACTOR SERVICES TO SUPPORT MAIZE PRODUCTION AND OTHER CROPS.



THIS SUPPORT HAS RECENTLY BEEN BOOSTED BY THE DONATION OF NEW TRACTORS FROM JAPAN. WE ENCOURAGE THE NATION TO MAKE GOOD USE OF THIS ESSENTIAL MACHINERY TO INCREASE CULTIVATION THIS FARMING SEASON AND BEYOND. WE COMMEND THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES THAT HAS MADE THIS POSSIBLE.

### **EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

THE WORLD OVER WEATHER AND CLIMATE SERVICES ARE INCREASINGLY BECOMING ESSENTIAL.

WHILE THIS HAS HAD A POSITIVE IMPACT ON OUR WATER STORAGE FACILITIES, IT HAS ALSO NEGATIVELY AFFECTED AGRICULTURE AND INFRASTRUCTURE, TO MENTION BUT A FEW.

WE ARE PLEASED THAT THE KINGDOM IS ON A PATH TO; MAINSTREAM CLIMATE ACTION ACROSS ALL SECTORS, ENHANCING EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS, PREPAREDNESS AND REDUCING EMISSIONS TO ENSURE THAT PROPERTY AND HUMAN LIFE IS PROTECTED FROM CLIMATE IMPACTS.

## **YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND EDUCATION**

THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI ACKNOWLEDGES AND VALUES THE IMPORTANCE OF THE YOUTH IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRESS OF THIS NATION.

THIS YEAR THE COUNTRY WILL ACCELERATE EFFORTS TO CONTINUE CREATING AN ENABLING EMPOWERMENT ENVIRONMENT FOR THE YOUTH'S INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY TO FLOURISH.

IT IS CRITICAL THAT OUR YOUNG PEOPLE ARE GIVEN THE APPROPRIATE SKILLS THAT WILL EMPOWER THEM IN ECONOMIC GROWTH INITIATIVES OF ALL SCALES.

OUR YOUNG PEOPLE ARE ENCOURAGED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE YOUTH REVOLVING AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDS TO ENSURE FINANCING OF QUALIFYING APPLICATIONS SO THAT THEY MAY CREATE MORE JOBS FOR THEIR PEERS.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT PROPER TRAINING IS GIVEN TO THE YOUTH SO THEY CAN DEVELOP THE REQUIRED BUSINESS PLANS.

FOR OUR SCHOOL GOING CHILDREN, WE PRAY THAT THERE WILL BE NO DISRUPTIONS. IT IS GOOD TO SEE THEM BACK IN CLASS AFTER ALMOST TWO YEARS AT HOME. THE EFFECTS OF THIS SETBACK WILL BE FELT FOR MANY YEARS TO COME.

WE ARE HAPPY TO NOTE THAT THE MINISTRY HAS SET PLANS TO ENSURE THAT COVID-19 IS WELL MANAGED SO AS TO PREVENT SPREADING INFECTIONS TO THE HOMES.

IT IS ALSO ENCOURAGING THAT VACCINATION IN SCHOOLS HAS BEGUN, EVEN FOR LEARNERS FROM 12 YEARS AND ABOVE. TESTING MUST BE ENCOURAGED NOW AND AGAIN IN ORDER TO ELIMINATE COVID ONCE AND FOR ALL AND IT WON'T BE FAR FROM NOW THAT WE DO. WE CAN ONLY ACHIEVE THIS BY WORKING TOGETHER.

THIS TIME, WE NEED TO ENSURE WE SUPPORT THE CHILDREN TO LEARN. NO ONE SHOULD USE OUR CHILDREN AND SCHOOLS TO FIGHT PERSONAL AGENDAS. WE HAD OUR CHANCE TO LEARN, SO LET THEM BE.

### **SOCIAL WELFARE AND DIGNITY COVER FOR THE ELDERLY**

THE COUNTRY VALUES THE IMMENSE CONTRIBUTION THAT OUR ELDERLY PEOPLE HAVE MADE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ESWATINI. WE ARE THEREFORE, OBLIGATED TO ENSURE THEY ARE WELL CATERED FOR THROUGH ELDERLY GRANTS AND OTHER SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES.

IN RESPONSE TO THE VULNERABILITY LEVEL EXPERIENCED AMONG THE ELDERLY PERSONS, GOVERNMENT WILL INTRODUCE A UNIVERSAL SERVICE COVER FOR THEM NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR.

AS EMASWATI WE RESPECT OUR ELDERS AND WE WANT TO ENSURE THAT THEY GET A DIGNIFIED DEPARTURE FROM THIS EARTH. THIS WILL COME AT NO COST TO THE ELDERLY, BUT WILL BE FULLY FINANCED BY GOVERNMENT.

### **COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE**

SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT HAS BEEN MADE BY GOVERNMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS IN THE HEALTH SECTOR DURING THE COVID-19 RESPONSE. IN THIS REGARD, WE GREATLY APPRECIATE OUR FRIENDS FOR THE VALUABLE SUPPORT IN THIS SECTOR.

WE ALSO COMMEND THE BRAVE AND DEDICATED HEALTH CARE WORKERS FOR SAVING MANY LIVES THAT COULD HAVE BEEN EASILY LOST TO COVID-19.

WE ALSO THANK ALL FRONT-LINE WORKERS WHO ARE IN CONTACT WITH PEOPLE AS THEY SERVE THE NATION FOR REMAINING RESILIENT DURING THIS TIME, THUS KEEPING THE SERVICES IN THE COUNTRY RUNNING EFFICIENTLY.

## **PURSUIING FIGHT AGAINST HIV AND AIDS**

DESPITE THE PREVAILING CHALLENGES AROUND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC WHICH HAS BEEN WITH US FOR 2 YEARS NOW, THE HIV AND AIDS RESPONSE HAS BEEN WORKING TIRELESSLY TO ENSURE THAT THE COUNTRY DOES NOT LOSE ON THE WONDERFUL GAINS MADE SO FAR.

WE WOULD LIKE TO SINCERELY THANK ALL EMASWATI AND DONOR PARTNERS, WHO STOOD WITH US IN SUCH DIFFICULT TIMES. WE UNDERSTAND THAT NO ONE STAKEHOLDER COULD HAVE AMASSED THE REQUIRED RESOURCES TO ACHIEVE SUCH IMPRESSIVE RESULTS.

AS WE CONTINUE WITH THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV AND AIDS, LET US **LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND** AND CONTINUE TO WORK COLLECTIVELY. THE MESSAGE FOR 2022 AND BEYOND IS ***FOCUS ON THE FIGHT, NOT THE FRIGHT – SIBHEKENE NGCO! NE AIDS, ASIYESABI.***

## **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI WILL CONTINUE TO INTENSIFY EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH, PROMOTE AND MAINTAIN GOOD INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS WITH EXISTING AND NEW BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL PARTNERS.

WE REITERATE THE SOLEMN WISH OF THE KINGDOM TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONS WITH ALL COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD IN THE SPIRIT AND PURPOSE OF UNITY, PEACE, STABILITY AND CO-OPERATION, UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF THE UNITED NATIONS.

IN THIS REGARD WE WISH TO REMIND EMASWATI THAT THE PHILOSOPHY OF '**FRIEND TO ALL AND ENEMY TO NONE**', HAS BEEN THE POLITICAL ETHOS OF ESWATINI SINCE THE TIME OF OUR PREDECESSORS, WHO PLACED GREAT VALUE ON A WORLD ANCHORED ON PEACE, DIALOGUE, RESPECT AND COMMON SHARED VALUES.

WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR THE VARIOUS SUPPORT FROM THE FRIENDS OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI. WE SHALL REMAIN COMMITTED TO THE PEACE AND STABILITY THAT WE WANT IN OUR AFRICAN CONTINENT AND THE WORLD OVER.

THE KINGDOM IS COMMITTED TO ATTAIN THE UNITED NATION'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND THE AFRICAN UNION ASPIRATIONS OF A BETTER AFRICA THAT WILL PROPEL OUR FUTURE TO A BETTER WORLD.

## **CONCLUSION**

THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR PROVIDES A MIXED WINDOW OF CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO TAKE ACTION ON A NATIONAL, REGIONAL, CONTINENTAL AND INTERNATIONAL SCALE.



GOVERNMENT, THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS CAN PROVIDE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT TO MAKE THIS POSSIBLE. TO ACHIEVE THIS WE ALL HAVE TO **"SHARE CHALLENGES, SHARE RESOURCES, SHARE OPPORTUNITIES AND SHARE SUCCESSES"**.

THIS WILL CIRCUMVENT A FINANCIAL CLIFF AMIDST A FISCAL STRAIGHT JACKET IN A NEW NORMAL AND GLOBALIZED WORLD OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY AND THUS PAVE THE WAY TOWARD A PROMISING AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR ALL EMASWATI AS WE TRAVERSE ON THE NEW DECADE 2021 - 2030.

### **RECOGNISING PARLIAMENTARIANS**

AS WE ARE GATHERED HERE IN PARLIAMENT, WE RECOGNISE THE IMPORTANT ROLE THAT IS PLAYED BY THE LEGISLATORS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS COUNTRY.

WE REALISE THAT COVID IN THE PREVIOUS YEAR PRESENTED PARLIAMENTARIANS WITH A CHALLENGING WORK ENVIRONMENT, BUT WE ARE PLEASED THAT YOU WERE ABLE TO ENSURE WORK PROCEEDED AS EXPECTED.

WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO CONTINUE PLACING THE COUNTRY IN THE FOREFRONT OF ALL YOUR ENDEAVOURS AS ESWATINI DEVELOPS ITS NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE NEXT 25 YEARS.

FINALLY, WE WISH TO STATE THAT THIS IS OUR SEASON TO REGAIN WHAT WE HAVE LOST, TO REBUILD WHAT HAS BEEN DESTROYED AND TO RESTORE THE PEACE. IT IS OUR SEASON TO RECONCILE OUR DIFFERENCES AND MAP A STRATEGIC WAY FORWARD TO REVIVE OUR FIRST WORLD ASPIRATIONS.

TO ACHIEVE THIS, A LOT OF HARD WORK LIES AHEAD. LET EACH AND EVERYONE OF US ROLL UP OUR SLEEVES AND PUT IN THE MUCH NEEDED EFFORT TO MAKE THIS DREAM WORK.

PEACE IS THE GREATEST GIFT ONE GENERATION CAN GIVE TO ANOTHER. LET US CONTINUE TO GUARD AND TREASURE OUR PEACE AS EMASWATI. THE YEAR 2022 IS, THEREFORE, A YEAR OF TRANSFORMATION.

### **DECLARATION**

IT IS NOW MY SINGULAR HONOUR, TO DECLARE THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI, OFFICIALLY OPEN.

**I THANK YOU. MAY GOD BLESS US ALL.**