

STATEMENT BY

**HIS MAJESTY KING LETSIE III
OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO**

**AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE
IAEA SCIENTIFIC FORUM**

**19TH SEPTEMBER, 2017
VIENNA - AUSTRIA**

**DIRECTOR GENERAL, MR. YUKIYA AMANO,
YOUR EXCELLENCIES; MINISTERS AND AMBASSADORS,
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE AND HONOUR FOR ME TO BE IN YOUR MIDST TODAY, AND TO HAVE BEEN ACCORDED THIS RARE OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS THE 2017 SCIENTIFIC FORUM THAT IS TAKING PLACE DURING THE 61ST REGULAR SESSION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA). I WOULD LIKE TO CONVEY MY DEEPEST GRATITUDE TO THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE IAEA MR. YUKIYA AMANO, FOR THE KIND INVITATION HE HAS EXTENDED TO ME TO ADDRESS YOU AT THIS VERY IMPORTANT EVENT. ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO, AN ON MY OWN BEHALF, I WISH TO SAY WE ARE TRULLY GRATEFUL AND HONOURED BY THIS ESTEEMED RECOGNITION WHICH WE GREATLY APPRECIATE AND CHERISH. WE PROUDLY JOIN THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY

IN CELEBRATING THIS MOMENTOUS MILESTONE IN THE LONG BUT FRUITFUL JOURNEY THAT WE HAVE TRAVELLED OF EMPLOYING NUCLEAR APPLICATIONS AS A TOOL TO ACCELERATE THE SOCIO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF OUR PEOPLES AND COUNTRIES. THE AGENCY'S CONTRIBUTION TO THIS ENDEAVOUR HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANT AND INDEED COMMENDABLE.

THIS WEEK MARKS THE 61ST ANNIVERSARY OF THE IAEA AND THIS GENERAL CONFERENCE. THE CONFERENCE BRINGS TOGETHER HIGH LEVEL REPRESENTATIVES, DECISION MAKERS AND SCIENTISTS, FROM 168 MEMBER STATES, TO CONSIDER AND APPROVE THE PROGRAMME OF THE AGENCY AND DECIDE ON OTHER MATTERS PERTINENT TO THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE WORK OF THE AGENCY.

THE THEME THAT HAS BEEN CHOSEN FOR THIS FORUM: ***“NUCLEAR TECHNIQUES IN HUMAN HEALTH: PREVENTION, DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT”*** IS VERY RELEVANT TODAY AND WILL REMAIN SO IN YEARS TO COME BECAUSE IT SEEKS

TO ADDRESS THE IMPORTANT ISSUE OF HOW NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY CAN EFFECTIVELY RESPOND TO THE THREATS POSED BY VARIOUS HUMAN DISEASES AND AILMENTS THAT PLAGUE MANY OF OUR CITIZENS IN OUR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES. AT THIS JUNCTURE I WOULD LIKE TO STATE THAT THE WORK THAT THE **IAEA** IS UNDERTAKING IN THE AREAS OF DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF A MYRIAD OF DISEASES, IN PARTICULAR CANCER, IS UNPARALLELED AND WORTHY OF ALL OUR PRAISE. WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE UNRELENTING RESEARCH EFFORTS BY THE AGENCY WHICH ARE AIMED AT INTRODUCING MORE EFFECTIVE RADIOTHERAPY TREATMENT WHILST AT THE SAME TIME ENSURING ITS SAFE APPLICATION.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I AM PROUD THAT MY COUNTRY, LESOTHO, HAS BEEN AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE **IAEA** SINCE 2009. WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR THE SUPPORT THAT WE HAVE OBTAINED TO BUILD THE MUCH NEEDED CAPACITY IN DEALING WITH

CHRONIC DISEASES, INCLUDING CANCER, THAT HAVE OF LATE BECOME RAMPANT AMONG OUR PEOPLES. WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE **IAEA**, LESOTHO IS ON ITS WAY TO ESTABLISH ITS FIRST NATIONAL RADIOTHERAPY FACILITY IN THE CAPITAL, MASERU. DURING HIS VISIT TO LESOTHO LAST YEAR, DIRECTOR GENERAL AMANO VISITED THE SITE FOR THIS GREAT PROJECT WHERE CONSTRUCTION IS EXPECTED TO COMMENCE NEXT YEAR. WE ARE ALSO GRATEFUL FOR THE CAPACITY BUILDING EFFORTS AIMED AT ENSURING THAT CAPABLE MANPOWER IS IN PLACE TO OPERATE THE FACILITY WHEN IT BECOMES OPERATIONAL. THE FACILITY WILL BRING MUCH RELIEF AS LESOTHO WILL BE IN A POSITION TO TREAT ITS PATIENTS WITHIN THE COUNTRY AND REDUCE THE BURDEN OF SENDING ALL CANCER PATIENTS TO OUR NEIGHBOUR AT A HUGE EXPENSE.

EXCELLENCIES,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

THE WORLD WE LIVE IN IS CHARACTERISED BY RAPID POPULATION INCREASES AND URBANISATION WHICH IS PLACING A HEAVY BURDEN ON OUR NATIONAL HEALTH OF SYSTEMS AND FACILITIES. AT THE SAME TIME TRANS-NATIONAL PANDEMICS AND EPIDEMIC – PRONE DISEASES ARE ALSO CREATING MONUMENTAL CHALLENGES IN OUR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES AND REGIONS. THESE CHALLENGES WILL REQUIRE A CONCERTED EFFORT BY OUR NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS, AND ALSO INCREASED COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND MEMBER STATES IN ORDER TO RESPOND EFFECTIVELY TO THESE EMERGING HEALTH EMERGENCIES. THE RESPONSE BY VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES, INCLUDING THE **IAEA**, TO THE RECENT OUTBREAKS OF EBOLA, ZIKA VIRUS, AND CHOLERA IS A TESTIMONY TO WHAT CAN BE ACHIEVED THROUGH COLLECTIVE ACTION BY ALL RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS.

DIRECTOR GENERAL AND FELLOW PARTICIPANTS,

THE WORLD IS FAST BECOMING ONE GLOBAL VILLAGE. IN THE INFORMATION AGE THAT IS CHARACTERISED BY PERVASIVE CONNECTIVITY TO HIGH-SPEED COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS, OUR HEALTH PRACTITIONERS IN THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WILL SOON BE IN A POSITION TO LEARN FROM THE BEST WHILE STILL OPERATING FROM THEIR REMOTE LOCATIONS. THE RELEASE OF A CANCER STAGING APPLICATION BY THE **IAEA** A FEW YEARS BACK WAS INDEED A BREAKTHROUGH THAT MANY OF OUR COUNTRIES STAND TO BENEFIT FROM IMMENSELY.

THE **IAEA / WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION (WHO)** JOINT PROGRAMME ON CANCER CONTROL HAS BENEFITED MOST STATES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CONTROL PROGRAMMES IN LOW AND MIDDLE INCOME COUNTRIES. IN THIS REGARD, THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR CANCER THERAPY (**PACT**) ESTABLISHED BY THE AGENCY HAS SUPPORTED MEMBER

STATES TO EXPAND ACCESS TO HEALTH TECHNOLOGIES, BUILD SKILLS AND MOBILIZE RESOURCES TO DEVELOP A COMPLETE RANGE OF HIGH QUALITY, EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE CANCER SERVICES. MOST MEMBER STATES, INCLUDING LESOTHO, HAVE AND CONTINUE TO BENEFIT SIGNIFICANTLY UNDER THIS INITIATIVE.

ONE REPORT BY W.H.O INDICATES THAT, CANCER IS ONE OF THE LEADING CAUSES OF MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY WORLDWIDE, WITH APPROXIMATELY 14 MILLION NEW CASES IN 2012. THE NUMBER OF NEW CASES IS EXPECTED TO RISE BY ABOUT 70% OVER THE NEXT 2 DECADES. CANCER IS RECORDED AS THE SECOND LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH GLOBALLY, AND WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR 8.8 MILLION DEATHS IN 2015.

THE GLOBAL BURDEN OF CANCER IS INCREASING AT AN ALARMING RATE AND PRESENTS A MAJOR GLOBAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE. THE GREATEST IMPACT

FALLS ON DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, SUCH AS MINE, THAT ARE LEAST PREPARED TO DEAL WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS DISEASE ON THEIR OWN.

WHILE ADVANCEMENT IN CANCER TREATMENT IS RECOGNISED AND APPRECIATED, WE ALSO NEED TO ADDRESS WITH HASTE AND URGENCY OTHER HEALTH PROBLEMS THAT EMANATE FROM TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES. THE TECHNOLOGICAL APTITUDE OF OUR EVER INCREASING POPULATION LEADS TO THE PROLIFERATION OF DEVICES AND TECHNOLOGIES WHOSE SHELF-LIFE IS BECOMING SHORTER BY THE DAY. THIS MEANS THAT THE MANAGEMENT OF RADIOACTIVE WASTE COMPONENTS POSES A BIG RISK WHICH, IF NOT CAREFULLY HANDLED, COULD REVERSE WHATEVER GAINS HAVE BEEN REGISTERED THUS FAR.

THE PROBLEM OF RAPID INCREASE IN POPULATION, WHICH I MENTIONED EARLIER, HAS ALSO RESULTED IN A DECREASE

OF SUITABLE ARABLE LAND FOR AGRICULTURAL PURPOSES. AS THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANISATION (F.A.O) SPECIAL AMBASSADOR FOR NUTRITION AND THE AFRICAN UNION CHAMPION FOR NUTRITION, THIS IS A TOPIC WHICH I PERSONALLY TAKE GREAT INTEREST IN. IN ADDITION TO THE PROBLEM OF DIMINISHING ARABLE LAND, WE HAVE ALSO OBSERVED IN RECENT DECADES, THAT QUITE A SIZEABLE PROPORTION OF THE GLOBAL POPULATION HAS INCREASED THEIR APPETITE FOR UNHEALTHY FOODS, AND THIS HAS HAD, MOST REGRETTABLY, AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON THEIR GENERAL HEALTH. THEREFORE, SECURING AND PROTECTING ARABLE LAND FOR NUTRITION SENSITIVE AGRICULTURE HAS TO BE A PRIORITY, PARTICULARLY IN AREAS OF THE WORLD WHERE MALNUTRITION IS RIFE, AND WHERE THERE ARE STEEP INCREASES IN POPULATION GROWTH. I WOULD THEREFORE LIKE TO URGE THE IAEA, WORKING IN CLOSE COLLABORATION WITH THE FAO AND OTHER RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS, TO INTESIFY THEIR RESEARCH EFFORTS IN AGRICULTURE RELATED AREAS WITH THE AIM OF INCREASING OUR YIELDS IN NUTRITIOUS

FOODS AND CROPS WHICH ARE ALSO MORE RESILIENT TO THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE. IN THIS REGARD, I WOULD LIKE TO SAY THAT THE **IAEA – FAO** JOINT INITIATIVE IN APPLYING NUCLEAR TECHNIQUES IN FOOD PRODUCTION AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IS MOST COMENDABLE, AND A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

I AM SURE YOU ARE ALL AWARE THAT PROPER NUTRITION HAS A POSITIVE EFFECT ON A PERSON'S MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH. A HEALTHY POPULATION CONTRIBUTES TO THE LEVEL OF SOCIO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF OUR NATIONS. IT HAS BEEN PROVEN BEYOND DOUBT THAT MALNUTRITION HAS HAD A HUGELY NEGATIVE EFFECT ON ECONOMIC GROWTH; THEREFORE IT WOULD ONLY BE PROPER FOR GOVERNMENTS TO ALLOCATE SIGNIFICANT PROPORTIONS OF THEIR BUDGETS TO PROGRAMMES THAT WILL ENHANCE NUTRITION IN ORDER TO REVERSE ALL THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF MALNUTRITION AND AT THE SAME

TIME IMPROVING THE PROSPECTS FOR HIGHER ECONOMIC GROWTH IN OUR VARIOUS COUNTRIES.

EXCELLENCIES;

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I HAVE NOTED FROM THE PROGERAMME THAT THE FORUM INTENDS TO EXAMINE WAYS IN WHICH NUCLEAR TECHNIQUES HELP COUNTRIES TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF THEIR PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS). IT IS COMMENDABLE THAT THE IAEA REMAINS RESOLUTE IN DEPLOYING NUCLEAR AND ISOTOPIC TECHNIQUES TO CONTRIBUTE DIRECTLY AND SIGNIFICANTLY IN ACHIEVING 9 OUT OF THE 17 SDGS.

I HAVE ALSO NOTED WITH SATISFACTION THAT THE FORUM WILL ALSO FOCUS ON THE PROBLEM OF NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES (NCDS). ONE OF THE REPORTS BY THE **W.H.O** SHOWS THAT, NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

INCLUDING HEART DISEASE, STROKE, CANCER, DIABETES AND CHRONIC LUNG DISEASE, ARE COLLECTIVELY RESPONSIBLE FOR ALMOST 70% OF ALL DEATHS WORLDWIDE. SADLY, ALMOST THREE QUARTERS OF ALL NON COMMUNICABLE DISEASES'S DEATHS, OR 82% OF THE 16 MILLION PEOPLE WHO DIED PREMATURELY, OR BEFORE REACHING 70 YEARS OF AGE, OCCUR IN LOW-AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES. THE RISE OF NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES HAS BEEN DRIVEN PRIMARILY BY FOUR MAJOR RISK FACTORS: TOBACCO USE, PHYSICAL INACTIVITY, THE HARMFUL USE OF ALCOHOL AND UNHEALTHY DIETS.

THE STATISTICS THAT I HAVE QOUTED CLEARLY DEMONSTRATE THAT, ADDRESSING HUMAN HEALTH ISSUES CANNOT BE UNDERTAKEN BY ONE ORGANIZATION ALONE. FIRST OF ALL IT NEEDS POLITCAL WILL BY GOVERNMENTS WHICH SHOULD BE SUPPORTED BY EXPERT TECHNICAL ADVISE FROM KEY PLAYERS IN THE AREA OF HUMAN HEALTH. GOVERNMENTS SHOULD HAVE ENHANCED

COHERENT POLICIES THAT GUIDE DIFFERENT NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS WHICH ARE RELEVANT IN ATTAINING SDG TARGET 3.4 – TO REDUCE BY ONE THIRD PREMATURE MORTALITY FROM NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES BY 2030.

EXCELLENCIES,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

IN CONCLUDING MY REMARKS, LET ME ADDRESS THE IMPORTANT SUBJECT OF SAFETY. WE ALL KNOW THAT THERE ARE TWO SIDES TO ONE COIN. THE USE OF NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGIES REQUIRES ESTABLISHMENT OF NUCLEAR SAFETY AND SECURITY FRAMEWORKS TO CATER FOR THE PROTECTION OF INDIVIDUALS, SOCIETIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT, AGAINST THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF IONIZING RADIATION.

IN ADDITION, THE AGENCY SAFEGUARDS REGIME SHOULD ENSURE THAT MEMBER STATES ARE LIVING UP TO THEIR

INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS OF NOT USING NUCLEAR PROGRAMMES FOR NON-PEACEFUL PURPOSES.

THE GLOBAL NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY AND OTHER TREATIES GUARDING AGAINST THE SPREAD OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS HAS ENTRUSTED THE AGENCY AS THE NUCLEAR INSPECTORATE. TODAY, WE SEE MORE THAN 140 STATES COOPERATING WITH THE AGENCY IN THIS REGARD. THE AGENCY THEREFORE CONTINUES TO FULFIL ITS MANDATE IN CONTRIBUTING TO INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY. I URGE ALL MEMBER STATES TO COMPLY WITH THE TREATIES OF THIS AGENCY, SO THAT GLOBAL PEACE CAN BE ENSURED FOR NOW AND FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

I AM CONFIDENT THAT, WITH THE CONTINUATION OF OUR JOINT EFFORTS FROM ALL OUR DIFFERENT POSITIONS, ROLES AND PROFESSIONS, TOGETHER WE WILL MAKE A MEANINGFUL CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE PEACE IN THE COMING

YEARS AND DECADES. LET'S NOT TIRE IN OUR QUEST FOR PEACE. LET US SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED TO US AND MAKE USE OF FORUMS LIKE THIS TO CHART A WAY FORWARD FOR A BETTER FUTURE FOR US ALL, AND FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.

WITH THESE WORDS, I WISH YOU ALL FRUITFUL DELIBERATIONS; I THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION.