

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 WITH GREAT JOY THAT WE JOIN YOU ALL FOR THIS OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI.

A WARM WELCOME IS EXTENDED TO ALL THOSE WHO HAVE TRAVELLED FAR AND WIDE TO BE WITH US TODAY, AND TO THE FRIENDS OF THE KINGDOM IN OUR MIDST, WHO HAVE COME TO WITNESS THIS VERY IMPORTANT OCCASION IN OUR ANNUAL CALENDAR.

WE ALSO RECOGNISE THE MULTITUDES OF EMASWATI WHO COULD NOT MAKE IT TO LOBAMBA BUT ARE PART OF THESE PROCEEDINGS THROUGH THE VARIOUS MEDIA.

AN EVENTFUL 2018

FROM THE ONSET, MAY WE GIVE THANKS TO THE ALMIGHTY GOD AND OUR ANCESTORS FOR GUIDING AND SEEING US THROUGH AN EVENTFUL 2018. WE WERE BLESSED WITH SUCCESSFUL NATIONAL CHURCH SERVICES AND IMIKHOSI YELIVE.

WE COMMEND THE MULTITUDES OF THE DIFFERENT REGIMENTS FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION, WHICH REVEALED A DESIRABLE COMMITMENT TO PRESERVE OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

IT WAS ALSO A YEAR THAT USHERED US INTO A 50-YEAR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT MILESTONE IN PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE. THE NATION SHOWED PATRIOTISM AS WE UNITED TOGETHER WITH FRIENDS OF THE KINGDOM IN CELEBRATION OF OUR SUCCESS OVER ADVERSITY.

THE LORD ALMIGHTY HAS BLESSED US WITH GOOD RAINS WELL INTO 2019. THIS GIVES US HOPE, AND WE URGE THE FARMERS AND ENTIRE NATION TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THESE RAINS TO PRODUCE ENOUGH FOOD WHICH WILL ENABLE US TO BE SELF-SUFFICIENT, AND COMMERCIALISE THE SURPLUS.

NATIONAL ELECTIONS

WE TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK THE WHOLE NATION FOR COMING OUT IN NUMBERS FOR THE GENERAL ELECTIONS. OUR ELECTIONS HAVE COMPLIED WITH REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES. MOST APPRECIABLY, OUR ELECTIONS WERE AMONG THE MOST PEACEFUL IN THE REGION AND ABROAD, WHICH IS A GOOD REFLECTION OF OUR TRADITIONAL VALUES.

INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS, INCLUDING SADC AND THE AFRICAN UNION, DECLARED OUR NATIONAL ELECTIONS CREDIBLE, FREE AND FAIR.

THE 2018 NATIONAL ELECTIONS MARKED A SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE IN THE HISTORY OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI

AS THE COUNTRY RECORDED OVER 90% VOTER REGISTRANTS AND OVER 60% VOTER TURNOUT. WE OWE THIS SUCCESS TO THE ASSERTIVE CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS CHAMPIONED UNDER THE SLOGAN; **“NGETE NGASALA NASAKHA LIVE”**.

ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS

PARLIAMENTARIANS, WE WELCOME YOU TO THIS AUGUST NATIONAL ASSIGNMENT. TODAY MARKS THE COMMENCEMENT OF **YOUR WORK AS YOU** NOW FORM PART OF THE LEGISLATURE ARM OF GOVERNMENT. YOU HAVE BEEN ENTRUSTED BY THE PEOPLE WITH ENACTING LAWS TO PROPEL US TOWARDS REALISING THE ASPIRATIONS OF OUR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA.

WE MUST EMPHASISE YOUR UNIQUE PARLIAMENTARY CYCLE THAT PLACES YOU AS THE PARLIAMENTARIANS THAT SHOULD LEAD US TO THE YEAR 2022 AND BEYOND.

THE WHOLE NATION IS LOOKING UPON YOU TO WORK HARD IN DEVELOPING OUR KINGDOM TO POSSESS ALL THE BASIC TENETS OF A FIRST WORLD COUNTRY. AS YOU PLAY YOUR OVERSIGHT FUNCTION YOU SHOULD ALSO COME UP WITH STRATEGIES AND IDEAS THAT WOULD ASSIST IN TURNING OUR CHALLENGES INTO GREAT ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES. THESE CHALLENGES INCLUDE UNEMPLOYMENT, JOB CREATION, POVERTY, SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,

PROVISION OF QUALITY HEALTH SERVICES, EDUCATION, SOCIAL WELFARE FOR THE WHOLE NATION, TO MENTION BUT A FEW.

YOU ARE URGED TO MEET, WORKSHOP AND BRAINSTORM TOGETHER TO COME UP WITH THE BEST POSSIBLE ROADMAP TO DEVELOP OUR NATION.

YOU ARE BOTH THE SERVANTS OF THE NATION. SOME OF YOU HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE WHILST OTHERS ARE NEW IN THIS ROLE, BUT THE EXPECTATION IS THAT YOU SHOULD TAKE THIS BATON FROM YOUR PREDECESSORS AND HIT THE GROUND RUNNING.

AFTER FIVE YEARS THE NATION SHOULD BE PROUD THAT YOU HAVE ACCOMPLISHED YOUR MISSION WITH TANGIBLE RESULTS.

WHAT IS REQUIRED OF YOU IS TO BE HONEST, EMBRACE THE SPIRIT OF NATIONHOOD, BE CREDIBLE, AND UPHOLD INTEGRITY AND RESPECT TO THE PEOPLE WHO VOTED FOR YOU, AS WELL AS TO ALL THE INSTITUTIONS AND AUTHORITIES OF OUR KINGDOM.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS AND OUTLOOK

DOMESTIC ECONOMIC ACTIVITY REMAINS WEAK AND IS ESTIMATED TO HAVE DECLINED BY 0.4 PERCENT IN 2018, TRIGGERED BY THE CURRENT FISCAL CHALLENGES AND THE WEAK EXTERNAL EXPECTATION WHICH DAMPENED GROWTH FOR THE COUNTRY'S EXPORTS.

ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE MEDIUM TERM IS EXPECTED TO GRADUALLY PICK-UP, BUT REMAINS BELOW 2 PERCENT, DRIVEN BY ANTICIPATED IMPROVEMENTS IN THE AGRICULTURE AND MANUFACTURING SECTORS. GROWTH IS FORECASTED AT 1.7 PER CENT, 1.8 PER CENT AND 1.5 PER CENT IN 2019, 2020 AND 2021, RESPECTIVELY.

GOVERNMENT'S FISCAL POSITION

THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI CONTINUES TO FACE DAUNTING FISCAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES. GOVERNMENT REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES ARE CONTINUOUSLY MOVING IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS, DRIVEN BY VOLATILE RECEIPTS FROM THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN CUSTOMS UNION (SACU) AND BALLOONING GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE.

THE EXPANSIONARY FISCAL POSITION HAS SURPASSED SUSTAINABLE LEVELS, RESULTING IN THE ACCUMULATION OF ARREARS, INCREASED DEPLETION OF RESERVES AND CONSTRAINED ECONOMIC GROWTH.

DESPITE THIS DOWNTURN, WE DO NOTE A SLIGHT IMPROVEMENT IN SACU RECEIPTS TO E6.3 BILLION. THE NATION IS **CONCERNED** THAT THE SACU RECEIPTS HAVE BEEN DECREASING **OVER THE** LAST FEW YEARS. WE NEED TO FIND OUT WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF THE THIS DECLINE BECAUSE IT AFFECTS OUR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS. THIS CALLS FOR A PROPER ANALYSIS OF THE SHARING OF SACU RECEIPTS BY MEMBER STATES.

IT IS PLEASING TO NOTE THAT THERE IS ALSO A PROJECTED INCREASE IN DOMESTIC COLLECTIONS BY THE ESWATINI REVENUE AUTHORITY IN THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2019/20.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO POINT OUT THAT THESE WILL NOT BE SUFFICIENT TO OFFSET THE ARREARS ACCUMULATED OVER THE YEARS. IT WILL ALSO FAIL TO MEET GOVERNMENT'S DOMESTIC FINANCING REQUIREMENTS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR.

IN THIS REGARD, IT IS **IMPERATIVE THAT** GOVERNMENT PRESENTS A FULLY FINANCED BUDGET TO HELP CONTAIN THE SITUATION. OUR NATIONAL BUDGET SHOULD BE INFORMED BY THE FUNDS THAT WE HAVE IN THE PURSE.

THIS HOWEVER, WILL REQUIRE VERY STIFF MEASURES AND CONCERTED EFFORT TO CURTAIL EXPENDITURE, WHILST VIGOROUSLY EXPLORING AVENUES THROUGH WHICH GOVERNMENT REVENUE CAN BE ENHANCED.

IN COMING UP WITH A FULLY FINANCED BUDGET, HARD DECISIONS WILL HAVE TO BE TAKEN, SACRIFICES NEED TO BE MADE AND UNCONVENTIONAL METHODS OF REDUCING EXPENDITURE NEED TO BE PURSUED.

ADDITIONALLY, LET US GIVE CREDENCE TO THE SENTIMENTS EXPRESSED BY THE NATION AT THE SIBAYA, WHERE ALL ACTS OF CORRUPTION AND MALPRACTICE WERE STRONGLY CASTIGATED.

IF WE ARE TO MAKE A MEANINGFUL TURN AROUND TO OUR ECONOMY, WE NEED TO FIGHT, CONTROL AND ELIMINATE ALL FORMS OF CORRUPTION WITH PUNITIVE MEASURE TO PROTECT OUR RESOURCES AND RESTORE FINANCIAL STABILITY.

DOMESTIC RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

IT IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT THAT **WE DIVERSIFY** OUR REVENUES AND IMPROVE OUR DOMESTIC ECONOMIC ACTIVITY BY CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR THE BUSINESS SECTOR TO FLOURISH.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRIZES ARE SUPPORTED BECAUSE THEY HAVE A HUGE POTENTIAL TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR REVENUE COLLECTION.

WE NEED TO ENCOURAGE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AT THE GRASSROOT LEVEL. SUCH PROGRAMMES CULTIVATE THE

SPIRIT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND WOULD SIGNIFICANTLY CONTRIBUTE TO OUR DOMESTIC RESOURCE MOBILIZATION.

INTERNATIONAL CAPITAL MARKETS

THE NATION IS PLEASED THAT THE COUNTRY HAS MADE A BREAKTHROUGH TOWARDS EXTENDING ITS VISIBILITY IN THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL MARKETS THROUGH ISSUING ITS VERY FIRST SOVEREIGN CREDIT RATING WITH MOODY'S INVESTOR SERVICES.

THIS GIVES THE COUNTRY A WIDER SCOPE FOR ACCESSING FUNDING FROM THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL MARKETS TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF ESWATINI.

WE ENCOURAGE THE NATION TO LOOK INTO THE VARIOUS WAYS AND MEANS OF ACCESSING FUNDS THAT WILL BE AVAILABLE THROUGH THIS PLATFORM, **IN ORDER TO** ADDRESS FINANCIAL CHALLENGES AND IMPROVE **THE** NATIONAL ECONOMY.

GOVERNMENT STRATEGIC ROAD MAP 2018 – 2023

IN AN ENDEAVOUR TO WORK TOWARDS THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF OUR KINGDOM, THE NATION WILL BE PLEASED TO KNOW THAT GOVERNMENT HAS DEVELOPED A STRATEGIC ROAD MAP WHICH HIGHLIGHTS THE KEY SECTORS THAT ARE CRUCIAL FOR THE REVIVAL OF OUR ECONOMY.

THE KEY SECTORS INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO; AGRICULTURE, ENERGY AND MINING, INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY & EDUCATION, TOURISM, MANUFACTURING AND AGRO-PROCESSING.

THE KEY PRIORITY THEMES WILL FOCUS **ON** IMPROVING THE EASE OF DOING BUSINESS, ENFORCING FISCAL PRUDENCE, BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE CAPACITY, DELIVERING SOCIAL IMPACT, AND BUILDING A CULTURE OF SERVICE EXCELLENCE.

FOR THIS TO BE SUCCESSFUL, WE ENCOURAGE THE SPIRIT OF TOGETHERNESS AS A NATION, AS THIS WILL NO DOUBT CONTRIBUTE IMMENSELY **TO FINDING CREATIVE** AND INNOVATIVE WAYS OF **TURNING OUR ECONOMY AROUND**.

GOVERNMENT WILL UNVEIL THE ENTIRE STRATEGIC ROAD MAP IN DUE COURSE, FOR THE NATION TO BE WELL VERSED AND BE ABLE TO MONITOR ITS PROGRESS CONTINUOUSLY.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

IN OUR QUEST TO ATTAIN DEVELOPED STATUS, PROVIDING QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE HAS BECOME ESSENTIAL. GOVERNMENT, TOGETHER WITH THE OTHER SECTOR STAKEHOLDERS, WILL CONTINUE TO PURSUE THE IMPROVEMENTS OF OUR ROADS, PARTICULARLY IN OUR RURAL AREAS WHERE THE MAJORITY OF OUR PEOPLE LIVE.

THE INVESTMENT THAT HAS BEEN MADE IN ROAD, RAIL AND AIR TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE, FOR THE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE, GOODS AND SERVICES, HAS TRANSFORMED THE COUNTRY SIGNIFICANTLY.

IT IS CRUCIAL THAT SUCH INFRASTRUCTURE IS WELL MAINTAINED IN ORDER TO REALISE A GOOD RETURN ON INVESTMENT. DERIVING VALUE FOR MONEY FROM BOTH DOMESTIC AND EXTERNAL SOURCES IS ESSENTIAL, AND WE HAVE CONTINUED TO SEE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE COUNTRY'S DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS AND INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES TOWARDS THIS END.

THE GROWTH IN THE VOLUME OF VEHICLES ON THE COUNTRY'S ROADS HAS INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY AND THIS WILL REQUIRE A CONCERTED AND SUSTAINABLE PLAN FOR REGULAR MAINTENANCE OF OUR ROADS.

MINING SECTOR

THE MINERALS SECTOR HOLDS THE POTENTIAL TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE ECONOMY AND THE COUNTRY'S GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP). WE ENCOURAGE EMASWATI TO INVEST IN THE MINING PROJECTS AS MINING REMAINS A CRITICAL SECTOR THAT HAS A HUGE POTENTIAL TO CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES.

THE CRUSHED STONE SUB SECTOR (*TINKWALI*) PERFORMED WELL IN THE PAST YEAR WHILE SUPPORTING THE BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY AND IT IS ENCOURAGING TO SEE THAT ALL THESE CRUSHED STONE PROJECTS ARE RUN BY EMASWATI.

GOING FORWARD, GOVERNMENT IS DETERMINED TO MAKE SURE THAT BENEFICIATION AND VALUE ADDITION **INITIATIVES FORM** PART OF ALL NEW MINING PROJECTS. IMPORTANTLY, MORE VALUE AND EMPLOYMENT MUST BE CREATED WITHIN ESWATINI AND AVOID **EXPORTING** RAW MINERALS TO EXTERNAL MARKETS.

LET US WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ALL INVESTORS FROM EXPLORATION, MINING, UP TO MARKETING OF OUR PRODUCTS.

ENERGY SECTOR

WE COMMEND THE PROGRESS ACCOMPLISHED TOWARDS PUTTING IN PLACE THE GENERATION EXPANSION AND ENERGY MASTER PLANS THAT WILL STRENGTHEN AND GUIDE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ENERGY SECTOR. LOCAL FINANCIERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE PLANS TO SECURE ESWATINI'S ENERGY SUPPLY.

THIS YEAR, THE NATION IS WAITING WITH KEEN INTEREST IN THE COMPLETION OF NEW POWER PROJECTS. IT IS HIGH TIME THAT THE **NATION LOOKS** INTO STRATEGIES TO CREATE ENOUGH ENERGY FOR THE ENTIRE COUNTRY AND SELL ANY SURPLUS PRODUCED OUTSIDE THE KINGDOM.

TRADE, INVESTMENT AND JOB CREATION

GOVERNMENT REMAINS COMMITTED TO JOB CREATION WITH A MAJOR FOCUS ON IMPROVING THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT; EXPANSION OF TRADE, INDUSTRY AND INVESTMENT; AND INCLUSIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT OF SMME'S AND THE INFORMAL SECTOR.

ESWATINI RANKS NUMBER 117 OUT OF 190 COUNTRIES IN THE EASE OF DOING BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT HAS SET ITSELF A TARGET OF IMPROVING THESE RANKINGS BY BRINGING THE TIME TO OPEN A BUSINESS IN ESWATINI DOWN TO ONE DAY. THIS CALLS FOR IMPROVING EFFICIENCIES IN DELIVERING ON THE FUNDAMENTAL NEEDS OF STARTING A BUSINESS THAT IS

NORMALLY FACILITATED IN A ONE-STOP SHOP FACILITY. ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, THE COUNTRY IS RANKED AMONG THE BEST IN THE WORLD IN TRADING ACROSS BORDERS, RANKING NUMBER 32 OUT OF 190 COUNTRIES, AND NUMBER 1 IN AFRICA.

WE NEED TO MAXIMIZE ON THIS EFFICIENCY IN ORDER TO CAPITALISE ON THE TRADE AND INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN SADC, WHICH SEEKS TO LIBERALIZE TRADE IN SERVICES TOWARDS THE FOUR AGREED PRIORITY AREAS OF COMMUNICATION, TOURISM, TRANSPORT AND FINANCE.

THE SUCCESS OF THIS LIES IN THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL TRADE IN SERVICES STRATEGY, AND THE PROMPT SETTLING OF COMMERCIAL DISPUTES TO PROTECT ALL INTERESTS OF TRADERS.

I.C.T CAN BE A VEHICLE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

AS WE POSITION OURSELVES TOWARDS VISION 2022, TECHNOLOGY REMAINS A KEY FACTOR TOWARDS ECONOMIC GROWTH AS IT PROVIDES WORLD-CLASS ACCESS TO INFORMATION FOR ALL.

GOVERNMENT SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE ENTIRE NATION ENJOYS PROPER CONNECTION IN ALL URBAN AND RURAL AREAS THROUGH THE TECHNOLOGIES MADE AVAILABLE.

THE NATION SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET SERVICES THROUGH THE DIFFERENT PLATFORMS THAT WE HAVE IN I.C.T. THIS PARADIGM CAN ALSO PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN TELEMEDICINE, EDUCATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF OUR NATION, TO MENTION BUT A FEW.

THE EFFORTS MADE BY GOVERNMENT TO ATTRACT FOREIGN INVESTMENT **TO THE** KINGDOM HAS BEEN ENHANCED BY THE ENACTMENT OF THE SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE.

THEREFORE, IT IS PRUDENT THAT WE MONITOR AND DETERMINE IF IT IS ACHIEVING THE DESIRED RESULTS. IF NOT, WE SHOULD **GO BACK TO** THE DRAWING BOARD TO IMPROVE AND REDESIGN IT TO EMULATE OTHER DEVELOPED COUNTRIES **THAT** HAVE USED THIS INITIATIVE **TO EFFECTIVELY CONTRIBUTE** TO THEIR ECONOMIC GROWTH.

THE HOSTING OF FACILITIES FOR I.C.T SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS INCUBATION AT THE SCIENCE PARK WILL HELP ACCELERATE THE SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMES) DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AND TAP INTO THE CREATIVITY OF THE COUNTRY'S YOUTH.

AS WE AUGMENT THE I.C.T LANDSCAPE, GOVERNMENT SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE APPROPRIATE CYBER SECURITY LAWS ARE PUT IN PLACE TO MONITOR THE CYBER ENVIRONMENT,

COMBAT CYBER-CRIME AND INSTIL CONSUMER CONFIDENCE IN ONLINE PRODUCTS.

TOURISM AS A CATALYST FOR GROWTH

TOURISM HAS A GREAT POTENTIAL TO REINFORCE ECONOMIC AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH ACROSS ALL SECTORS, DESPITE THE ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY FACED BY MOST ECONOMIES OF THE WORLD, OF WHICH THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI IS NO EXCEPTION.

THIS SECTOR HAS THE POTENTIAL TO GENERATE FOREIGN CURRENCY THROUGH TRADE, EXPORTS AND JOB CREATION. THEREFORE, WE NEED TO ADOPT A ROBUST INVESTMENT STRATEGY IN OUR TOURISM MARKETING CAMPAIGNS REGIONALLY AND BEYOND, TO ATTRACT MORE TOURISTS.

WE NEED TO MAXIMISE **ON** THE HISTORICAL SITES, CULTURAL EVENTS AND UTILISE THE INCREASED HOSPITALITY FACILITIES THROUGHOUT THE KINGDOM, GROUNDED ON OUR PEACE AND STABILITY.

OUR TOURISM VIBRANCY SHOULD APPEAL TO A WIDE AUDIENCE, INCLUDING THE YOUNG AND OLD, SO AS TO MOTIVATE TOURISTS FROM ALL CORNERS OF THE GLOBE TO

STAY FOR LONGER PERIODS IN THE KINGDOM, THUS SPENDING MORE AND CONTRIBUTING TO OUR REVENUES.

CLIMATE CHANGE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES ARE TAKING LEAD IN THE GLOBAL ARENA. THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE HAVE CALLED FOR COUNTRIES TO STRENGTHEN THEIR EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS AND REDUCE EMISSIONS.

THE PROVISION OF METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES WILL BE ENHANCED FOR THE FLOURISHING OF THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR, AS WELL AS OTHER SECTORS CRITICAL FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI.

THIS IS NOW A GLOBAL AGENDA BECAUSE OF ITS DEVASTATING EFFECTS. IT REQUIRES INTENSIVE INVESTMENT IN EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS THAT LINK UP WITH THOSE OF OTHERS IN THE REGION. COUPLED WITH THIS SHOULD BE A COORDINATED REGIONAL APPROACH TO MITIGATING THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS INCLUDE UNSUSTAINABLE LAND USE PRACTICES, PROLIFERATION OF INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES, AND UNCONTROLLED WILD FIRES; THESE RESULT IN SOIL EROSION, LAND DEGRADATION AND DEFORESTATION.

WE WILL CONTINUE TO COOPERATE WITH PARTNERS TO SOURCE FUNDS AND STRENGTHEN OUR CAPACITY TO PROTECT LIVES, REDUCE LOSS AND BE MORE RESILIENT AGAINST THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

COMMERCIALIZATION, VALUE ADDITION & AGRO-PROCESSING

THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR REMAINS A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO THE COUNTRY'S GDP, HENCE, IT IS IMPORTANT FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH.

INVESTING IN THIS SECTOR IS SYNONYMOUS TO INVESTING IN THE PEOPLE. THEREFORE, GOVERNMENT SHOULD PROMOTE AND IMPLEMENT VARIOUS PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES FOR VALUE ADDITION THAT ARE EXPECTED TO SIGNIFICANTLY PENETRATE AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE ATTAINMENT OF BOTH NATIONAL AND GLOBAL ASPIRATIONS.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE EXPANSION OF MARKETS WILL BE DERIVED FROM INCREASED LOCAL PRODUCTION OF TARGETED PRODUCTS SUCH AS DAIRY, FRUITS, VEGETABLES, MEAT AND OTHER AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS. WE NEED TO ENGAGE IN GREATER RESEARCH OF NEW PRODUCTS THAT WE CAN EXPORT

TO THE VARIOUS GLOBAL MARKETS TO GENERATE REVENUE FOR THE COUNTRY.

TIME HAS COME FOR US TO EXPLORE THE DIFFERENT MARKETS THAT ARE AT OUR DISPOSAL TO **SELL PRODUCE** FROM THE KINGDOM OF **ESWATINI**. **AS** WE EXPLORE THESE OPPORTUNITIES, WE NEED TO BE COMPETITIVE **WITH QUALITY** PRODUCTS THAT **WILL FIND A NICHE** WITH THE CONSUMERS.

WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL TO THE FRIENDS OF THE KINGDOM FOR PROVIDING FUNDS TO CONSTRUCT COLD STORAGE FACILITIES AND PACK-HOUSES IN VARIOUS AREAS IN THE COUNTRY TO PROLONG THE SHELF LIFE OF OUR PRODUCTS.

NATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

HUMAN RESOURCE IS, UNDOUBTEDLY, A KEY ASSET TO DRIVE THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI TOWARDS ATTAINING VISION 2022. IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT GOVERNMENT, SINCE INDEPENDENCE, HAS PUT EDUCATION AT THE TOP OF ITS DEVELOPMENT AGENDA.

GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT OUR CHILDREN FROM PRIMARY EDUCATION TO TERTIARY LEVEL. THIS DEVELOPMENT HAS, NO DOUBT, PAID HANDSOME DIVIDENDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF APPROPRIATE SKILLS THAT ARE REQUIRED FOR THE GROWTH OF OUR KINGDOM.

THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN WHO APPLY FOR SCHOLARSHIPS CONTINUES TO GROW EACH AND EVERY YEAR, THUS COMPETING FOR THE VERY LIMITED RESOURCES WITH OTHER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF THE COUNTRY.

WE ENCOURAGE THE NATION TO THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX AND LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES IN STARTING THEIR OWN BUSINESSES.

THE COUNTRY HAS SIGNED SEVERAL TRADE AGREEMENTS WITH DIFFERENT COUNTRIES AND ECONOMIC BLOCS WHERE YOU CAN MARKET YOUR PRODUCTS. UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES **ARE ALSO** ENCOURAGED TO PREPARE GRADUATES TO BE ENTREPRENEURS **AND BE** SELF-SUFFICIENT UPON COMPLETION OF THEIR STUDIES.

GOVERNMENT REMAINS THE LARGEST EMPLOYER AND RELIES ON PUBLIC SERVANTS AS ITS HUMAN RESOURCE TO DELIVER QUALITY SERVICES.

REGARDLESS OF THE ECONOMIC CHALLENGES, GOVERNMENT MUST ENSURE THAT IT PROPERLY CAPACITATES AND TRANSFORMS THE PUBLIC SERVICE FOR QUALITY SERVICE DELIVERY TO THE NATION.

OUR YOUTH AGENDA

THE YOUTH REMAIN THE CORNERSTONE OF ESWATINI'S DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH, AS THEY CONTINUE TO REPRESENT THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF OUR NATIONAL POPULATION STATISTICS.

AS THEY FACE MORE CHALLENGES, WE WILL REQUIRE A COMPREHENSIVE, COORDINATED AND MULTI-SECTORAL RESPONSE IN CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT.

WE ENCOURAGE THE YOUTH TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE YOUTH ENTERPRISE FUND, WHICH IS AIMED AT EMPOWERING THEM AND GUARANTEEING FINANCIAL INCLUSION. THIS WILL ENSURE OUR YOUTH ARE ENGAGED IN MEANINGFUL ACTIVITIES THAT KEEP THEM AWAY FROM DESTROYING THEIR LIVES AT AN EARLY STAGE.

WE DO ENCOURAGE THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, OUR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS AND FRIENDS OF THE KINGDOM TO AVAIL MORE OPPORTUNITIES THAT WOULD HELP THE NATION REALIZE THE FULL POTENTIAL OF OUR YOUTH IN ALL SPHERES.

NO LISWATI SHOULD DIE OF HIV/AIDS

THE HEALTH SECTOR REMAINS AT THE TOP OF OUR NATIONAL AGENDA. GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING RESOURCES TO ENSURE THAT OUR POPULACE REMAINS HEALTHY, HAPPY AND PRODUCTIVE.

WE ARE GRATEFUL TO OUR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS AND THE FRIENDS OF THE KINGDOM FOR PARTNERING WITH US **IN ADDRESSING** THE MANY CHALLENGES THAT WE ARE FACED WITH. ISSUES OF TB, MALARIA AND HIV/AIDS, CONTINUE TO STRAIN OUR BUDGET.

THIS YEAR, THE COUNTRY WILL START THE CONSTRUCTION OF **A REFERRAL HOSPITAL WHICH HAS** A POTENTIAL TO CONTRIBUTE IMMENSELY **TO ENSURING QUALITY HEALTH FOR** OUR PEOPLE AND EASE **OUT-OF-COUNTRY** COSTS.

THE **KINGDOM'S DRIVE TO END AIDS BY 2022** REMAINS IN MOTION.

WE ALL NEED TO TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY **IN CREATING** FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS FOR THE NATION TO ACHIEVE **ITS** TARGET IN THE LAST MILE LEADING TO 2022; WHERE NO LISWATI SHOULD GET HIV, DIE FROM AIDS RELATED ILLNESSES AND NO HIV STIGMA OR DISCRIMINATION SHOULD EXIST WITHIN OUR COMMUNITIES.

OUR PAST SUCCESS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV MUST NOT RESULT IN COMPLACENCY; LET US CREATE A RENEWED SENSE OF URGENCY TO AIM FOR THE REAL TARGET.

WE ENCOURAGE GOVERNMENT, OUR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS AND LOCAL INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING COMMUNITIES, TO REMAIN VIGILANT TO THE VISION. THE MULTI-SECTOR APPROACH, LED THROUGH NERCHA, MUST CONTINUE TO BE INCLUSIVE OF ALL STAKEHOLDERS.

WE EXTEND OUR APPRECIATION TO GLOBAL FUND, DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS, DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS THAT SUPPORT THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV/AIDS.

SOCIAL WELFARE

ONE OF THE MANY CHALLENGES THAT WE ARE FACED WITH AS A COUNTRY IS TO PROVIDE SUFFICIENTLY FOR THE DISADVANTAGED GROUPS, PARTICULARLY OUR ELDERLY.

LOOKING AFTER OUR ELDERLY IS EMBEDDED IN OUR CULTURAL ETHOS. DESPITE THE MEAGRE NATIONAL RESOURCES GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION, ORPHANS, VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND THOSE PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED TO GUARANTEE A HEALTHY LIFE AND PROTECTION.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

THROUGH OUR MISSIONS ABROAD, WE WILL UPSCALE EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH, PROMOTE AND MAINTAIN GOOD INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS WITH EXISTING AND NEW BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL PARTNERS. OUR AIM WILL BE THAT OF FOSTERING GREATER ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT FOR OUR PEOPLE.

IN ORDER TO ATTRACT FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT, OUR MISSIONS SHOULD MARKET THE KINGDOM BY TELLING **THE GOOD STORY OF OUR** RICH CULTURAL HERITAGE AND TRADITIONS, **BOUND BY** PEACE, STABILITY, RESPECT, HUMILITY AND UNITY AS A DISTINCTIVE NATION.

A KEY COMPONENT OF THE COUNTRY'S BRANDING STRATEGY WILL BE THE PACKAGING AND PROMOTION OF OUR UNIQUE POLITICAL SYSTEM AS A VIABLE MODEL OF GOOD GOVERNANCE AND A CENTRAL REASON FOR THE CONTINUED PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE KINGDOM.

AS A PEACE-LOVING NATION, WE ARE CONCERNED WITH THE CONFLICTS THAT WE CONTINUE TO WITNESS, NOT ONLY IN OUR BELOVED CONTINENT – AFRICA, BUT ALSO IN SOME OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD.

FIGHTING HAS NO ECONOMIC VALUE AS IT BRINGS POVERTY, SUFFERING AND MISERY. WE CALL UPON THE UNITED NATIONS

AND THE AFRICAN UNION TO INTERVENE IN ORDER TO STOP THE UNNECESSARY LOSS OF LIFE AND PROPERTY.

WE NEED TO DIRECT OUR RESOURCES TO THE ATTAINMENT OF THE U.N. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS, AND THE CONTINENTAL AGENDA 2063, WHICH SEEKS TO CREATE A BETTER ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE FOR ALL NATIONS.

ADDITIONALLY, THIS CAN BE ATTAINED THROUGH FOCUSING ON OUR TRADING PLATFORMS INCLUDING THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AGREEMENT. THIS WILL BE THE LARGEST IN THE WORLD IN TERMS OF PARTICIPATION AND IS EXPECTED TO BOOST THE INTRA-AFRICAN TRADE AREA SIGNIFICANTLY BY PROVIDING VARIOUS MARKETS.

WE REITERATE THE NEED TO LOCALLY PRODUCE QUALITY GOODS FOR EXPORTS TO EXPLOIT THESE READILY AVAILABLE MARKETS IN THE CONTINENT.

WE WISH TO THANK ALL THE FRIENDS OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI, INCLUDING OUR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS, FOR THE MULTIPLE SUPPORT THAT THEY CONTINUE TO EXTEND IN A VARIETY OF OUR SECTORS AS WE TRY TO CREATE A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT AND QUALITY LIFE FOR OUR PEOPLE.

2019 – UNITY, PROSPERITY AND GROWTH

TIME HAS COME FOR EMASWATI TO HOLD HANDS IN **UNITY** AND WALK TOGETHER ON A JOURNEY OF REHABILITATION. WE OUGHT TO BEGIN BY **RE-PROGRAMMING** OUR MINDS TO FULLY APPRECIATE THE CURRENT REALITY AND TAP INTO OUR RESILIENCE.

THIS CALLS FOR A **RENEWAL** OF OUR COMMITMENT TO **REJUVENATING** OUR ECONOMY, REVIEWING OUR SUCCESSES AND FAILURES, **REFOCUSING** AND **RE-PRIORITISING** OUR NEEDS.

WE NEED TO RETHINK SOLUTIONS FOR A QUICK TURNAROUND, **RE-STRATEGISE** ON **OUR** IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF PROGRESS **WHILE REPELLING** ALL NEGATIVE ELEMENTS THAT MAY ATTEMPT TO DISTRACT US FROM OUR PATH OF RENEWED **GROWTH**.

TO SUCCEED IN THIS TASK, WE NEED TO REIGNITE THE ESSENTIAL HUMAN VIRTUES OF COMPASSION AND HUMANITY, WHICH WE CALL, **BUNTFU**.

LET THIS TRAIT SERVE AS A GUIDING PRINCIPLE IN EVERYTHING WE DO IN OUR HOMES, COMMUNITIES, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS. OUR JUDICIARY, EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATURE SHOULD WORK TOWARDS CREATING A

CONDUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT TO PROMOTE NATIONAL UNITY, PEACE AND JUSTICE FOR ALL.

CONCLUSION

AS I CONCLUDE, WE TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK THE ENTIRE NATION FOR A RENEWED PERSPECTIVE AS WE ENTER THE NEW YEAR WITH A NEW GOVERNMENT, MARKING THE START OF A SMOOTH TRANSITION WITH THIS PARLIAMENT.

WE HAVE AN ENORMOUS TASK AHEAD OF US TO REBUILD THE ECONOMY OF THIS BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY, AND A COLLECTIVE EFFORT TOWARDS THIS GOAL CAN SEE US ACHIEVE GREAT PROSPERITY. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT WE WILL SUCCEED, FOR NO CHALLENGE CAN EVER BE GREATER THAN A NATION UNITED!

DECLARATION

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

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