

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 LAPHA
EPHALAMENDE**

INTRODUCTION

IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE FOR ME TO JOIN YOU ALL HERE TODAY FOR THIS OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 5TH SESSION OF THE 11TH PARLIAMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI.

A WARM WELCOME IS EXTENDED TO THIS DISTINGUISHED GATHERING, WHICH IS REPRESENTATIVE OF ALL SECTORS OF OUR SOCIETY, OUR FRIENDS AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO ARE TUNED IN TO THIS EVENT THROUGH THE VARIOUS ELECTRONIC MEDIA PLATFORMS.

HONOURING IMIKHOSI YELIVE

WE ARE GRATEFUL TO THE ALMIGHTY GOD AND OUR ANCESTORS FOR PROVIDING THE GUIDANCE THAT HAS SEEN US THROUGH THE YEAR, DURING WHICH THE NATION HAS BEEN ABLE TO COME TOGETHER FOR OUR NATIONAL PRAYER AND TRADITIONAL CEREMONIES.

THE PARTICIPATION OF EMASWATI AND FRIENDS OF THE KINGDOM FROM ABROAD AT THE INCWALA CEREMONY WAS HIGHLY IMPRESSIVE, WHICH DEFIED SOME ATTEMPTS TO DISCOURAGE PARTICIPATION IN A CUSTOM SO DEARLY LOVED BY OUR PEOPLE.

THE BIG TURNOUT FROM THE BEGINNING OF INCWALA UNTIL THE LAST DAY, WAS HIGHLY COMMENDABLE. WE WISH TO THANK THE NATION FOR SHOWING THEIR LOVE FOR THIS VERY IMPORTANT CEREMONY. IT GIVES US HOPE THAT OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS WILL FIND THIS TRADITION VERY MUCH ALIVE.

WE ALSO COMMEND THE RESOUNDING SUCCESS OF OTHER IMIKHOSI, WHICH WE ALSO LOOK FORWARD TO THIS YEAR, ALL OF WHICH CONTINUE TO ATTRACT VISITORS FROM THE DIFFERENT CONTINENTS OF THE WORLD. THIS SPEAKS TO THE UNIQUENESS OF OUR CULTURE, AND WE SHOULD ALWAYS REMAIN PROUD OF WHO WE ARE.

UNITY AND TOLERANCE KEY IN NATION BUILDING

GOD GAVE EACH NATION ITS OWN IDENTITY AND OUR STRENGTH AND UNITY ARE ENTRENCHED IN OUR CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS, AND WE HAVE A DUTY AS EMASWATI TO GUARD AND PROTECT THIS HERITAGE FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR COMING GENERATIONS.

AS EMASWATI WE WERE GIVEN THIS COUNTRY BY MVELINCHATI TO LIVE IN AND HE EXPECTS US TO LOVE AND BE TOLERANT OF EACH OTHER. OUR DIVERSITY AND BELIEFS SHOULD NOT CREATE HATE AMONGST OURSELVES, BUT RATHER SHOW TRUE PATRIOTISM TO WHO WE ARE AS A PEOPLE OF THIS GREAT KINGDOM.

WE NEED TO CO-EXIST DESPITE OUR DIFFERENT WAYS OF LOOKING AT THE DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL LANDSCAPE.

EACH AND EVERY LISWATI SHOULD BE GUIDED BY THE PRINCIPLES OF THE HOLY BOOK; **“THOU SHALL LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF. THERE IS NONE OTHER COMMANDMENT GREATER THAN THESE”**.

CONGRATULATING PARLIAMENTARIANS

TODAY MARKS THE FINAL CHAPTER FOR MEMBERS OF THE 11TH PARLIAMENT. WE TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE CONTRIBUTION THAT OUR LEGISLATORS MADE THROUGH ENGAGING IN ROBUST DEBATES AIMED AT IMPROVING THE LIVES OF OUR PEOPLE.

MALUNGA EPHALAMENDE, MUCH HAS BEEN ACHIEVED AND GREAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE ACROSS A WIDE SPECTRUM OF OUR SOCIO-ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE AS YOU CARRIED OUT YOUR OVERSIGHT ROLE TO THE BEST OF YOUR CAPABILITIES.

WE COMMEND YOU FOR LIVING UP TO THE TASK ENTRUSTED TO YOU BY A NATION THAT CONTINUES TO ENJOY ITS UNIQUE DEMOCRATIC RIGHT TO DIRECT REPRESENTATION.

WE URGE YOU TO COMPLETE YOUR TERM BY WORKING CLOSELY WITH YOUR CONSTITUENCIES AND THE GOVERNMENT TO STRENGTHEN UNITY, PROMOTE PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AND PRIORITISE NATIONAL INTERESTS.

TRADE, INDUSTRY, AND INVESTMENT EXPANSION

WE BEGIN THE YEAR WITH A POSITIVE ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AS IN RECENT YEARS WE HAVE BEEN RECOGNIZED AS THE TOP FIVE GROWING ECONOMY WITH OUR **GDP GROWTH AT 7.43 PERCENT IN 2021, ACCORDING TO THE WORLD BANK.**

ESWATINI ALSO **RANKS SECOND** WHEN IT COMES TO MANUFACTURING VALUE ADDED PER CAPITA IN THE AFRICAN CONTINENT.

IN ADDITION TO THIS, WE ARE CURRENTLY **RANKED 6TH IN THE AFRICA** INDUSTRIALIZATION INDEX 2022 WHICH IS A TESTAMENT TO OUR COMMITMENT TO CREATING AN EXPORT-DRIVEN PRIVATE SECTOR-LED ECONOMY.

THE TARGET IS NOW TO ATTAIN POSITION ONE IN THE RANKINGS AND THIS IS POSSIBLE IF WE ADOPT TEAMWORK TO MAKE THE VISION SUCCESSFUL.

THESE RATINGS GIVE US A GOOD FOUNDATION UPON WHICH WE CAN TAP INTO AND COMPETE EFFECTIVELY IN REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE MARKETS SUCH AS SACU, SADC, THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA, EU, AGOA AND ASIA, TO MENTION BUT A FEW.

WE WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN INVESTORS, TOGETHER WITH OUR PARTNERS, FOR THEIR CONFIDENCE IN THE KINGDOM.

EXPANSION OF TRADE AND INVESTMENT INTO NEW SECTORS IS EXPECTED AS GOVERNMENT ADOPTS NEW POLICY DIRECTIONS AND REVIEW REGULATORY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK TO KEEP UP WITH GLOBAL TRENDS AND BEST PRACTICES.

DOMESTIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

THE DOMESTIC ECONOMY PROVED TO BE ONE OF THE MOST RESILIENT ECONOMIES, WITHERING SEVERAL EXTERNAL AND OTHER DOMESTIC SHOCKS.

THE ECONOMY BATTLED WITH THE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, CLIMATE CHANGE-INDUCED DISTURBANCES AND THE UNPRECEDENTED SOCIAL CHALLENGES.

THESE DOMESTIC SETBACKS, COUPLED WITH SUBDUED GLOBAL NEEDS AND OTHER TRADE DISRUPTIONS, NEGATIVELY AFFECTED OVERALL ECONOMIC OUTPUT. RESULTANTLY, ECONOMIC GROWTH IS EXPECTED TO BE MUTED IN 2022, INCREASING MARGINALLY BY 0.4 PERCENT.

FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY

SINCE 2021/22, GOVERNMENT'S FISCAL CONSOLIDATION PLAN HAS MANAGED TO KEEP NATIONAL SPENDING WITHIN THE BUDGETED CEILINGS OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS.

DOMESTIC AND EXTERNAL REVENUES ARE BEGINNING TO IMPROVE, ALTHOUGH OUR DEBT LEVELS HAVE SLIGHTLY INCREASED, THEY ARE WITHIN SUSTAINABLE LEVELS.

RE-FOCUSSING OUR BUDGET IS NOT AN EASY PATH BUT AS DIFFICULT AS IT MAY BE, GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE SUPPORTING THE SOCIAL SECTOR THROUGH MEANINGFUL PROVISIONS FOR THE HEALTH SYSTEM, EDUCATION, AGRICULTURE, VULNERABLE GROUPS AND THE YOUTH.

GOVERNMENT IS ALSO PUTTING EFFORT TO CREATE AN ENABLING BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT THROUGH MAJOR PROJECTS. AS PART OF JOB CREATION, GOVERNMENT SHOULD REVERT TO THE POLICY OF BUILDING AT LEAST 10 FACTORY SHELLS PER YEAR TO STIMULATE THE ENTRY OF NEW INVESTORS INTO THE LOCAL MARKET.

EACH FACTORY SHELL SHOULD NOT EMPLOY LESS THAN 200 PEOPLE IN ORDER TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF UNEMPLOYMENT, PARTICULARLY AMONG OUR YOUTH, OUR GRADUATES AND THE GENERAL POPULACE.

HOWEVER, TO REALISE THESE GOALS, WE CALL UPON ALL EMASWATI TO UNITE AGAINST CORRUPTION BY REFUSING TO BE PART OF ANY CRIME AND REJECTING EVERY TYPE OF CRIMINALITY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF OUR NATION.

REVENUE

WHILE SACU REMAINS THE MAIN SOURCE OF REVENUE, WITH RECEIPTS FOR ESWATINI EXPECTED TO INCREASE BY 102 PERCENT IN 2023/24 FROM **E5.8 BILLION IN 2022/23 TO E11.75 BILLION**, THIS REVENUE SOURCE IS VOLATILE AND UNCERTAIN.

THE SACU REVENUE FORMULA IS IN THE PROCESS OF BEING REVIEWED AND COULD RESULT IN DECREASED RECEIPTS GOING FORWARD.

WITH THESE PROJECTIONS IN MIND, IT IS IMPORTANT TO ENSURE WE UTILIZE THE GAINS TO SAVE FOR DRY DAYS. IT IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO STRENGTHEN THE COLLECTION OF REVENUE INTERNALLY, WHILE PURSUING COST-CUTTING MEASURES.

SMALL & MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (MSMES) ARE KNOWN TO BE THE LIFEBLOOD OF INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH GLOBALLY. THEY DRIVE DOMESTIC ECONOMIC GROWTH AND MASSIVE JOB CREATION.

THEY ALSO COLLECTIVELY CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE NATIONAL GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP) MEANING THE PRODUCTION OF GOODS AND SERVICES.

GOVERNMENT HAS SET UP SEVERAL STATE ORGANS THAT ARE CHARGED WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY TO DEVELOP AND SUPPORT MSMES AND PROVIDE ACCESS TO FINANCE.

THEREFORE, EMASWATI ARE ENCOURAGED TO TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF THESE SCHEMES IN ORDER TO START THEIR OWN INCOME-GENERATING PROJECTS AND CREATE THE MUCH NEEDED EMPLOYMENT.

SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES

SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES REMAIN A KEY CATALYST TO STIMULATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

WHILST OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE DIFFERENT OBJECTIVES OF HAVING ESTABLISHED THESE ECONOMIC ZONES, EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE SHOWS THAT THEY ARE A CORNERSTONE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

IN ORDER FOR THE SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES PHENOMENON TO BE A SUCCESS IN THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI, GOVERNMENT SHOULD REVIEW **THE SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES ACT OF 2018**. THIS WILL ENSURE THAT IT IS IN LINE WITH GLOBAL REQUIREMENTS.

FURTHERMORE, GOVERNMENT SHOULD FAST-TRACK THE ISSUE OF PROVIDING THE OUTSTANDING INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENT SUCH AS THE COMPLETION OF THE ONE-STOP SHOP SERVICE CENTRE TO HOST THE RELEVANT SERVICE PROVIDERS.

THIS FACILITY SHOULD NOT ONLY SERVE THE BENEFICIARIES OF THE ECONOMIC ZONES BUT EMBRACE ALL OTHER INVESTORS OF ESWATINI.

QUALITY HEALTH FOR EMASWATI

THE HEALTH OF THE NATION IS A PRIORITY. WE ARE NOTING THAT COVID-19 CONTINUES TO CHANGE ITSELF TO BYPASS OUR IMMUNE SYSTEM AND MAKE US ILL.

WE THEREFORE URGE ALL EMASWATI TO CONTINUE TAKING PRECAUTIONS FOR THE VIRUS AND FOLLOW THE GUIDANCE BEING GIVEN BY THE HEALTH SECTOR.

IN AN EFFORT TO BRING HEALTH FACILITIES CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE, TODAY WE ARE PRESENTING FIVE NEW CLINICS THAT HAVE BEEN BUILT BY THE GOVERNMENT RECENTLY AND ARE OPERATIONAL: NKOMANZI, HLANE, MAGWANYANA, TIKHUBA AND SIDVOKODVO AT LUVE.

HOWEVER, TIME HAS COME FOR GOVERNMENT TO EXPAND THE SERVICES PROVIDED AT OUR CLINICS SO THAT THEY CATER FOR MORE DIVERSE NEEDS OF THE POPULACE.

GOVERNMENT SHOULD ENSURE THAT OUR HOSPITALS AND CLINICS ARE PROVIDED WITH THE REQUIRED MEDICATION, PARTICULARLY HIV PREVENTION DRUGS, WHICH SHOULD ALWAYS BE MADE EASILY ACCESSIBLE.

WE URGE COMMUNITIES TO JEALOUSLY PROTECT THESE STRUCTURES BECAUSE THEY ARE DIRECTLY AFFECTED IF THEY ARE DESTROYED.

NATIONAL VISION OF ENDING AIDS BY 2022

OUR COLLECTIVE STRIDES DRIVEN BY “**I-AIDS YINDZABA YETFU SONKHE**” HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO ESWATINI BECOMING ONE OF TWO COUNTRIES THAT HAVE SUCCESSFULLY MET THE AIDS GLOBAL TARGETS.

HOWEVER, WE REMAIN CONCERNED BY THE CONTINUOUS INCREASE OF NEW INFECTIONS. WE ENCOURAGE ALL THOSE WHO FIND THEMSELVES IN A CHALLENGING SITUATION AFTER BEING EXPOSED TO HIV TO USE **PREP** THAT CAN PREVENT ONE FROM BEING INFECTED.

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK **SIVE SONKHE** AND ALL OUR PARTNERS WHO HAVE STOOD WITH US DURING DIFFICULT TIMES. HIV REMAINS OUR COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY. **ASICONDZANE NGCO! NE AIDS, SINGAYESABI.**

AT THE SAME TIME, AS EMASWATI, WE NEED TO CONFRONT ONE OF THE DRIVERS OF THE AIDS PANDEMIC: GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.

JUST AS WE HAVE DONE WITH AIDS, WE MUST USE THE SAME LEVEL OF DETERMINATION AND COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY TO BRING AN END TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

THE COUNTRY HAS ALSO MADE NOTABLE STRIDES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST MALARIA AND TB. NONETHELESS, WE WOULD LIKE TO REMIND AND URGE ALL EMASWATI AND PARTNERS TO CONTINUE TO CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS THE END MALARIA FUND SO THAT WE HAVE ADEQUATE RESOURCES.

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

GOVERNMENT HAS THE MANDATE TO ENSURE THE COUNTRY IS FOOD SECURE THROUGH A NUMBER OF POLICIES BY PROMOTING THE PRODUCTION AND MARKETING OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD COMMODITIES.

KEY PROGRAMMES FOR THE UPCOMING FINANCIAL YEAR WILL INCLUDE: THE CONSTRUCTION OF MPAKENI DAM, THE CONTINUED ROLLOUT OF THE INPUT SUBSIDY FOR CUSHIONING FARMERS, AMONG OTHER PROGRAMMES.

WE NOTE THAT THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI AND THE ENTIRE AFRICAN CONTINENT HAVE EXPERIENCED ADVERSE EFFECTS BROUGHT ABOUT BY CLIMATE CHANGE AND YET AFRICA HAS THE LOWEST PER CAPITA GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS.

THIS, TOGETHER WITH UNPREDICTABLE WEATHER CYCLES, HAS NEGATIVELY IMPACTED ON THE LIVELIHOODS OF MANY IN THE KINGDOM.

ROADS INFRASTRUCTURE

ROADS ARE A CRITICAL ELEMENT IN THE PRODUCTIVITY OF THE ECONOMY. GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN THE REHABILITATION PROGRAMME OF EXISTING ROADS INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONSTRUCT NEW ONES TO CONNECT TOWNS AND CITIES AS WELL AS PROVIDE AN UNHINDERED MOVEMENT OF GOODS AND SERVICES.

THE ROADS AUTHORITY SHALL BE ESTABLISHED TO ENSURE THAT THE COUNTRY'S NEWLY IMPROVED ROADS NETWORK IS WELL TAKEN CARE OF AND MAINTAINED FOR THE BENEFIT OF FUTURE GENERATIONS.

WE COMMEND THE IMPRESSIVE DEVELOPMENTS WE SEE WITH SOME OF OUR ROAD NETWORKS, SUCH AS THE MANZINI INTERSECTION AND THE MONENI/MBADLANE HIGHWAY WHICH ARE AT PAR WITH SOME OF THE ROADS IN FIRST WORLD COUNTRIES.

WE NEED TO SEE MORE OF OUR ROADS MEET SUCH STANDARDS, PARTICULARLY THE INDUSTRIAL AREA OF MATSAPHA, WHERE WE ARE CURRENTLY WITNESSING TRAFFIC CONGESTION DURING PEAK HOURS. THIS FRUSTRATION NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED URGENTLY AS IT COMPROMISES THE EASE OF DOING BUSINESS.

GOVERNMENT SHALL GIVE MORE ATTENTION TO IMPROVING THE FEEDER ROADS IN OUR COMMUNITIES SO AS TO ATTRACT INVESTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN THESE AREAS. WE HAVE WITNESSED IMMENSE CONTRIBUTION THAT THE PROBASE ROAD PROJECT HAS HAD IN IMPROVING OUR ROAD NETWORK IN RURAL AREAS.

WHILST THERE ARE SOME CHALLENGES IN SOME AREAS, THESE NEED TO BE ADDRESSED URGENTLY AND GOVERNMENT WILL EXPAND THE PROBASE NETWORK ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

THE NATION WILL BE PLEASED TO NOTE THAT THE NHLANGANO – SICUNUSA (MR13) PUBLIC ROAD WHICH HAD EXPERIENCED IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES IS DUE FOR COMPLETION IN JULY 2023.

THIS WILL BRING TRAVEL CONVENIENCE TO ROAD USERS AND ASSIST ADJACENT COMMUNITIES IN ACCESSING SERVICES AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES.

HOUSING AND RESETTLEMENT

ONE OF THE MAJOR IMPEDIMENTS TO DEVELOPMENT IS THE ABSENCE OF A WELL-STRUCTURED RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME THAT WILL OVERSEE THE GROWTH IN OUR RURAL COMMUNITIES, WHICH ARE EXHIBITING FAST GROWING ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES THAT ARE TRANSFORMING THE AREAS INTO TOWNS.

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE QUICKLY ADDRESS THIS ANOMALY THAT HAS RESULTED IN NUMEROUS LAND DISPUTES AND PROVED COSTLY WHEN MUCH-NEEDED ECONOMIC GROWTH HAS TO BE INITIATED.

PROPER DEMARCATION AND RESPECT FOR BOUNDARIES OF PRIVATE LAND AND ESWATINI NATION LAND NEEDS TO BE ENFORCED SO THAT DEVELOPMENT OF OUR COMMUNITIES CAN BE SPEEDED UP AND THE PEOPLE CAN DERIVE BENEFIT FROM ESSENTIAL SERVICE FACILITIES.

WE SHOULD ALSO SEE TO IT THAT THE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME INCORPORATES HOUSING SCHEMES IN RURAL AREAS THAT ATTRACT FINANCING FROM PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS. THIS WOULD GO A LONG WAY IN IMPROVING HOME OWNERSHIP FOR OUR PEOPLE.

WE ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPING COMMUNITIES WHICH ARE GROWING INTO TOWNS TO BE GUIDED BY PROPER DEVELOPMENT PLANS THAT ACCOMMODATE FUTURE EXPANSIONS INTO TOWNS. THE EXISTING TOWNS AND CITIES SHOULD CONTINUE WITH THEIR PROGRAMMES OF DEVELOPMENT SO THAT THEY ARE AT PAR WITH OTHER CITIES OF THE WORLD.

ENERGY SECTOR

THE ENERGY SECTOR IS CRITICAL TO ECONOMIC RECOVERY. IT THEREFORE REMAINS IMPORTANT FOR THE COUNTRY TO ATTAIN ENERGY SECURITY CONSIDERING THAT OUR ENERGY SUPPLY AGREEMENTS ARE DUE FOR REVIEW IN 2025.

GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO DEVELOP 126.5 MEGAWATTS (MW) OF POWER PLANTS THROUGH INDEPENDENT POWER PRODUCERS (IPPS) AND THROUGH OUR LOCAL POWER UTILITY (EEC), ARE ON TRACK.

FURTHER, A POTENTIAL OF AN ADDITIONAL 80 MW BIOMASS POWER GENERATION CAPACITY HAS BEEN CONFIRMED AND ITS PROCUREMENT WILL COMMENCE SOON.

GOVERNMENT SHOULD PURSUE THE THERMAL POWER PROJECT GIVEN THE ABUNDANCE OF COAL DEPOSITS IN THE COUNTRY.

THIS NEEDS TO BE DONE WHILE TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION MINIMISING THE IMPACT OF EMISSIONS TO THE ENVIRONMENT THROUGH THE USE OF TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS AS WE ARE SEEING IN SOME DEVELOPED COUNTRIES.

ANOTHER SOURCE OF ENERGY IS SOLAR, WHICH COULD ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF POWER IN THE COUNTRY, TO ASSIST THOSE WHO ARE UNDERPRIVILEGED AND WITHOUT THE CAPACITY TO WIRE THEIR HOUSES.

GOVERNMENT IS DEVELOPING A MODEL FOR THE INSTALLATION OF **READY BOARDS** AND IS WORKING ON A PLAN TO ECONOMICALLY EMPOWER QUALIFIED UNEMPLOYED YOUTH BY GRANTING OPPORTUNITIES TO INSTALL THEM WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITIES.

ALL THESE INITIATIVES WILL ASSIST TO FAST TRACK THE RATE OF ELECTRIFICATION IN THE COUNTRY IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT EVERY LISWATI HAS ACCESS TO ELECTRICITY BY 2030 IN A COST-EFFECTIVE MANNER, WHILST UPLIFTING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF EMASWATI.

MINING SECTOR

THE COUNTRY RECENTLY ENGAGED A CONSULTANT TO SYSTEMATICALLY INVESTIGATE THE KINGDOM'S POTENTIAL MINERAL ENDOWMENT IN THE HHOHHO AND MANZINI REGIONS.

NUMEROUS MINERAL TARGETS WERE SUCCESSFULLY IDENTIFIED, WHILE ANOTHER SURVEY WILL BE CARRIED OUT TO COVER THE SHISELWENI AND THE LUBOMBO REGIONS. HOWEVER, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE BIGGEST BENEFICIARIES OF THESE MINERALS ARE THE PEOPLE OF ESWATINI.

THIS REQUIRES A REVIEW OF THE MINING LEGISLATION, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE PRACTICES OF NATIONS THAT ARE SUCCESSFUL IN THIS REGARD, SUCH AS THE GULF STATES. WE MUST ENSURE THAT EMASWATI REAP THE FULL BENEFITS OF OUR GOD-GIVEN RESOURCES.

PROPOSED BIG FIVE GAME PARK

ON THE TOURISM FRONT, ALL EFFORTS SHOULD BE MADE TO ENSURE THE KINGDOM REMAINS A PREFERRED DESTINATION OF CHOICE BOTH LOCALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY.

ESWATINI'S TOURISM OFFERING IS ALSO HIGHLY DEPENDENT ON THE COUNTRY'S RICH NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE WHICH IS ONE OF A KIND.

IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT THE KINGDOM HAS EMBARKED ON THE BIG FIVE NATIONAL PARK PROJECT WHICH IS MOTIVATED BY THE DESIRE TO IMPROVE AND SECURE ESWATINI'S CONSERVATION ESTATE.

IT WILL ALSO INCREASE THE OUR OVERALL TOURISM RECEIPTS WHICH WILL HAVE DIRECT RESULTS IN IMPROVING THE ECONOMY. GOVERNMENT SHOULD COMMENCE THIS PROJECT THIS COMING FINANCIAL YEAR BECAUSE IT HAS HANDSOME DIVIDENDS.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

WE ARE COMMITTED TO MEETING AGENDA 2030 OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN THE REMAINING SEVEN YEARS.

OUR VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW REPORTS IN 2019 AND 2022, SUBMITTED AT THE HIGH-LEVEL FORUM ON SDG'S IN NEW YORK, HAVE HELPED US TO REFLECT ON THE PROGRESS WE HAVE MADE AND WHERE WE NEED TO IMPROVE.

THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023/24 – 2027/28, WHICH INTEGRATES **AGENDA 2030 AND AGENDA 2063 OF THE AFRICAN UNION**, HAS BEEN UPDATED TO ADDRESS EMERGING CHALLENGES.

THIS WILL REMAIN OUR GUIDING INSTRUMENT FOR FORGING AHEAD WITH OUR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT VISION AND THE RACE TO 2030.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

WE WILL STRIVE TO ENSURE THAT OUR YOUNG PEOPLE CONTRIBUTE POSITIVELY TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS COUNTRY, AS WELL AS IMPROVE THEIR OWN LIVES.

IN 2022, WE HAD SUCCESSFUL EVENTS AIMED AT PROMOTING ESWATINI AS AN INTERNATIONAL INVESTMENT DESTINATION AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO REALISING THE RESULTS OF THESE EFFORTS THIS YEAR.

WE URGE ALL STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS TO WORK HARDER TO INCREASE INVESTMENTS IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT FOR THE REALISATION OF THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.

IN THIS REGARD, LAST YEAR I LAUNCHED A PARTNERSHIP WITH THE UNDP TO SUPPORT THE YOUTH THROUGH AN EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME WHICH WILL CONTRIBUTE TO OUR EFFORTS OF CREATING JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEM.

THE YOUTH SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS PROGRAMME, WHICH HAS ALREADY RECEIVED TREMENDOUS SUPPORT FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

WE ARE PLEASED THAT ALL THE UN AGENCIES IN ESWATINI ARE NOW WORKING TO CONSOLIDATE THEIR SUPPORT INTO A **ONE UN YOUTH OFFER** WHICH THEY WILL SOON PRESENT TO GOVERNMENT, AS AN ADDITION TO THE ONE LAUNCHED IN NOVEMBER LAST YEAR.

IT WILL FOCUS ON ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, EDUCATION, SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE.

THE NATION IS GRATEFUL TO THE UNITED NATIONS FOR THIS ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTION. OUR YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD ALSO TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF THE YOUTH REVOLVING FUND, THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND AND OTHER INITIATIVES SET UP TO FINANCE INNOVATIVE BUSINESS IDEAS TO CREATE JOBS FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR PEERS.

POLITICAL CLIMATE

OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, THE WORLD HAS BEEN FACED WITH INCREASED AGITATION THAT HAS MANIFESTED ITSELF THROUGH REPETITIVE WAVES OF INSTABILITY AND OTHER FORMS OF DISRUPTION.

THE SADC REGION HAS BEEN NO EXCEPTION TO THIS. WE ENCOURAGE THE AFRICAN POPULACE TO JOIN HANDS IN WORKING TOWARDS REALISING ONE OF THE AFRICAN UNION AGENDA 2063 INITIATIVES, IN SILENCING THE GUNS BY 2030, WHICH ASPIRES TO END ALL WARS AND VIOLENT CONFLICT ON THE CONTINENT.

THE SUCCESS OF THIS GOAL WILL GO A LONG WAY TOWARDS ENSURING THAT THE PEOPLE OF AFRICA FOCUS THEIR ATTENTION ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ISSUES IN A FREE AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT.

NATIONAL ELECTIONS AND DOUBLE CELEBRATIONS

THIS YEAR WE SHALL HAVE A DOUBLE CELEBRATION OF 55 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE AND 55TH BIRTHDAY OF THE MONARCH.

IT IS GRATIFYING TO NOTE THAT OUR MONARCHICAL DEMOCRACY HAS EVOLVED OVER THE YEARS. THIS IS EVIDENCED BY THE FACT THAT THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS HELD EVERY 5TH YEAR ARE ONE OF THE MOST DEMOCRATIC.

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT CARRY THE MANDATE AND VOICE OF THE PEOPLE SINCE THEY ARE VOTED FREELY BASED ON INDIVIDUAL MERIT FROM THEIR CONSTITUENCIES.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO THE INCOMING MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT TO CARRY ON OUR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA THAT SEEKS TO ELEVATE OUR COUNTRY TO A FIRST WORLD STATUS.

NOBODY SHOULD BE LEFT BEHIND IN PLAYING THEIR PART TOWARDS ADDRESSING THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CHALLENGES AND TAPPING INTO THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT THAT LIE AHEAD OF US.

WE ARE A NATION CAPABLE OF ACHIEVING GREAT THINGS WHEN WE WORK TOGETHER, SO WE CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE THE SPIRIT OF DIALOGUE TO ADDRESS OUR DIFFERENCES AND FIND LASTING SOLUTIONS TO ALL CHALLENGES THAT CONFRONT US.

WE MUST CAUTION AGAINST THE USE OF FOUL PLAY, BRIBERY AND FALSE PROMISES TO GAIN A SEAT IN PARLIAMENT. THIS CAN ONLY BE AIMED AT ACHIEVING SELFISH AMBITIONS AT THE EXPENSE OF OUR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT. WE WISH THE ELECTION PROCESS ALL THE SUCCESS IT DESERVES.

GO ALL OUT AND EXERCISE YOUR RIGHT TO CAST YOUR VOTE AND LET IT COUNT. LET EACH OF US BE REMINDED OF OUR SLOGAN; **“NGETE NGASALA NASAKHA LIVE.”**

CONCLUSION

WE TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK YOU ALL MASWATI, FOR COOPERATING WITH THE GOVERNMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALL SECTORS OF OUR SOCIETY.

THE ACHIEVEMENTS WE HAVE REALISED WITH OUR ECONOMY, WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE IF YOU HAD NOT PLAYED YOUR PART.

MAY WE ALL CONTINUE TO CONTRIBUTE MEANINGFULLY TO THE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE KINGDOM AS WE PURSUE THE ASPIRATIONS OF OUR NATIONAL VISION.

OUR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASPIRATIONS FOR A BETTER FUTURE CAN ONLY SUCCEED IF THEY ARE FIRMLY GROUNDED IN PEACE.

ONE IS CERTAIN THAT NO ONE WANTS TO LIVE IN A COUNTRY WHERE GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES ARE CONTINUOUSLY DESTROYED, HOMES ARE BURNT DOWN AND PEOPLE'S LIVES ARE LOST.

WHEN A BUSINESS IS BURNT DOWN IT MEANS PEOPLE WILL LOSE JOBS, AND THE RIPPLE EFFECTS OF THIS ARE HUGE. THAT IS NOT THE KINGDOM THAT OUR FOREFATHERS ENVISAGED AND FOUGHT FOR.

THIS IS CHASING AWAY INVESTORS AND WORKING AGAINST OUR DECENTRALISATION POLICY. IT IS UNFORTUNATE, THOUGH, THAT THERE ARE FACELESS ORGANIZATIONS, INSTITUTIONS AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE PROMOTING THE PROBLEMS THAT OUR PEOPLE HAVE FALLEN VICTIM TO IN RECENT TIMES.

SPONSORING TERRORISM IS A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY. WE CALL UPON ALL MANKIND AND THE FRIENDS OF THE KINGDOM IN PARTICULAR, TO CONDEMN THESE ACTS OF ASSASSINATIONS WHERE WE HAVE LOST MANY LIVES.

WE SEND WORDS OF COMFORT TO ALL FAMILIES THAT HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY THESE DEVELOPMENTS. **IMPILO YEMASWATI AYITSENGISI BEKUNENE. AKUPHELE LOKUBULALA SIVE.**

WE BESEECH THE ALMIGHTY GOD TO FORGIVE THOSE WHO ARE CAUSING TERROR IN THE KINGDOM WITH THE AIM OF REVERSING ALL THE GAINS THAT EMASWATI HAVE WORKED FOR SINCE WE GAINED OUR INDEPENDENCE IN 1968.

LET US PROMOTE THE SPIRIT OF LIVING IN HARMONY WITH ONE ANOTHER. LET US GUARD AND CHERISH THIS JEWEL AS A NATION FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

MASWATI, MAY EACH OF US DIRECT OUR FOCUS TOWARDS THE ACTIVITIES LINED UP FOR THIS YEAR. LET US COME TOGETHER AND BE UNITED IN ONE OBJECTIVE OF PROMOTING A PEACEFUL ENVIRONMENT.

LET US **MAKE 2023 A YEAR OF TURN AROUND,** ABOUNDING WITH PEACE, TRANQUILITY AND SUCCESS IN OUR BEAUTIFUL KINGDOM.

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