

**REMARKS BY MR. NTAHLI MATETE, PRINCIPAL SECRETARY FOR THE
MINISTRY OF FORESTRY, RANGE AND SOIL CONSERVATION DURING
THE OPENING OF THE REFRESHER WORKSHOP AT 'MELESI LODGE,
THABA-BOSIU, 11 SEPTEMBER 2017.**

Programme Director

**Our Esteemed Guest - Representative of the Food and Agricultural
Organisation (FAO) Office in Lesotho**

Dear Colleagues, Staff of the Department of Forestry

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning

Since it is the first time that I meet most of you here at the workshop, kindly allow me to convey my heartfelt greetings to you, and to welcome you to this week's discussions that will remind us, not only about the significance of information-sharing, but also about new ways of ensuring that, indeed, the trees that we grow do become forests. It is our responsibility as well as that of the various stakeholders that have an interest in trees and forests to ensure that we grow trees that have tangible benefit to our communities across the country.

Let me also seize this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation, and on my own behalf, our deepest gratitude to the FAO, for making it possible for us to sit together here to refresh our minds on the common vision, mission, and values that drive our strategies and plans enabling us to achieve success in our daily work.

It is, therefore, critical to indicate that while we are here, we must share, without any hindrance, a common vision that will help us make informed decisions so that we can, indeed, see forests that cover the length and breadth of this country.

The Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation is a key player in the planning and implementation of various forestry interventions in Lesotho, hence, we are expected to focus our efforts towards promotion and implementation of sustainable management of forests; halting of deforestation; and restoration of degraded forests, while simultaneously increasing afforestation; re-forestation; non- wood forest production; as well as fruit-tree production.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am informed that the Department of Forestry has not met in this way since 2004, despite the fact that the earth and its constituents have been substantially dynamic and ever-changing, hence the importance of this workshop. Nonetheless, we are aware that there are various strategies which have been employed from time-to-time to address the challenges that confront us, and these include Vision 2020, the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and now Sustainable Development Goals.

Our Guest of Honour from the FAO

Ladies and Gentlemen

Perhaps, at this stage I should remind all of us that one of the Sustainable Development Goal 6 Targets states that:

“By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes”.

The underlying objective is to have increased quality and quantity of water which is achievable through protection and restoration of water related ecosystems such as forests, and thus training and dialogue are critical factors towards the achievement of what we have set out to do. We are hopeful, therefore, that this particular training and exchange of ideas will address, amongst other things, sustainable forest management which benefits the ministry and the country at large.

It is, therefore, very important that we significantly increase the area of sustainably managed forests. This would invariably be identified by availability of community forests and protection of the newly established and already existing forest reserves.

Esteemed Representative of the FAO and Colleagues,

In conclusion, kindly permit me to highlight the fact that training of the Ministry’s staff charged with protecting the environment by growing trees is a *sine qua non* for the long-term success in rolling back poverty. Indeed, it is my firm belief that after this workshop, you will be well equipped with essential skills and techniques that will enable you to discharge your mandate efficiently and effectively in communities across the country. To that end, I wish you all the best in this week’s deliberations.

Programme Director

Kindly allow me now to declare this workshop open, and thank you for your attention!