

Opening Remarks by Mr. Karabo Marite, Director of planning, Ministry of Public Works and Transport

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First and foremost I wish to extend my respect to his Majesty the King, King Letsie III,
The Right Honorable the Prime Minister,
To the Honorable Minister of Public Works and Transport here with us this morning,
Donor representatives
Chairman of the SSATP Board, SSATP Program Management Team
And to you distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you for affording me this opportunity to say a few words of welcome to all the SSATP delegates gathered here today. To say that I am excited is an understatement of the day—I am in a state of ecstasy, simply because today, we are living a dream, a long cherished dream of bringing together here in Maseru, men and women who are truly concerned with the development of the African continent. I say to you ladies and gentlemen: A BIG WELCOME TO MASERU.

I see very familiar faces, friends, acquaintances, donors, colleagues whom together have traversed the African Continent in preparation of this, our conference and the AGM.

Allow me Mr. Chairman, to take this opportunity to say a few words about Lesotho: It will be an introduction to this beautiful land of Basotho, as well as brief assessment of the policy achievements and plans.

Current situation of the transport sector and policy development for activities

1. Background information

Lesotho is a land-locked country of about 30,600 square kilometers with a population of approximately 2.2 million people. Two thirds of the country is characterized by rugged topography in which one quarter of the population is sparsely distributed. However, in western and southern parts of the country, the mountainous terrain gives way to more rolling hills and valleys (one third of the country), where three quarters of the population live and carry out commercial and subsistence farming. The type of terrain and settlement pattern contributes to difficult and costly provision of transport infrastructure and services. As a result, accessibility levels in the lowlands are higher than in the mountainous areas.



2. Transport sub-sectors

In Lesotho, the transport sector consists of five sub-sectors: Road Transport, Air Transport, Rail Transport, Inland Water Transport and Intermediate Means of Transport.

It has been said by many observers that transport in general is the lifeblood of any economy, however in Lesotho, road transport sub-sector is a linchpin of transportation system. Road Transport Services consist of low vehicle ownership. However, the public transport is generally operated by private companies and individual business men and women. The road network consists of about 7400 km and they are concentrated in the lowlands. The Government is committed to increasing capacity of the Road Safety Department in order to reduce number of fatalities (69 fatalities per 10,000 vehicles as per 2004 statistical records).

2.1 Air-transport sub-sector consists of one international airport, twenty nine (29) aerodromes and airstrips that are mainly located in mountainous and remote parts of Lesotho and are mainly used by Lesotho Flying Doctor Service.

2.2 Rail transport sub-sector consists of 2.5 km rail line between Maseru Bridge Border and Maseru Station. The facilities at the station are owned by Government but they are leased, operated and maintained by South African rail company, Spoornet.

2.3 Water transport consists of 39 inland river crossings located in the highland areas. Water transport services consist of mainly public and private owned aluminium rowing-boat river ferries with an average carrying capacity of eight adults.

2.4 Intermediate Means of Transport sub-sector infrastructure statistics are not well documented. However, the Government has been able to construct more than 210 footbridges and 110 km of footpaths that are mainly approaches to the footbridges.

3. Policy Development Activities (achievements and plans)

3.1 Poverty Reduction and Transport Strategy Review (PRTSR)

The PRTSR was completed and validated by end of 2005 and final PRTSR recommendations were submitted to all stakeholders including the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. Based on these recommendations and action plan from the review of PRTSR, Draft Transport Sector Policy was reviewed. Intensive consultations of all stakeholders (economic, social and private sectors, priority population groups, civil society, organizations dealing with cross-cutting issues), regarding all issues in the Draft Policy, were done through presentations, meetings and workshops. The draft Transport Sector Policy was then revised and circulated to the wider stakeholder groups for review and comments. The main stakeholder Ministries (Ministry of finance and Development Planning, Ministry of Local Government) formally concurred to the contents of the document. The final Draft Policy was then adopted by the Government of Lesotho as a working document. Based on the approved Transport Sector Policy, the Ministry has planned to review the Transport Sector Program. The Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) will be reviewed in 2007 to incorporate recommendations from the PRTSR during the formulation of a second generation PRS.

3.2 Indicators

In 2005, the Ministry of Public Works and Transport established the statistical section with the purpose of collection of data (from transport data producers) and establishment of a database. The lack of institutional framework, spatial data policy and standards, have all resulted in difficulty in the management of data quality. Therefore, Ministry and the Bureau of Statistics have formulated the TORs for engagement of the consultant to formulate data policy and standards and recommend appropriate institutional framework for management of data at national level. Furthermore, TORs for Institutional Capacity, establishment of Database and GIS review within Ministry of Public Works and Transport have been completed. Evaluation of expression of interest from more than ten consultants has been completed. It is expected that these studies will be effective by March 2007 following Integrated Transport Project effectiveness (proposed EU, GOL & IDA funded project).

3.3 Road Management and Financing

The Ministry of Public Works and Transport through the Department of Rural Roads and Roads Branch is responsible for the management of rural national and urban roads respectively while Local Authorities are responsible for urban roads. However, due to inadequate funds and inefficiencies within the road sub-sector, Government has approved institutional reforms within the road sub-sector in the form of establishment of a Roads Directorate for management of primary and secondary roads, while management of tertiary and feeder roads will be decentralized to the districts. TORs for preparation of an action plan, revision of legislation and other related issues for the establishment of the Roads Directorate and decentralization of management of tertiary and feeder roads to Local Authorities have been compiled.

Roads development, upgrading and rehabilitation are funded through funds from development partners and the Government of Lesotho, while the road maintenance is funded solely by Government through normal budget allocation and second generation Road Fund. The inadequate maintenance funds have resulted in deterioration of road network, to ameliorate the situation the Government has approved increase of road user charges (which will result in increasing maintenance funds) from 30% to 60% of maintenance needs. The study for determination of road maintenance needs was completed in 2002 and the outcome of this will be two studies under ITP project and these are: *Review of Road Maintenance Needs and Road Management and Maintenance Funding Stakeholder Awareness*. TORs for these studies are complete and it is planned that the consultant will be engaged by end of 2007.

3.4 Transport Services

As earlier mentioned, transport sector services are owned and managed mainly by the private sector. However, the Ministry through use of consultants under ITP project, will formulate each transport sub-sector policy and align them with road sub-sector policy. In order to improve urban mobility, a study will be conducted for Maseru Urban Planning and Transport. The procurement for consultancy services is planned to be completed in 2007. Furthermore the TORs for basic access and mobility have been completed and the procurement for consultancy services will be completed by March 2007.

3.5 Regional Integration

The cross boarder transport dialogue between Lesotho and Republic of South Africa regarding the management of cross boarder traffic is held with the sole purpose to solve mobility problems. The Re-design of two bridges connecting roads along the proposed corridor (Roma-Ramabanta-Semokong -Sekake road is about complete. Procurement of civil works has started. It is expected that the construction works will start by March 2007.

3.6 Cross Cutting Issues

Cross cutting issues have been incorporated in the Transport Sector Policy and in the implementation of transport sector activities. As a result, transport sector activities have been engendered by incorporation of the transport needs for priority population, including women, in the transport sector policy document.

The HIV/AIDS and environmental clauses have been incorporated in the contract documents. TORs for consultancy services for formulation of work place policies for environmental management and HIV/AIDS have been completed.

The Ministry continues to use and enforce use of labor-based methods wherever possible in the provision of transport infrastructure, especially in road construction and maintenance in order to create employment and assets.

In order to reduce fatality and accidents rates, the Ministry through Road Safety programs will increase capacity of drivers by modification of curriculum for training of drivers and inspectors, formulation of examination questions and reduction of number of black spots.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to conclude by thanking our Honorable Minister, Mr. Popane Lebesa for placing his confidence in our ability to host the SSATP Conference and the AGM. I also thank Mr. Monyane Mathibeli, our Principal Secretary, for his stewardship, fatherly touch, and his tremendous ability to bring the best in us.

Lastly I want you Ladies and gentlemen to know that Basotho women are very strong, tenacious, and make the best planners. I say this in respect to our Mrs. Pama and all the ladies who have been pivotal in making this meeting a reality. The Event Coordinator for the AGM and Conference is also a woman, Ms. Monica Fako, the owner of CGS firm. Mrs. Pama is an engineer and the first female engineer in Lesotho and the former SSATP National Coordinator. She is strongly committed to the gender balance, rural access and poverty reduction. She is the reason Lesotho enjoys membership of SSATP. It is therefore not surprising to note that the Organizing team for the AGM and conference in Lesotho is largely made of women. Could the members of the team stand up please? Can we kindly give them a standing ovation?

I further conclude by wishing you distinguished delegates, a very peaceful and enjoyable stay in Lesotho.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION.