

GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI



ACTING PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT

Siyanivusela MaSwati lamahle.

Our Nation is built on a collective agreement called the Constitution and other traditional structures that have served us well for centuries. The Constitution is a home grown document which was adopted by emaSwati after years of extensive consultations.

This national document serves to guide our way of engaging on issues as a Nation in an orderly, civil and lawful manner. We are all bound by its provisions and guidelines.

This is a Kingdom that believes in dialogue when addressing the challenges that confront us in order to peacefully surge forward in unity and cohesion.

It is the bedrock upon which our governance and progression as an economy has rested for hundreds of years. It defines who we are as a Nation, a people who respect one another and respect the institutions that serve to unite us as we rally our nation towards peace and prosperity.

It is therefore incumbent upon all of us to respect the values and ethos of our great Nation which are not only mounted in the respect for each other, but respect for the rule of law and orderly consultation where we have differing views.

A country without the rule of law cannot develop socially, economically and politically. The rule of law plays a fundamental role in affording citizens the opportunity to work and live safely and thrive in their daily endeavours.

This is what has kept this country united and afforded us the opportunity to develop and transform our economy to a level that improves the lives of all emaSwati in spite of the challenges that continue to afflict the world.

We are alive to public concerns of lack of adequate jobs and service delivery anxieties, among others, which are by and large a global concern. These are issues that Government has always taken on board hence we have put in place several strategies and interventions to address them within the constraints of our budget.

However, what we are seeing of late are elements who have hijacked these concerns to further their own agenda, mainly to shake the foundations that define this country with an intention to achieve regime change.

These protests have degenerated into disorder and violent scenes in several instances, putting the lives of citizens, public and private property in danger. We have seen some protestors deliberately provoking the police who have continued to restrain themselves under serious provocation and attacks.

We should always be cognisant of the fact that Police serve to maintain law and order, and to protect us, including our property, from criminals who induce fear and

commit heinous crimes such as murder, rape, armed robbery, house-breaking, among others.

This kind of unruly behavior is unacceptable and cannot be allowed to continue without consequence. Our Tinkhundla system, as encapsulated in the Constitution, ably provides the structures and procedures to be followed when raising concerns at community or constituency level. Delivering petitions is not one of them.

All political systems have checks and balances set intentionally to maintain law and order, and none of them allow uncontrolled and violent engagements.

It is disheartening to observe the flagrant disregard of the rule of law, the result of which has been the breach of the Constitution, Public Order Act 2017 and the COVID-19 Regulations as varied from time to time.

In light of the above, Government has reached the decision to stop with immediate effect the delivery of petitions to Tinkhundla Centres.

It has become apparent that this exercise has created a breeding ground for anarchy and has been intentionally hijacked to sow seeds of division among eMaSwati in complete disregard of public safety, the rule of law and COVID-19 Regulations.

This comes at a time when the country is at the brink of a third wave of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic. We have observed protesters deliberately ignoring COVID-19 regulations thus threatening their own lives and those of others. Yesterday, the country recorded the highest number of new infections in three months for the second day in succession, signaling that we are edging dangerously close to another uncontrollable outbreak.

The rise of COVID-19 infections is of great concern to His Majesty's Government. Every responsible eMaSwati has to stand up to the challenge and adhere fully to the COVID-19 prevention regulations and protocols and avoid any situation that tends to expose them to a risk of infection.

The full might of the law will take effect to anyone who will continue to ignore the rule of law.

There will be zero tolerance for all who will break the Public Order Act and the obtaining COVID-19 Regulations. Currently, we are in the process of reviewing these regulations as we have a duty to protect emaSwati from this rampaging virus and save lives.

Government remains receptive to all concerns raised by the public through the appropriate forums and in full compliance with the law, in particular the Public Order Act and COVID-19 Regulations. Our Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and fully embraces orderly consultation and engagement.

Government is committed to enhancing service delivery efforts which have been derailed since last year with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. We continue to see through job creation projects in line with the Government Strategic Roadmap and the Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan and we are already seeing some positive results in the midst of global challenges with over 18 000 jobs created since 2018.

We are forging ahead with a number of service delivery projects such as fixing our road infrastructure, provision of water and electricity to communities and facilitating the creation of more jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities, especially for our youth, in full collaboration with the private sector.

As we move in full steam to transform lives, we have to continuously confront unplanned challenges like the recent shortage of drugs reported in our health facilities.

May I emphasise to the public that these shortages, spread across the region and continent, are due to a limited supply of drugs from manufacturers who were severely affected by the global restrictions imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19. We have intensified our efforts to source these drugs from all available markets in the world and through pooled platforms like the UNICEF in order to sufficiently replenish our supplies. Government has adequate funds to purchase these medicinal commodities to meet our demand. These shortages are not linked to budgetary constraints but supply challenges.

While the world and the Kingdom of Eswatini continue to grapple with the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic which has plunged many global economies into severe strain, we remain committed to not losing sight and pace of our primary mandate - to uplift the lives of all emaSwati and attain sustainable economic development, peace and prosperity.

I thank you.

THEMBA N. MASUKU

Acting Prime Minister

24 June 2021