



Statement from the Government of Lesotho

Delivered by Mamphono Khaketla, Minister of Education

Thank you very much.

In Lesotho the political will to education is not in doubt because the Ministry of Education receives the highest budget allocation, between 23-25% annually. Policies that are already in place to achieve the MDGS are that we introduced free primary education in 2000 and currently we have an enrollment of 86%. We also achieved gender parity in 2003 and last year we enacted an education act that makes education not only free but compulsory at the basic level this means that children between the ages of 6 and 13 must be in school. We also introduced bursaries for vulnerable children and orphans because we could see that they were not attending school well. The new teacher salary structure was introduced in 2009 to try to attract people into the teaching profession.

The new policies that we are going to implement next year one is on ECD because we have realized that a lot of our girls drop out of school or fail to attend school because they have to take care of their younger siblings and if we have reception classes attached to primary school then they would bring their younger sisters and brothers to school.

We also are going to reduce the number of subjects taught in primary school from 14 to 6 because we realized there was a lot of repetition and wastage because the focus was not on the basics in the early classrooms. We will also introduce in 2012 the rationalization of fees for secondary schools and this will bring a number of children from primary schools into secondary schools and those who were not able to go to secondary school will come back to school but we need to give subventions to those schools now that have reduced their fees to accommodate these new policies. The biggest challenges that face us now are the repetition rates especially in the early years, the low transition rate because some of the boys will come to school but when

they get a little bit older they move to South Africa to go to the mines and the girls get married early. I am glad the Elders are here to help us talk about how to get girls and not brides. Also the girls drop out because they are in charge of their younger siblings or their parents who are HIV positive because we have a very high incidence of HIV/AIDS in Lesotho.

So our plans as I said for the next year are to introduce and attach early childhood centers to primary schools, to increase our teacher training and deployment incentive skills so they can go to rural areas and we want to reduce the current teacher pupil ratio from 1-65 to 1-50 and eventually 1-40. And we are working very closely with the Global Partnership through Irish Aid and UNICEF.