

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 EPHALAMENDE

INTRODUCTION

IT IS AN IMMENSE PLEASURE FOR ME TO GET THIS WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN THE NATION HERE AT LOBAMBA FOR THE OFFICIAL BLESSING OF THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI.

PROFOUND GREETINGS GO TO THE ENTIRE SWAZI NATION AND I WISH YOU ALL AN EVENTFUL AND SUCCESSFUL 2013.

A WARM WELCOME GOES TO ALL OF YOU PRESENT TODAY AND THOSE WHO ARE FOLLOWING THROUGH THE MEDIA, WITH A VERY SPECIAL GREETING TO THE FRIENDS OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI AND OUR GUESTS FROM BEYOND OUR BORDERS.

2012 AT A GLANCE

THE PAST YEAR WAS AN EVENTFUL ONE PROVIDING A MIXED BAG OF ACTIVITIES, SOME OF WHICH WERE A SETBACK TO OUR DEVELOPMENT AGENDA, WHILE OTHERS USHERED IN GOOD NEWS TO THE NATION.

AS A COLLECTIVE, WE REFUSED TO LISTEN TO THE DIVISIVE VOICES AND REMAINED RESOLUTE TOWARDS OUR CONVICTION. THIS RESOLVE MOTIVATED US TO TURN THE CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES. BY GODS GRACE WE SUCCEEDED WHERE SOME PEOPLE WERE LABELLING PROBLEMS IN US.

WE SINCERELY THANK THE INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS AND MEMBERS OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, FOR THE CONTINUED SUPPORT TOWARDS THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY PROCESS AS WELL AS THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR NATIONAL CEREMONIES IN A VARIETY OF WAYS TO ENSURE THEIR SUCCESS.

ABOVE ALL, WE ARE GRATEFUL TO THE ALMIGHTY GOD AND OUR ANCESTORS FOR GUIDING US THROUGH THE YEAR 2012.

SIBAYA

THE PAST YEAR PROVIDED US WITH A NATION BUILDING OPPORTUNITY AT SIBAYENI, A DIALOGUE FORUM WHICH HAS ALWAYS REMAINED AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR LIVES ADOPTED FROM OUR FOREFATHERS.

MANY ISSUES WERE RAISED DURING THE DEBATE. THE NATION SHOULD REST ASSURED THAT ALL THE VIEWS RAISED AT SIBAYA ARE IN THE PROCESS OF BEING IMPLEMENTED.

DIFFERING VIEWPOINTS WILL ALWAYS EMERGE IN ANY SOCIETY AND WE APPLAUD THE CITIZENRY FOR FULLY EMBRACING THE PHILOSOPHY OF SOLVING THEIR DIFFERENCES IN A PEACEFUL MANNER THROUGH SUCH FORUMS.

MASWATI, SIBAYA WILL ALWAYS REMAIN THE HIGHEST DECISION MAKING BODY IN THE COUNTRY.

45TH INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY

THE NATION WILL KNOW THAT 45 YEARS AGO OUR PREDECESSORS ATTAINED OUR NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE AND DID SO PEACEFULLY.

THEY SUBSEQUENTLY ENTRUSTED UPON US THE HUGE TASK OF MAKING SURE WE ALL RECOGNIZE AND CHERISH THIS NATIONAL TRIUMPH.

IT REMAINS FOR US TO JEALOUSLY GUARD IT AND MAINTAIN OUR BINDING PEACE WHICH IS NOW A PRICELESS COMMODITY ON THE GLOBAL ARENA.

FINAL SESSION FOR PARLIAMENTARIAN

THE YEAR 2013 MARKS THE FINAL SESSION FOR THE CURRENT PARLIAMENT. WE THANK YOU PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR THE GOOD WORK DONE THROUGHOUT YOUR TERM SINCE 2008.

NUMEROUS PIECES OF LEGISLATION THAT HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, HAVE GONE THROUGH YOUR HANDS. YOU HAVE RUN YOUR RACE WITH DEDICATION AND FULL COMMITMENT DURING YOUR TERM OF OFFICE AND THE KINGDOM IS GRATEFUL FOR THAT.

ELECTIONS

SINCE THIS IS THE LAST SESSION FOR THIS PARLIAMENT, IN THE NOT SO DISTANT FUTURE WE SHALL BE HOLDING OUR NATIONAL ELECTIONS. ELECTIONS ARE A VITAL TOOL THROUGH WHICH CITIZENS EXERCISE THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD AND TO FREELY CHOOSE THEIR OWN REPRESENTATIVES IN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE COUNTRY.

THIS YEAR WILL MARK YET ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY FOR EVERY ELIGIBLE SWAZI TO MEANINGFULLY AND DUTIFULLY GO TO THE POLLS SO AS TO BE PART OF SHAPING THE POLITICAL AND SOCIO - ECONOMIC DISPENSATION OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI.

IT IS IN THIS VEIN THAT I URGE EVERY ELIGIBLE SWAZI TO TAKE PART, FULLY, IN THE ELECTION PROCESS.

I MUST ALSO HASTEN TO POINT OUT THAT IN CASTING THE VOTE, LET US BE CONSCIOUS THAT WE ELECT MEN AND WOMEN OF INTEGRITY, CHARACTER AND PROBITY.

MOREOVER, WE MUST MAKE SURE THAT THESE MEN AND WOMEN ARE PEOPLE DRIVEN BY NATIONAL SERVICE, NATIONAL VISION, NATIONAL INTEREST AND NOT PERSONAL GAIN.

IF WE ARE SUCCESSFUL IN CHOOSING THIS CALIBER OF REPRESENTATIVES, WE AS A NATION OF ESWATINI, WILL ENJOY OUR NATIONHOOD IN THE FORM OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, PEACE, SECURITY AND PROSPERITY. WE WILL BECOME A ROLE MODEL NOT ONLY TO THE REGION AND THE CONTINENT, BUT TO THE GLOBAL VILLAGE AS WELL.

IT WAS ENCOURAGING TO NOTE FROM THE PAN AFRICAN PARLIAMENT OBSERVER MISSION, WHICH WENT ON TO STATE IN ITS MISSION REPORT, THAT AFRICA HAS A LOT TO LEARN FROM THE SWAZI ELECTORAL SYSTEM. OUR APPEAL TO THE NATION IS THAT; **ONKHE EMASWATI AKASUKUME AYOKHETSA.**

LET US SHOW THE WHOLE WORLD THAT PEACE AND STABILITY IS ENSHRINED IN OUR NATION. LET US GUARD AND PROTECT THIS GOOD LEGACY FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.

MAY I, HOWEVER, REMIND YOU ALL, THAT PARLIAMENT SHALL BE IN SESSION AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT TO DISSOLVE PARLIAMENT IS YET TO BE MADE IN DUE COURSE.

ECONOMY

WE WELCOME THE GOOD NEWS THAT THE ECONOMY HAS SLIGHTLY GROWN FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR TO 0.7 PER CENT. THIS IS AS A RESULT OF THE PROGRAMMES WE INTRODUCED LAST YEAR TO REVIVE THE ECONOMY.

EVEN THOUGH WE HAVE REALISED SOME GROWTH IN THE ECONOMY, THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE HAVE NOW OVERCOME THE PROBLEMS THAT WE FACE. THEREFORE, IT IS STILL IMPORTANT TO CONTINUE TO CREATE JOBS AND TO FIGHT POVERTY IN ALL ITS FORM.

WE MUST REMAIN COMMITTED TO ERADICATING POVERTY BY POOLING ALL OUR EXPERTISE AND RESOURCES IN FINDING LASTING SOLUTIONS. FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR CHILDREN, WE NEED TO LEAVE A GOOD LEGACY OF BUILDING A STRONG AND SOUND ECONOMY.

IN ORDER TO DO THIS, WE NEED VISIONARIES WHO WILL TURN CHALLENGES INTO MEANINGFUL ACTION WHICH NEEDS A VERY STRONG AND VIBRANT WORKFORCE.

I CALL ON EVERY SWAZI, FROM THE CHIEFDOMS TO THE CITIES, PRIVATE SECTOR TO PUBLIC SECTOR, TO USE EVERY EFFORT TO ACHIEVE THIS NOBLE DREAM. YOU MUST BE COUNTED AMONGST THOSE AS HAVING MADE A DIFFERENCE. BY DOING SO, YOU WILL CERTAINLY BE CONTRIBUTING MEANINGFULLY TO IMPROVING PEOPLE'S LIVES.

FISCAL POSITION

THIS YEAR, HIGHER REVENUES FROM SACU HAVE EASED PRESSURE ON RESERVES WHICH HAS ALLOWED GOVERNMENT TO CLEAR E1 BILLION IN ARREARS.

THE SACU WINDFALL WILL CONTINUE IN 2013/14 GIVING US AN OPPORTUNITY TO CLEAR THE REMAINING DEBT.

THIS PROVIDES US WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD CONFIDENCE IN OUR ECONOMY BY WAY OF A PRUDENT AND SUSTAINABLE BUDGET THAT NEEDS TO BE PASSED BY THIS AUGUST HOUSE.

IN DOING SO, WE SHOULD NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THE LESSON THAT HEAVY RELIANCE ON THIS VOLATILE SOURCE OF REVENUE CAN BE DISASTROUS. ALTERNATIVE INCOME SOURCES ARE URGENTLY REQUIRED.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE SWAZILAND REVENUE AUTHORITY AND VAT HAS IMPROVED DOMESTIC TAX COLLECTION BY HALF A PER CENT OF GDP, AND FURTHER GAINS ARE FORECAST FOR 2013/14.

HOWEVER, WE STILL GET TWO THIRDS OF OUR REVENUE FROM SACU TO CATER FOR OUR EXPENDITURE WHICH IS UNSUSTAINABLE.

WE CALL UPON GOVERNMENT TO EXERCISE PRUDENT FISCAL MANAGEMENT. PARLIAMENT MUST TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ENSURING THAT THE DESERVING NEEDS ARE PRIORITIZED, PROTECTED FROM CORRUPT ELEMENTS AND ARE FULLY ACCOUNTED FOR.

ALTHOUGH THERE WAS A BIT OF OUTCRY IN THE INTRODUCTION OF VAT, WE CAN AGREE THAT IT HAS BROUGHT GOOD RESULTS FOR THE COUNTRY.

HOWEVER, THERE IS STILL ROOM FOR THOSE WHO STILL NEED FURTHER EDUCATION ON THIS FORM OF TAX COLLECTION AND HOW IT CAN HELP US MEET OUR SOCIAL OBLIGATIONS.

ON A POSITIVE NOTE, I WOULD LIKE TO ANNOUNCE THAT THE NATION CAN EXPECT A REVIEW OF OUR TAX POLICIES TO SEE HOW THEY CAN AFFECT US BETTER.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

AS THE NATION IS AWARE THAT OUR MAIN NATIONAL OBJECTIVE IS TO ATTAIN A FIRST WORLD STATUS. TO SUCCEED IN THIS QUEST, REQUIRES US TO ADOPT FIRST WORLD PRACTICES. THESE PRACTICES MUST START FROM AN EARLY AGE, WHICH MEANS INSTILLING IN OUR YOUTH THE CULTURE OF DISCIPLINE IN EVERYTHING THAT THEY DO.

THEY OUGHT TO GROW WITH RESPECT FOR TIME, HAVE HIGH REGARD FOR PERFECTION, PAY ATTENTION TO DETAIL AND WITH A WELL INSTILLED COMPETITIVE PRINCIPLE OF BEING THE BEST ONE CAN BE IN ANY GIVEN SITUATION OR CHALLENGE THEY MAY BE FACED WITH.

I HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY IMPRESSED BY THE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT MODEL ADOPTED BY MANY CARE CENTRES AROUND THE KINGDOM WHERE CHILDREN ARE BEING MOULDED TO BECOME FIRST WORLD CITIZENS.

WE NEED TO PROMOTE THIS PROGRAMME WHICH HAS BEEN THE KEY INGREDIENT FOR THE SUCCESS OF DEVELOPED COUNTRIES.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

IN ORDER TO CREATE JOBS FOR OUR PEOPLE, GOVERNMENT SHOULD THIS YEAR EMBARK ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF PROJECTS THAT HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS ESSENTIAL FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND JOB CREATION.

IN THIS REGARD, THE NATION IS FOLLOWING WITH KEEN INTEREST THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE STRATEGIC OIL RESERVE AT PHUZUMOYA.

THE TWO SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PARKS, WHICH ALREADY HAVE INVESTORS LINED UP FOR OCCUPATION, ARE ALSO EAGERLY AWAITED AND GOVERNMENT SHOULD SPEED UP THE COMMENCEMENT OF THESE PROJECTS.

THE ENVISAGED CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW RAILWAY LINE BETWEEN THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI, THE REPUBLICS OF SOUTH AFRICA AND MOZAMBIQUE, WILL NO DOUBT IMPROVE SIGNIFICANTLY THE TRANSPORTATION OF GOODS AND SERVICES.

WE SHOULD ALSO NOT LOSE FOCUS ON THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS WHICH WERE MEANT TO DEVELOP TRADE, TOURISM AND SPORTS FACILITIES. THERE HAS BEEN GREAT DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEW AIRPORT THAT WILL PLACE THIS COUNTRY AT PAR WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS OF THE WORLD.

GOVERNMENT SHOULD EXPLORE ALL AVAILABLE AVENUES TO MARKET THE AIRPORT TO INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES. WE EXPECT THIS FACILITY TO BE FULLY OPERATIONAL THIS YEAR.

WE ARE ENCOURAGED THAT SOME AIRLINES ARE KEEN TO UTILISE THIS STATE OF THE ART FACILITY. SUCH INFRASTRUCTURE COMES WITH THE BENEFIT OF JOB CREATION AND INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

THE HARDSHIP WE HAVE GONE THROUGH SHOULD BE A VERY GOOD LESSON TO HELP US AVOID A REPEAT OF THE FISCAL CHALLENGES. WE NEED TO REDOUBLE OUR EFFORTS.

EDUCATION

GOVERNMENT UNDERSCORES THE CRITICAL ROLE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN ALLEVIATING POVERTY, IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL EMASWATI, ATTAINMENT OF ACCELERATED ECONOMIC GROWTH AND ENHANCING SOCIAL COHESION.

IN ORDER TO REALISE A SOUND ECONOMY WE MUST INVEST IN EDUCATION THAT WILL PRODUCE VISIONARIES AND ENTREPRENEURS. THESE MUST NOT BE JOB SEEKERS BUT PIONEERS IN JOB CREATION THAT ULTIMATELY GIVES US THE BEST ECONOMIC RETURNS.

COMMITMENTS TO IMPROVING ACCESS TO PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION, PROVIDING ENTREPRENEURIAL AND PRACTICAL SKILLS MUST, THEREFORE, BE SUSTAINED.

WE MUST REMAIN SENSITIVE TO THE COST ASSOCIATED WITH OUR EDUCATION SO THAT IT REMAINS AFFORDABLE TO ALL WITHOUT COMPROMISING THE QUALITY.

NEW AND INNOVATIVE WAYS OF PROVIDING FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR TERTIARY EDUCATION ALSO, HAVE TO BE EXPLORED AS THE NEED ON THIS SECTOR HAS BECOME A HUGE CHALLENGE.

WE MUST ALSO ENSURE THAT OUR EDUCATION IS RELEVANT AND UP TO DATE TO THE CONTEMPORARY ENVIRONMENT SO THAT THE GRADUATES BECOME COMPETITIVE AND MARKETABLE WORLDWIDE.

WITH THE ADVENT OF E-EDUCATION, OUR TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ESTABLISH LINKS WITH THEIR INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED COUNTERPARTS SO AS TO KEEP ABREAST WITH DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR.

QUALITY HEALTH SERVICES

A HEALTHY NATION IS A HIGHLY PRODUCTIVE NATION. WE MUST THEREFORE FIGHT TO ERADICATE ALL DISEASES AND AILMENTS THAT MAY AFFECT THE PRODUCTION OF OUR HUMAN CAPITAL.

WE SHOULD PROMOTE GOOD BEHAVIOUR, NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL FITNESS AT ALL TIMES.

OUR HEALTH OBJECTIVE AS A NATION IS TO ATTAIN THE THREE ZEROS: WHICH ARE; **ZERO NEW HIV INFECTIONS, ZERO AIDS RELATED DEATHS AND ZERO DISCRIMINATION.**

WE ARE PLEASED TO NOTE THAT THE PROGRAMMES FOR PROVIDING SUPPORT TO THOSE AFFECTED BY HIV/AIDS, TB AND EPIDEMIC DISEASES ARE PROGRESSING VERY WELL.

TRANSMISSION OF HIV AND AIDS FROM MOTHER TO CHILD HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED TO LEVELS THAT HAVE EARNED THE KINGDOM RECOGNITION AS ONE OF THE BEST PRACTICES IN COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD.

OUR NATIONAL EFFORTS TO COMBAT MALARIA HAS EARNED US AN AWARD DURING THE RECENTLY ENDED AFRICAN UNION SUMMIT IN ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA. WE HAVE ALSO RECEIVED A LIFE CHANGER AWARD FROM THE HEALTH CARE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY IN LONDON FOR THIS ACHIEVEMENT.

GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE FIGHT AGAINST MALARIA IN THE COUNTRY AND ENSURE THAT WE INDEED ELIMINATE IT BY 2015.

GOVERNMENT WILL ALSO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE RESOURCES FOR SPECIALISED MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS TO THOSE IN NEED, WHILE CONTINUING WITH EFFORTS TO ENSURE SPECIALISED SERVICES BECOME AVAILABLE LOCALLY.

THE NATION IS PARTICULARLY PLEASED WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE LUBOMBO REFERRAL HOSPITAL THAT IS PROGRESSING VERY, VERY WELL. IT WILL STAND OUT AS A GREAT ACHIEVEMENT IN THE HEALTH SECTOR FOR THE REGION.

SOCIAL WELFARE

THOUGH WE FACE MANY CHALLENGES AS A NATION, WE CANNOT AFFORD TO ADDRESS THEM ALL AT ONCE. COMMITMENTS TO SUPPORT THE SICK AND MORE VULNERABLE OF OUR SOCIETY, SUCH AS THE ELDERLY AND THE ORPHAN AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN, MUST BE HONOURED TIMEOUSLY AND MORE EFFICIENTLY.

GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE RESOURCES FOR ALL THE OTHER SOCIAL PROGRAMMES SUCH AS THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND, PHALALA FUND, YOUTH FUND AND THE ORPHANED AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN EDUCATION FUND. WE BELIEVE THESE FUNDS PLAY AN INTEGRAL PART IN MITIGATING AGAINST POVERTY.

AGRICULTURE

WE ARE THANKFUL FOR THE PLENTIFUL RAINS AND HOPE ALL FARMERS WILL TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF THE RAINS, TO PRODUCE ALL OUR FOOD NEEDS SO THAT WE ARE NOT ONLY SELF SUFFICIENT BUT BECOME A COMPETITIVE EXPORTER OF FARM PRODUCE.

WHILE WE ARE STILL FACED WITH A CHALLENGE OF FOOD SECURITY, WE ARE ENCOURAGED BY SIGNS THAT VEGETABLE FARMERS ARE NOW ABLE TO SATISFY SOME LOCAL PRODUCE REQUIREMENTS, THUS DECREASING THE NUMBER OF IMPORTS.

OUR FARMERS ARE ALSO ABLE TO PRODUCE VEGETABLES FOR EXPORTS TO OUR NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES AND ABROAD. WE DO, HOWEVER, REMAIN WITH THE TASK OF DIVERSIFICATION.

WITH THE WELCOME NEWS OF A FIVE YEAR EXTENDED PERIOD FOR EXEMPTED SUGAR EXPORTS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION, THERE IS NO TIME TO WASTE IN PRODUCT DIVERSIFICATION TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT ON OUR MAJOR SOURCE OF EXPORT REVENUE.

WE APPEAL TO THE EU MARKET TO BE SENSITIVE TO THE BENEFIT THAT THIS FACILITY PROVIDES TO THE NEEDY POPULATION AT GRASSROOT LEVEL. SUGAR PRODUCTION HAS NOW BECOME A MAJOR SOURCE OF INCOME FOR MANY FAMILIES IN THE COUNTRY.

WE ALSO URGE FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS TO CONTINUE TO MAKE THEIR PRESENCE FELT BY SUPPORTING BOTH BIG AND SMALL BUSINESSES AS WELL AS OUR FARMERS, FOR THEY ALL REMAIN THE ENGINE FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH.

REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

TO THE FRIENDS OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI, WE TAKE COGNIZANCE OF THE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY MANY OF YOUR GOVERNMENTS TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS COUNTRY.

PLEASE EXTEND OUR HEARTFELT GRATITUDE TO YOUR RESPECTIVE GOVERNMENTS AND PEOPLE FOR THE VALUABLE SUPPORT EXTENDED TO US.

THE COUNTRY WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN GLOBAL ORGANS SUCH AS THE UNITED NATIONS WHERE THE COUNTRY RECENTLY SUBMITTED 28 CONVENTIONS FOR RATIFICATION, MAKING US ONE OF THE FEW TO DO SO.

VERY SOON, WE WILL ALSO BE JOINING HANDS IN CONGRATULATING AND CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AFRICAN UNION, WHILE PURSUING DEEPER BILATERAL COOPERATION WITH FRIENDS TO THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI.

AS WE CELEBRATE FIVE DECADES AND HAVING CHANGED OUR NAME FROM OAU TO AFRICAN UNION, ONE MAY ASK WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED THUS FAR.

AS A CONTINENT WE HAVE SUCCEEDED IN TERMS OF REGAINING INDEPENDENCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, UPLIFTING THE SOCIAL WELLBEING OF OUR PEOPLE, CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION.

WE ARE, HOWEVER, CONCERNED THAT AFTER SO LONG, THE CONFLICT AND POVERTY SITUATION AND HEALTH PROBLEMS, AS WELL AS VARIOUS OTHER CRISES, STILL HAUNT US BUT THE AFRICAN SOLUTION IS NOT EVIDENT.

TIME HAS COME FOR AFRICANS TO PROVIDE AFRICAN SOLUTIONS, BECAUSE WE HAVE THE INTELLECTUAL CAPACITY TO DEAL WITH ALL OUR PROBLEMS.

WE SHOULD LOOK AT BRINGING THESE CHALLENGES TO AN END. AS WE CELEBRATE 50 YEARS, WE SHOULD BE RECOGNISING THE MILESTONES PIONEERED BY AFRICAN CHAMPIONS.

WHERE WE NEED HELP, BECAUSE WE MAY NEED IT SOMETIMES, IT MUST BE THE AFRICAN VOICE THAT LEADS THIS CHARGE.

WE TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO CONGRATULATE THE NEW CHAIRPERSON OF THE AU COMMISSION NKOSAZANA ZUMA - DLAMINI. WE LOOK FORWARD TO HER CHAMPIONING THE AFRICAN SOLUTIONS.

WE NEED TO UNITE AND CONFRONT THESE CHALLENGES HEAD ON. I TRUST AND HAVE FULL CONFIDENCE IN THE CAPABILITIES OF OUR AFRICAN BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

AT A REGIONAL LEVEL, WE MUST CONTINUE TO MAXIMIZE THE OPPORTUNITIES TO BE PRESENTED BY THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FREE TRADE AREA, WHILE MINIMIZING THE CHALLENGES THAT AN OPEN MARKET MAY POSE TO OUR ECONOMY.

PEACE

LET ME TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS OUR SADNESS TOWARDS THE ELEMENTS THAT ARE ENEMIES OF PEACE THAT CONTINUE TO MANIFEST THEMSELVES, NOT ONLY ON OUR CONTINENT BUT EVEN IN SOME PARTS OF THE WORLD.

IT IS DISHEARTENING THAT MANKIND CONTINUES TO BE CONFRONTED BY WARS WHICH HAVE DISPLACED OR FORCED PEOPLE FROM THEIR PLACES OF ABODE TO BECOME REFUGEES IN OTHER COUNTRIES. WARS WILL NEVER BRING PEACE BUT MISERY.

WE CALL UPON ALL THOSE WHO ARE FIGHTING TO FIND A LASTING SOLUTION TO THEIR PROBLEMS. DIALOGUE IS THE ANSWER AND NOT THE BARREL OF A GUN.

CONCLUSION

AS I CONCLUDE, MAY I ONCE AGAIN REMIND THE NATION THAT IT IS TIME FOR EACH OF US TO PUT OUR SHOULDERS TO THE WHEEL.

IT IS TIME TO FAST TRACK THE ONE HOUSEHOLD ONE PRODUCT PROGRAMME. IT IS ALSO TIME TO BUY SWAZI, TO BUILD A STRONG ECONOMIC FOUNDATION. WE NEED TO FULFILL THE NEW PROMISE WE HAVE MADE TO AFRICA AND THE WORLD, IF WE ARE TO ATTRACT THE MUCH NEEDED INVESTMENT FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH.

THE CHALLENGE TO OUR OUTGOING LEGISLATORS IS FOR YOU TO DEDICATE THE TIME REMAINING IN OFFICE TO PROMOTE PEACE AND HARMONY FROM THE CHIEFDOMS UP TO THE CORRIDORS OF THIS AUGUST HOUSE AS THESE ORGANS ARE KEY TO REALIZING MEANINGFUL DEVELOPMENT.

DECLARATION

AT THIS JUNCTURE, LET ME TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO DECLARE THAT THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI IS OFFICIALLY OPEN.

THANK YOU, MAY GOD ALMIGHTY BLESS US ALL.