I made a statement on 12 March, 2020 addressing the Basotho nation as a whole about the Corona Virus (COVID-19). There is no doubt that the virus is spreading daily. As I address you today, COVID-19 is getting closer to Lesotho, as South Africa, our only neighbor, has been affected. I would like to take this opportunity to convey our sympathies as the Government and People of the Kingdom of Lesotho to the Government and People of the Republic of South Africa with regard to the more than 100 confirmed cases so far.
Fellow citizens,

I would like to reassure you that as soon as the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a pandemic, this Government did not rest in preparing for this crisis. In this regard, I would like to enlighten the public on measures that the Cabinet has taken during its extraordinary sitting this morning, aimed at protecting the Basotho Nation from this fast-spread ing virus.

1. Government has taken a decision to declare COVID-19 a National Emergency. As a result, of this, Manthabiseng Convention Center will be utilised as the National Command Centre to tackle this scourge.
Even though, by the grace of God, there are as yet no confirmed cases, there is an undeniable truth that COVID-19 is indiscriminate in its infection pattern, and affects all, rich and poor; and, prevention is better than cure. That being the case, we need to be vigilant and take all necessary measures to protect ourselves from the virus. This Government, in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, will continue to ensure that COVID-19 does not ravage the Basotho Nation. Cabinet will meet at least once every two days, to monitor progress on all activities related to this fight.
2. Government has taken a decision to close all schools from tomorrow, 19 March 2020, until 17 April 2020. This measure is being taken to protect the lives of our children, and to reduce chances of infection. The Ministry of Education and Training will work together with schools in this regard.

3. Government will tighten controls at our borders to ensure that all travellers who enter through the border posts are tested for symptoms. We appeal to all Basotho to use designated border posts during this time. The Government of the Republic of South Africa has publicised a list of
operational border posts, and the National Command Centre will elaborate on this issue where necessary.

4. All travellers who enter Lesotho from affected countries will be placed under quarantine for 14 days as a protective measure. Fedix Likileng Hotel has been identified as one of the quarantine centres. Other centres will be announced in due course. Basotho, school children and returning residents will be treated in separate facilities or using different modalities, which will be explained later.

5. Government requests employers to ensure that there is adequate protection
in the various places of employment, such as adequate soap and running water, with minimal crowding, with protective clothing where necessary.

6. The number of visitors at Correctional Services Institutions will be reduced. Recently convicted prisoners will be tested before they enter these institutions.

7. Government will increase awareness campaigns on this pandemic through various radio stations, television and clinics and hospitals.

8. Basotho studying outside the country will receive support from our Diplomatic
Missions, guided by the National Manpower Development Secretariat (NMDS).

9. I appeal to Basotho not to gather in large numbers in one place, be it at funerals, festivities or any other public functions. This does not mean that funerals should cease, but mourners should take care to avoid congestion.

10. Government will engage with the Christian Council of Lesotho, Civil Society, the business community and other sectors to work hand-in-hand to fight this pandemic.
11. We will continue to work with our Development Partners in this fight.

Fellow citizens,

This is not the time to attack each other or attempt to gain political mileage. Our victory will come if we all work together as Government, the Opposition and the entire Basotho Nation. This crisis is facing all of us, thus we should unite as a nation and put our differences aside.

Our help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth, whose hands are tender. I therefore invite all Basotho that there should be
a joint prayer daily at 12 noon, to ask for mercy from God.

Government will continue to inform the public on further measures to be taken in the fight against this pandemic.

GOD SAVE LESOTHO AND BASOTHO.

KHOTSO! PULA! NALA!