

## **Presentation of Credentials to His Majesty, King Letsie III**

Your Majesty, King Letsie III,

It is a great privilege and honour for me to present to Your Majesty the Letter of Credence by which His Excellency Michael D Higgins, President of Ireland, appoints me Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ireland to the Kingdom of Lesotho, along with the Letters of Recall of my predecessor, Ambassador Liam MacGabhann.

The President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins, recalls with great pleasure the visit by Your Majesty to Ireland in 2012 and he extends his best wishes to you and to the people of Lesotho.

In taking up my role, I am conscious of the long and friendly relationship between our two nations. Over the course of 40 years, from the establishment of Ireland's development cooperation programme in Lesotho in 1975, Ireland was pleased to support the work of Government of Lesotho in providing quality health and education services. Although that programme has now drawn to a close as our relationship has evolved, this has brought new opportunities for Ireland and Lesotho to cooperate in a variety of ways.

My Embassy was pleased to extend Ireland's Fellowship Programme to applicants in Lesotho, supporting talented students to study at Master's Degree level at universities in Ireland. Through this initiative, these talented students enrich the classes that they join in Ireland, and they also gain skills and expertise which will allow them to contribute to Lesotho's development on their return home. Links have also been established between businesspeople in Ireland and Lesotho, opening the door to greater bilateral trade and investment between our countries. Lesotho remains home to a small but active Irish community, who are ably supported by our excellent Honorary Consul in Maseru, Ms Mannete Malethole Ramaili, and who ensure that the people-to-people links between our nations remain vibrant.

As well as this close bilateral relationship, Ireland and Lesotho share many priorities on the international stage. We share a commitment to fulfilling the promise of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals to deliver a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable future for our people and our planet. Ireland is steadfast in our support to the UN system, including the many agencies working to reduce poverty and inequality in Least Developed Countries around the world.

As two small countries with open economies, dependent on trade with our neighbours and with partners further afield for our prosperity, we also have a shared interest in supporting the rules-based multilateral system and in ensuring international peace and security. Ireland was extremely grateful for and honoured by Lesotho's support for our successful candidature for a non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council in the 2020 elections. Now that we are serving our two-year term in 2021 and 2022, we are determined to live up to the trust that the nations of the world showed in us, by promoting the values of empathy, partnership and independence that were at the heart of our campaign.

During this COVID-19 global pandemic, indeed, strong multilateral cooperation to work towards the common good is more important than ever. I commend the Government of Lesotho's strong action to limit the transmission of COVID-19 within and beyond the borders of Lesotho. As in Ireland, this action has been necessary to protect public health, but has had significant economic and social impacts from which it will take time and investment to recover. As a committed member of the European Union, Ireland is proud that the EU is the leading contributor to the Covax global vaccination programme. I know that the EU Delegation here in Maseru is also working, on behalf of all EU Member States, to provide support to Lesotho as you look to move forward to post-pandemic recovery.

I very much look forward to playing my own role, as Ambassador of Ireland to the Kingdom of Lesotho, in further strengthening the strong bilateral relationship and international cooperation between our two nations. I thank you once again for the honour of accepting my Letters of Credence and my appointment to this role.