



**Statement by His Majesty King Mswati III,
Head of State of the Kingdom of Eswatini**

**Presented on his behalf by the
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Eswatini
H.E. The Right Honourable Cleopas Siphon Dlamini**

**During the General Debate of the
76th session of the United Nations General Assembly
*Theme: “Building resilience through hope – to recover from
COVID-19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the needs of the planet,
respect the rights of people, and revitalize the United Nations”***

25th September 2021

New York

Please Check Against Delivery

Mr. President,
Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
United Nations Secretary-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Mr. President,

It is my singular honour to address the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. Allow me to express my sincere congratulations to you Mr. President, on your election as President of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly. We commend the outstanding leadership and sterling performance of the outgoing President. I also extend our profound congratulations to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, for his re-election for another five-year term.

The theme of this session touches on every aspect of our daily lives. It underscores the need to ensure that the world does not lose sight of the three dimensions of sustainable development during the last decade of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – the “Decade of Action.” Over the past year, the Kingdom of Eswatini experienced immeasurable and unimaginable setbacks in the implementation of our development priorities since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. This compelled the country to rethink its development strategy and re-direct its resources to cater for additional needs of the population. Nevertheless, we have not lost sight of the objective of the 2030 Agenda: “To leave no one behind.”

Mr. President,

Sincere appreciation goes to all the frontline medical workers who have become the first line of defence in the battle against the virulent pandemic, labouring tirelessly to keep us safe. Many of them throughout this challenging period lost their lives for our sake. Without their commitment and sacrifice, the world would not be anywhere near the path to recovery from this pandemic. In the same vein, similar appreciation and honour also goes to all involved in research, sharing of expertise and resource mobilisation, be it institutions and individuals, for the successful development of vaccines.

It is without doubt that the panacea for any practical, effective and efficient plan to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic rests on vaccination of national populations. This has been demonstrated and proven in countries that have endeavoured to achieve herd immunity. Low access to vaccines by many countries remains a cause for concern. Such a scenario has been more pronounced in developing countries, especially countries in special situations, in Africa, and other vulnerable regions. This was one of the pressing reasons why Eswatini supported the call for a temporary waiver of the obligation of member states under the TRIPS Agreement to protect intellectual property rights for technologies related to the prevention, containment or treatment of COVID-19. The Kingdom of Eswatini applauds the establishment of the COVAX Facility, which came to existence through efforts by the United Nations, in the wake of the pandemic and solely meant to be of assistance to member states, particularly low middle-income countries. As a beneficiary,

Eswatini is grateful for such an initiative and also extends further appreciation to the generous donors, particularly the United States of America amongst many others, whom in their absence, the objectives of this initiative would not have been achieved thus far.

Mr. President,

In this view, the Kingdom of Eswatini commends African countries that have commenced manufacturing COVID-19 vaccines. We bank on the successful implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to widen and strengthen Africa's integration process. We are confident that this arrangement will create and/or strengthen the value chains and the ability for African countries to produce more vaccines. Eswatini has prioritized health, for every member of the population is at the center of our socio-economic agenda. Currently, a significant percentage of the eligible population has been vaccinated, having commenced with our frontline staff and the elderly, most recently, effective 30th August 2021, the Eswatini Government commenced inoculating all aged 18 years and above. We aim at reaching herd immunity hopefully by the end of 2021.

Mr. President,

Resilience is a multifaceted and complex concept that calls for our attention to comprehend its meaning academically and in practice. It entails the ability to bounce-back, build-back and build better from any situation that confronts us. In the context of the pandemic, resilience transcends the health sector to cut-across all sectors of the economy. The Kingdom of Eswatini believes that the starting point of building resilience through hope entails access to vaccination by all eligible populations, and while doing so, ensuring that no one is left behind. This will determine the ability, power and speed to recover from COVID-19, and to rebuild sustainably.

Like many other countries, the pandemic has been an eye-opener to the Kingdom of Eswatini and has overly sensitized Government to 're-think resilience' and incorporate it in all its policies. In this view, building resilience has become a cornerstone and an inevitable component in all our mitigation, adaptation strategies and recovery plans.

Mr. President,

The pandemic has, momentarily, shifted our focus from issues that are perpetually on the global agenda, particularly our quest to respond to the needs of the planet including the mitigation and adaptation to the persisting impact of climate change. Nonetheless, it has highlighted our interconnectedness in all facets of our daily lives and further clarified the meaning and practicality of living in a global village. Climate-related impacts continue to overwhelm our economies and remains one of the insistent challenges of the 21st century. The Kingdom of Eswatini has not lost sight of its commitment to respond to the needs of the planet. In this view, we reaffirm our resolve to play our part in operationalizing the Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) that presents steps taken by the country to develop effective climate change responses, while fast-tracking the implementation of our objectives for sustainable development and poverty eradication. We look forward to the 26th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework

Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) for the world to re-ignite, re-engage and accelerate climate actions.

Mr. President,

Education is an important tool utilized to equip, capacitate, develop and empower every learner to create and/or sustain development and attain the future we want. The closure of schools and institutions of higher learning due to the pandemic, has had an unparalleled devastating impact to millions of learners. This has been more pronounced in the developing world, mainly because many of these countries are not adequately equipped to pursue their education virtually.

The impact of students being out of school for an extended period of time was enormous and a nightmare in many developing countries. The lack of access to digital learning resources was a setback to students' learning opportunities. Upon resumption of classes in the Kingdom of Eswatini, schools had to stagger attendance in order to prevent the snowballing of infections and the spread of the virus, as it evolves and changes phases.

Mr. President,

It is important to highlight the fact that our economies have been severely battered, businesses continue to close down and people are losing jobs, Governments are struggling with rising debt levels. Eswatini is therefore appreciative of the decision by the Board of Governors of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to approve Special Drawing Rights (SDR) to boost global liquidity, this cash injection of over \$75 million to the economy of Eswatini could not have come at a better time. On Monday 06th September 2021, His Majesty King Mswati III, launched the Reconstruction Fund, meant to rebuild infrastructure and the economy, following a civil unrest which was brought about by a vast array of economic challenges including the added burden of the Covid-19 pandemic, and these funds will assist Government advance closer to the budget target of \$200 million.

Mr. President,

On another note, in the fight against HIV and AIDS, Eswatini has continued to employ all means possible to stop the spread of the virus even during this critical time in history. This is evidenced by the achievement of the UNAIDS goal of 95-95-95, which summarily means 95 percent of people with HIV identified, 95 percent of people with HIV on treatment, and 95 percent of people on treatment virally suppressed. Although this was deemed achievable, in a decade from now, fortunately the Kingdom is now one of only two countries to have made such an achievement of SDG goal number three on health, as announced by the United Nations body.

In Eswatini, as much as some of our plans to accelerate the process have been derailed, we have remained focused. Since 2016, the country has integrated the SDGs into the national development framework and put in place appropriate institutional arrangements to ensure that the implementation is properly monitored at all levels. Government has infused the spirit of ownership to every citizen, so that every individual understands and appreciates the importance of the SDGs.

Both the Executive and Legislative arms of Government are involved. In the midst of the obtaining challenges, we have not lost hope and sight of our development agenda.

Mr. President,

As the reforms of the United Nations development system evolves, the Kingdom of Eswatini continues to steadfastly reiterate and maintain its call for Africa's voice to be heard at the United Nations Security Council. This follows an annual call by the African Union Heads of State and Government articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration. The Common African Position remains intact with regard to allocation of permanent and non-permanent seats in the United Nations Security Council, a very important decision-making Organ of the United Nations.

When all members and regions are efficiently and effectively represented and their voice conspicuously heard, the revitalization of the work of the United Nations will be enhanced.

Mr. President,

May I take this opportunity to share with the nations of the world how the Tinkhundla System of governance works. The elections conducted under this system embrace our traditional and cultural existence where people from communities nominate candidates in their chiefdoms to compete at constituency level, which we call Tinkhundla. This system was agreed upon by the nation through consultations. A Commission was set up to consult widely the populace as to which governance system they would like to have in place as a nation.

The winners then go straight to parliament as a direct representation - some of the elected candidates end up being members of cabinet. As a result, the people are part of the government formulation process because they can claim ownership of the people who constitute the government of the day. We are convinced that our system of governance has a place in modern day democracy and it complies with all structures of the United Nations family. The Kingdom of Eswatini is committed to the ideals of the United Nations in just as much as she is dedicated to protecting its history, legacy, and dignity. While at the same time embracing the opportunities and the possibilities of cooperating in the community of nations.

It is, therefore, the Kingdom of Eswatini's position that it believes in democracy as an idea but not as an ideal because things that are ideal to you may not be ideal to other people. The Kingdom of Eswatini will, however, continue to embrace the opportunities, technologies and the mechanisms that create a modern society. Our country is committed to a process of consultation with the people at the people's parliament, Sibaya, and other dialogue forums through which people provide advice and counsel to the King that ensures transparency and accountability. This is how our monarchy operates, in counsel. As such, the practice is democratic and participatory in that everybody is involved in our key decision-making processes. As a nation we shall remain seized with the preservation of our cultural norms and traditions, promoting of peace and stability, addressing our different opinions in a peaceful manner, not by violence. Above all this, dialogue is at the apex of our existence as a nation.

Our philosophy is inclusive, we use a bottom-up approach, from the grass roots level, where every Liswati must have an opportunity to voice his or her opinion in a free and fair environment. whilst we embrace modernity, we cannot forget who we are and where we come from, our identity as a nation remains pivotal so that we can work together to develop our country and ensure that we realize a robust social and economic foundation for the benefit of future generations as our predecessors have done.

Mr. President,

The persistent exclusion of the Republic of China (Taiwan) from the United Nations and the discrimination of its citizens in a system meant to serve international citizens, is a gross violation of the unshakeable principles of the UN Charter. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Taiwan in solidarity with UN Member States, made a significant contribution in realizing the theme of this year's Session.

Eswatini would again this year continue to urge the United Nations to consider the meaningful participation of Taiwan, especially in the World Health Organisation, International Civil Aviation Authority and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. With this inclusion of Taiwan, it is our hope that the UN will be living up to its objectives and equally serving the interests of all its Member States.

The path to 2030 on the attainment of the UN SDGs was dented as a result of the pandemic, and Taiwan, adhering to the principle of living no one behind, shared its disease prevention expertise and experience with more than 80 countries & further assisted 40 countries make headway in ICT, agriculture, education and health. Furthermore this year, in demonstrating that "Taiwan Can Help, and Taiwan is Helping", Taiwan continued to send medical assistance, in the form of medical specialists and protective equipment for Eswatini's health sector. It is in this light that we call upon for the recognition of Taiwan's efforts for the global wellbeing.

Lastly, the Kingdom of Eswatini can attest to the fact that Taiwan is an indispensable partner and would, if given an opportunity, play a meaningful role in the global body.

Mr. President,

Finally, allow me to take this opportunity to wish the United Nations family a prosperous future as we battle COVID-19, to rebuild sustainably and respond to the needs of the people.

Thank you and May the Almighty God bless us all.