

**MEETING WITH THE HONOURABLE MINISTER MR TM THABANE,  
MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO**

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

**BY**

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**MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS**

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It gives me great pleasure to meet with you again Minister Thabane after our successful encounter in Maputo during the SADC Organs Meeting earlier this year. As you know, the Government and the people of the Republic of South Africa are committed to doing everything we can to promote economic growth and development of the Kingdom of Lesotho. As the Minister of Home Affairs I wish to carry that commitment within my line function responsibilities. We have mutually identified that a way in which my Department can support the growth and development of Lesotho is by facilitating the movement of people between our two countries.

For this reason, during our meeting in Maputo we tasked our respective Departments to meet and discuss the possibility of facilitating the movement of people between our two countries. I have been informed that such meeting was held on November 11, 2003 in Maseru. At the meeting, our officials formulated a draft agreement which has far-reaching consequences for both our countries. Therefore, I welcome the opportunity of this meeting to consider how the matter of this agreement can be taken further and to give direction to our respective officials on the way forward. I understand that my Department has discussed the matters and proposals covered by such draft agreement, with other Departments of State in South Africa and at this juncture we have noticed no major objection to its general framework. Further consultation will take place amongst other affected and concerned Departments of State of the Republic of South Africa if and when we have agreed between the two of us, as the responsible Ministers of our respective countries, that this draft is, indeed, a suitable basis for further discussion.

I feel that this draft agreement brings us closer to fulfilling the goals of the Joint Bilateral Commission of Co-operation between our two countries. The agreement mainly focuses on our respective citizens who routinely cross the common border. They will be allowed to cross the border without reporting to an immigration official, being examined and having their passports stamped, which will apply under certain conditions. This facilitation will apply for purposes of holidays, business and transit irrespective of the duration of stay. In respect of other purposes of stay for which immigration clearance will remain necessary, procedures will be developed to facilitate the issuance of appropriate visas and/or permits.

I am pleased that many provisions in the draft agreement address the possibility that the agreement may be abused and has put in place several checks, balances and guarantees. It would be a bold step forward, which both our countries would need to monitor attentively in its implementation. I am in the process of issuing new Regulations which will implement

our immigration registration, the Immigration Act of 2002. In these new Regulations I have made provision for the implementation of this agreement should we decide to carry it forward in its present format or substantially in the same framework. Therefore, South Africa will be in the position of giving expedited implementation to the type of facilitation in the movement of people between our two countries which has engaged our discussions for the past months.

I look forward to receiving your feedback and relevant suggestions on how this agreement be modified to improve upon it if necessary. My review of the agreement leaves me with a sufficient degree of satisfaction, but I am open to any suggestion which may come from my colleagues and this Department. I feel that we are sharing a great responsibility and that what we are now considering will, indeed, have an historical value in the lives of respective people. I feel that this is the time for bold and courageous decisions and I hope that we may in our meeting be able to finalize this matter to such a point that it can be brought forward to successful conclusion within a relatively short period of time. In fact, as you know, South Africa is about to hold its general elections which are expected to take place in less than three months. It is possible that I will no longer be the Minister of Home Affairs after such elections, and I would like to complete any ongoing process so as to leave my Ministerial house in order should another person take it over. For this reason, I wish to thank my colleague for having accepted to hold this meeting here in Durban for the personal attention which he has dedicated to this important matter.

I hope that your stay in Durban may be not only successful, but also pleasant and that the people of Durban may extend to you the warm hospitality for which this Province of ours is internationally renowned.

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