

**Remarks by Dr Mothusi Mashologu: Former Vice Chancellor
of the National Univesity of Lesotho 1975-1980.**

Your Majesty Chancellor

The Right Honourable The Prime Minister

Deputy Prime Minister and Honourable Ministers

Mr. Vice Chancellor

Distinguished Guests

Members of the University Community

Ladies and Gentlemen:

1. We are celebrating the 70th Anniversary of a remarkable institution whose positive influence has been felt far and wide beyond the confines of this beautiful valley. Within the Roma valley itself there are families whose direct association with the university extends up to three generations. Of them it can be said that this is their university, but of course not to the exclusion of the rest of the nation. The university has provided for them from its pioneering days when it was Pius XII University College, through its exciting phase as the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, up to this challenging stage when it is the National University of Lesotho. The families of the valley have witnessed along with the people of Lesotho the evolution of the institution with its sometimes dramatic mutations, moving forward without compromising its mission as a university of the people, for the people.

2. Keen observers noted at the outset of the current status that the very name "National University of Lesotho" was sometimes the subject of heated debate. Explanations had to be given by the

advocates of the name that it implied in their words, that the university "would give high priority to locally relevant programmes and projects while cherishing its links with the worldwide academic community." The name National University of Lesotho was therefore not meant to be exclusive of anyone, or

3. Shortly after the demise of the UBLS in 1975, some members of the management team of the National University of Lesotho met by chance Father Romeo Guilbeault, a Canadian priest, who had been Rector of the Pius XII University College from 1954 to 1959. In their discussions he recalled that one of the principal objectives for the founding of the university in Lesotho had been to provide leadership training for a changing Africa. He said that this was certainly not the only objective of the university, but it was among the most important. All present noted that without good leadership nations fail, communities stagnate, and families break down. Therefore all agreed that the NUL would continue with its high mission to provide leadership training in addition to its growing range of courses and research activities. There was no illusion that leadership training is a complex but necessary exercise for which there is no simple agreed formula.

4. From its experience Pius XII University College had already given Lesotho among its alumni such stalwarts as J.T. Kolane who rose in the public service to be Speaker of the National Assembly for many years, and later was High Commissioner of Lesotho in London. Mention may also be made of Phillip Mabathoana who went to teach in Uganda before coming back to Lesotho to be Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs, and later Secretary to the Cabinet and afterwards Deputy Minister of Education. Other prominent alumni were A.S. Ralebitso and B.A. Tlelase both of

whom also became ministers of Education each in his turn. Their pioneering generation of graduates had left this valley with an understanding of the complexities of the wider world they were going to serve. They also believed in a set of values that would provide a compass as they navigated their way over challenging waves. Importantly they were armed with essential communication skills in Sesotho, English and sometimes Latin. They had received a good education from their time at Pius XII University College which served as a good model for the future.

5. The precedent of producing leaders of stature in this University has been followed with consistency. Dr. Tom Thabane our former Prime Minister came out of Pius XII University College. The University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland had previously given us as Prime Minister the Rt. Hon. Dr. Pakalitha Mosisili who is leading the country again. The National University of Lesotho, not to be outdone, has given us our Head of State, His Majesty and Chancellor, and our gracious Queen 'M'e Masenate. The Basotho nation has to acknowledge that this University has indeed groomed generations of dedicated public servants within its precincts. The people of Lesotho of all strata are greatly fascinated by legal matters. In response to this widespread interest the university has had an active faculty of Law that has faithfully provided training for personnel to serve in the legal sector including the highest offices of the judiciary. Some cynics sometimes say that litigation has become a national sport in Lesotho, but the University's mission to provide well qualified professionals for this vital sector is respected.

6. The Faculty of Education of the National University of Lesotho deserves special mention because it has continued to provide the many dedicated teachers who have sustained the system of public education in Lesotho. Among the very many educationists who have been produced by the University have been people like Odillon Seheri who held the position of Permanent Secretary for Education before becoming Private Secretary to his Majesty King Moshoeshoe II. Mr. Seheri was a dedicated educationist who left an indelible imprint on education in Lesotho at all levels including the University where he served as a member of the Council of the University of Botswana Lesotho and Swaziland. The growth and spread of High School education in Lesotho during the past thirty years has been based on the alumni of the University even though they have had to be complemented by external agencies such as the Peace Corps of the United States of America. The spread of High School Education has been matched by the University's Outreach Programmes executed vigorously over the years by the Department of Extra Mural Studies later known as Institute of Extra Mural Studies. This unit has provided valuable training in Community development

throughout Lesotho. Additionally the mature age entry programme which was pursued vigorously by the National University of Lesotho also provided an opportunity for many men and women to pursue university education which they would otherwise had missed. The University has therefore been a consistent standard bearer of enlightenment.

7. The era of the University of Bechuanaland, Basutoland and Swaziland (UBBS) later UBLS ushered in an edifying experience of a dynamic regional University. The Lesotho Campus of the regional UBLS had the honor of being the mother campus. The University was set in the midst of a turbulent political environment that was South Africa at the time. UBLS provided high quality university education at all its campuses for students of the region; and affirmed academic excellence, non-racialism, equality, and regionalism in accordance with the spirit and objectives of the Organization of African Unity. It was planned to respond to the diverse needs of a new Africa. Under the Vice Chancellor Prof. Blake and dedicated staff from many countries UBLS cultivated a cosmopolitan and progressive environment. The products of UBLS bore testimony to the radical promise of the University.

Because of its dynamism UBLS was able to produce many alumni like Njabulo Ndebele, Sam Montsi and Mothae Maruping who stand out in their respective occupations. Some graduates of UBLS later proceeded abroad to pursue professional Degrees in fields that were not offered at UBLS such as Engineering, Medicine, Architecture and Advanced Agriculture. The University drew strength from its many international links and the material and moral support that it received. In 1973 His Holiness Pope-Paul VI said a special prayer for the University during a visit to the Vatican by the then Prime Minister of Lesotho Dr. Leabua Jonathan. Many messages of spiritual support for the University and its mission were received from University associations in Africa, Europe and the Americas.

8. Although the period of UBLS had been full of promise this regional University suffered from the strains and stresses that often beset ambitious human enterprises. In spite of valiant efforts the University finally succumbed to dissolution in October 1975. The end of UBLS came suddenly, and left much pain and uncertainty in the minds of the University community when the Lesotho Campus was transformed overnight into the National University of Lesotho. The new University era was nonetheless sustained by the strong traditions that went back to the days of Pius XII University College. It drew strength from the commitment of the remaining University community and the generous support of the Lesotho Government as well as friendly governments of countries such as Canada, Denmark, Netherlands, Nigeria, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States.

9. Far-reaching discussions were held about the future development of the National University of Lesotho that included the proposed establishment of new faculties such as Commerce, Agriculture, Engineering and Health Sciences. A new and ambitious vision of the University was developed, but there were clear warnings about the heavy capital and operational costs of

initiating the new faculties. The many international links that had been developed during the time of UBLS helped but were not sufficient to support major expansion. The National University of Lesotho however inherited fruitful working relationships with bodies such as the Inter-University Council in the UK, the Association of Commonwealth Universities, the Association of Canadian Universities and the Association of African Universities. Bilateral relationships with individual universities were also maintained among them the University of Cape Town and the University of Natal nearer home, the University of Edinburgh and the Free University of Amsterdam further afield.

10. In 1975 an overwhelming majority of the academic staff of the National University of Lesotho was expatriates, and an ambitious staff localization programme was launched. The results of this initiative are in evidence today. The 70 years that we are celebrating have demonstrated that the University in Lesotho can also make unique contributions to other countries as evidenced by the Alumni of the University who hold responsible positions in neighbouring countries and abroad. The National University of Lesotho is proud of its galaxy of stars, too many to name individually today. But as examples we can mention with pride Dr. Tebello Nyokong who has been an award-winning researcher in South Africa, and Dr. Lehana Thabane who has distinguished himself as a professor and researcher in Canada in the field of Biostatistics.

11. We note today with appreciation that the University is steadily unfolding new plans to meet the challenges that exist in various sectors. The establishment of the Faculty of Health Sciences was a welcome response to the crying need for more qualified workers in the health sector and to assist in the fight against the HIV and AIDS Pandemic. The establishment of the Faculty of Agriculture was also a welcome response to transform agricultural production in Lesotho radically to combat hunger and fight poverty. The

12. It is often said that a nation that neglects investment in education does so at its peril. But it is also a truism that a nation is entitled to a due dividend on the funds it spends on education. For a long time the government was able to employ new graduates in the civil service as its annual harvest. Now the university graduates realize that employment in the civil service is nearing saturation point. Unemployment among university graduates is becoming a problem in many countries. In India for instance some state governments have had to mount special initiatives involving universities, the private sector as well as the unemployed university graduates themselves to seek solutions to growing graduate unemployment. Perhaps Lesotho can draw some useful lessons from their experience in resolving the frustrations of unemployed graduates.

13. The families of this beautiful valley and the nation at large will have observed by now that new universities are entering the playing field in Lesotho. A certain amount of competition will be inevitable, but there will also be scope for collaboration and cooperation in some areas. The National University of Lesotho

need have no fear as it moves forward because it has demonstrated that it has the strength and the capability to respond to the changing demands of the times. The University has already moved with the times into the digital era. New developments may demand that the University move ahead of the times to anticipate new requirements such as those brought by environmental and climatic change. With seventy years of experience in higher education the National University of Lesotho has reason to march forward with confidence. Long live the National University of Lesotho.