

**SPEECH BY HIGH COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE
HER EXCELLENCY MS RUCHIRA KAMBOJ ON THE OCCASION OF
PRESENTATION OF LETTER OF CREDENCE TO THE KINGDOM OF
LESOTHO ON 29 NOVEMBER 2017**

It is a profound honour and a privilege to be received by Your Majesty this morning. May I extend to you on behalf of the President of the Republic of India our warm greetings and good wishes for your continued good health and for the prosperity and well-being of the friendly people of Lesotho, in also expressing the sentiment that relations between our two countries and people will continue to grow to mutual benefit and well-being in the years to come.

2. India and Lesotho, though separated by an Ocean, maintain friendly and fraternal relations that are characterized by a shared appreciation of common values and principles. Over the years, this relationship has been strengthened and deepened by the interaction between our peoples. Each year, many young students from Lesotho travel to India in the pursuit of their academic interests. During their stay, they have the unique opportunity to experience India. When they return, these young people bring with them not only the knowledge they have gained but also an understanding of the values, customs and traditions of the people of India. This is an invaluable asset to any country and its people who can benefit from an interaction and exchange of values and beliefs, talents and strengths in a partnership where all win.

3. The strong bonds of friendship between India and Lesotho have produced fruitful results over the years. Our two countries continue to enjoy close cooperation in various sectors such as agriculture and food security, institution and capacity building, science and technology, trade and investment and education and skills. An important mechanism in taking the bilateral partnership further forward is the Joint Bilateral Commission of Cooperation. We are indeed delighted that the Third Meeting is scheduled in New Delhi on 1 December 2017. We greatly look forward to the pleasure of receiving a delegation from Lesotho in our capital city, this regular interaction bodes well for an upscaled India-Lesotho partnership in coming years.

4. The Government and people of India have shown their care and concern for the wellbeing of the people of Lesotho which is reflected in the

many ways the Government of India assists the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho to educate and train its citizens through capacity building programmes and to apply these skills to the unique challenges that confront them. The recent gift of 500 metric tons of rice, which consignment will be formally handed over today in Lesotho, is a manifestation of the concern of the people of India for the people of Lesotho and their desire to help their brothers and sisters mitigate the devastating effects of food shortages caused by famine and other acts of nature.

5. Your Majesty, through the *Pan African e-network Programme*, the Government of India seeks to diminish or remove the distance that physically separates our peoples so that medical students, health care providers and patients, teachers and students and others can avail themselves of educational and health care facilities provided by experts in India that would otherwise not be available to the common man who is often unable to overcome the distance barrier that physically separates our two peoples. Your Majesty would be pleased to know that in response to a request from African leaders at the Third India-Africa Forum Summit held in New Delhi in October 2015, the Government of India intends to expand the e-network Programme to make it accessible by more people to satisfy their diverse needs.

6. Science and Technology is the basis of social progress, indeed a vital tool to modernize a society and its people. India is a frontrunner in using and applying IT to revolutionize society by applying Information Technology to provide better and more efficient service delivery to the people. The new India-Lesotho Centre for Advanced Education in Information Technology at the Lerotholi Polytechnic donated by the Government of India and which I will inaugurate later today would help students from Lesotho to pursue their studies in Information Technology. I am confident that the students trained at the IT Centre would purposefully apply these skills back home to address challenges in diverse areas such as education, healthcare, banking, service delivery and manufacturing. Another project that is ongoing would, on completion, provide Vocational Training Centres in Lesotho with modern equipment, thus enabling youth and women to be self-sufficient as well as to employ or train others.

7. Your Majesty, it is very encouraging to observe that India-Lesotho bilateral trade has grown in the past year. It is especially heartening to

note that most of the increase in bilateral trade is from growth in Lesotho's exports to India. This augurs well for our future. Our two countries can work together to further increase trade by widening our trade basket to include non-traditional items and by adding value to traditional items of export and import. Over the years India has supported Lesotho's healthcare programme by providing low-cost anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs that have a two-fold benefit: that of providing affordable medicines for those who need them and keeping the Government expenditure on healthcare as low as possible. There are yet other areas to be explored in providing low-cost medicines, including ARVs.

8. The Kingdom of Lesotho is home to a small but significant community of expatriates from India. We are deeply appreciative of the warm welcome that has been extended to them by Lesotho, as these bridges play a significant role in strengthening the people-to-people relations and warm friendship between our two countries.

9. Your Majesty, Lesotho has consistently supported India in various multilateral fora, including recent invaluable support at the United Nations. India deeply appreciates this show of solidarity and assures Lesotho of its reciprocal support, as and when the situation arises. We need, more than ever, an effective multilateralism to combat the many global threats and challenges that confront the world today.

10. India and Africa share a common past and importantly shared aspirations for the future as we move together forward to promote a sustainable future for our people. We assure Your Majesty and the Government and friendly people of Lesotho of India's steadfast friendship and cooperation as we traverse the road to dignity for all and where above all no one is left behind.

Khotso, Pula, Nala.