

**REMARKS BY DR ABSALOM THEMBA DLAMINI
TIBIYO TAKA NGWANE MANAGING DIRECTOR
AT ROYAL SWAZI CONVENTION CENTRE
DURING THE MOTHER TONGUE DAY
CELEBRATIONS.**

EZULWINI

21 FEBRUARY, 2018

ROYAL HIGHNESSES,
PRINCIPAL SECRETARY IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,
HHOHHO REGIONAL EDUCATION OFFICER,
SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS,
COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE OF UNESCO,
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS,
PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS,
STUDENTS,
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MEDIA,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

OPENING REMARKS

- I WISH TO BEGIN BY THANKING THE MANAGING DIRECTOR OF MACMILLAN SWAZILAND, MRS SIMELANE AND HER TEAM FOR INVITING ME TO ADDRESS TODAY'S IMPORTANT OCCASION, WHICH IS THE MOTHER TONGUE CELEBRATION.
- BEFORE I SHARE MY THOUGHTS WITH YOU, I WANT TO SHARE A BRIEF STORY ABOUT TWO FRIENDS, ONE AN AMERICAN AND THE OTHER AN INDIAN.
- THE TWO HAD A CONVERSATION ABOUT POVERTY IN INDIA.

- “YOUR PEOPLE ARE SO POOR THEY DON’T HAVE MONEY AND LIVE IN CROWDED SPACES,” THE AMERICAN BOASTED.
- IN RESPONSE, HIS INDIAN FRIEND SAID: “YOUR PEOPLE ARE SO POOR THEY DON’T EVEN HAVE A CULTURAL IDENTITY OR A LANGUAGE.”
- THIS MAY NOT BE A TRUE STORY, BUT IT HIGHLIGHTS ONE THING THAT I FIND VERY IMPORTANT AND RELEVANT TO TODAY’S EVENT.
- SOME SOCIETIES DEFINE WEALTH IN MONETARY TERMS, WHILE OTHERS PLACE MORE VALUE ON IDENTITY, CULTURE, SOCIAL COHESION AND LANGUAGE.
- CULTURE AND LANGUAGE ARE A SOCIETY’S MOST-PRICED TREASURE.
- TODAY MARKS THE CELEBRATION OF OUR MOTHER TONGUE.
- THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT EVENT, PARTICULARLY AS IT DOES NOT ONLY CHALLENGE US TO HONOUR OUR SISWATI LANGUAGE, BUT IT ALSO EMPHASISES THE ROLE PLAYED BY OUR LANGUAGE IN EVERY ASPECT OF OUR LIVES.
- PROGRAMME DIRECTOR, ALLOW ME TO ADDRESS THREE CRITICAL POINTS.
- THESE ARE PRESERVING, RESPECTING AND PROMOTING OUR MOTHER TONGUE.

PRESERVING A LANGUAGE

- WHEN WE STOP USING AND PASSING OUR LANGUAGE DOWN TO THE NEXT GENERATION, WHICH IS OUR CHILDREN, SOCIETY LOSES SOMETHING MORE VALUABLE THAN ALL THE CURRENCIES OF THE WORLD.
- WE CANNOT PASS OUR MOTHER TONGUE TO OUR CHILDREN IF WE DO NOT SPEAK TO THEM IN THE LANGUAGE?
- I KNOW THAT MANY PARENTS TODAY, PARTICULARLY YOUNG PARENTS, FIND IT FASHIONABLE TO SPEAK TO THEIR CHILDREN ONLY IN ENGLISH.
- GRANTED, ENGLISH IS A GLOBAL LANGUAGE, AND IT IS CORRECTLY THE LANGUAGE OF DOING BUSINESS IN A GLOBALISING WORLD. BUT WE MUST NOT DO THIS AT THE EXPENSE OF OUR OWN HERITAGE.
- WHEN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE ARE PRESERVED, AND CHILDREN TAKE PRIDE IN WHO THEY ARE, OUR CULTURE, TRADITIONS AND IDENTITY ARE EQUALLY PASSED DOWN TO THEM.
- AS TEACHERS, PARENTS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS, WE NEED TO EXAMINE OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE SISWATI LANGUAGE, AND MAKE SURE THAT IT IS MIRRORED IN THE CHILDREN WE RAISE, TEACH AND GROOM.

RESPECTING A LANGUAGE

- IF WE DO NOT RESPECT OUR LANGUAGE, TRADITIONS AND IDENTITY, NO ONE WILL.

- IF WE CANNOT FIND VALUE IN IT, NO ONE WILL TAKE IT OR US SERIOUSLY.
- WE WILL REMAIN THE LAUGHING STOCK OF OTHER NATIONS.
- OUR LANGUAGE IS OUR LIFETIME TREASURE, WHICH WE HAVE USED TO COMMUNICATE OUR HISTORY, SHARE OUR STORIES AND EXPRESS OUR COLLECTIVE AND INDIVIDUAL EMOTIONS SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL.
- REAL VALUES OF ANY CULTURE CAN ONLY BE CONSERVED IF THERE IS RESPECT FOR MOTHER TONGUE AND HERITAGE.

PROMOTING OUR LANGUAGE

- ONE OF THE BIGGEST THREATS TO AFRICA'S RICH HISTORY AND HERITAGE IS LACK OF DOCUMENTATION AND ARCHIVING THAT HISTORY.
- WE APPLAUD INSTITUTIONS LIKE MACMILLAN FOR CONSISTENTLY INVESTING IN DOCUMENTING OUR LANGUAGE, THROUGH BOOKS AND OTHER PRODUCTS.
- WE ALSO COMMEND THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR SUPPORTING THE ARCHIVING OF THE LANGUAGE THROUGH THEIR MANY CHANNELS.
- PRESERVING AND DOCUMENTING OUR LANGUAGE WILL SERVE AS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT POINTS OF REFERENCE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

THINKING AHEAD

- I WANT TO SPEAK BRIEFLY ABOUT LANGUAGE AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO OUR SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC LIVES.
- LANGUAGE BRINGS TO LIFE THE SOUL OF A CULTURE.
- THROUGH LANGUAGE, A CULTURE IS COMMUNICATED, LIVED AND PRESERVED.
- SCHOLARS OF LANGUAGES TELL US THAT AFRICA IS HOME TO OVER 2000 INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES, SPOKEN IN 54 COUNTRIES. BY WORLD STANDARDS, OUR CONTINENT IS THE MOST LINGUISTICALLY-DIVERSE.
- BUT THEY ALSO TELL US THAT, SADLY, MANY AFRICAN INDIGENOUS LANGAUGES ARE DISAPPEARING FROM OUR VOCABULARY.
- ONE OF THE BIGGEST THREATS TO LOCAL INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES AND CULTURES IS THE RAPID INFILTRATION BY FOREIGN LANGUAGES, CULTURES AND LIFESTYLES.
- TODAY, OUR CHILDREN SPEAK SOME OF THE BEST ENGLISH IN ACCENTS THAT WOULD MAKE EVEN THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND ENVIOUS.
- OF COURSE THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH OUR YOUNG PEOPLE EXPRESSING THEMSELVES ELOQUENTLY AND CLEARLY.
- BUT WHAT WE MUST NEVER LOSE SIGHT OF IS THE DANGER OF BLINDLY ADOPTING AND INDISCRIMINATELY THOSE FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND

CULTURES, BECAUSE THAT WILL INEVITABLY DRIVE OUR OWN INTO EXTINCTION.

ROLE OF CULTURE IN NATIONAL COHESION

- AS AN ORGANISATION, TIBIYO TAKA NGWANE BELIEVES STRONGLY IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL COHESION.
- WE BELIEVE THAT FOR A NATION TO PROGRESS, IT OUGHT TO BE WELL DEVELOPED IN ALL AREAS OF LIFE, PARTICULARLY ITS CULTURE
- OUR FOUNDING PRINCIPLE IS THAT FOR A SOCIETY TO DEVELOP MEANINGFULLY, IT MUST PAY ATTENTION TO SEVERAL ASPECTS OF ITS LIFE.
- THESE ARE THE ECONOMY, ITS SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AS WELL AS ITS CULTURAL FIBRE.
- THESE ARE THE RESOURCES PASSED ON TO US BY THOSE WHO LIVED BEFORE US.
- OUR ROLE IS TO PROTECT THEM, DEVELOP THEM AND KEEP THEM IN GOOD SHAPE FOR THE GENERATIONS THAT WILL INHERIT THIS SOCIETY FROM US.
- OUR CALL, AS AN ORGANISATION, AND INDEED MINE AS AN INDIVIDUAL, IS THAT WE MUST JEALOUSLY PROTECT, IN PARTICULAR, OUR LANGUAGE, OUR CULTURAL TRADITIONS AND BELIEFS.

- ONCE WE LOSE THESE, WE WILL JOIN THE SOCIETIES ACROSS THE CONTINENT WHO HAVE LOST THEIR IDENTITY.
- WHEN A NATION LOSES ITS IDENTITY, IT BECOMES VULNERABLE TO INFILTRATIONS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD.

IN CONCLUSION

- AS WE CELEBRATE OUR MOTHER TONGUE, I WANT TO CHALLENGE ALL OF US TO ALWAYS THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE GENERATIONS.
- AS WE ALSO INHERITED OUR TRADITIONS AND OUR LANGUAGE, WE ARE EXPECTED TO PASS THEM ON TO THE NEXT GENERATION.
- WE SHOULD STRIVE TO LEAVE THE BEST FOR OUR CHILDREN AND THEIR CHILDREN.
- I WISH ALL OF YOU THE BEST AS YOU REFLECT ON THE WORK YOU DO TO KEEP OUR LANGUAGE IN THE STATE WE FOUND IT.

I THANK YOU, AND MAY GOD BLESS US ALL.