

Lesotho independence day

'Kingdom in the Sky' holds investment opportunities

Richard Ramoetsi
AMBASSADOR OF LESOTHO

On this day, the 44th anniversary of the independence of the Kingdom of Lesotho, on behalf of His Majesty King Letsie III and the people of the Kingdom of Lesotho, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and the people of Japan for the generous hospitality, friendship, support and cooperation extended to the Kingdom of Lesotho.



Our country, although small, is unique: It is the only independent state in the world that lays entirely 1,500 meters above sea level. This is why it is known as "The Mountain Kingdom" or "The Kingdom in the Sky." These mountains are the source of Lesotho's abundant natural resources and incomparable beauty. They also help the 1.9 million people living there to enjoy a very favorable and healthy climate.

Lesotho's government is a

constitutional monarchy, one of the three remaining monarchies on the continent. The prime minister is head of government and has executive authority. The king is the head of state and serves an important ceremonial function. The monarchy plays a nonexecutive role and does not actively participate in political initiatives. This provides a politically stable democracy and attractive destination for tourism and business. Lesotho is one of the few countries with a constituency-based electoral system that has adopted a legislated quota (30 percent) for increasing women's participation in politics.

Lesotho is a small country with a small voice, but this is a challenge that can be overcome through the collective bargaining that Lesotho can achieve in Japan. I therefore emphasize the need for close collaboration between the people of the two countries to which we can all count on each other for support.

I recognize Lesotho's strides in political stability as a country that adheres to the pillars of democracy through peace, the role of law and protection of the Basotho's basic human rights.



King Letsie III of Lesotho

We note that Lesotho's achievements are undermined by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the lack of food security from recent chronic droughts resulting from climate change as well as the north-south divide, which is a challenge across the African continent.

In recent years, investors worldwide have recognized Lesotho as a target of economic opportunity, which is why our country has business relationships based on mutual economic interests and not only aid and charity.

One of Lesotho's major natural resources is water, which we often refer to as "the White

Gold of Lesotho." The year 1986 marked the start of the multi-billion dollar Lesotho Highlands Water Project, which contributes greatly to Lesotho's growing economy. This 21-year project was designed to capture, store and transfer water from Lesotho to South Africa's Gauteng Province while at the same time generating electricity through hydropower for our own consumption and export to South Africa. It generates about \$41 million annually.

Diamonds of the highest quality, large and small, are being mined in Lesotho. Letseng Diamond Mining Co. is one of the most productive mines in the country and the best known. A 603-carat diamond, "the Lesotho Promise," was found there in 2006. It later sold for about \$12.4 million. In 2008, miners also found the 500-carat "Letseng Legacy." Both diamonds are among the world's 20 largest rough diamonds ever to be found. Opportunities exist for the establishment of diamond cutting and polishing as downstream activities of the mining industry.

The Mountain Kingdom is also making great inroads in the

apparel and textile industry. We have become the largest exporter of garments to the U.S. from sub-Saharan Africa. This, a branding initiative to make "Made in Lesotho" a global trademark, along with fair and ethical labor standards, and stable government all help to make Lesotho a country on the rise, an African investment destination of choice.

The mountains make Lesotho an exciting tourist destination where visitors can enjoy a real and authentic African experience in a place that upholds a unique balance of the old and the new.

There is so much to do. Trav-

elers can go pony trekking on a sure-footed Basotho pony in the early morning breeze; take in the stunning mountain landscapes and scenery; or even laze round and soak up the sun. There is also fine dining from haute cuisine to traditional African fare. And no matter what you do here, there is always the opportunity to make new friends.

Lesotho offers a good choice of accommodations, ranging from sophisticated hotels and casinos to lodges and bed and breakfasts. With the new village-stay accommodation programs, guests can get a taste of everyday life of Basotho in The



'White Gold': The Mohale Dam in the Lesotho Highlands harnesses the country's precious resource. EMBASSY OF LESOTHO

Kingdom in the Sky.

Once again, on this 44th anniversary of the independence of the Kingdom of Lesotho, on behalf of King Letsie III and the people of Lesotho, I would like

to sincerely express our gratitude to all of our friends here in Japan for your wonderful cooperation and support.

"Khotso, Pula, Nala" (Peace, Rain and Prosperity).

Congratulations

to the People of the Kingdom of Lesotho
on the Occasion of the 44th Anniversary of
Their Independence Day



HOTEL IBIS ROPPONGI

<http://www.ibis-hotel.com>

phone: 03-3403-4411 fax: 03-3479-0609

14-4, Roppongi 7-chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan

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O.P.C. CORPORATION

3-3, Kanda Nishikicho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0054

Tel: 03-3294-0646 Fax: 03-3291-6156

<http://www.opccorp.com>