

GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI



GOVERNMENT STATEMENT

END-OF-YEAR PROGRESS REPORT

I am pleased to present this progress report of the current Administration's performance in the first year in office. During the Sibaya People's Parliament, emaSwati voiced out their concerns and made their contributions on what the Government should focus on to develop the country. His Majesty King Mswati III, during the opening of the 12th Parliament, commanded Parliament and the Nation at large to move with accelerated speed (Nkwe) in implementing the vision for Eswatini to become a developed country.

In pursuit of His Majesty's vision and Sibaya submissions, Government has ably captured and delivered such aspirations in a policy statement and programme of action. It is, therefore, imperative for all emaSwati to rally behind this programme of action as it directly addresses the issues raised at Sibaya.

His Majesty charged Government to implement the Sibaya submissions with excellence, patriotism and a new impetus (Nkwe). While the programme of action intends to stimulate economic growth and achieve sustainable

development, it also seeks to address prevalent problems namely unemployment, Gender Based Violence, and poverty, amongst others.

It is heartening to see the private sector responding positively to the call to be part of the Grand Plan efforts by making mega investments that will have a transformative impact to the economy. It is equally encouraging to see parastatals aligning themselves with the spirit of the grand plan to make major investments, adding further to the Nkwe impetus.

In providing this update, we also comply with the Directive Principles of State Policy as enshrined in the constitution of the Kingdom of Eswatini

I will now outline a summary of some of the high-level achievements of the past year.

1. Government strategies

Government has developed strategies for each of the ministries to implement the Plan of Action and all Government ministries are aware of their roles in implementing the programme.

The Nation experienced a peaceful year for which we are grateful to God. Government will continue to promote tolerance and democratic principles enshrined in the country's constitution.

2. Legislation and policies

As part of the main functions of Cabinet, eight (8) bills were considered and are now ready for Parliamentary consideration. Several Regulations and policies were approved. Notwithstanding such progress, Government has charged Ministries to initiate a review process for all outdated pieces of legislation and regulations.

3. International Relations

The Kingdom of Eswatini does not operate in isolation, but is part of the international community hence the country recognises and values the importance of continuous engagement with existing and prospective diplomatic and development partners. We value the mutual support that emanates from such relations.

In the current year, Government established diplomatic relations with Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Saudi Arabia, and with the guidance of His Majesty the King, Government signed Joint Cooperation Agreements and several Memoranda of Understanding and with a number of countries, including Uganda, UAE, Serbia, Indonesia, Rwanda, Türkiye and others.

Government is pleased to have successfully negotiated for the removal of special paragraphs on Eswatini at the SADC Troika agenda and the International Labour Organization (ILO). Government will continue to re-evaluate the value and benefit of the country's membership in international organizations that we subscribe to.

During the course of the year, Government had fruitful engagements with several groups of the international community wherein updates and Government's position on areas of development cooperation, human rights and governance were provided. A report on alleged human rights violations was presented during the political dialogue with Embassies of countries

under the European Union wherein issues of the murdered Chief, State Security officers and Mr. Thulani Maseko were also discussed.

Government seized available opportunities in international forums to promote the Tinkhundla system of governance. Government will continue to engage on proper understanding of our home-grown system of governance. A presentation on Tinkhundla was delivered at the Pan African Parliament following an invitation to discuss our system of governance.

4. Education

In response to the concerns raised during the Sibaya submissions in relation to the quality of education, Government set up two task teams to revitalise UNESWA and also improve the quality of education in the country. The task teams have completed their reports for Cabinet consideration and implementation.

The Ministry of Education was tasked with developing a national curriculum to promote patriotism and inculcate a culture of excellence. The curriculum has been developed and is ready for consideration by Cabinet.

Etjendlovu High School was expanded to include vocational subjects such as Design and Technology as well as a computer laboratory and introduction of agriculture as a subject. The school was officially launched by His Majesty the King.

To demonstrate Government's commitment to education, Government increased scholarship grants from 3 550 to 4 550 awards a year, making an addition of 1 000 scholarships. This has increased the total number of the population benefiting on scholarships, which rose from 13 932 to 14 435, enabling a greater number of emaSwati to access quality higher education.

5. Health

Government acknowledges the gravity of the crisis in the health sector. To that extent, Government has charged the Ministry of Health to transform the Central Medical Stores into a parastatal to improve efficiencies and the procurement and distribution of pharmaceuticals as well as eliminate all forms of corruption and pilferage within the supply chain mechanism.

Government rehabilitated, expanded and launched a number of health facilities, including kaZondwako Clinic, which now has a maternity wing, Ndunazithini Clinic, which is new, the Hlathikhulu Public Health Unit, the new High Dependency Unit at Manzini Government Hospital and the National Psychiatric Referral Hospital to ease congestion at the facility.

In addition, Government procured and distributed 8 ambulances to selected health centres and hospitals to strengthen emergency response.

Three theaters were operationalised at the new Referral and Emergency wing at Mbabane Government Hospital.

The country has made good progress in the fight against HIV and AIDS and Government recognises the role played by NERCHA, the Global Fund and the UN Family in that regard. While good progress has been made to attain

and sustain the 95-95-95 UNAIDS target, statistics indicate that the fight against HIV is far from over and more work needs to be done as more than 4 000 new infections are still recorded annually, particularly amongst the youth. Government, through NERCHA, developed and launched the National Strategic Framework for HIV/AIDS, which will sustain the gains made and further intensify the fight against HIV and AIDS way into the future.

In addition to the fight against HIV and AIDS, this strategic framework recognises the resurgence of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and their impact. NCDs have emerged as a serious concern due to the increase in the number of people, including children being affected by NCDs. Government has charged NERCHA and the Ministry of Health to prioritise NCDs and consider if NCDs should not be declared a national emergency. Government has initiated resource mobilisation to support the NCD programme.

6. Gender Based Violence

Following the outcry from Sibaya on Gender Based Violence, through the DPM's Office, a GBV Programme of Action was established and is being implemented. The programme seeks to raise awareness and eliminate all forms of Gender Based Violence in the country.

7. Job creation and MSME support

Government created at least 2 095 new jobs from new and expansion investments. Through EWADE, at least 800 direct jobs have been created

and more jobs through MSMEs will be realised from the construction of Mpakeni Dam.

Two community factory shells have been completed at Hlathikhulu and Gamula whilst two are still under construction at Ndzevane and Nhlangano.

Government established the Citizens Economic Empowerment Council to operationalise the Citizens Economic Empowerment Act (2023).

8. Fight against corruption

Corruption is one of the major issues that was raised at Sibaya. His Majesty further charged Government to bring to book all the corrupt, with particular emphasis on the 'big fish' (bobhabuli). Corruption makes it difficult for the state to function. In response to this directive from the Throne and Sibaya, Government did the following:

- To support the fight against corruption, Government established the Anti Corruption Task Team, comprising the Police, the Anti Corruption Commission and the Directorate of Public Prosecutions.
- To further support the team, 10 Police Officers will be earmarked for deployment to the ACC to assist in the investigation and ultimate prosecution of the corrupt.
- Government has also requested for technical assistance from the international community to strengthen investigation and prosecution capacity of the country's anti corruption institutions. Government remains tenacious to eliminate this scourge that is throttling the economy.

- Government intensified the fight against corruption with 285 cases being investigated by the Anticorruption Commission and several warrants of arrests issued and six arrests were made. 37 of the corruption cases are being processed within the court system.

9. Infrastructure development and rehabilitation

Governments' policy is to stimulate economic growth through investment in infrastructure and public sector development. Government has made meaningful investments in the country's infrastructure. One of the highlights is the completion of the 43km Nhlanguano-Sicunusa road (MR13) and launched by His Majesty King Mswati III.

Several roads were upgraded from gravel to bituminous standard as well as constructed several river crossings and low-level bridges.

Four Tinkhundla centres that needed reconstruction were completed. These are Kwaluseni, Lamgabhi, Ndzingeni and Sandleni Tinkhundla Centres.

Government acknowledges the delay in completion of certain infrastructure projects and measures have been put in place rectify this.

10. ICT

A UNESWA Resource Centre for the Disabled was established and commissioned by His Majesty King Mswati III. The centre enhances digital inclusion of Persons with Disabilities.

The Royal Science and Technology Park (RSTP) graduated seven new companies from their incubation centre.

Over 40 Tinkhundla centres were installed with free internet access.

A project to make Mbabane City a smart city is currently being implemented in conjunction with the Embassy of Taiwan and is due for completion in early 2025.

11. Regional Development Fund

Through the Regional Development Fund, 84 projects worth over E42Million have been funded. At least 14 of those are Income Generating Projects (IGP) and 71 are infrastructure projects. The completed projects benefitted 10 348 emaSwati directly and created 557 jobs.

12. Youth empowerment and support

Government's effort to address youth unemployment is demonstrated through the continued prioritisation of youth empowerment and support. A national youth empowerment programme was developed. Through the Youth Enterprise Revolving Fund, 62 loans amounting to E2 789 164 were approved while some applications are still outstanding.

Ninety (90) graduates from Technical and Vocational Training Institutions were supported with start-up tool kits to start and/or grow their enterprises. Four regional Art centres and offices were established.

Public Service

Government's policy and programme of action acknowledges that to improve service delivery, an empowered and motivated public service is key and that it is paramount to invest in inculcating a culture of excellence and high-performance culture in the civil service.

To improve the performance of the public service and service delivery, Government launched and piloted the Performance Management System. This system will be continuously monitored, evaluated improved for optimisation of its function and success.

The Government appreciates the service of security forces and the entire public service. A salary review exercise was commissioned for the entire public service. During this exercise, the contentious Phase II was thoroughly interrogated and will be addressed at the conclusion of the exercise. The salary review exercise is on course and due for completion in 2025 in line with the terms of reference.

Government recognises and is pleased with the good relations and notable improvement in the relations with Public Sector Associations (PSAs) – namely the Eswatini Association of Nurses (SNAS), Eswatini National Association of Teachers (SNAT), the National Public Services and Allied Workers Union (NAPSAWU) and the Eswatini National Association of Government Accounting Personnel (SNAGAP). Good employee and employer relations in the public sector are crucial for improved service delivery hence Government is committed to continuously strengthening of

these relations. Recognising the importance of its employees, Government awarded a 1% once off sweetener to civil servants.

Social security and social safety net

The devastating impact of climate change on livelihoods continues to be felt across all sectors throughout the country, in the form of tropical storms, hail storms, heatwaves and drought amongst other hazards. Government, through its agency, the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA), has reconstructed and rehabilitated about 778 houses, aiding over 3 890 individuals impacted by severe weather and climate conditions. A supplementary budget of E32 million was approved and released to NDMA to achieve this milestone.

Additionally, Government provided livelihood support to 100 households that were affected by extreme weather conditions to bolster food security among families whose crops were destroyed by the summer extreme conditions.

Recognising the importance of the social security of all eSwati, Government continues to intervene and mitigate the impact of extreme poverty. Government conducted socio-economic needs assessments, reaching 175 beneficiaries with essential food parcels.

A National Disability Plan of Action (2024–2028) was completed aimed at mainstreaming disability inclusion across sectors. In addition, a dedicated studio for Persons with Disabilities has been set up. This studio will play an important role in addressing the needs of people with various disabilities.

Government approved a budget for the rehabilitation of homesteads and support for families of security officers who were affected by the 2021 unrest

as a result of their employment by Government. The support was also extended to dependents for their education and sustenance.

Mining

The current Administration's policy prioritises economic growth as the main strategy to create wealth, eliminate unemployment and address the social ills. The mining sector has been identified as one of the key sectors to significantly contribute to economic growth. In that regard, Government has completed a Multi-Disciplinary Geoscience Mapping project (airborne electromagnetic, radiometric and magnetic survey) for the Shiselweni and Lubombo Regions.

Government through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy has initiated the establishment of a local mining company to optimise benefits to the country and its citizens from identified mineral resources.

Energy

Energy is a key enabler for economic development and therefore Government recognises the urgent need for energy security. In that regard, ESERA has awarded contracts of 50 MW biomass, 75 MW solar and 23.5MW hydro power generation to independent power producers. These contracts amount to 148.5 MW, leaving the country with a shortfall of about 100 MW to achieve self-sufficiency once in full operation. The efforts by ESERA to expedite energy security in the country is commended. In the

same vein, Government continues to look for investments in the energy sector to generate the required baseload to attract mega investments.

Agriculture

Government's Policy and Program of Action highlights food sovereignty as one of the key strategic thrusts. The Ministry of Agriculture has developed a strategy and plan of action to attain food sovereignty.

An Agricultural Investment Forum was successfully hosted, which sought to mobilise resources for implementing the Eswatini National Agricultural Investment Plan.

Government constructed a fisheries and aquaculture research and production centre in Malkerns.

16 small and medium dams worth about E285 Million (14.5M Euros) with downstream development for irrigation schemes and water harvesting were completed and launched. These schemes benefit a total of 681 households.

As part of the impetus to attain food sovereignty, input support was extended to smallholder farmers for grain production. In addition, the Horticulture Revolving Fund has been extended to include grains to improve the production of maize and beans. An increase in production and total yield was observed as a result of government support.

Tourism and environmental affairs

A total of 853 190 tourists were recorded to have visited the country by the end of November 2024, indicating a year-on-year growth rate of 11.8%

compared to 2023. These figures exclude numbers of tourists who recently visited the country during Incwala as that statistics was still under compilation. Government acknowledges the contribution of arts and culture in drawing tourists into the country and reinforce existing strategies as Tourism is a strategic pillar for economic growth and job creation.

To further improve tourism in the country, nine (9) National Monuments were declared in May 2024 and these are Khabane Cave, Iron Wood, Mkhuzweni Rock Art, Nsangwini Rock Art, DPM's Offices, Old Library Building, Lion Cavern, KwaMagogo and Old Stone Church.

Globally, environmental degradation is a threat to livelihoods and to the existence of mankind. Government, as indicated in the policy statement, promotes green policies to make our economy environmentally friendly and to safeguard the health of its citizens. In line with that, Government has evoked Legal Notice No. 155 of 2021, on the Control of Plastic Bags Regulations, and banned single-use carrier plastic bags.

Two million five hundred and forty-two thousand eight hundred and thirty-four (2 542 834) indigenous trees were planted throughout the country to restore degraded areas and reduce the impacts of Climate Change through National Tree Planting programme.

Economic Objectives

Government's Policy seeks to direct investment to areas that will stimulate exponential economic growth. It cannot be overemphasised that the growth of the economy must outpace the growth of social ills, especially unemployment and poverty in order for the country to experience

measurable development. Investment in infrastructure is key to stimulate economic growth. Government has, therefore, charged the Ministry of Finance to expedite the development of a national borrowing plan to direct resources to optimal investment.

Government has approved a programme worth E2.4 billion for infrastructure development and institutional housing to stimulate the economy. This amount was also approved by the African Development Bank for financing.

The Government has, through the Ministry of Finance, initiated a comprehensive review of the procurement system before digitisation to eliminate dominant bottlenecks and ensure cost effectiveness and efficient service delivery. It is clear to Government that efficient service delivery cannot be achieved with the current limitations of the Procurement Act of 2011 and institutional arrangements.

Government debt to local companies has an adverse effect to the economy. Government is, therefore, intent on reducing debt to local companies, which have been reduced from E2.8 Billion to about E700 Million, which indicates that 75% of pending areas was cleared within the year for suppliers.

The Stabilisation Fund was capitalised by an amount of E2 billion. This will contribute significantly to stabilizing the fiscus. In addition, Government will strive to promote practices to ensure that the country's expenditure is sustainable.

The country was upgraded in the Moody's rating from a junk status to an investment grade listing, making it a favourable investment target and reducing the cost of borrowing. This upgrading will ensure that the country's benefit from the Johannesburg Stock Exchange listing is optimized.

Government has started implementation of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), the Treasury Single Account (TSA) and an Asset Management system aimed at improving financial reporting and cash management. In addition government has also started implementing the integrated finance management and information system (IFMIS).

Government is exploring modalities for participation by citizens in formulating the national budget.

Home Affairs

The country through the Ministry of Home Affairs, successfully hosted national events, which included the Marula festival, Umhlanga Reed Dance ceremony and the Incwala ceremony. These national events, apart from being our way of life, contributed significantly to national cohesion, promoting cultural heritage and attracting tourists into the country.

The process of ensuring that all emaSwati have access to national identification documents was intensified through the mopping exercise which brought government services to the communities.

Decentralisation

One of the key submissions during Sibaya People's Parliament was the urgent need to improve service delivery. Recognising this need, Government

has initiated the process of developing new legislation on decentralisation. Consultations with communities and key stakeholders have been done. The draft decentralization legislation is being finalised for submission to Cabinet. This process is being led by the Ministry of Tinkhundla Administration and Development and is being supported by the Ministry of Housing and urban development.

Conclusion

On behalf of the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini, as the team entrusted by His Majesty and the Nation to drive Government business, I would like to express our appreciation for the guidance we received from His Majesty the King in carrying out our responsibilities.

Through an extensive consultation process, Government developed a Programme of Action and initiated its implementation. Government is confident that this Administration's Policy and Programme of Action shall yield national transformation in line with the people's aspirations raised at Sibaya.

The development of the Grand Plan, which is a long-term comprehensive national transformation plan, has been initiated and is due for completion in 2025. Government will not relent to implement this Administration's Policy and medium term Programme of Action which is focused on the transformation of the national economy, achieve mindset change of the people, achieve public sector efficiency and improve service delivery across all sectors and firmly place the country on the path toward first world status.

Lastly, but by no means the least, I would like to express Government's appreciation for the support received from all emaSwati, the private sector and international community within and without the country. I urge all to rally behind the Government and work hard to achieve the people's aspirations, improve their well-being and maintain Eswatini as the most peaceful and stable country in the region.