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The Secretariat  
Convention on Biological Diversity  
413 Saint Jacques Street, Suit 400 Montreal  
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Dear sir/ madam,

**COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF BIODIVERSITY**

The Government of Lesotho through the Department of Environment launched the International Year of Biodiversity on the 11<sup>th</sup> June 2010 by planting of indigenous trees. The Department has been engaged in several activities for public awareness on Biodiversity and Nature Conservation from February 2010.

Other IYB celebration activities include the following:

- Re-seeding of indigenous grass species to upgrade rangelands
- Planting of indigenous trees
- Held media press conference on the 26<sup>th</sup> August during which issues that affect biodiversity were discussed. A press conference for Tourism Day was also held on the 14<sup>th</sup> September where issues which affect tourism and biodiversity were discussed as this year's theme is on Tourism and Biodiversity.
- Publication of articles on biodiversity to the newspapers
- Development of brochures and posters on biodiversity of Lesotho
- Launching of establishment of vulture restaurant

Please find the country's progress report towards 2010 target and IYB events. The government of Lesotho wishes to express gratitude for your usual support in our activities.

Yours sincerely



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Mr. S.M. Damane

Director for Environment and CBD focal point

# IYB PROGRESS REPORT



## INTRODUCTION

The World is currently losing its natural resources at an alarming rate. It was, therefore, agreed at the sixth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in April 2002 that by 2010, the world should achieve a significant reduction in the current rate of biodiversity loss. The year 2010, was therefore declared as International Year of Biodiversity (IYB) and was set as a target year by which Member States committed to significantly reduce the current loss of biodiversity. The international community, including Lesotho, therefore rallied around this year's target and incorporated it into the Millennium Development Goals. IYB offers an opportunity to renew our efforts and create a global alliance with all stakeholders to protect life on Earth. It also brings to the world's attention the importance of biodiversity as this is humanity's source for countless irreplaceable goods and services (food, shelter, medicine, crop pollination and air and water purification).

It has been noted that human activity is largely responsible for an increasing rate of biodiversity loss and the situation may be worsen by climate change. The objectives of IYB are to effectively communicate to different target groups the value of biodiversity to human existence and to motivate them to conserve, protect and promote sustainable use practices. The IYB is therefore a unique opportunity to increase public understanding of the vital role that biodiversity plays in sustaining life on Earth and to highlight the role that individuals, communities and countries have in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

There are many activities which countries are carrying out to reduce biodiversity loss. These include among others, the eradication of Invasive Alien Species and introduction of indigenous species, restoration of wetlands, forests, grasslands and other eco-systems. It is easier and less expensive to conserve healthy eco-systems by implementing sustainable practices, so education for all is vital. The theme for IYB is "Biodiversity is life, Biodiversity is our life".

This report summarizes activities undertaken by Lesotho in the aspiration to meet the set target in biodiversity conservation.

## **PROGRESS TOWARDS 2010 TARGET**

### **Government Policies and Laws on Biodiversity Conservation**

Lesotho is a party to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and ratified the Convention in 1995. Ratification of the Convention demonstrated a commitment to undertake national and international measures which aim to achieve the main objectives of the convention, namely to: conserve the biological diversity, sustainable use of its components and the equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources. As party to the Convention, the country is committed to tackle the challenges of biological diversity loss the world is facing today. These challenges and many more call for countries' involvement in the development of policies, laws and implementation to protect the environment. Lesotho has therefore developed laws and policies with sections which relate directly or indirectly to biodiversity conservation and are aimed at reversing the historical and continuing critical levels of environmental degradation and promote sustainable utilization of natural resources. Lesotho embarked on a process towards production of National Strategy of Biological Diversity. Research and monitoring of biodiversity was identified as a category that required strengthening and expansion by this strategy. Its implementation however, has largely been the prerogative of the parastatals, while government's efforts mainly focused on agricultural crops, which renders monitoring data relegated to and depended on internationally funded projects. The task of establishment of trends is therefore, mostly patchy and is rather haphazard in this scenario.

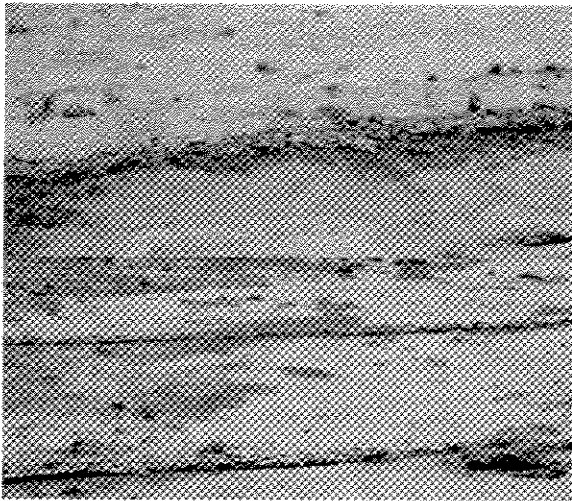
The Department of Environment is a lead agency for coordination of environmental issues in the country. The Department therefore took the initiative for the development of the National Environmental Policy for Lesotho (1998) and enactment of supporting legislation (Environment Act, 2008, Nature Conservation Act 2005). It has been acknowledged internationally that human civilizations have depended on the biological diversity components as the fundamental base of life support. Sustainable development of such civilizations therefore can only be attained through conservation of this diversity. This is a major challenge that was recognized at the

Earth Summit in Reo de Janeiro as well as through the development of the Convention on Biological Diversity – CBD.

The country has also embarked on the development of the National Livestock and Range Management Policy, Lesotho Food Security Policy 2005, National Environmental Education Strategy 2009, Lesotho Water and Sanitation Policy 2007, Local Government Act 1997, Vision 2020. These have also been adopted as the mechanism for implementation of the provisions of 2010 target

The Country has also reviewed the National Forestry Policy 2008 and Range Management Policy to take into account the prediction of Global Circulation Model (GMC) of warmer and drier future conditions by emphasizing the use of indigenous trees, shrubs as well as exotics and reseeded of grass. Furthermore, amendments have been made under the Monument, Historical Relics and Flora and Fauna Act of 1967 for protection of wildlife and indigenous plants in 2004 and 2006. This was an effort to reduce an alarming rate of biological diversity loss.

Under the Forestry Policy, the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation implements a number of programs such as the Social Forestry Program. This encourages establishment of individual tree nurseries from which government in turn procures seedlings for wider application of the Community Woodlots. To facilitate implementation of the Community Woodlot Program, the local authorities (Community Councils) through technical assistance of the land use planning function, identify areas appropriate for woodlots establishment. In order to establish a woodlot, community members are mobilized in rosters and provided necessary skills to undertake various steps of tree planting and management. Management of woodlots (regulates grazing and harvesting of tree and other economically important plants) provides tremendous opportunity by arresting erosion and ensuring adequate soil cover, (subject to appropriate species as well as right spacing), providing canopy for re-establishment of biodiversity, as seen in figure 8 below.



*Area rehabilitated through tree planting under Social Forestry*

### **Biodiversity Conservation categories**

Towards the 2010 target, protected areas network as a conservation strategy has been initiated and has somewhat advanced and contributed tremendously to in-situ conservation efforts compensating the ex-situ conservation efforts.

A level of achievement has been attained through re-orientation of sectoral policies, enactment of legal frameworks and institutional restructuring to ensure incorporation of environmental considerations into programs implementation and actual implementation of interventions (projects) such as RMAs, MRA (ERMA), PAs, Social Forestry and preservation of indigenous genetic materials

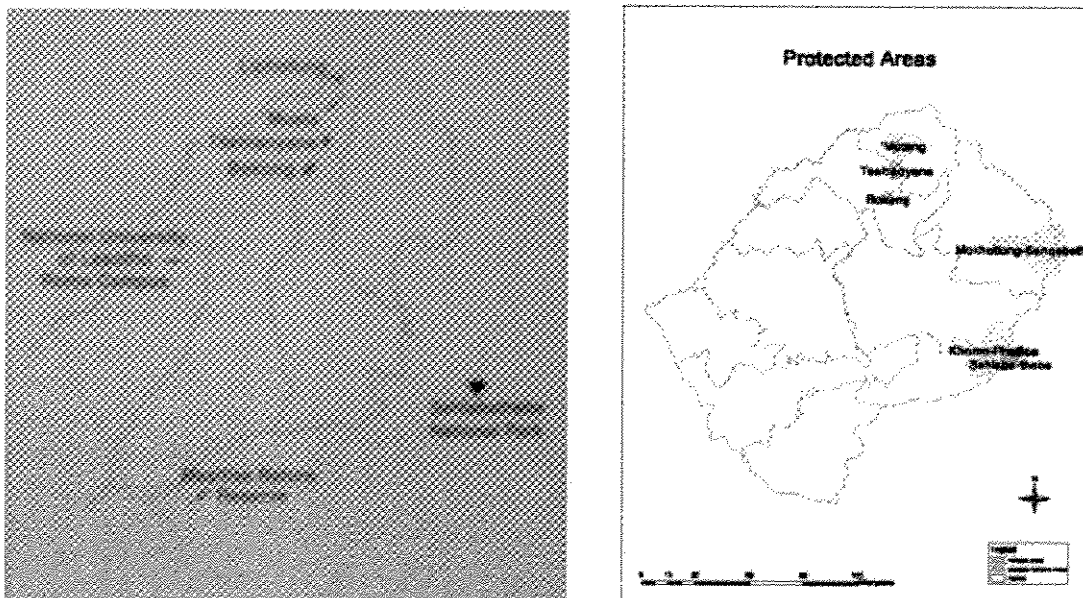


*Minister of forestry reseeding grass for Upgrading of rangelands*



*Honorable Prime minister reseeding grass for improving a rangeland*

There are also various categories that inform the country's conservation status in accordance with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources classification (IUCN). Current Biodiversity conservation category includes the followings: Sehlabathebe National Park, Tsehlanyane Nature Reserve, Bokong Nature Reserve and Masitise Nature Reserve. Current Range Management Areas category includes among other the following examples: Khomo-phatsoa MRA, Mokhotlong/Sanqebethu, Liseleng ERMA etc. The management objective of RMAs was improvement of rangeland for specific interest groups of livestock farmers. Over time, growing interest as a result of other natural resources benefits accruing out of such conserved areas resulted in the transformation of this concept, to accommodate several user groups. This has now become known as Managed Resource Areas and Environmental Resources Management Areas synonymously. The history behind the RMAs was one of entitlement mindset for interest groups. This has largely influenced the slow pace of acceptance and proliferation of the new approach. Map 2 below shows location of some key protected areas.



*Maps Sourced from Department of Environment Data base*



## **Biodiversity Conservation Projects**

### **The Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Conservation and Development Project (MDTP)**

The Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Conservation and Development Project was a bilateral Agreement between South Africa and Lesotho which was signed in 11 June 2001. The agreement established a framework for co-operation between these countries for the purpose of conserving biological diversity and promoting the sustainable development of the Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Conservation and Development Area through nature based tourism. The project covered an area of 5000km<sup>2</sup>, straddling 300km of the eastern border between the kingdom of Lesotho and South Africa. In 2007 the bilateral agreements was revised and the scope and mandate of the initiative broadened to depict the complexity and interrelatedness of conservation and development challenges facing the area. Through the MDTP programme, biodiversity management plan has been completed and implemented in some protected areas within the project area. New protected areas have been established and Environmental Centre has been developed at Sehlabathebe National Park (SNP).



*Some units of Environmental Centre at SNP*

Sehlabathebe National Park is one of legally proclaimed National Park in the country and will be declared as a World Heritage Site. There are a number of rare, endangered, endemic species found in the park. The SNP Water lily, Drakensburg Siskin, Drakensburg Rock Jumber, Bearded Vulture and the Cape vulture are but a few. Due to altitude and high snow fall in winter, the occurrence of big mammals is restricted in the

park, however, baboons, Grey Reedbuck, the Eland and Mountain Reedbuck are still found. The Park also boasts the following features: distinctly spectacular and rugged mountain scenery, exceptional **biodiversity** including pristine wetland system. It is with this envisage that preparations are made to nominate Sehlabathebe as a World heritage site.

Commissioning and implementation of a 20 year conservation and development strategy for MDTP is the future hope for the preservation and conservation of biodiversity for the Maloti Drakensburg Areas. It is important to note that in the projects areas, involvement and participation of the resident communities and other stakeholders are also important for conservation of the resources. Hence for the purpose of sustainability and provision of alternative opportunities for survival thus creating jobs, Lesotho has initiated a community participation process of co-management of natural resources through formation of Community Conservation Forum (CCFs). The CCFs operates under Local Government Community Councils through enacted laws and have been capacitated with necessary skills by MTDP. This is a continuous process for the country whereby 10% of revenue accumulated from the utilization of the nature reserves goes to the community for investment in community sustainable development.



*CCF members during training session on management of wetlands*

### **Wetlands Restoration and Conservation Programmes**

Lesotho has acceded to Ramsar Convention. The convention provides an opportunity for Lesotho to put in place the apparatus for implementation of sustainable development of natural resources in Lesotho. Lets`a la Letsie in Quthing district has been declared as National RAMSAR site because of its richness in biodiversity. The purpose was to promote sustainable use of the wetlands and raise awareness among communities about ecosystem services that wetlands provide.

The government of Lesotho through the Ministry of Natural Resources developed a National Wetland Management Programme for Wetlands Conservation in the country. Priority points for the programme include improving knowledge and information on Lesotho`s wetlands and capacity building on wetlands management due to the unsustainable use of resources and poor management of the wetlands. In response to this, a number of projects are in existence in the country mainly to protect and conserve biodiversity and promote eco-tourism.

The Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) Lesotho is one of the agencies supporting the country`s goal to reduce poverty by identifying means of enhancing rural livelihoods through improving productivity of highlands wetlands and promoting wise and sustainable use of wetlands resources. The objective of one of their projects on conservation the environment is to rehabilitate wetlands and ensure that rural communities have access to improved or alternative livelihoods emanating from improved rangeland management. Stakeholders are engaged and consulted on a regular basis to ensure regular feedback and monitoring of biophysical environment surrounding the selected project areas. The following wetlands are used as pilot and these are Khalong-La-Lithunya, Koti-Sephola and Letsa-La-Letsie. Trainings on intergrated watershed management and sustainable use of wetlands have been carried out and monitoring equipments have been installed in the above mentioned pilot areas.

Moreover, through biodiversity studies undertaken by MDTP, a number of priority areas in terms of biodiversity hot spots and rich cultural heritage were identified. Lets`a-la-Letsie was one of such areas which need protection and development. The project has

now extended its planning domain to incorporate Lets`a-la-Letsie in the 20 Year Conservation and Development Strategy. The Ministry of Tourism Environment and Culture through MDTP has therefore assisted the communities around this area to establish it as a protected area and efforts have been carried out to promote sustainable resource management in order to enhance eco-tourism. As a result, community involvement and participation was considered critical hence CCF was also established for Lets`a-la-Letsie wetland.



*Lets`a-la Letsie in Quthing District*

### **Herders' initiatives on Biodiversity Conservation**

Herders from 10 districts have been trained on biodiversity conservation and have established associations in an effort to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss that the country is currently experiencing. Two herders' associations in Berea district have been engaged in different biodiversity conservation projects through funding from GEF Small Grants.



*An area around Semonkong town where herders' association initiated aloe plantation for conservation*

### ***Sustainable use of Biodiversity through community based projects/ GEF small grants involvement in Biodiversity Conservation***

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) was established in 1991 to protect the global environment in four areas and these are: conservation of biodiversity, climate change, pollution of international waters and the depletion of the ozone layer. Lesotho joined GEF/SGP in 2007. The country has received USD 5000000 and has promoted sustainable use of Biodiversity in the country through provision of funding to 17 Community Based Organisations/ Non-Governmental Organisations in 5 Districts namely:

- Maseru: Tsenekeng Semonkong (Botanical garden)
- Mafeteng: Ha Nots'i – Preservation of the unique Gene pool of Lesotho's indigenous chicken
- Butha-Buthe: Qholoqhoe – establishment of a botanical garden
- Quthing : In situ preservation of Biodiversity – Mokotjomela and Mt. Moorosi

- Mokhotlong: Establishment of aloe plantation (Spiral aloe)

## **LESOTHO AND INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF BIODIVERSITY (2010)**

International Year of Biodiversity (2010) was set as a Target year in 2002 against which member states to CBD have to report on the progress made in the fight against biological diversity loss. Lesotho has been involved in various projects and activities to meet this target. Among others these include the followings:

### **School programmes**

One of the obligations of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity is to provide education and awareness on the importance of Biodiversity. With regard to Environmental Education in Formal education, the Department of Environment in collaboration with Ministry of Education has selected 8 Schools in Maseru district for establishment of School Enviro-Clubs. The schools were used as pilot schools for the programme. Teachers from the selected schools were trained on sound environmental management in schools. As part of the IYB celebration, the schools have established mini- botanical gardens. The Department of Environment has therefore awarded the starter packs for smooth management of the mini-botanical gardens. The objective of establishing the gardens is to equip students with knowledge and encourage them to use and conserve the indigenous plant species.



*A mini botanical garden at Thabana t'soana Primary School*

### **Vulture Management and Restaurants Establishment**

Human activities such as hunting of wild animals have noticeably proved to affect bird species negatively. Large birds such as vultures' breeding pairs have declined in the country. The decline is also attributed by a decrease in habitat and food supply, disturbances at nests and collisions with power lines. Interventions such as establishment of Vulture restaurants where food is placed to attract these birds are in place. Two vulture restaurants are established at Tsatsane and Ha Tlhako villages within Quthing district. Community members exchange old domestic animals for two Merino Sheep. Old domestic animals are used to feed the vultures and this is done once in every 2 weeks. Examples of the other restaurants are Bokong vulture restaurant and the other one has been proposed at Lets'eng La-Khama in Mokhotlong District



## Celebrations of IYB

*The following are the activities carried out for 2010 IYB celebration:*

- 400 indigenous trees were planted at Likatseng village within Nyakosoba A4 community council in the Maseru district. The event took place on the 11<sup>th</sup> June 2010.



*Community members at Likatseng village planting indigenous trees for IYB Celebration*



*Director for Environment during IYB Celebration*

Lets'a- la- Letsie has been declared as RAMSAR site however the communities around the area are depended on the grazing land within this site. Community councils (Mkho'ono and Mphaki) around the area have selected two grazing areas outside the protected area for rehabilitation. These grazing lands were reseeded with indigenous grass specie on the 11<sup>th</sup> August 2010 to upgrade it.



*A community member eradicating invasive alien species (sehalahala) before reseeding of grass*



*Some community members ready for reseeding of grass*

- 1000 indigenous trees (Mohloare, Tsinabele, Cheche, Mofifi) will be planted at Masimphane Village within Makeoane DO1 council in the Berea District on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2010.

### **Awareness Raising**

Education and awareness programmes have been done in the form of Radio and TV presentations and through the development of posters and brochures covering issues of climate change, biodiversity of Lesotho. Furthermore, press conferences have been held for public awareness.



*Press conferences to raise awareness on IYB*