

GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI



GOVERNMENT STATEMENT

CABINET RETREAT 2025

Good afternoon.

It has been a productive week, which began with the presentation of the Government Programme of Action (PoA). We had robust discussions on the PoA; reflecting on the process of its development and content.

As already alluded to during the opening of this retreat and on other occasions, Government has taken note of the devastating impact that the recent incessant rains caused to people's livelihoods and national infrastructure. We, once again, express our empathy and support to those that were affected and reassure the Nation that His Majesty's Government is on the ground responding to this disaster. The Deputy Prime Minister's Office, through the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) and the Ministry of Public Works and Transport have collaborated with development partners and the private sector to offer food and shelter assistance to the affected as well as rehabilitate the country's damaged infrastructure.

This Retreat reflected on issues of national concern as raised at Sibaya and as replicated on the Programme of Action, which, no doubt, encapsulates the Sibaya mandate, the National Development Plan and the critical issues needed to place the country in the trajectory to attain His Majesty's vision of Eswatini becoming a developed country. It is required, therefore, that the national budget is aligned with the PoA.

The PoA is dynamic and Government will continue to host workshops for Government officials, the private sector and other stakeholders. This will be preceded by a special session of Cabinet Ministers to further deliberate in detail the PoA with a view to prioritise and align the budget with the PoA and mobilise additional resources to enable its execution.

CRITICAL ASPECTS OF THE PoA

In the spirit of the PoA, our strategy should be focused on the local situation. We have been driven too much by external forces based on international mandates even if contrary to the local situation. This must change.

As such, the vision and the values we must espouse as the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini to achieve a developed status has been recrafted as articulated in the policy statement and the PoA. In this Retreat, Cabinet resolved to transform Eswatini into a Green Economy.

Effective delivery of the PoA within the constrained budget requires decentralisation and devolution of powers from central agencies to ministries. This entails authorising Principal Secretaries to manage their budgets and deliver on their mandates.

A unified approach focusing on realising impact is crucial. This means breaking the silos, collaborating more and promoting a more unified

response to public needs. We must, therefore, adhere to the One Government approach in planning, budgeting and execution.

Comprehensive planning, taking into consideration key parameters of planning, is crucial to inform effective budgeting and execution thereof. A new planning and budgeting approach should be introduced to ensure Government projects and programmes are designed and implemented timeously. The manner in which our budgeting is done should be aligned with the needs of communities.

Based on the deliberations and the issues already articulated, it is evident that the Public Finance Management Act and the Procurement Act must be reviewed to enable strategic investment, agile service delivery, and high impact economic growth.

We recognise the inadequacy of the national purse; however, we can use the current resources wisely to grow our economy and invest in the future. This Administration's focus is to do what matters and that has been reflected in the PoA.

As part of the strategic priorities in the PoA, Food Sovereignty is non-negotiable. We must produce and eat healthy food. This does not mean we will not import or export food but the country must produce and store its staple food.

CABINET RETREAT OUTCOMES

In view of the presentations and discussions over the past week, the following decisions were made: -

Programme of Action

- All Government ministries must align their budgets to the PoA priorities.
- There must be a comprehensive review and streamlining of planning and budgeting processes for effective delivery of the PoA. A team has been appointed to carry out this mandate. This team comprises representatives of the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, the Ministry of Public Service, the Prime Minister's Office (PPCU and the Technical Advisor to the Prime Minister), the Deputy Prime Minister's Office (NDMA), and a business transformation and accountability technical expert. The Terms of Reference for this team include the review of the procurement system, the Public Finance Management Act, Ministries' management structure, Project Management and the budgeting system, a task that should be completed by March 2025.
- From this year henceforth, Government will undertake a biannual progress evaluation of the PoA implementation across ministries.

Ministry of Finance

- The Ministry of Finance will explore the review of the expenditure ceiling for Principal Secretaries, including taking into consideration a proposal to increase the expenditure ceiling to E200 000 from the current E20 000; in accordance with the outcomes of the review of the Public Finance Management Action.
- All border infrastructure management must be handed over to the Eswatini Revenue Service (ERS).

- The Ministry of Finance will prepare a detailed Cabinet Paper that outlines proposed options to improve national tax regimes and explore untapped revenue strategies by the end of April 2025.

Ministry of Health

- NERCHA will ensure sustained gains from HIV interventions, while increasing focus on value-based prevention in addition to treatment.
- The Ministry of Health will review the 8km radius standard for health access in line with developments that have taken place in communities.
- The Ministry will conduct a holistic study on the exposure factors for Non-Communicable Diseases, in particular cancer, and develop strategies to mitigate them.
- The Ministry will prepare a detailed Cabinet Paper on the regulation of on-call allowances with the intention to increase efficiency, better health outcomes and a healthier work environment, and to give opportunities for the hiring of more doctors and other health professionals. This Paper will be submitted to Cabinet for consideration by the end of March 2025.
- The community health motivators (bagcugcuteli) programme will be redesigned to suit current community health needs.

Ministry of Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs

- The Ministry of Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs will finalise the review of the Youth Fund policy and fast track the Youth Empowerment Bill and Arts and Culture Bill.

Ministry of Tinkhundla Administration and Development

- The Ministry of Tinkhundla Administration and Development will fast-track the finalisation of the Decentralisation Bill.

Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade

- The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade will urgently engage all new and existing businesses facing difficulties in the country and resolve these without delay. The Ministry will establish a Council to resolve the identified bottlenecks.
- As part of the Government strategy to build factories, the Ministry will create accessible cottage industry facilities that provide a suitable working environment in the different Tinkhundla centres across the country.
- The Ministry will conduct an Investment Conference for large businesses and another one for MSMEs in the duration of the year.

Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy

- The Ministry will target to generate at least 1000W of energy to attract investments and provide a baseload for manufacturing and industrialisation.
- Cabinet will approve the regulations for Ethanol Blending by the end of March 2025

Deputy Prime Minister's Office

- The Deputy Prime Minister's Office will bring the disaster risk management fund for consideration by Cabinet under the current disaster management law.

Ministry of Agriculture

- It is the policy of this Government to pursue food sovereignty for sustenance. Added effort will be made towards financing agriculture as a primary sector that significantly contributes to economic growth and employment creation.
- The Ministry will redesign and modernise the agricultural extension policy for efficiency.

Ministry of Education

- The Ministry of Education will create positions for Heads of Departments in schools.
- A national teachers database will be developed within the next 6 months.
- The Ministry will review the conditions for temporary teachers and bring a Cabinet Paper for consideration by the end of March 2025.

Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs

- The Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs will ensure that the environment rehabilitation fund is considered upfront and enforced.

Ministry of Labour and Social Security

- In principle, Cabinet has approved the conversion of the Eswatini National Provident Fund (ENPF) into a national pension scheme and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security will bring a Bill for Cabinet consideration by the end of February 2025.

Ministry of Public Service

- Government will finalise investigations and immediately suspend salaries for all unaccounted floating positions and prepare a list of all unaccounted-for civil servants within the next two weeks.
- The Ministry will eliminate discrimination of employment by age within the public service.

Ministry of ICT

- The Ministry of ICT will consolidate all Government IT systems so that they can speak to each other.

Ministry of Home Affairs

- The importance of the mopping exercise was reaffirmed and the Ministry of Home Affairs tasked to strengthen this exercise to ensure the legitimate registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths. Communities and Chiefdoms remain an integral part of this process.

Ministry of Public Works

- Government reaffirms that we prioritise disaster risk management to help those affected by the rains and the damaged infrastructure. The Ministry of Public Works will continue to work with the private sector to rehabilitate roads and bridges damaged by the recent rains.

CONCLUSION

The Cabinet Retreat has been a resounding success and a perfect opportunity to reflect outside the familiar walls of the Cabinet Offices. We have no doubt that the decisions collectively taken will benefit the Nation and

we look forward to another productive year. We continue to solicit the Nation's support and prayers as we executive the Sibaya mandate.

Thank you.

RUSSELL MMISO DLAMINI

Prime Minister

24 January 2025