



REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE RT. HON. PRIME
MINISTER RUSSELL MMISO DLAMINI
MAY DAY COMMEMORATION
PRINCE OF WALES, MBABANE
01 MAY 2024

Programme Director

Honourable Cabinet Ministers present

Senior Government Officials

The National Office Bearers of TUCOSWA, all structures and the general membership of the Federation

Representatives of Employer Organisations here present (BE and FESBC)

Representatives of all Civic society organisations

Ladies and gentlemen

Good afternoon.

It gives me great pleasure to join you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, on this May Day celebration. May I begin by appreciating all workers in Eswatini for the valuable contribution you all make in your various organisations and places of work.

Esteemed workers, today is your day. His Majesty's Government appreciates the coming together of workers because we believe it is very important in advancing the interests of workers.

May Day is a day where we celebrate our ability to work and live independently of somebody else. Historically, unionisation came about in order to allow workers to collectively negotiate better terms and conditions of service, including salaries, wages and protection of labour rights. Even today, if workers do not come together, individual workers will not have the requisite strength of joint bargaining and resisting against abuse and infringements of labour rights. It is important, therefore, to recall that the main focus of unions is to protect workers' interests in relation to their employment and labour rights.

It is equally critical for workers to understand that the Prime Minister, Cabinet and all public servants are also workers. As members of the current Administration, we would like our fellow workers to know that Government has the interests of workers at heart. Although we may not promise heaven and earth, we do want to commit ourselves and assure you that the minimum wage and the entire welfare of workers is being looked into by this Government. As per His Majesty's pronouncement during Sibaya, this commitment is aligned with the **Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) for 2022 – 2025** as adopted by Cabinet and publicly launched on 17

November, 2022. That document was signed at a high level by the Prime Minister of the time. That demonstrates the high commitment of His Majesty's Government in improving the standard of living for all workers in this country much in line with your organisation's May Day theme of "Social justice and decent work for All." In this regard, Government has taken note of the agreed roadmap that has been developed by the tripartite Constituent partners on the process towards coming up with a national minimum wage and assures our Constituents that we support this process.

The Ministry of Health has already been mandated to work on the National Health Insurance Scheme, whilst the Deputy Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security are working on various social security programmes in an effort to ensure comprehensive social coverage for every liSwati in this country. These programmes are all tailored with the liSwati worker in mind, to make both work and life decent for them.

Unions can do more to advance the interests of workers. When workers are focused on other issues, other than their direct socio-economic interests, which is why they are employed, then their economic interests are normally left behind. We therefore implore every one of us here to join hands in ensuring the effective implementation of the national Decent Work Country Programme as the main vehicle that has been agreed and adopted by Government, Workers and Employers towards social justice and decent work for all. As Government, we have committed ourselves to grow the economy so that we can create more employment as well as increase disposable income for the people of this country.

So, I am here today together with Cabinet to challenge you as workers to work with this Government to build our country. This is the right time for us

to work together and not fight. We are not enemies, but we have the same interest to build our country. We may have different responsibilities but we have to work together. We, therefore, must seek to understand each other and be reasonable in doing so. As His Majesty's Government, we look forward to meeting the leadership of the various organisations that represent workers to share the vision that we pursue as the new administration.

Working together has proven to bring economic success. Workers have done well in terms of cooperatives and savings groups, which is really commendable. I now encourage all workers who have not started to save to do so. Save, no matter how small your savings are. Do not consume all that you earn. Workers can be part of investments by buying shares and by saving. In the long run, this becomes significant.

On this May Day, I would like to make propositions that will transform our lives as workers. Primarily, I would like to motivate that we can be better than where we are today and our future can be brighter if we maintain the right mindset. Workers, for instance, can build their own banks that will enable us to access finance at low rates. Through these banks, we can lend even to our employers and charge them reasonable interest rates. Teachers can build private schools and make a decent living from that, just as we have other international schools in the country. Nurses can build private clinics and hospitals and make a decent living from that as well.

Before I conclude, I would like to say Government has noted the outcry on corruption. We invite all workers in the country to work with us to fight corruption. We urge individuals who have been asked to pay for jobs and who have been asked to pay for promotions to report such to the police and authorities so that these bad apples can be dealt with.

I am optimistic that we can work together, Government and workers, to maintain the peace and prosperity of Eswatini by respecting the rule of law, which ensures that all people feel safe and are treated equally.

Thank you for allowing me to address you. We are, first and foremost, emaSwati before being workers. Let us lift our country high, uniting against any form of social ill.

Happy May Day. Happy Workers Day.

God bless you. God bless Eswatini.

Thank you.