

PRESS RELEASE

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STATEMENT ON PROSPECTING AND MINING, BY THE
PRIME MINISTER, CHIEF LEABUA JONATHAN,
BROADCAST OVER RADIO LESOTHO ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 3.

On the 18th July His Majesty the King made an order on the advise of the Privy Council, suspending the issue of new prospecting and mining rights, and requiring all existing rights, and applications for rights, to be reported for examination.

It is in the public interest that firm control should be taken of these matters. Chiefs should pay strict heed to the King's Order, and make no more grants for prospecting or mining. They must also obey his order to report what prospecting or mining is going on, and what applications have reached them for prospecting or mining.

Those rights that have been properly granted according to law will be recognised, but those that have been irregularly granted will be rejected.

Questions whether a right has or has not been legally granted must be referred to the Minister of Finance, Commerce and Industry, who will seek legal advice.

This order enables the King in his Government to complete the consultations that are in progress with experts retained by the Government, in order to determine in what way Lesotho's minerals should be exploited for the maximum benefit of the Basotho Nation.

A Mining Bill is to be introduced in Parliament soon which will govern the granting of prospecting and mining rights in Lesotho and the moneys to be paid to the Basotho nation for the grant of such rights. The Bill will also regulate the conduct of prospecting and mining operations, and establish effective procedures for the proper control of trade in diamonds.

The Government is determined that there should be no haphazard exploitation of the mineral resources of Lesotho. On the contrary, those resources are to be methodically used according to a pre-determined policy.

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