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PRESS RELEASE

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PRESS STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER ON HIS  
RETURN FROM THE FAR EAST

I have returned from my first visit to the Far East where I had gone at the invitation of the Governments of Taiwan and Japan. During the course of this visit further invitations were extended to me by the Governments of Korea, Thailand and Pakistan. Of these I could only accept the Korea and the Thailand invitations. I had to decline the Pakistan invitation because it was not possible for me to stay any longer abroad.

As I said in my broadcast speech to the nation prior to my departure, I went to the Far East on a goodwill mission to arouse interest among the people of the orient <sup>in</sup> the welfare and problems of my people and to make friends with them. I am in a position to report with satisfaction that strong bonds of friendship have been made with all the countries I was able to visit. Between me and the Prime Ministers of Taiwan, Japan and Korea it was agreed that we would consider an exchange of diplomatic missions.

All the countries I visited expressed sympathetic interest in our problems and offered assistance by way of technical Co-operation and training of personnel. Here it should be noted that except for Japan most of these countries are still at the developmental stage of their economy subsequent to gaining independence either from Colonial or Military rule. They have therefore a clear understanding of the nature of the economic situation in Lesotho.

Without fear of contradiction, I make bold to say the Lesotho Government, especially the Government presently in power has friends among the free nations of the Far East. They have pledged to give us all manner of support in our struggle against poverty, ignorance and disease. They have undertaken to cooperate with us in International Affairs, at the United Nations and in the fight against Communism and its attendant evils.

During my stay in Taiwan I was received in audience by His Excellency the President and Madame Chiang-Koi-Shek. In Japan I had a very pleasant audience with His Imperial Majesty, the Emperor of Japan. Very useful and cordial talks were held between me and these two distinguished Heads of State. My audience with His Excellency the President of Korea was of particular significance to me. He was gracious enough to confer on me the Order of Service Merit, First Class - an honour which I highly appreciated. This he said was in recognition of my services to my country in successfully leading it to independence in the face of overwhelming odds. Above all, His Excellency said the Order was in recognition of the stand I took against communist aggression. I also had most useful discussions with the Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers and Ministers of Economic and Industrial Development in all the host countries.

In Thailand my visit, short as it was, had special significance. It coincided with the holding of the Fifth Asian Games and the South East Asia Trade Fair - two attractions patronised wholly by the non-communist countries of Asia. Both the standard of performance among the competitors and the quality of exhibits were very high.

Resulting from these visits, I have gained certain impressions of the countries of the East. Like Lesotho, most of them are developing countries; yet they differ from us in certain important respects. Their approach to national questions lays emphasis on development and the raising of living standards rather than on politics and empty slogans. They have a clear understanding of our unique situation in relation to our neighbours in the Republic of South Africa. Their practical turn of mind fits them well to appreciate the nature of our problem better than most of our friends in the Continent of Africa. While they are not in doubt about our attitude to apartheid, they are careful not to cause any unnecessary embarrassment. They understood that our bread and butter interests are interwoven with the South African economy - South Africa being the only potential customer for the water which is one of our principal natural resources.

I was particularly impressed by the way the Oriental people plan their work before it is embarked upon. In the field of planning their's is a talent much superior to any I have seen before. All natural development projects are graphically represented which gives a sense of reality. Concrete models are made to show what they have in mind. One readily gets the impression of people who know what to do and when and how to do it. Their water schemes are advanced. Their primary and secondary industries are forging ahead at a very rapid rate. Not only do they enjoy the benefits of careful planning but also the advantages

of active co-operation from all sections of the population.

These people are realists and they make a clear distinction between politics and their commercial and economic interests. Japan, for example, does not hesitate to buy South African agricultural and manufactured products and in South Africa, as you know, Japanese cars, radios and cameras are sold on a large scale. Here in Lesotho, however, we have a number of extremists who, for political purposes, publically advocate the boycott of South African goods, while privately they themselves do not hesitate to use them. This is sheer hypocrisy.

In conclusion, let me say that I have already approached Britain asking her to do her utmost to discharge her moral obligations to assist in the development of Lesotho. The countries of Africa and the Far East are now fully aware of the nature of our problems. I am prepared to accept any help offered in good faith from whatever quarter it may come, in order to develop our national economy and raise the standard of living of our people. I am not frightened by malicious and unfounded reports of South Africa's intention towards us, and I hope that South Africa will not be deterred by the irresponsible comment of mischievous self-seekers from extending to us the hand of friendship. I say this because I shall shortly be on my way to meet the Prime Minister of South Africa, and in our discussions the welfare of our nation and the needs of its economy will be uppermost in my mind. I shall have no hesitation in accepting whatever aid our neighbour can give us in promoting the welfare and the real interests of Lesotho.