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LETTER DATED 17 AUGUST 1983 FROM THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF LESOTHO ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Lesotho has, for some time now, been going through a very grim period due mainly to the deterioration of relations between herself and her neighbour, South Africa.

South Africa has held on to weapons belonging to Lesotho at her ports. These arms are required by Lesotho for normal internal purposes of law and order. There have been cross border excursions from South Africa into Lesotho. Thirdly, South Africa has now imposed very heavy restrictions on the movement of persons across the common borders between Lesotho and herself.

On 10 August, and after repeated requests by Lesotho, South Africa finally agreed to a meeting with representatives of the Government of Lesotho. At the meeting, South Africa made a categorical demand as a condition for normalization of relations, as follows:

- (a) The return to it by Lesotho of certain members of the refugee community whom they claim pose a security threat to South Africa;
- (b) Alternatively, their expulsion out of Lesotho into a third country or countries.

On Saturday 13 August Lesotho made a public appeal to the international community to bring pressure to bear upon South Africa to exercise restraint and withdraw this demand on Lesotho. So far, there are no positive signs on the part of South Africa. Lesotho has always asserted that it has full control over the refugees in Lesotho and that South Africa has failed to convince Lesotho of the threat the refugees pose to South Africa.

In the circumstances, the Government of Lesotho would like to make an urgent appeal to yourself, as Secretary-General of the United Nations, to use your good offices and, through Member States of the United Nations and other related organizations, to make a final appeal to South Africa to exercise restraint on her demands and to lift the undue pressures she has imposed on Lesotho through arms embargo and restrictions on movement of people - measures which are very harsh, taking Lesotho's geographical position into account.

Your Excellency may wish to appreciate that the situation in question has already prevailed long enough and is, indeed, causing a security situation inside the country, as well as incalculable suffering of Lesotho's people and her economy. While Lesotho has full confidence in the success of Your Excellency's initiatives, should the anticipated success not be forthcoming Lesotho requests that you cause urgent consultations to take place between yourself and Lesotho after consulting Member States of the United Nations, United Nations organizations and agencies as to how best the international community can help Lesotho to handle the refugee problem as smoothly and as humanely as possible.

Your Excellency, Lesotho wishes to reiterate that the presence of the refugees in Lesotho is caused by an external factor, within South Africa, over which Lesotho has no control. Since we can anticipate that, so long as these conditions prevail within South Africa, the tide of the refugees will increase and we are bound by an international convention as well as on grounds of morality not to return these refugees back to South Africa, we request that, in your consultations, the international community should advise you on how best Lesotho and the United Nations system and Member States can best deal with a new wave into Lesotho of fresh refugees.

Finally, I have, today, through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Maseru, provided you with the list of 512 politically affiliated South African refugees in Lesotho out of 3,000 registered with UNHCR to assist you in your consultations towards the final resolution of this problem.

You are requested to circulate this letter among all Member States of the United Nations as well as international organizations and agencies as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) R. SEKHONYANA
Minister for Foreign Affairs
of the Kingdom of Lesotho
