PRESS STATEMENT

Since 2015 constitutional, parliamentary, judiciary, public and security sector reforms have been a topical issue both internally and externally. A civil society organisation, Development for Peace Education (DPE) currently soliciting citizen voices on the reforms initiated meetings with leaders of other similar initiatives namely Lesotho Council of NGOs, Justice and Peace Commission of Lesotho Catholics Bishop Conference(JCCP), Transformation Resource Centre(TRC), Christian Council of Lesotho(CCL), Media Institute for Southern Africa Lesotho chapter, Department of Political and Administrative Studies and experts from other departments of the National University of Lesotho to discuss possible ways of collaboration. Robust internal engagements led to a consensus that these parties should work together to ensure that their different individual initiatives and those of others which may still come are channelled into a framework that will ensure that all ideas generated become part of reforms debate. It would seem that there is a general common appreciation among different sectors of Basotho that as part of seeking lasting solution to some of the political and governance challenges Lesotho is facing, there must be a deliberate effort to do some changes to make governance architecture better suited for the effective management of contemporary challenges.

The following specific issues have emerged from the deliberations;

1. To date *reforms* has been a subject of government monopoly and the collective strongly believes that for any reforms to benefit Lesotho the manner in which they are handled should be open, transparent, inclusive and participatory;

2. The reforms process should be people and not government driven and government should not be allowed to kill the process by unnecessary and excessive dominance;

3. There is a need for a concerted effort by non-state actors to define the process which would best suit the Lesotho situation and present it to different actors for endorsement and execution;

The positive expressions by several actors such as Southern African Development Community (SADC), African Union (AU) United Nations (UN), and Commonwealth as well as development partners both collectively and individually are recognised and welcome. However the collective believes that reforms would and should be, what Basotho themselves make of it.

In order to realise this objective the collective has thus resolved to have:

Civil Society Reforms Process Forum

This is where different sectors of civil society; NGOs, labour, academia, business, professionals, women, people with disabilities, youth, the elderly etc would come together to define the reforms process they would like to see. This forum would address questions like structure to lead the process, its composition, deployment of its secretariat, technical teams, how voices of ordinary citizens would become part of deliberations, whether that process should be legislated or take a policy formulation process, the actually changing of the constitution in line with the current provisions for amending the constitution, the environment conducive for an all-encompassing and participatory process, methodology of submission of citizen inputs through conventional or social media, whether all issues are equally urgent and all need equal urgent attention or not and defining the role of SADC,AU UNDP & other Development partners in the process that would otherwise be a Basotho.

Stakeholder engagement

Following this forum the civil society position shall be presented to various stakeholders in the process and these are (i) government (ii) political parties both in and outside government and (iii) others.

Call to Basotho

The collective calls upon Basotho through their various sectors and platforms to join this initiative to ensure that every voice is heard and every idea fairly forms part of deliberations and therefore decisions made on the reforms.

 Contact:

Sofonea Shale +26658854920/ +26622326855/ shalesofonea@yahoo.ocm