

**WELCOME REMARKS GIVEN BY REGIONAL PROJECT
MANAGER DANIEL KUMITZ AT INTERNATIONAL MATERNITY
PROTECTION WORKSHOP, MASERU, LESOTHO ON APRIL 23,
2013**

Honourable Minister,

Members of the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho,

Permanent Secretary Madame Mosisili,

Labour Commissioner Madame Matsoso,

**Representative of the International Labour Organisation, Mr
Luis Frota,**

**Distinguished Representatives from Lesotho Trade Unions
and Employer Organisations,**

**Distinguished Experts from the SADC-SPEN Social Protection
Experts Network,**

**Distinguished Representatives from International, Regional
and National Organisations,**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The first democratically elected President of Germany, Friedrich Ebert, died in 1925 while still in office. In his last will, he stipulated that proceeds from donations at his funeral (to be given instead of spending money on wreaths), should be used set up a fund for children from poor families to receive grants for education. He did so, because he knew that education and social security for the poor are indispensable for a democracy. Hungry people have other priorities than to engage in democracy and civil society; those who struggle for livelihood every day are not empowered to have a say and speak out in political matters that concern them.

Thus Friedrich Ebert Stiftung was set up as a foundation a few days after the funeral and has since then promoted democracy – in Germany and in other countries. Around the globe, FES engages with civil society, trade unions and governments and organises over 20,000 conferences, workshops, seminars and public forums every year.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the major lines of work of FES is social protection. FES strongly believes that without sufficient social security, democracy and democratic governance will not be able to fully evolve. Therefore FES has set up a regional project called “social compact” for the SADC region. With this

programme, FES seeks to enhance social protection and social security dialogue, knowledge, advocacy and expertise throughout the region.

FES does not do this alone. The regional project has found strong partners in the region whom we are very proud and grateful to work with. We regularly conduct activities with the SADC Secretariat in Gaborone, with the International Labour Organisation, ILO, with the experts network SADC-SPEN, with the Centre for International Labour and Social Security Law (CICLASS) at the University of Johannesburg, but also with the Southern African Trade Union Council SATUCC, the Civil Society Umbrella Organisation SADC-CNGO, with HelpAge and the African Platform for Social Protection. Many of these organisations are represented in this workshop. Last, but not least, FES also offers direct support to governments and we are quite excited that we are able to provide assistance to the government of the Kingdom of Lesotho to continue on their quite remarkable and renowned endeavour of providing social protection and social security to their entire population.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The FES program is committed to four main components

1. We extend broad support for all active in this field in Southern Africa and intend to provide basic information for all actors.

2. We support awareness and lobbying campaigns from Civic Society like TUs, Churches and specialised CSOs such as national Platforms for Social Protection with meetings and suitable publications
3. We provide forums for exchange of experts, policy makers, civil servants and CSO representatives on specific topics at a national and regional level. I am addressing such a forum here today.
4. We support and cooperate with the network of SADC Social Protection Experts who have provided expertise for this workshop.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The particular strength of Friedrich Ebert-Stiftung's regional project on social protection lies in our ability and willingness to link different partners, groups, stakeholders and disciplines both across sectors and across countries. Almost year ago in May 2012, we convened high level tripartite stakeholders from all SADC countries in Johannesburg in a regional conference to discuss the proposed (and later adopted) recommendation on Social Protection Floors of the International Labour Conference 2012. From that conference I am familiar with some of the people here today. I very clearly remember the most outspoken and committed input given by Lesotho delegates. FES is honoured that we now have the opportunity to be witness of and contribute to the discussion in Lesotho.

In October 2012 FES hosted an international conference on engendering social protection in Lusaka. One of the main topics of this conference which convened stakeholders from over a dozen countries, including Lesotho, was, of course Maternity Protection. I have brought copies of the conference report, as a humble offer to those of you who may be interested in what was discussed then and what was presented about other countries in the SADC region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today and tomorrow, it is for me to be interested; most interested in what will be discussed here. For as long as social protection is on the agenda, social rights, social welfare and democratic empowerment will follow. Thank you for inviting us to the Kingdom of the Sky. May this platform be fruitful for exchange and dialogue, may it be a forum of promoting the wellbeing and decent life of mothers, a vehicle towards the realisation of maternity protection.

I thank you.