



1 August 2020

### **Happy New Year Celebration to Basotho:**

The 1<sup>st</sup> of August marks the new year celebration for Basotho (*Selemo sa Basotho*). The observation of the 1<sup>st</sup> of August as a new year by the Basotho people is in recognition of nature's giving way to new life after the dry season, commonly known as winter season according to Gregorian Calendar, relying on the position of the moon, the natural indicator of the season rotation.

The Basotho calendar commences after the last days of winter season in August/*Phato* known for blowing winds, clearing Mother Earth and refreshing the land with showers of spring. The Basotho people celebrate the beginning of the year with different rituals such as *Mokete wa lewa*, during which celebrations commence after harvesting, to thank God and the Ancestors for the food harvested.

The Free State Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation annually celebrates this special day through various festivities traditionally hosted at the Basotho Cultural Village in Qwa Qwa. The celebration is hosted in partnership with the Free State House of Traditional Leaders. Dignitaries as well as the traditional leadership from Lesotho grace the celebration. About 4000 residents from Lesotho and the Free State transform the

celebration into a spectacle to behold through different forms of dance, song, dress and rendition of praise singing.

The onset of the pandemic of COVID-19 has this time around denied the Basotho the opportunity to engage in the usual celebration. With this pandemic ravaging the world, different traditional forms cannot be engaged in the traditional way during this special day: the Traditional Healers' Ceremony; Traditional Sesotho Prayer; Traditional Sesotho Music (*Famo, Mohobelo* etc); Demonstration and Drama on Ancient Sesotho Cultural Practices; Symbolic Presentation of African New Year Concept; Arts and Crafts Exhibitions, Horse Demonstrations; Cultural Performances as well as Presentations on Traditional Harvesting Methods, cannot be showcased during this special day this time around as they used to be in the previous years.

“While we are happy to celebrate this important day in the calendar of the Basotho nation, we are nonetheless saddened by the fact that we are not able to do so in the traditional way that we are accustomed to due to the ravaging effects of coronavirus pandemic. We nevertheless take this opportunity to wish all Basotho a happy and prosperous new year. To Basotho in the mountain Kingdom of Lesotho, in the Free State and wherever they might find themselves we say: *ha e lale makwala a none mme pele ya pele ban aba thesele, bana ba Morena Moshweshwe*”, stated Mrs Limakatso Mahasa, Member of the Executive Council for Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation.

END

**Issued by the Free State Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation  
(DSACR)**

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