

YOUR MAJESTIES KING LETSIE THE THIRD AND QUEEN 'MASENATE

YOUR EXCELLENCIES HEADS OF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS

THE PRESIDENT OF ALLIANCE FRANCAISE DE MASERU – MR ASHRAF ABUBAKER

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS - LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

BONSOIR.

Opening in French JE SUIS VRAIMENT TRES HEUREUX DE VENIR A NOUVEAU AU LESOTHO POUR CETTE VISITE ET ENCHANTE DE LE FAIRE A NOUVEAU POUR CELEBRER LA FETE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE ;

WHAT IS FRANCOPHONIE?

70 COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD – SOME DUE TO POLITICAL REASONS, AND OTHERS DUE TO HISTORICAL REASONS – HAVE COME TOGETHER TO SHARE AND TEACH CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND THE FRENCH LANGUAGE. THIS GROUP IS CALLED L'ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE – OIF.

OIF COUNTRIES ARE HOME 870 MILLION PEOPLE IN FIVE CONTINENTS AND THEIR PRESIDENT IS THE FORMER PRESIDENT OF SENEGAL – MR. ABDOU DIOUF.

EVERY YEAR ON THE 20TH OF MARCH WE CELEBRATE TO RECOMMIT TO OUR SHARED VISION.

WHY FRENCH?

THERE ARE NEARLY A QUARTER BILLION PEOPLE IN THE WORLD WHO SPEAK FRENCH TODAY, AND THE NUMBER IS EXPECTED TO DOUBLE TO HALF A BILLION (500 MILLION) BY 2050. 85% OF THESE PEOPLE WILL BE, NOT IN FRANCE, BUT IN AFRICA.

THESE FIGURES ARE CONSERVATIVE BECAUSE THE SURVEYS WERE BASED ON PEOPLE WHO READ AND WRITE ONLY, BUT THERE ARE MANY MORE WHO ONLY SPEAK THE LANGUAGE, ESPECIALLY IN AFRICA.

IN AFRICA 344 MILLION PEOPLE SPEAK FRENCH - MOSTLY AS A SECOND LANGUAGE, BUT IN SOME COUNTRIES IT IS A FIRST LANGUAGE. TRADE AND CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS WITH THESE COUNTRIES ARE CONDUCTED IN FRENCH, AND SOUTHERN AFRICANS INCREASINGLY NEED TO UNDERSTAND AND SPEAK FRENCH TO DO BUSINESS THERE.

AS A RESULT - FRENCH IS THE NINTH MOST SPOKEN LANGUAGE IN THE WORLD, THE THIRD MOST USED ON THE INTERNET, AND THE SECOND MOST TAUGHT – IN SCHOOLS, UNIVERSITIES, IN COMPANIES AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST - THE ALLIANCE FRANCAISE.

FRENCH IN LESOTHO - FRENCH AND LESOTHO HAVE A CENTURIES-OLD LOVE AFFAIR THAT WAS STARTED BY HIS MAJESTY’S GREAT GRANDFATHER, THE FOUNDER OF THE BASOTHO NATION, THE LEGENDARY KING MOSHOESHOE THE FIRST, IN 1833 WHEN HE INVITED MISSIONARIES EUGENE CASALIS, THOMAS ARBOUSSET AND CONSTANT GOSSELLIN.

NEARLY ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY (150) YEARS LATER THE ALLIANCE FRANCAISE WAS ESTABLISHED IN LESOTHO, IN 1981. IN JUNE LAST YEAR MANY OF YOU ATTENDED CELEBRATIONS TO MARK THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THIS RELATIONSHIP.

THE CORE FUNCTION OF ALLIANCE FRANCAISE IS TO TEACH THE FRENCH LANGUAGE AND PROMOTE FRENCH CULTURE AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY. IN MASERU IT HAS TRAINED YOUNG STUDENTS, PROFESSIONALS, COMPANIES, THE POLICE AND DEFENCE. WE ALSO SUPPORT THE NEWLY FOUNDED ASSOCIATION OF FRENCH TEACHERS.

FRENCH IS TAUGHT AT BOTH THE LESOTHO COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LESOTHO WHERE SINCE 2009 A FRENCH LECTURER WAS APPOINTED TO TRAIN FRENCH TEACHERS.

ONE OF THE MOST REWARDING PROJECTS OF THIS PARTNERSHIP STARTED IN 2009 WITH THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION. IT WAS THE APPOINTMENT OF A FRENCH MASTERS DEGREE INTERN, SPECIALISED IN THE TEACHING OF FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE, AT THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT CENTRE – NCDC.

THE AIM WAS TO DEVELOP A DRAFT FRENCH CURRICULUM FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS WITH A TEAM OF EXPERT TEACHERS, BECAUSE CHILDREN ARE THE FUTURE.

FOLLOWING A NUMBER OF WORKSHOPS FOR TEACHERS HERE IN MASERU, IN REUNION ISLAND AND IN FRANCE, A PERMANENT EXPERT HAS NOW BEEN PLACED AT THE NCDC TO MONITOR THE PROJECT.

LAST MONTH SECONDARY SCHOOLS RECEIVED 3,000 TEXTBOOKS THAT WILL GIVE LEARNERS THE OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY THE LANGUAGE THROUGH THE LATEST METHODS AND TECHNIQUES, AND SIT FOR INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED CERTIFICATIONS OFFERED BY ALLIANCE FRANCAISE.

IN SOUTH AFRICA THESE TEXTBOOKS ARE USED TO TEACH AT THE DIPLOMATIC ACADEMY OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.

WITH ALL THESE PLANS IN PLACE WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT LESOTHO AND BASOTHO WILL BE POISED TO GAIN ACCESS TO FRANCOPHONE AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETS, DO BUSINESS WITH EVERYONE WITH NO BARRIERS.

FRANCOPHONIE WILL BE CELEBRATED IN MANY WAYS, IN MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD TODAY, AND THIS WEEK, BUT WE ARE DELIGHTED TO WELCOME YOU TO CELEBRATE WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT BASOTHO WILL MEET THE CHALLENGES OF ECONOMIC GLOBALISATION, AND REACH THEIR INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS.

YOUR MAJESTIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN – HAPPY FRANCOPHONIE DAY!

VOTRE MAJESTE, MESDAMES MESDEMOISELLES ET MESSIEURS, JE VOUS SOUHAITE UNE BONNE FETE. JE VOUS PROPOSE DE LEVER VOS VERRE POUR LA FRANCOPHONIE .