

Opportunities for economic growth

By HM KING MSWATI III

HEAD OF STATE OF THE KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND



KING MSWATI III was educated at Sherborne School in England before returning to Swaziland to ascend the throne in 1986 following the death of his father King Sobhuza some years earlier. The Kingdom of Swaziland is a landlocked country in Southern Africa, bordered by South Africa and Mozambique which celebrated the 40th anniversary of its independence in 2008. The economy is dominated by agriculture, the service sector and tourism.

The Kingdom of Swaziland continues to use its resources and capabilities to expand investment opportunities for both foreign and local business, as part of our national strategy for socio-economic growth. We spare no effort in our drive to access and secure international markets for our products as we see this to be a crucial link to the global economy.

All our programmes and initiatives are guided by our National Development Strategy – Vision 2022. The Vision's main objective is to improve the standard of living for all our people through access to quality services, wealth creation and employment opportunities. It spells out all the key macro-sectoral strategies that need to be in place so that by the year 2022, the Kingdom of Swaziland would be in the top 10 per cent of the medium human development group of countries founded on sustainable economic development, social justice and political stability. It is noteworthy that the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) fit very well into our national vision.

We are committed to address issues of poverty and access to quality health, gender equity, social integration and the pursuit of development models which place emphasis on environmental protection.

However, efforts to achieve our objectives are often negatively affected by several challenges including disease and epidemics such as HIV and AIDS, climate change and the global financial crisis that the world experienced recently. The latter has been a drawback to many of our initiatives especially because it affected our export-based industries. However, we remain optimistic as we see signs of recovery from the global economic downturn.

While our economy is still primarily agro-based, our programmes have opened opportunities in mining, energy, tourism, Information Communication Technology (ICT), research and hi-tech industries. We realise that our economy will continue to benefit from the advancement of information and technology in all areas of our operations.

I am confident that if used correctly and creatively, ICT holds the key to solutions to the various challenges we face. Swaziland sees a golden opportunity in the use of ICT for research, particularly in the area of industrial development and other fields. In this regard, we are establishing a Science and Technology Park and a Centre of Excellence.

In realisation of the fact that education is key to the

development of our people a decision has been taken that we shall be offering free universal primary education – albeit on an incremental basis. Government funds the education of orphaned and vulnerable children.

Investment opportunities

The Kingdom offers vast opportunities in agro-business, mining, tourism and light manufacturing. As a result of our open market policy, skilled human resource, modern infrastructure and political stability to name just a few, Swaziland is a safe and stable investment haven in our region.

Tourism

The Kingdom of Swaziland sees tourism as a major income earner and a vehicle to bring people of different cultural backgrounds together. Our country boasts a very rich cultural heritage that continues to play an important role in attracting tourists.

We hold major annual cultural events such as the Umhlanga – Reed Dances which starts off with that of women around July and culminates in that of maidens in the last week of August.

The Kingdom will be commissioning a new and bigger international airport in early 2010. Our new international airport is strategically located between major regional wildlife parks and harbours and is the best gateway into the proposed Lubombo Game Reserve.

Peace and stability

Since Swaziland became a nation we have continued to progress under peaceful and stable conditions. We have used this attribute as a major draw for attracting investment as we offer an investor-friendly environment that suits the needs of even the most discerning prospector. As a peace-loving nation, the Kingdom of Swaziland strongly believes in promoting dialogue to address national issues and challenges. It is for that reason that our country is known all over the world to be an oasis of peace.

Conclusion

As the Commonwealth Heads of State and Government are meeting in this beautiful Island of Trinidad and Tobago, I wish our organisation great success in dealing with all the issues and challenges that humanity faces today.