

Press Statement

MATTER OF FACT

Newsday Media acknowledges the press release issued by **the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development on Tuesday, 22 October 2024**, which appears to be an attempt to undermine and discredit the credibility of our reporting rather than addressing the real issues of national importance.

Instead of validating this press release with an extensive rebuttal, **Newsday** firmly places on record that the **Ministry itself invited stakeholders to a meeting on Thursday, 17 October 2024, specifically to validate the “final” draft of the Lesotho Special Economic Zones policy.**

While the meeting may not have resulted in the formal validation of the draft, this does not negate the fact that stakeholders were indeed invited to validate the policy. What the Ministry must now clarify to the nation is **how it came to draft a document intended to become government policy that explicitly named a specific company—iSwiss—without any form of engagement or arrangement with that company.**

It is highly improbable that the Ministry selected iSwiss randomly from a pool of existing companies worldwide to be included in the draft policy. **The Ministry must explain the criteria used in choosing this specific company for mention in such an important draft document.** This situation raises serious questions that demand clarity: **Was there a formal process involved in selecting iSwiss, or was the mention of this company the result of some other engagement?**

The Ministry should also clarify whether iSwiss would be surprised to find its name included in the draft policy document. The public deserves to know whether **the inclusion of this company’s name was legitimate and based on any form of agreement or collaboration, or if this situation occurred without the company’s consent.**

The Ministry owes the public an explanation regarding **why iSwiss was explicitly mentioned in what was poised to be an official government policy.**

Had the meeting validated the draft policy as planned, it would have advanced to the next phase, leading to its formal adoption and binding the government to proceed with any commitments outlined in the document, including obligations toward the mentioned company. Therefore, the inclusion of iSwiss in the draft cannot be viewed as accidental or insignificant but rather as an indication of an intended formal arrangement.

Furthermore, the Ministry’s officer who extended the invitation to validate the document was clearly acting on official instructions. Instead of deflecting blame onto

Newsday and simply insulting the intelligence of the media house's leadership, **the Ministry should clarify the invitation process, identify who drafted the policy, and specify who authorized the invitation of stakeholders with the draft policy attached.**

Newsday calls upon the Ministry to exhibit transparency and provide clear responses to these critical questions. We will continue to rigorously investigate this matter and, in due course, disclose the individuals responsible for drafting the policy and issuing the instructions for its validation.

It is imperative for the Ministry to be forthcoming and provide definitive answers rather than casting aspersions on the media whose clear mandate is to hold those in power accountable.

Newsday stands by its reporting and remains committed to informing the public with accuracy and integrity.

We have uploaded the said draft document on our social media pages: **LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter (X)** and on our website: **www.newsdayonline.co.ls** for the public to read and understand Newsday has no issues with SEZ, but the contents of the policy (draft).

ABOUT NEWSDAY

Newsday Media PTY, LTD is a legally registered media organisation wholly owned by Basotho.

It is a leading hybrid news media company recognized for its comprehensive news coverage, in-depth analysis, and unwavering commitment to quality journalism.

We uphold our tradition through our respected print media, maintaining the trust and loyalty of our diverse readership. While embracing digital innovation, Newsday Media leverages cutting-edge technology to deliver news and information to audiences in a timely and accessible manner. We have seamlessly integrated digital advertising into our offerings, ensuring broader audience reach and enhanced engagement through our online platforms, which feature multimedia content, interactive features, and user-friendly navigation, providing an engaging and immersive experience for our readers.

Located at Carlton Centre Room 302, we take pride in prioritising the interests of Basotho, with profit-driven content being secondary. We are a group of dynamic trailblazers whose professional integrity guides our core responsibility of being Basotho first and journalists second.

Newsday #PacingStandards