

REPUBLIC OF  
BOTSWANA

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**STATEMENT BY**

**HIS HONOUR MOKGWEETSI E.K. MASISI, M.P.,  
THE VICE PRESIDENT  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

**DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE  
OF THE 71<sup>st</sup> SESSION OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**23<sup>rd</sup> SEPTEMBER 2016  
UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK**



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**Mr. President,**

1. On behalf of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Botswana, Lt. General Dr. Seretse Khama Ian Khama, allow me at the very outset, to join previous speakers in congratulating you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Seventy First Session of the UN General Assembly.
2. Your election to lead this, the most universal organ of the United Nations, is a practical demonstration of the confidence and high esteem by which you personally, and your great country Fiji, are held by the international community.
3. As a former Permanent Representative of a small island developing State, we have deep respect and admiration for your zeal and advocacy on issues of sustainable development and climate change. This gives us inspiration to look to you in carrying us forward towards implementation of both the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.
4. We are confident that your extensive diplomatic experience coupled with your deep familiarity with the private sector and UN development system will prove to be invaluable in your leadership of this Session. We wish to assure you of Botswana's unequivocal support and cooperation during your tenure.
5. In the same breath, permit me to pay a fitting tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mogens Lykketoft, for his effective guidance and leadership of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session. The High level events he convened during his tenure, including the recently adopted action-oriented Political Declaration on ending AIDS; the signing of the Paris Agreement and the development of The Indicators Framework for the Sustainable Development Goals, are a clear demonstration of his commitment to sustainable development; Peace and Security; as well as human rights, the very pillars upon which this Organisation was founded.

**Mr. President,**

6. My delegation fully endorses your pertinent choice of the theme for this Session, namely, ***"The Sustainable Development Goals; A Universal Push to Transform Our World"***.
7. We are well aware of the need and importance of reviewing, monitoring and evaluating progress made in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) during the next 15 years. This has been one of the main lessons learnt from the implementation of Millennium Development Goals (MDG's).
8. **Mr. President,** Botswana has long recognized that in order for Sustainable Development to be achieved, it has to be nationally owned. It must be based on inclusive, accountable, democratic and strong institutions and processes.
9. For us as Botswana, adherence to these principles, coupled with the judicious exploitation of natural resources and international development support, has enabled us, as a country, to achieve the modest economic growth in the past 50 years of our independent statehood.
10. In the next 7 days, on 30<sup>th</sup> September, Botswana will be celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence. Once among the poorest nations of the world with a GDP per capita of about US\$70 in 1966, we have managed to be counted amongst the Middle Income Countries (MICs).

**Mr. President,**

11. When we told the world that we were ready for self-governance, many skeptics, historians and commentators alike, did not think we were serious.

12. In fact, on the 28<sup>th</sup> September 1966, two days before we joined the community of sovereign nations, one cynical Canadian journalist, Charles King, of the Southern News Services of Canada observed:

***"Bechuanaland poor, hungry, desert-land, independence to come Friday."***

***"The new blue, white and black flags are flying everywhere in Gaborone, its incongruous capital city. But elsewhere in the vast, trackless wasteland that will take the name of Botswana there is little to celebrate."***

13. King continued:

***"Two years of disastrous drought and crop failure have brought havoc and hunger to its widely scattered agricultural inhabitants. More than one fifth of the population is literally being kept alive by emergency feeding and the numbers are rapidly increasing."***

14. He further said that:

***"It has debts and economic misery. It is destined to be an international charity case forever exporting its ablest men and cattle in exchange for cash and kindness from abroad."***

15. With less than 2 miles of paved roads in the entire country, 42 college graduates, a few primary schools, a single railway line operated by neighbouring Rhodesia and one national radio station that broadcast for two hours a day, ours is a country borne out of humble beginnings.
16. Having joined the United Nations in 1966 together with Lesotho, Guyana and Barbados, we look back with pride and fulfillment that the experiment we started was worth the try.

17. We had but little or no infrastructure to rely on from day one of Independence, we placed a high premium on building a united, democratic and accountable nation premised on the respect for democracy, human rights, rule of law and strong institutions.
18. Conscious of the prevailing circumstances and challenges, we chose to base the development of our society on four key national principles of **Democracy, Development, Unity and Self-reliance**.
19. As we reflect on our challenges and modest achievements we have made, we are proud of the fact that we are among Africa's most stable democracies, having held free, fair and peaceful multi-party elections every 5 years without interruption.
20. In celebrating 50 years of independent nationhood, we are conscious of the fact that we could not have achieved all these milestones without the much needed support and solidarity of the international community.
21. For this, we shall forever remain profoundly grateful to our all-weather and reliable development partners from all corners of the world who, have stood with us through this challenging journey.
22. Due, in part, to the overwhelming commitment of all our development partners, donors and entities alike, we have today made great strides and achievements in the fields of education, health care, infrastructure, human resource development as well as women and youth empowerment. These achievements should, however, not make us complacent.

**Mr. President,**

23. Like many nations, Botswana is already feeling the adverse impact of climate change. Such impact manifests through decline in agricultural production, increasing food insecurity and increasing water stress. These are projected to worsen with time.

24. The threat posed by climate change must not be underestimated. Urgent and effective global action on climate change mitigation and adaptation is required to avoid the catastrophic consequences of global warming.
25. This 71<sup>st</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly provides a strategic opportunity for injecting the much needed political momentum into the effective implementation of the Agenda 2030, which this august body unanimously adopted exactly a year ago.
26. The recent High Level event on large Movements of Refugees and Migrants held a few days ago, is a stark reminder of the challenges we continue to face as a planet. Whilst we commend all States that take on the burden of receiving displaced people, it clearly is not the answer. More should be put into addressing the problem and finding solutions in the countries they come from. Clearly the current situation of receiving such people serves only to encourage others to follow their predecessors.
27. As a member of the community of nations which cherish freedom, peace and the full enjoyment of life, we remain deeply concerned about the many acts of terror, conflict and human suffering that have precipitated the vast and large displacement of people across the globe.
28. To this end, we are concerned about the protracted Syrian crisis, which could have been long contained had the United Nations Security Council and the international community intervened promptly in this man made catastrophe. History will judge us harshly for we have allowed this situation to degenerate into what it is today. However, we are well aware that Assad and his machine that slaughters innocents is not the only party committing crimes against humanity.
29. We are equally concerned and strongly condemn the continued blatant contravention of international law and UN resolutions by North Korea through its continuous testing of ballistic missiles. To demonstrate our abhorrence, Botswana terminated her diplomatic relations with the rogue state because of its poor human rights record. In fact in our

opinion, North Korea and Syria do not deserve the membership of this world body due to their lack of respect and adherence to the values and principles which they have committed to uphold.

30. As a community of nations bound by universal ideals and moral ethos, it would be a dereliction of our responsibilities if we do not hold each other accountable for breaching the very fundamental values of human rights this organization is committed to uphold. In the light of the increasing security threats, we call upon the United Nations Security Council, as an organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security to demonstrate seriousness and alacrity in executing this important mandate. It can no longer be acceptable to hide behind the veto while millions of innocent lives are lost.
31. We continue to express our sympathies and prayers to those afflicted by disasters such as earthquakes, floods and other natural calamities. We extend our condolences to all those who lost their lives in the last year. In this regard, we wish to commend civil society for their tireless efforts in providing humanitarian aid to those in dire need.
32. In the same vein, we reiterate our long-held belief, which is shared by many, and in line with the hallowed principle of Responsibility to Protect, that States have the primary responsibility to protect their own populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity. We commend Human Rights Organizations work in exposing such violations wherever they occur in the world.
33. As a staunch supporter of the International Criminal Court (ICC), we support all efforts to fight impunity and strengthen the international criminal justice system in order to bring justice to the victims of such crimes. We urge all states who are signatories to the Rome Statute to uphold their commitments.

**Mr. President,**

34. It is crucial that we step up our efforts in the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 in order to effectively protect women and

children in armed conflict, and to involve them in all levels and processes of mediation, peacekeeping and peace maintenance, reconstruction and development, given the fact that they suffer most from the effects of armed conflict.

35. As a peace-loving nation, we reaffirm our abiding faith in the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the various multilateral instruments under the International Humanitarian Law, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**Mr. President,**

36. Let me conclude by commending Brazil for hosting successful Olympic Games despite criticisms in some quarters which advocated for failure by disseminating fear messages linking the games with issues of the Zika virus, terrorism and others.
37. In a related matter, we strongly condemn the International Paralympics Committee for its blanket ban of Russian athletes. Botswana does not condone doping in any way, but to punish clean athletes is discrimination. Those who participate in the Paralympics are disabled and is a way of including them in the mainstream and help them overcome their physical challenges. To treat them like this by a body that was set up specifically to show compassion and caring for such people is an injustice. We believe there is an agenda beyond their stated reasons for this.
38. Lastly, I wish to re-affirm Botswana's continued commitment to playing her part in the quest for International peace and security, as well as to the international community's unrelenting efforts towards making this world a safer and more prosperous place for both present and future generations.
39. Finally, as we are in the United States of America, we wish the people of America successful elections in November, this year. We do hope that the person who emerges victorious will be someone who is known to be tolerant and who embraces all.



40. In the spirit of United Nations Charter, and as inspired by the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals **"Let us push to transform our World and leave no one behind."**

**I thank you for your kind attention.**

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