

REPUBLIC OF  
BOTSWANA



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

154 EAST 46TH STREET • NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017  
TEL. (212) 889-2277

**STATEMENT BY**

**HON. PHANDU T. C. SKELEMANI, PH, MP  
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND  
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OF  
THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

**AT THE**

**67<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
NEW YORK, 1 OCTOBER 2012**

*Check against delivery*

**Mr. President,**

1. Allow me, on behalf of my delegation, to join preceding speakers in expressing our felicitations to you on your assumption of the Presidency of the 67<sup>th</sup> Session of this Assembly.
2. Let me also seize this opportunity to sincerely commend your predecessor, His Excellency Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of the State of Qatar, for his skillful stewardship of the 66<sup>th</sup> Session.
3. My delegation is confident that under your guidance and wise leadership, the deliberations of the 67<sup>th</sup> Session will achieve the desired successful and fruitful outcome.
4. I therefore pledge to you, the full support and cooperation of my delegation in the discharge of your onerous responsibilities.

**Mr. President,**

5. Botswana is among developing countries which were adversely affected by the 2008 global economic and financial crisis.
6. Consequently, we were compelled to re-order our priorities and also defer implementation of some approved projects in our National Development Plan, some of which were of strategic national importance.
7. It is in this regard, Mr. President that we continue to be concerned that many of our traditional donors who helped to bring us to where we are today have virtually abandoned us following our graduation to Higher Middle Income developing country status.

8. Contrary to the perception that Botswana is an economically well off country, we do need development assistance now, more than ever before, on account of the varied nature and gravity of the challenges we continue to face.
9. Turning to the African continent, Botswana has followed with concern some recent peculiar developments.
10. The military coups in Mali and Guinea Bissau early this year are a sad reminder of what we thought was a closed chapter of the dark days of African politics driven by self interest.
11. These developments seriously undermine the significant progress which Africa has made to date in embracing and consolidating democracy, good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law.
12. We therefore call on the African Union to remain firm and resolute in its rejection of unconstitutional change of governments on the African continent and we implore the International Community to give full support to the African Union in this regard.
13. Elsewhere on the continent we particularly welcome the recent agreement between Sudan and South Sudan on the implementation of the African Union Roadmap, aimed at resolving outstanding issues in the relations between the two countries.
14. We, however, remain concerned about the fragile security situation between the two. We therefore appeal to both parties to exercise maximum restraint and to commit to honouring the terms of the Roadmap.

15. Although this appeal is made to both sides, we are very much aware that Sudan is the main cause of instability between the two countries. There is a catalogue of incidents of provocation and blatant acts of aggression against the Republic of South Sudan by the North that have led to instability in that region which has been typical of the Sudanese regime for many years.

**Mr. President,**

16. We live in times when our common well-being is seriously compromised by such threats as nuclear proliferation, terrorism, climate change, environmental degradation, under-development and pandemic diseases, coupled with the effects of the global economic and financial crisis and internal conflicts.
17. The resolution of this myriad of challenges and threats confronting mankind requires urgent and concerted action by the international community.
18. Because of its universality, the United Nations commands the requisite legitimacy and moral authority to provide guidance and leadership in addressing these threats and challenges.
19. It is therefore, imperative that the United Nations of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century should respond effectively to present realities and to effectively handle future challenges.

**Mr. President,**

20. We believe that the international community should act and speak out strongly and forthrightly against human rights abuses and atrocities whenever and where ever they occur.
21. In this regard, my delegation observes with deep regret that over the past few months, the World watched helplessly and failed hopelessly to intervene as Syria descended into protracted anarchy.

22. In the process, the Syrian people have been subjected to a cycle of violent repression and some of the worst human rights abuses and atrocities known to mankind.
23. Even as we speak, the violent crackdown and bloodshed in that country continue unabated. Assad has displaced more than a million Syrians to satisfy his lust for power. He has caused around 300,000 Syrians to flee into neighbouring countries because of his criminal acts. He has slaughtered 20,000 of his citizens in order to remain President. He has killed men, women, children and babies to achieve this.
24. The International Community has, regrettably, failed to respond collectively. And yet Syria remains a member of the UN, a body with the expressed objective to defend humanity. This surely cannot be right. Syria's allies in the Security Council and in the region need to be equally condemned.
25. The uprisings in the Middle East, commonly referred to as the Arab Spring, have demonstrated that no amount of force can suppress the will of the people forever. The situation in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt where the popular will of the people has ushered in democratic dispensations in these countries, attests to this fact.
26. With regards to Libya which had to engage in an internal conflict to rid itself of a brutal dictator, we commend the Libyan people and their allies in the military coalition that imposed a no-fly-zone in removing Gaddafi and his regime.
27. My delegation is of the view that, given its mandate of maintenance of international peace and security, the United Nations Security Council should assume high moral ground in defence of victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity such as the ones currently being committed in Syria. The Principle of the Responsibility to Protect in accordance with UN resolution 1674 of April 2006 should be forcefully applied wherever crimes against humanity occur.

28. In this connection, my delegation condemns in the strongest terms possible, the persistent veto action by China and Russia of successive Security Council resolutions aimed at putting pressure on the Syrian leadership to cease its heinous crimes against its own citizens.
29. We therefore call upon such Members of the Security Council to live up to their responsibilities in accordance with the provisions of the UN Charter.
30. We urge the international community to act swiftly to save the people of Syria from further unwarranted bloodshed.
31. Botswana will continue to co-sponsor and support the various General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions aimed at addressing the situation in Syria as a practical demonstration of our unwavering commitment towards a resolution of the Syrian crisis.
32. It is for this reason that we join forces with like-minded countries in calling for the situation in Syria to be referred to the International Criminal Court for investigation in order that those responsible for committing crimes against humanity could be held accountable.
33. Assad and his regime should be removed as soon as possible. We must encourage the opposition to unite and form a transition administration we can all recognize.
34. We wish to commend Turkey and other countries that have taken the burden of accommodating Syrian refugees and who have spoken out against the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in Syria and for contributing along with others to the UNHCR's plea for contributions.

35. On our part as Botswana, we have made a modest contribution to the UNHCR to assist in humanitarian relief efforts for Syrian refugees.
36. Further we wish to commend those responsible Human Rights organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch for the work they do in seeking to safeguard principles that protect humanity. Their mission is a very necessary one, to act as watchdogs on matters of safeguarding human rights.
37. Similarly, we commend those Humanitarian NGOs that work tirelessly with meager resources and under very difficult circumstances to bring relief to Refugees affected by natural and man-made disasters.

**Mr. President,**

38. Human rights abuses and atrocities are not only limited to Syria. It is in this context that we affirm our support for the International Criminal Court (ICC) and urge the Court to continue to implement its mandate including the prosecution of those indicted for human rights abuses and crimes against humanity. We therefore appeal to State Parties to fully cooperate with the court in its efforts to bring to justice suspected perpetrators of such crimes.
39. We wish to add our voice in condemning the violence that occurred following the release of a publication that caused offence to people of the Islamic faith. There can be no justification at all for such violent response to the publication. This violence also caused offence to its victims. Therefore retaliation to offensive expressions cannot be answered by other offensive actions on innocent parties.
40. However, where Democracy is defined as a government of the people, by the people for the people, – in other words doing what is in the best interests of the people, how can it be in the best interests of the people if freedom of speech causes insult.

41. Other freedoms, in a democratic dispensation refer also to freedom of association – but you cannot associate with terrorist groups or criminal groups without consequences as it is not in the best interests of the people to have terrorism and crime. Freedom of expression allows for protest – but only for peaceful protest in a Democracy, because it is not also in the best interests of people to have violent protest – and consequences do follow in Democracies if protests become violent.
42. The same goes for freedom of the Press – if it is abused as it often is. There are consequences, to protect people’s interests from misinformation and attempts to discredit and defame them. With all these freedoms there must be limits. Democracy is supposed to be responsible. Causing offence and insult cannot by any stretch of the imagination be passed off as what we want in a Democracy. To try to justify irresponsible actions to be permitted under any of the Freedoms, including freedom of speech, is also irresponsible.
43. Coming to Environmental Issues, we note the limited and disappointing progress that was made at the Rio+20 Conference in addressing issues of sustainable development as has been the case at similar summits in the past.
44. As we all know, the world is facing the twin challenges of resource scarcity and climate change. These problems are particularly acute in Africa due to the high prevalence of poverty in the continent. To respond to these big problems, my country took the important initiative of hosting the Summit for Sustainability in Africa in May this year. These problems obviously need visionary solutions and strong partnerships for sustainability on a scale and with impact never seen before. Participation was at Heads of State level, and included some of the most influential and significant private sectors in the world.



45. The Summit adopted the Gaborone Declaration, which among others, provides for policy improvements at both the Government and Private sector levels to integrate the value of the natural capital development. The Declaration also calls for increased private sector investment in Africa to reduce food insecurity, improve livelihoods and increase sustainability. We therefore call upon the United Nations system and international community at large to commit to the implementation of the Declaration.
46. There are very important and urgent issues affecting developing countries that need to be addressed. These include technology transfer, funding and capacity building in other areas, to enable such countries to adapt to the requirements of a green economy, in the context of sustainable development.
47. In this regard, we urge the developed world to assist developing countries to address these critical issues and adopt for themselves accelerated interventions to address climate change and its causes in their economies.
48. We, however, welcome the agreement on the launching of an Intergovernmental negotiation process which will lead to the adoption of Sustainable Development Goals as part of the post-2015 development agenda, when the process for the implementation of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will have run its full course.
49. My delegation believes that the process to develop Sustainable Development Goals should be synchronized with the 2013 Review of the implementation of Millennium Development Goals.
50. We would like to take this opportunity to commend the work done by environmental organizations worldwide in their effort to save the planet from climate change and its negative effects.

**Mr. President,**

51. Botswana participated in the ill-fated UN Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty last July, whose purpose was for Member States to agree on common international standards to regulate international trade in conventional weapons.
52. Botswana believes that, when adopted, the Arms Trade Treaty will complement the UN Programme of Action in combating the proliferation of arms and ammunition, which continue to cause untold suffering.
53. Before concluding my statement, I wish to state that Botswana fully supports the call for the implementation of the successive resolutions of this august Assembly on the lifting of sanctions against Cuba. We believe that the lifting of these sanctions is long overdue and logical.
54. I thank you for your attention.

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