



STATEMENT

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY DR. MOKGWEETSI E.K. MASISI
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

DURING THE

**GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 77th SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

***"A WATERSHED MOMENT: TRANSFORMATIVE SOLUTIONS TO
INTERLOCKING CHALLENGES."***

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- **Mr. President,**
- **Your Excellencies,**
- **Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. At the outset, I wish to extend my sincere congratulations to you and your country, Hungary, on your election as President of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly at its 77th Session.
2. I am certain that this august body will benefit greatly from the wealth of knowledge and experience from your illustrious career in the diplomatic service including your term here in New York as Hungary's Permanent Representative, where you co-chaired the intergovernmental process that ushered in the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Mr. President,

3. I must particularly express gratitude to the outgoing President for his close coordination and collaboration with other Principal Organs particularly the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which Botswana was honoured to lead as its 77th President.

4. I am delighted that the two Presidents worked very cooperatively on addressing Vaccine Equity, the Sustainable Development of Africa, Financing for a sustainable recovery and the nexus between natural resources and sustainable development, among other priorities. Close collaboration among UN Principal Organs of the United Nations is beneficial, and must be promoted.

Mr. President,

5. Botswana endorses your choice of the theme for this Session, that is, ***"A Watershed Moment: Transformative Solutions to Interlocking Challenges."*** We concur with your observation that the current global challenges, namely, the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, Humanitarian Challenges and Climate Change are complex and interconnected hence require transformative solutions.
6. Given the interconnectedness of these challenges, it is evident that they can only be effectively addressed in a holistic approach. This further demonstrates the enduring relevance of the UN Charter, which 77 years ago, established the three founding pillars of the UN system namely, **human rights, peace and security**, and **development** as interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

7. As UN Member States, we should look no further for these solutions than in the already existing key multilateral frameworks, among these, the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs**, the **Paris Agreement**, the **UN 75th Anniversary Declaration** as well as the outcomes of major UN meetings.
8. This Session gives us an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to these solutions. In his comprehensive report on **Our Common Agenda**, the Secretary-General has offered us a boost with concrete ideas and recommendations to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda and close the existing gaps in our multilateral frameworks.

Mr. President,

9. I wish therefore, to preface my remarks, through which I will share my country's progress in recovering from the COVID-19 and towards a transformative and sustainable development, by reminding this auspicious body of Botswana's road to development.
10. Many in this room may only know the Botswana of now, which is an upper middle income economy. This is a status that we are proud of, given that when we attained our independence

only 56 years ago, we were among the poorest in the world. However, we were very fortunate to discover what has turned out to be the World's largest diamond reserve, across the Kimberly belt.

11. For those less acquainted with the development path we have travelled as a country, this is not the entire reflection of the Botswana story. Our story is based on the humanity, the principled and the tenacity that we have as a people, **as Batswana. It is the story of the wisdom of our forefathers who avoided the misfortune that often accompanied the discovery and exploitation of minerals in other parts of the world, and electing instead, to turn the discovery of diamonds into a story for development.** Botswana as a nation, would never have been able to realise this development had we not held firmly to our belief in the principles of democracy, centred on the rule of law, good governance and the protection and enjoyment of the basic human rights by our people.

Mr. President,

12. I must however, admit that we face an uphill battle in our investment efforts to attract investors to help us to diversity our economy away from dependence on diamonds.

13. I have stood before this General Assembly and I have engaged at different fora when the opportunity arises, to share the Botswana story with a view to encouraging partnerships to augment our efforts towards diversification. I trust that those that are attentive to our call are more in number, and I firmly believe that they too, aspire to share a part in our story. In the meantime, diamonds are still the bedrock of our economy. It is in this respect, that the words of the Secretary General António Guterres, and the call for a “Common Agenda”, resonate with me.
14. I liked in particular, the call by the Secretary General for a global view whereby “Power, wealth and opportunity are shared more broadly and fairly at the international level.” For my country, this translates into a fair and equitable opportunity to use the resources that we have to develop our people and give them an equal opportunity to contribute and share in global wealth.
15. As we continue to advocate for the Kimberly Process (KP), I wish to remind this august body that **Botswana’s Story is unquestionable proof and living testimony, that diamonds, with good governance, are for**

development. In fact, **DIAMONDS ARE A SERIOUS MATTER OF LIVELIHOODS!**

16. I will be hosting a side event on Diamonds for Development later this evening, through which I hope to further broaden conversations and allow our partners, both within the United Nations, governments, civil society and the private sector, to join us in ensuring that my country, **BOTSWANA**, will also be part of the United Nations family espoused around shared power, wealth and opportunity as we endeavour to realise the 2030 Agenda.

Towards A Sustainable and Transformative Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic

Mr. President,

17. Despite our challenges, my Government continues to play its part to contribute to the international agenda and in ensuring that access to medicines by our people is part and parcel of their healthcare while ensuring that the economy also recovers from the Pandemic.
18. Vaccine rollout remains a pre-condition for a sustainable recovery. Yet many countries in the global South especially

Africa have not met the WHO's target of 70% of their populations being fully vaccinated by mid-2022. This underscores the urgent need to continue promoting vaccine equity through international solidarity as well as addressing vaccine hesitancy by countering disinformation and raising awareness about the science-backed facts regarding the effectiveness and safety of the vaccines.

19. Despite the challenges we encountered, which were common to many developing countries, Botswana has procured enough vaccines to administer to all eligible groups, thus enabling significant progress with 64% of our population now fully vaccinated. However, more needs to be done.

20. It is in this context that Botswana continues to play an active role on this matter and recently also joined other Member States in co-sponsoring the General Assembly Resolution calling for the convening of a **High-Level Meeting on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response** during the 78th Session of the General Assembly. We also continue to actively participate in the ongoing process towards the possible elaboration of a Pandemic treaty at the World Health Organisation in Geneva. We believe that such a legally binding instrument will strengthen existing global

mechanisms to address and react more speedily to health emergencies.

Mr. President,

21. I am pleased to inform you that as part of overcoming the challenges of global vaccine inequity, and in line with our commitment to ***Build Back Better*** and in a transformative manner, the Government of Botswana has approved the manufacturing of the patent-free Corbevax COVID-19 vaccine, and the construction of a vaccine manufacturing plant has already commenced.
22. Additionally, the facility will produce cancer treatment and next generation cell-based immunotherapy. This initiative is being undertaken in partnership with NantWorks, the Texas Children's Hospital Center for Vaccine Development and the Baylor College of Medicine. This partnership will enhance Botswana's capacity in human vaccine production, contribute to our goal of building a knowledge-based economy, and help in preparations for future pandemics.

Mr President,

23. Botswana's recovery plans include strengthening the country's vast social protection system to ensure the inclusivity of vulnerable groups, persons living with

disabilities, which will go a long way in facilitating equal enjoyment of their rights while broadening the accountability framework as we recently acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

24. In this regard, My Government has set a medium to long term **Economic Recovery and Transformation Plan (ERTP)** intended at fast tracking recovery efforts while advancing the implementation 2030 Agenda and its Goals.

Mr. President,

25. In order to achieve sustainable development, adequate financing is needed for the success of our recovery efforts from the pandemic and acceleration of implementation of the 2030 Agenda during this **Decade of Action**. Effective mobilisation of domestic and international financial resources as well as their prudent utilisation is therefore imperative.
26. I therefore, reiterate calls for development partners to scale up and fulfil their **Official Development Assistance (ODA)** commitments and our efforts in attaining long-term development sustainability.

Mr. President,

27. In addition to international funding, it should be noted that transformative agendas require the effective implementation by Governments and associated stakeholders as well as a sense of ownership by all stakeholders, and a buy-in from the people we serve. This decisive moment of the myriad of challenges we face, demands that we challenge ourselves even more.

28. My Government has thus initiated the **Reset Agenda**, inspired by the need for collective, inclusive and coordinated efforts towards the transformative agenda. We are accelerating digitisation in the delivery of services, driven by innovation and creativity. Our people are responding to the technology driven solutions and they too are demonstrating the reorientation of their disposition as well as conceptual agility to venture into new frontiers of doing things differently. A full embrace of this mind-set-change is an inspirational approach to effective implementation of government policies, programmes, projects and business activities and indeed the Sustainable Development Goals.

29. The realisation of transformative solutions to the current social and economic challenges will require solidarity both within and between countries. As Chair of the **Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)**, many of whom are also characterised as Least developed and Small States, Botswana expresses solidarity with fellow UN Member States, in special situations, particularly the distinct and peculiar challenges faced by the **LDCs** and **the SIDS** in their efforts to *Build Back Better* and recover sustainably from the pandemic.
30. In line with the repeated position of our sub-regional body SADC, I also wish to express solidarity with our north-eastern neighbour Zimbabwe and call for the removal of **Unilateral Coercive Measures** targeted at that country. While we are confident of the resilience and resolve of Zimbabwe as well as its economic transformation prospects, we are concerned that such measures are not advancing the cause and livelihoods of innocent Zimbabweans.

Addressing the Climate Crisis

Mr. President,

31. This year we continue to witness extreme weather events that point to the escalating severity of the climate crisis. Decisive

implementation of the bold climate action spelled out in the **Paris Agreement and the Glasgow Climate Pact** is therefore needed now to prevent the worst implications.

32. Botswana remains committed to our 15% carbon emission reduction target by 2030, as indicated in our Nationally Determined Contributions and reconfirmed in our Climate Change Policy adopted in 2021. The policy addresses access to climate finance, clean technologies and renewable energy.

Mr. President,

33. Climate ambitions will not translate into climate action in developing countries if they remain inadequately funded. We are therefore pleased that new financial pledges to support adaptation in developing countries were made at **COP 26 in Glasgow, United Kingdom.**
34. It is our hope that these commitments will be fulfilled expeditiously in order to enable accelerated implementation particularly in Africa, a region that contributes minimally to climate change but is regrettably the most affected.
35. In this context, we are optimistic that **COP 27, to be held in Sharm el-Sheik, Egypt,** on African soil, will further inspire

ambitious climate action and deliver more adaptation resources for Africa and other vulnerable regions.

36. Drawing from this inspiration, Botswana in collaboration with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and various stakeholders, convened the Climate Adaptation Week 2022 from 22 to 26 August 2022 in Gaborone under the theme '**Transformations in advancing the formulations and implementation of National Adaptation Plans (NAPS)**'.
37. The Expo succeeded in promoting the exchange of experiences and fostering partnerships between a wide range of actors and stakeholders on how to advance National Adaptation Plans (NAPs).

The War in Ukraine and Other Threats to International Peace and Security

Mr. President,

38. On 2nd March this year, Botswana was among the 141 Member States that voted in favour of the General Assembly resolution which demanded an end to the invasion of Ukraine.

39. With that vote we were reaffirming the **purposes and principles of the UN Charter** particularly its Articles 1 and 2, which underscore the need for peaceful settlement of disputes as well as respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Charter is a binding instrument of international law, therefore all peace-loving nations ought to adhere to its letter and spirit under all circumstances.
40. We therefore continue to call on all parties to recommit to finding a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict through diplomacy and dialogue. The UN-brokered talks that resulted in the Russian Federation and Ukraine signing an agreement on the **Black Sea Grain Initiative** are a testament that when given a chance, diplomacy and dialogue can yield results. If nothing else, the end of the second World War and the founding of the United Nations in 1945, has demonstrated that only if we approach conflict based on solidarity and working together, can we find peace.
41. I commend the Secretary-General and the UN system organizations and other stakeholders, including neighbouring countries such as Poland for rising to the challenge to address humanitarian needs in Ukraine and other crisis situations.

42. As we continue to seek amicable redress of this worrying conflict, it is important that the UN system be adequately resourced given its critical work of saving lives and alleviating the suffering of victims of armed conflict, climate change and other disasters.

43. **Mr President,**

We, the collective Member States of the United Nations, have the responsibility and mandate to strength international law, promote human rights and gender equality, and most crucial to protect civilians in challenging peacekeeping environments. In this context, Botswana shares the same ideals with many of you present here today on the principle of **Responsibility to Protect (R2P)**.

44. **Mr President,**

As has already been acknowledged at the **2005 World Summit**, States have the primary responsibility to protect their own populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity. As part of the **Group of Friends on Responsibility to Protect** which Botswana is Co-Chair together with Costa Rica and Denmark, we will continue to ensure that the membership of the United Nations

pays attention to this important responsibility to reinforce needed global action.

45. In Southern Africa, we remain actively engaged through our sub-regional organisation, the **Southern African Development Community (SADC)**, in addressing the threat posed by terrorism and violent extremism to peace and security in our sub-region.

The UN's Fitness for Purpose

Mr. President,

46. The UN's response to today's crises is a clear demonstration of its indispensability as the foremost organisation in addressing global issues. From its system-wide response to COVID-19 to its swift action in relation to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and other crises situations, the UN has proven to be fit for purpose.
47. Nonetheless, there remains ample room for improving the organisation's effectiveness in fulfilling the principles and purposes of the UN Charter. In this connection, we welcome recent reforms and proposals aimed at strengthening the UN system and enhancing its relevance in addressing contemporary global challenges.

48. These efforts include the Secretary-General's **development, management, peace and security, human rights and humanitarian** pillar reforms, which are aimed at enhancing the Secretariat's agility, accountability, and effectiveness in mandate implementation.
49. Also noteworthy is **General Assembly Resolution 76/262** adopted in April by consensus mandating that the Assembly automatically meets within ten (10) days, if a veto is used in the **Security Council** by one of its five permanent members. It is our considered view that the resolution is an important accountability step that enhances the General Assembly's voice on peace and security matters.
50. The fact that the General Assembly had to adopt a resolution on the use of veto underscores the need to enhance the responsiveness and representative nature of the Security Council. I therefore reaffirm Botswana's support of a reform of the Council in line with the Common African Position which is reflected in the **Ezulwini Consensus** and the **Sirte Declaration**.
51. The work to revitalise the **General Assembly** is equally important and must continue, with a view to reinforce the role

of this most universally representative august body. During our Presidency of **UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**, we were delighted as Botswana to work together with other Bureau members to implement the provisions of General Assembly resolution 75/290 A and B on strengthening of the Council and the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). ECOSOC is key in implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Mr. President,

52. For a small country like mine, the reform of the United Nations is important, only in as far as it will ensure the equal voice of Member States, regardless of size. My Government, and I personally, are therefore eager to have our own people represented and employed within the United States system. With our Presidency of the ECOSOC, I believe we have demonstrated our capability, including the capacity of our youth, who have received positive reviews from their support of the ECOSOC Secretariat during our tenure. We would however, love to see such accolades turning into real opportunities for absorption throughout the employ and hierarchy of the Organisation, particularly for our Youth.

53. As I conclude my remarks, **Mr. President**, let me reassure you that you can count on Botswana's support and constructive engagement towards the successful implementation of the programme of work of the 77th Session of the General Assembly. **I hope that Botswana can also rely on the UN system and our development partners and the wider international community to help us realise the AGENDA 2030 and transforms our people and country into a developed nation by 2036.**

I thank you.