



**REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

**STATEMENT BY**

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

**DURING THE**

**GENERAL DEBATE OF THE  
78<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**“REBUILDING TRUST AND REIGNITING GLOBAL SOLIDARITY:  
ACCELERATING ACTION ON THE 2030 AGENDA AND ITS  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS TOWARDS PEACE,  
PROSPERITY, PROGRESS AND SUSTAINABILITY FOR ALL”**

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## **Mr. President,**

1. I join previous speakers in extending my sincere congratulations to you, on your election as the President of the 78<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). You can count on my delegation's full support as you steer the work of this august body.
2. **Mr. President,** I could not agree more with you that the multilateral system needs to **"Rebuild trust and reignite global solidarity to accelerate action on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals in order to realise Peace, Prosperity, Progress and Sustainability."**
3. As we convene this week, the world is in the age of polycrisis, facing a plethora of persisting global challenges, amongst them the war in Ukraine and its associated geopolitical tensions and impact on the global economy; the challenges relating to Climate Change and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

4. Of critical importance is the distressing reality that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable development Goals is off track. From the 2023 SDG Progress Report, half of the targets of SDGs are experiencing inadequate progress while 30% of the targets have come to a halt. This lack of progress is exacerbated by the multifaceted global crisis which compounds the already dire situation we find ourselves in.
  
5. Illustratively, whereas SDG 5 which expresses the need for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, and picks representation in positions of power and leadership as one of the indicators, the UN in this regard has not done badly except for the Secretary General position. **Would you not agree with me that the time is now to have a female Secretary General?**
  
6. The gravity of challenges faced by the SDGs demands that we transcend the business as usual approach to addressing these. This will obligate a robust political commitment from all of us.

7. It is therefore, imperative for the United Nations (UN) system, international financiers, the private sector and civil society to forge a collective front and refocus our efforts to swiftly propel the SDGs back on track. To this end, the recent SDG Summit and its Political Declaration could not have come at a better time.

### **PANDEMIC PREVENTION, PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE**

8. **Mr. President**, over the past few years, we have witnessed and continue to endure the profound and devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The consequences have been felt across nations, but the extent of its devastation has varied greatly depending on factors such as level of development and geographical location. Whether one resides in the Global South or North, a Landlocked Developing Country or Small Island Developing State, these distinctions have played a crucial role in determining the severity of the pandemic's effects.
9. It is, therefore, imperative that we wholeheartedly embrace the ongoing discussions regarding Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response.

10. **Mr. President,** Botswana's key priority in these discussions is to ensure an international instrument that addresses equity during a pandemic. To this end, the main issues to be addressed from this perspective include timely and equitable access and sharing of benefits; strengthening of regulations to ensure developed countries and those with resources do not hoard medical products during a pandemic; building capacity for stronger health systems; investment in research and development to build local and regional manufacturing of vaccines, including sharing of Intellectual Property; and establishing sustainable, predictable and flexible financing mechanisms.
  
11. I am pleased to inform the General Assembly that Botswana is making her contribution to build capacity to manufacture vaccines for both humans and animals. We have made remarkable progress in terms of HIV diagnosis and on the 28<sup>th</sup> August 2023 our National HIV Reference Laboratory was designated a World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre of Excellence. This epitomised, in part, the crowning of our National Laboratory competence and success in carrying out genomic sequencing on levels equivalent to those of the best, as demonstrated by being the first to discover the Omicron variant.

12. By the time these discussions reach their conclusion, it is essential that we establish robust systems that leave no room for the repetition of such calamity, ensuring that the survival and well-being of our people are never again contingent upon their location in the Global South or North. More importantly, our hope is that the resultant of these discussions will culminate into a Treaty.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

13. **Mr. President**, climate change remains an urgent and critical challenge of our time, with a huge threat to the existence of our planet. It is alarming that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently reported record-high global greenhouse emissions which are at the highest level and continues to surge.
14. To effectively address climate change, it is crucial that we prioritise international cooperation and partnerships. This global effort requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond reducing emissions, encompassing various aspects of our lives be it energy production, agriculture, transportation and industry.

15. Our efforts must also include accelerating the up-take of renewable energy sources and investing in clean technologies. This necessitates sufficient funding to support mitigation and adaptation, particularly for developing countries.
16. In this context, we endorse the appeal for developed countries to fulfill their pledge of providing US\$100 billion annually in climate finance to developing countries. This also includes fully replenishing the Green Climate Fund.
17. My Government welcomes the Secretary General's Acceleration Agenda, which urges the fast tracking of climate action in all countries and sectors. It is imperative that both developed and developing countries comply with their targets. As for Botswana, we reaffirm our commitment to achieving a 15% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030.

## **PEACE AND SECURITY**

18. **Mr. President**, it has been more than a year since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine war. The war's destructive consequences have been experienced not only in the region but also globally, as the international economy has suffered from food and energy crisis.

19. Botswana strongly urges an immediate cessation of hostilities and advocates for a diplomatic resolution to the conflict. In this regard, Botswana welcomes the recent engagement between African and Russian and Ukraine leaders, and we hope that these efforts, along with similar initiatives elsewhere, will encourage the conflicting parties to return to the negotiation table.
  
20. While we work on resolving active conflicts, we must step up action in mitigating all threats to international peace and security by reaffirming and observing the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, international law and other obligations. This also includes commitment to obligations concerning, among others, nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, arms control, weapons of mass destruction.
  
21. **Mr. President,** Botswana shares a deep concern regarding the persistent conflicts and destabilisation of legitimate governments across the African continent. The negation of constitutionalism as evidenced by overthrows of governments, which seem to be having a contagion effect, should be shunned with the greatest disdain. Equally, the deprivation of people to self-determine continues unabated albeit repugnant.



22. It is of utmost importance that the UN Secretary General collaborates closely with the African Union and sub-regional organisations to prioritise and actively engage to foster peace and stability in Africa.
23. I firmly believe that the attainment of lasting peace in Africa, can pave way for a more prosperous and harmonious continent, where the aspirations and well-being of African people can thrive.

### **LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (LLDCs)**

24. **Mr. President**, next year marks the conclusion of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) for the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), followed by the Third Landlocked Developing Countries Conference in Kigali, Rwanda, scheduled for June 2024.
25. The challenges faced by LLDCs have been extensively documented, and the ongoing global crises have inflicted severe damage on their economies. Unfortunately, the progress achieved in implementing the VPoA has been eroded by these crises, resulting in persistently high poverty levels in LLDCs that averaged 23% (2022).

26. These countries continue to suffer from marginalisation in global trade due to exorbitant trade costs, underscoring the urgent need for infrastructure development and maintenance to address geographical and structural obstacles and capitalise on their untapped potential.
27. The forthcoming programme presents a valuable opportunity to rally greater global support and foster multi-stakeholder partnerships. Consequently, we must prioritise the formulation of new and tangible priorities aimed at bolstering infrastructure in LLDCs with particular emphasis on transit transportation, ICT and energy sectors.
28. I, therefore, urge the UN Secretary General, development partners, international financial institutions, the private sector, and civil society to unite in support of the upcoming conference. It is essential that we not only strive for its success but also forge a new programme of action that is attuned to the pressing challenges confronting LLDCs.
29. This comprehensive programme must provide the necessary tools and resources to enable these countries to attain their SDGs objectives.

30. To conclude, **Mr. President**, I want to reemphasise that merely acknowledging global problems without taking substantive measures will not solve them. We require greater action! The urgent action to revitalise the UN system, ensuring that it is fit for purpose, is now.

**I thank you for your attention.**