



STATEMENT

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. MOKGWEETSI E.K. MASISI

PRESIDENT

OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE

OF THE 79th SESSION OF THE

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

***"LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND : ACTING TOGETHER FOR THE
ADVANCEMENT OF PEACE, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND
HUMAN DIGNITY FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS"***

SEPTEMBER 2024

NEW YORK

Mr President,

Secretary General, Mr. Antonia Guterres

Excellencies,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I wish to start by extending my congratulations to you, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its 79th Session. You can be assured of Botswana's full support as you steer the work of this August body.

Mr. President,

2. This Assembly continues to meet on the backdrop of an age of multiple and interconnected crises which were triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions between major powers.
3. These crises have been further compounded by the Israel-Hamas war, which erupted shortly after we concluded last year's High-Level Week.
4. The attacks on innocent civilians on both sides are unacceptable and thus stand condemned.
5. In the same vein, we wish to express our deep concern at the situation in the Gaza Strip where the war has resulted in catastrophic

humanitarian crisis and unprecedented fatalities for civilian, children and humanitarian workers.

6. I should also register Botswana's concern regarding the loss of lives of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) personnel.
7. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to UNRWA personnel and all humanitarian workers and their commitment to deliver aid, save lives and alleviate suffering in Gaza and elsewhere. We owe them a debt of gratitude and they deserve our full protection.
8. Botswana also abhors attacks on UNRWA installations and condemns disinformation and misinformation campaigns against this life-saving General Assembly-mandated Agency.
9. Botswana firmly supports the work of UNRWA, which entails providing humanitarian and development assistance and protection to Palestine refugees, pending the just resolution of the question of the Palestinian question.
10. In this regard, Botswana is proud to be among the countries that joined the "***Statement of Shared Commitments on UNRWA,***" which reaffirms support for the agency, its mandate, its staff and highlights its indispensable role during this difficult time.

Mr. President,

11. We wish to reiterate the centrality of the two-state solution in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the attainment of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace.
12. We therefore urge parties to commit to a political process that will pave the way for the realization of the two-state solution, in which Palestine and Israel live side by side, in peace and security, based on pre-1967 borders.

Mr. President,

13. The war in Ukraine also rages on with no indication end in sight. We continue to underscore the need to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, in line with the UN Charter and international law. We also call on parties to give diplomacy and dialogue a chance and to seek a peaceful resolution.
14. In Africa, the guns still have not gone silent. We continue to grapple with armed conflict, terrorism and potentially explosive geopolitical tensions.
15. We commend the African Union (AU), sub-regional bodies as well as the UN for their efforts in addressing these challenges. In this vein, we

welcome the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2719 (2023) on the provision of support by the UN to AU-led Peace Support Operations on a case-by-case basis and look forward to its operationalisation.

Mr. President,

16. I must add that this time of escalated armed conflicts, violent crime and humanitarian crises requires intensified efforts and more vigilance to protect human rights, advance humanitarian action and promote accountability in line with the UN Charter, international law, international humanitarian law as well as relevant principles such as the Responsibility to Protect (R2P).

Mr. President,

17. It is evident that peace is under strain across the world. It needs to be revitalised. However, that task cannot only be left to multilateral and regional bodies. Governments have a responsibility to create conditions that enable peace to thrive within their countries. Key steps that Governments should take include, among others, building effective institutions, committing to good governance, protection of human rights and upholding democratic values.

18. As many are aware, Botswana has a long track record of commitment to these democratic principles. The implementation of recommendations from our recently concluded constitutional review process as well as our upcoming general election on 30th October 2024 provide opportunities to deepen our democracy and strengthen our good governance credentials.

Mr. President,

19. Regrettably, while the on the one hand, the scourge of war rages on, on the other hand, the promise of Sustainable Development is in great peril.

20. It is deeply concerning that with only six (6) years before the 2030 deadline, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are way off track. We learn from the latest Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Report that only 17% of the Goals are on track while the rest range from moderate progress to stagnation and regression.

21. There is a lot of work to do. We must take inspiration from and build on the success achieved in the reduction in global child mortality, prevention of HIV infections, attaining girls' parity with boys in education, increased access to energy and the internet, while also scaling up action and investments in areas which are lagging far behind particularly poverty eradication.

22. The levels of extreme poverty remain disturbingly high. But we cannot attain sustainable development without eradicating poverty in all its forms and manifestations. Poverty eradication is the *sine qua non* of sustainable development.
23. A comprehensive approach will be required to move the needle in the fight against poverty. We therefore endorse the call for comprehensive social protection systems and inclusive economic policies.
24. Pro-poor policies should also be complemented and reinforced by policies which spur inclusive economic growth and create sustainable employment.
25. Policy interventions that aim to **Leave No One Behind** ought to be matched by adequate SDG financing. In this vein, my delegation reiterates the call for predictable, sustainable and sufficient development finance to developing countries from all funding sources.
26. In addition to livelihood issues, progress should also be accelerated in addressing other forms of inequality within countries especially gender equality. Meaningful action is needed to empower women and girls in areas where they are left behind and to combat harmful cultural practices and gender-based violence.

Mr. President,

27. Extreme weather events and related natural disasters continue to remind us of the severity of the climate crisis and the urgency of mitigation and adaptation.
28. In our sub-region, Southern Africa, the El niño phenomenon induced drought and floods which resulted in devastating consequences on livelihoods and a humanitarian situation that affected over sixty-one (61) million people.
29. I take this opportunity to reiterate the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Humanitarian Appeal of at least US\$5.5 billion, aimed at augmenting domestic resources of the affected Member States, including efforts for resource mobilisation from national, regional, and international partners in response to the impacts of El Niño induced drought and floods.
30. I cannot overemphasize the need for adequate climate finance for effective climate action. We continue to remind developed countries of their annual \$100 billion commitment in climate finance for developing countries until 2025 and call for a more ambitious goal thereafter.

Mr. President,

31. Efforts at attaining Sustainable Development ought to be redoubled in countries in special situations, in particular, Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) which are disproportionately affected by development challenges.
32. Botswana as an LLDC and current Chair of the Group of LLDCs at the UN, is deeply concerned by the enormity of challenges faced by LLDCs in their effort to implement the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.
33. With no direct territorial access to the sea, LLDCs struggle with international trade, connectivity, and economic development. Our countries are cut off from the global marketplace and without the means to develop adequate transport and logistics infrastructure and inevitably face significant challenges in achieving the sustainable development goals.
34. The forthcoming Third UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC3) from 10-13 December 2024 in Gaborone, Botswana, under the theme "Driving Progress through Partnerships," will provide an opportunity to effectively address these challenges in an ambitious, action oriented and forward-looking Programme of Action.

35. I therefore invite transit countries, development partners and other stakeholders to join us in the beautiful and vibrant Gaborone as we shape the future for our thirty-two (32) countries.

Mr. President,

36. As you rightly observe, it is only when we “act together” that we can effectively deliver meaningful progress for people, planet, prosperity and peace while leaving no one behind.

37. Without a doubt, the UN-led multilateral system remains an indispensable platform for the effective global action that this moment demands. It is therefore of paramount importance that the multilateral framework remains fit-for-purpose.

38. The onus is on us as member states to ensure that our intergovernmental processes enable rather than stifle effective multilateral action and international cooperation.

39. We must not allow the current geopolitical tensions and great power rivalries to get in the way of progress. Our shared values, norms and interests as expressed in the UN Charter, the 2030 Agenda and other relevant frameworks should remain the North Star that guides our engagements. The spirit of consensus and solidarity ought to be at the front and center of our actions.

Mr. President,

40. Allow me to conclude by reaffirming Botswana's commitment to working constructively on all agenda items before the General Assembly during this session. The session offers opportunities to turbocharge action for peace, sustainable development and human rights, for the benefit of present and future generations. Let us seize the moment.

I thank you.