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BOTSWANA

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT BY

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AT THE

40TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT:
"CHANGING AGE STRUCTURES AND THEIR
IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT"

NEW YORK, 11 APRIL 2007

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1. Mr. Chairman, the Delegation of Botswana extends warm congratulations to you and all Members of the Bureau for assuming the leadership of this 40th Session of the Commission on Population and Development. You have the full support, cooperation and goodwill of my delegation in this important task of guiding the work of the Commission.
2. I also wish to express our gratitude and appreciation to Mr. Antonio Ocampo, the Under-Secretary-General for the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, for his opening remarks. As usual, he has given us some useful insights into this theme and his views will certainly enrich our deliberations.
3. Mr. Chairman, the Secretary-General of the United Nations deserves our commendations for the illuminating reports before us.
4. In the report, World Population Monitoring, focusing on the changing age structures of populations and their implications for development (E/C.N. 9/209/3), the Secretary-General observes that, "the world population is in the midst of an unprecedented transformation brought about by the transition from a regime of high mortality and high fertility to one of low mortality and low fertility". This succinctly summarises the issues before us today. The challenges brought by this demographic transition are undoubtedly many and varied for both developed and developing countries alike. It was therefore by no accident that in 1994 we collectively made an undertaking in the Programme of Action that the "ultimate goal" of our efforts in this area is "the improvement of the quality of life of present and future generations".
5. Essentially, this means that the implementation of the Programme of Action for the International Conference on Population and Development is about employment creation, provision of health care for youth and the elderly, access to sexual and reproductive health; provision of good sanitation, access to clean water; education and training opportunities; eradication of poverty; respect for human rights. In one word, development.
6. Mr. Chairman, for us in Africa, and in particular my own country Botswana, the changing demographic trends are as much about population as they are about development. We have the largest share of young people in the world today. The demands and needs of young people are growing and increasing everyday. Yet the continent is confronted by a plethora of problems that not only undermine the welfare of African children, but the future of the continent in general.
7. Apart from hostile climatic conditions, hunger, poverty and disease, Africa must contend with the social dislocations resulting from conflict and war. Migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons are a critical factor in the evolving demographic trends in Africa. Africa is determined to address these challenges and it is our hope that with the assured support and partnership of the international community we can find lasting solutions. Efforts should be intensified to combat disease and resolve conflicts to create an atmosphere conducive for development, for our youth to realize their potential and the elderly to have access to necessary services. Population and development is about international development, cooperation, and partnership. Most importantly, it is a call on governments to assume greater responsibility for the development of their people.
8. We are convinced that if we are to effectively deal with the challenges of population growth, we must implement the outcome of the various UN Conferences and Summits in the social and economic field. These commitments, including the Millennium Development Goals, provide a realistic template for a better future for our populations and succeeding generations.

9. Mr. Chairman, in Botswana, we are working very hard and are consistently committed to improving the quality of life and living standards of our people. This is the foundation and cornerstone of our national development plans. We have put in place policies that are aimed at creating opportunities for our people to attain a better life. Improved access to modern health facilities, combined with other population related programmes led to fertility and mortality decline. These resulted in the current population age structure, where over half of the population is youthful and we are observing an increase in the proportion of the elderly.

10. HIV/AIDS has been a setback on our development efforts. However, we are persistent in our efforts to combat the epidemic because this is an enemy that takes no prisoners and therefore surrender is not an option. A three-pronged approach to the reduction of HIV infection rate by 75 per cent focuses on the prevention of new HIV infection, treatment and care for people living with HIV/AIDS, and managing the epidemic. Substantial resources are diverted from productive sectors and development projects to address the challenges of HIV/AIDS. For instance this year alone, Government intends to spend about US\$136 million on activities related to combating and mitigating the effects of HIV/AIDS.

11. Mr. Chairman, due to the combined effect of HIV/AIDS and other demographic variables, Botswana's current age structure is faced with some developmental challenges which include:

- the increasing number of orphans and child-headed households;
- youth unemployment and the increasing dependency burden on the working population;
- increasing number of female-headed household; and,
- the elderly increasingly becoming custodians of orphaned children.

12. In view of the foregoing, Botswana is currently reviewing the population policy to deal with the challenges and implications of our population structure. The policy will among others, give sharper focus on the following areas which are already at various stages of implementation:

- Assistance to the child-headed households and provision of psychosocial support;
- Promote and create opportunities for youth entrepreneurship;
- Intensification of skills-based training;
- Provision of the social safety nets for the children and the elderly; and,
- Improvement of services for the elderly.

13. In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm Botswana's commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the International Conference on Population and Development. The Programme of Action is an important framework to guide our efforts in delivering on our people-centred development. It is the collective responsibility of the international community to seize the opportunity provided by this 40th Session of the Commission to rededicate ourselves to the effective implementation and realization of the Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals.

14. I thank you Mr. Chairman.