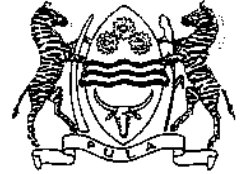


REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

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AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED
NATIONS**

**41ST SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

New York

7 - 11 April 2008

1. Mr. Chairman, The delegation of Botswana extends warm congratulations to you and all Members of the Bureau for assuming the leadership of this 41st 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. Mr Chairman, during the past four decades Botswana has been increasingly transforming into an urban society. There were only 5 urban centres in 1971 and they increased to 8 in 1981, 26 in 1991 and 34 in 2001. In 1966 only 2% of the population lived in urban areas. This proportion increased further to 8.5% in 1971, 17% in 1981, 45% in 1991 and a further 54% in 2001. The proportion is projected to increase to 65% by 2011. In Botswana, a settlement that has more than 5000 people with at least 75% engaged in non-agricultural activities is classified as urban, and those that do not meet these criteria are rural.

3. Rapid urbanization brings with it a number of developmental and environmental challenges, the most important is responding to the ever-growing demand for social amenities such as water, housing, sanitation and health services. The most disturbing challenge is the rapid increase of population in villages surrounding the urban areas owing to the inability of the urban areas to accommodate the growth in demand for housing and related services.

4. Semi-desert conditions account for about 84% of the country's land area. Due to the harsh climatic conditions and the severity of the desert environment in the western part of Botswana, population density in that part of the country is very low. The great majority of the population live in the fertile eastern region, where water and agricultural land resources are in a favourable state, and infrastructure and other services are adequate.

5. In 1998, Botswana adopted the National Settlement Policy which provides a set of guidelines for national physical planning. It also provides a framework to guide the distribution of investment in a way that reflects the settlements' population size, economic potential, level of infrastructure and settlements' role as service centres. The policy aims to reduce the rate of migration to towns by; planning for the provision of similar level of infrastructure and services to villages on the same hierarchical level with towns; provision of incentives for the location of job creating activities in rural areas and villages; and improving access to loans and financial resources to rural areas and villages.

6. Botswana also implements the National Policy for Rural Development to guide and coordinate the various rural development issues and programmes. The policy seeks to improve the living conditions in the rural areas by, amongst others, promoting sustainable and rewarding rural livelihoods, poverty reduction, and appropriate investment in infrastructure and services. The objective of this policy is, inter alia, to reduce rural-urban migration and promote a more spatially balanced distribution of the population. Its implementation is overseen by a

council whose membership consists of public and private sector representatives and is chaired by the Minister of Finance and Development Planning.

7. Mr. Chairman, on another note, Botswana continues to make concerted efforts to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The epidemic is a serious national challenge as the response entails diverting resources from development programmes and projects. We are however receiving substantial assistance from our development partners. There are encouraging signs that the prevalence rate is receding due to robust prevention and mitigation programmes.

8. Mr. Chairman, Botswana is on course towards fulfilling the objectives of the International Conference on Population and Development Plan of Action. The basic policy tenets to achieve the objectives are in place. Botswana is determined to assume its responsibilities and counts on the support of the international community to extend the relevant technical expertise and resources.

9. 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.

10. I thank you Mr Chairman.