

REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

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AT THE

**45th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE POPULATION
AND DEVELOPMENT**

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Check Against Delivery

Mr. Chairman

1. Let me start by congratulating you on the assumption of the Chairmanship of this important Commission which is a fitting tribute to you personally and the esteemed Government of your country. My delegation has full confidence and trust in your abilities to steer the business of the 45th Session to a successful conclusion. I also wish to commend your predecessor for the excellent manner in which he guided the Commission through the 44th Session.

2. We align ourselves with the statements delivered by the delegations of Algeria, on behalf of the African Group, Angola on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

3. Botswana welcomes the theme of this year's Session, namely, "**Youth and Adolescent**". This theme is both timely and relevant to the prevailing challenges the world over where adolescents and the youth are experiencing a myriad of challenges including, but not limited to, poverty, sexual and reproductive health challenges, unemployment, and HIV and AIDS.

4. Botswana's population, just like in most countries in demographic transition, is youthful with 43% of it being adolescents and youth. This group has unique developmental needs and challenges which require unique approaches and interventions.

5. In this regard, Botswana adopted a revised National Youth Policy in 2011 to provide a broad framework for mainstreaming and promoting youth empowerment and participation in community and civic affairs. The Policy also guides youth serving organizations to implement programmes

that will equip the youth with requisite skills to fully exploit their talents to improve their own livelihoods and those of their communities.

6. The major challenge facing the country today is the high number of unemployed youth largely due to limited capacity of the country's economy to generate enough jobs to absorb the growing number of youth with employable skills. According to the 2009/10 Botswana Core Welfare Indicators Study (BCWIS) 41.4% of the 15 – 19 year olds are unemployed, 34.2% of these being males while 50.5% are females. The same study also indicated that 34% of the 20 – 24 year olds are unemployed, 27.8% being males while 41% are females. My government, through the gender mainstreaming strategy, has come up with a number of interventions to enhance the economic independence of young women.

7. Resulting directly from the growing unemployment is the phenomenon of poverty. By 2009, 20.6% of the population of Botswana was living below the poverty datum line, with 6.5% living below the minimum \$1 a day. The dynamics of poverty are changing in the country, showing an increase in poverty in urban areas. As the youth migrate from the rural to urban areas in anticipation of jobs and better lives in the latter, majority of them end up being unemployed and subjected to poor living conditions.

8. In order to alleviate the impact of this bias, the Government has embarked on deliberate policies and programmes for rural development. For instance, in 2007/08, Government introduced the Young Farmer's Fund to assist aspiring youth to venture into commercial agriculture in both livestock and pastoral farming. In addition to offering subsidized loans, the Fund includes a component of training to ensure that youth beneficiaries have skills to manage their enterprises. While the scheme has had mixed results, it has assisted many youngsters to get out of the vicious cycle of poverty.

Mr. Chairman,

9. HIV and AIDS scourge still remains a challenge in Botswana with an estimated 17.1% of the total population living with the virus in 2010. The disease has affected the most sexually active and productive segment of the population, that is the youth. In 2010, it was estimated that 25% of the youth were living with the virus. However, recent statistics shows that the prevalence of HIV and AIDS among the youth and adolescents is declining. This is a clear demonstration that the continuing campaigns on behaviour change, are having desired impact on the youth and adolescent population.

Mr. Chairman,

10. Botswana recognizes that access to reproductive health services is essential for the health and development of adolescents and youth. The Government recently developed an Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Implementation Strategy for 2012 to 2016. The strategy provides a framework to enhance young people's access to sexual and reproductive health information and services.

11. Consequently, Botswana has recorded a significant increase in the use of modern contraception over the years with an estimated 54% of sexually active mothers using contraceptives. Despite these efforts, teenage pregnancy is still a big challenge. We therefore recognize the need for sustained efforts in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

12. Botswana is equally concerned about the incidence of alcohol and substance abuse among the youth and adolescents. Botswana Government

with the active support of civil society has embarked on a programme to educate the youth and adolescents on the dangers associated with substance abuse with the intention of producing a drug free society.

13. To this end, we wish to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of development partners, youth NGOs, and all relevant stakeholders who continue to play a crucial role in ensuring that the youth and adolescents have access to youth friendly services.

14. In conclusion, we reaffirm Botswana's commitment to the effective implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

15. Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentleman, I thank you for your attention.