

REPUBLIC OF  
BOTSWANA

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**STATEMENT BY**

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MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL  
COOPERATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

**AT THE 63<sup>RD</sup> SESSION  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**29<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2008**

**NEW YORK**

Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

1. I am delighted Mr. President to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly. Your election to this high office is indeed a clear reflection of the strong confidence and trust that the international community has in you personally and also in your great country, Nicaragua.

2. I am confident that under your able guidance we will continue to build on the achievements of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Session in our efforts to advance our common global agenda towards a more just, secure and prosperous world. I assure you of the full support, cooperation and goodwill of the delegation of the Republic of Botswana in the discharge of your mandate.

3. I also wish to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly. We sincerely commend him for his sterling work and leadership which enabled us to achieve critical milestones towards our common goals.

4. Mr. President, this year marks the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is an important event in our global human rights agenda. It is an occasion for Member States to reflect, individually and collectively, on how much progress we have made in our efforts to build a more just world order.

5. The Universal Declaration embodies the aspirations of humanity for liberty, freedom and equality. It is a reflection of the human spirit to strive for a more perfect society in which individuals recognize the reality that creating the space for the enjoyment of individual human rights expands the horizons for society to realize its full potential.

6. In pursuance of this noble objective we must continuously strive to improve our governance to ensure that it is responsive to the wishes of the people. It should be borne in mind that, in the final analysis, it is the people in whom the sovereignty of any nation is vested. In this respect, it is imperative that the will of the people expressed in free and fair elections be respected by all political leaders. Heads of State or Government must avoid the temptation to change constitutions in an effort to prolong their stay in power, which often results in instability.

7. Botswana reaffirms its commitment to the ideals and purposes of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We are determined to contribute to the promotion of respect for human rights at home and abroad. In doing so we are conscious of the need for international cooperation in the promotion of human rights. It is for this reason that Botswana is a State Party to a number of human rights instruments including the Rome Statute on the establishment of the International Criminal Court.

8. We fully support the work of the Court. As a country that strongly believes in the rule of law, we are convinced that there should be no political interference in the work of the Court. The International Criminal Court was established with the support of African States. We felt that it was necessary to address problems that confronted our continent. The court is meant to serve a specific purpose and there should be no exceptions as to what it can or cannot do.

9. Mr. President, Botswana is pleased that representatives of political parties in Zimbabwe finally signed an agreement in Harare on 15 September 2008. We welcomed this development as it augurs well for national reconciliation, economic reconstruction and development in Zimbabwe.

10. The effective implementation of the agreement should have a positive impact not only on developments in Zimbabwe but also on Southern Africa and the wider African region. This is a good beginning and we encourage the parties to do all they can to make the agreement work.

11. No party should attempt to obstruct the implementation of the agreement as the political crisis that confronted that country following the 29 June 2008 Presidential run-off election can only be resolved through the implementation of the agreement. Such a development will not be acceptable to Botswana. We call upon the international community to help the process to succeed by extending their goodwill and support to help the Government and people of Zimbabwe with much needed economic, financial and technical assistance.

12. We must commend the former President of the Republic of South Africa, H.E. Mr. Thabo Mvuyelwa Mbeki for his hard work, commitment and determination in helping the Zimbabweans reach agreement. We also wish to pay tribute to former President Mbeki for his contribution to the attainment of freedom and democracy not only in South Africa but also the wider African continent. We are grateful to him for his visionary leadership and people – centred initiatives whose primary objective was to build an African continent that is free, peaceful, democratic and economically prosperous.

14. Mr. President, as the international community, we have the collective responsibility to equip and optimally use our multilateral body, the United Nations, to search for fair and just solutions to global problems, in order to contribute to the betterment of all humanity.

15. The United Nations is today more than ever before required to respond effectively and swiftly, to the complex challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Conflicts, poverty, disease, natural and man-made disasters, climate change, energy, terrorism, are among a myriad of pressing problems that confront humanity and require an urgent global response. It is, thus, imperative that we continue to make concerted efforts to address these challenges in pursuit of a better tomorrow. The magnitude of these challenges clearly requires multilateral strategies and solutions.

16. Botswana calls upon all member states to unite in the search for solutions to these problems. It is imperative that in our policies, actions and pronouncements we must always seek to build greater international understanding. In our approach to managing relations between states, leaders are called upon to set a higher standard. The language which we employ in international fora should neither be belligerent, provocative, nor calculated to shame or humiliate other leaders and Member States should not host military or rebel groups that operate from their territories against their neighbours.

17. In our international discourse, we must aim at building and facilitating agreement on common goals. In this respect, we must exercise restraint by avoiding the often frequent temptation to recall diplomats from each others capitals including purely for solidarity reasons. Such action is unfortunate and outdated as it only leads to a breakdown in communication.

18. Mr. President, as we meet here, let us always remind ourselves of the solemn commitments which we the peoples of the world have undertaken to end war and human suffering. Botswana calls upon all States especially the major powers to set an example by refraining from the use of weapons in resolving conflicts. Military confrontation is unfortunately always a demonstration of either the failure of the will to use diplomacy, or the urge to show off military superiority and the inability to employ resources and technological advances for the benefit of improving human lives.

19. As developing countries, sustainable economic growth, development and the eradication of poverty are central to our development agenda. Poverty is undoubtedly one of the most critical challenges facing our people. In this respect, achieving the Millennium Development Goals and combating poverty in its many dimensions, are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Thus, the attainment of these goals should be our primary preoccupation.

20. Botswana welcomes initiatives introduced by some development partners which seek to have a more focused approach to Africa's economic and development problems. These initiatives include the Lome Conventions and successor arrangements between African, the Caribbean and Pacific States on the one hand and the European Union on the other, the US Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), China/Africa Cooperation and India/Africa Cooperation.

21. Botswana has always made effective use of the resources made available by our cooperating partners. It is important that more be done to help developing countries to embark upon the path of sustainable development. We are convinced that as we receive much needed assistance, we must envisage a day and time when there may be no need for such assistance because we would all be able to stand on our own.

22. Mr. President, this year, marks the mid-way from the 2015 target for attaining the Millennium Development Goals. We thank the Secretary General for his analytic and informative reports regarding progress in the implementation of our common commitments and shared future. We also welcome the work of the High Level meetings held to take stock of progress made. This will, no doubt, provide impetus for the expeditious implementation of our commitments.

23. The Secretary General's reports indicate a mixed and uneven score. It is clearly evident that while we have made real progress in some areas, a lot still remains to be done in the next 7 years if we are to reach our goals.

24. In other words, we are seriously lagging behind schedule on every target, among countries and within countries that need to eradicate poverty and reduce human suffering.

25. In addition to revealing gaps, the process has highlighted new and emerging challenges hindering the attainment of targets across the spectrum of human development. It also emphasizes the serious need to fast track the pace of implementation, if we are to make any notable impact. The achievement of these goals is our shared responsibility. It is, thus, imperative that we all, individually, and collectively, do our part to accelerate progress towards a better quality of life for our people.

26. Mr. President, our people deserve a life free from fear and want, and to live in an environment that offers equal opportunity for all. This is not a privilege but a fundamental human right which each State has a duty to respect, protect and fulfill.



27. For our people, this should translate into universal access to education, health, shelter, clean water, and infrastructure and to living in a safe and secure environment. Fully honouring our commitments is the cornerstone to realizing these expectations.

28. It should trouble our collective conscience that;

- More than one-quarter of under fives in the developing world are underweight. This accounts for about 143 million underweight children in developing countries;
- Children in developing countries continue to die from preventable diseases such as malaria;
- About 4 billion cases of diarrhoea per year cause 2.2 million deaths, mostly among children under five;
- About 6 million people are blind from trachoma, a disease caused by lack of water combined with poor hygiene practices;
- In sub-Saharan Africa, a woman's lifetime risk of maternal death is a staggering 1 in 22, compared to 1 in 8,000 in industrialized countries; and,
- that HIV is spreading at a faster rate than we can provide universal access to prevention, treatment, support and care.

29. Clearly, closing these gaps will entail more than our reaffirmations – it urgently necessitates: sustained strong political commitment and leadership; sound and appropriate national policies matched with increased Official Development Assistance (ODA) and technical support from the international systems; stepped up participation and combined efforts of governments, civil society and the private sector; fairer, transparent and inclusive international trade regimes, more global partnerships to assist developing countries, full implementation of debt relief initiatives, greater access to markets and other innovative international support measures to finance development.

30. Mr. President, the search for global peace and security remains a matter of vital interest to my delegation. While we may have made significant strides in the promotion of peace through conflict prevention and resolution, post conflict recovery, peace building, conflicts continue to flare up, thus, making the restoration of peace, a remote possibility to some in the world.

31. My own continent, Africa, plays host to a large number of conflicts. The scourge of war has claimed many lives and caused untold human suffering. Substantial time, energy and financial resources have been expended with little or no success. As the international community, the United Nations Charter implores us to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war by employing all diplomatic efforts and tools at our disposal.

32. I am pleased to note that commendable strides have been made in placing some countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea - Bissau on a firm path of national reconstruction, post-conflict recovery and peace-building. Regrettably the peoples of Africa continue to face hunger and death in the Darfur region of the Sudan, Somalia and Chad among others.

33. My delegation is particularly concerned about the ever worsening situation in the Darfur region of the Sudan. It is disconcerting that, despite the efforts of the United Nations and the African Union through the development of the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), armed hostilities continue. We call upon the parties to commit to political dialogue in the search for lasting peace, and to fully utilize the good offices of His Excellency Djibril Bassole, who has recently been appointed to facilitate the peace process.

34. With respect to Somalia, Botswana welcomes the signing of the Djibouti Agreement on 9 June 2008 by the Somalia Transitional Federal Government and the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia. We call upon all the Somali political forces to commit to an all inclusive political process so that the long suffering people of Somali can also live in peace. My delegation further calls on the international community to continue assisting the people of Somali with much needed humanitarian assistance. In the same vein, we remind the political leaders of the Somali people to put the interests of the people of Somalia above their own so that the focus can be on the search for a lasting political settlement to the problems facing their country.

35. Mr. President, the success of the United Nations in delivering on our expectations and common ideals must be matched by the adequate resources, appropriate mandates, structures and policy guidance. Botswana strongly believes in the instrumentality of the United Nations. In this regard we are committed to paying our assessed contributions in full and on time. We therefore call upon all Member States to do the same, so that this machinery which is the motor that powers multilateralism does not run out of steam.

36. There can be no doubt that any organization and the United Nations in particular must be constantly reformed or renewed if it is to continue to be relevant and responsive to the needs of its Members. We are pleased that there has been some measure of progress in implementing the set of reforms mandated by the 2005 UN Summit.

37. Mr. President, let me conclude my remarks by once again calling on each and every one of us, to live up to the high expectations of this august organisation by honouring our commitments. Botswana reaffirms its abiding faith in this body which unites the peoples of the world for a higher purpose. It is our hope that as we meet here we will succeed in building greater international understanding across regions, cultures, language and faiths because we are all human because of the humanity of others.

38. I thank you for your attention.