



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

STATEMENT

BY

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**DURING THE
ANNUAL MINISTERIAL MEETING OF FOREIGN
MINISTERS OF LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

***“Partnering for Accelerated Implementation of the
Vienna Programme of Action (VPOA) and achieving
Sustainable Development in LLDC in the COVID-19 Era”***

23rd SEPTEMBER 2020

VIRTUAL



Your Excellency, Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries;

Fellow Ministers, here present;

Distinguished Delegates;

1. I am honoured to participate in this important annual meeting of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), for the first time, particularly that it comes shortly after my appointment as Minister of International Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Botswana.
2. Allow me to join other colleagues in commending you on your assumption of the Chairmanship, and the sterling job you have done in steering the work of our Group, especially during these difficult times occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chairperson,

3. Botswana fully endorses the theme for this year's meeting, ***"Partnering for accelerated implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) and achieving sustainable development in LLDCs"***. It is in sync with our collective aspiration of urgently resetting our economies in the debilitating aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. This meeting is timely as it allows us to reflect on our achievements and challenges as well as intensify our efforts to fast-track implementation of our collective blueprint, the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA).

Chairperson,

5. It goes without saying, that the pandemic has gravely exacerbated the myriad of challenges already confronting us, both as landlocked and transit countries. The pandemic prevention and containment protocols, which included lockdowns and border closures, have had far-reaching consequences on our livelihoods and the overall socio-economic development agenda.

6. As the demand for repatriation, goods and services increased, we experienced even higher costs of trade due to weak transport infrastructure, coupled with non-tariff barriers, of delays and inefficiencies associated with cross border management.

7. However, on a positive note, I must also underline that while our vulnerabilities were accentuated during this difficult time, we also benefited from immense good international partnership and cooperation, which facilitated expeditious and smooth flow of much needed goods and services. This has revealed abundant opportunities and good lessons we can

now build on in our collective response to our common challenges besieging LLDCs.

8. We are most appreciative of the generous and wide-ranging support accorded to us by our development partners and international organisations, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and our development agenda.
9. We therefore fully concur that this platform is an ideal opportunity for us to renew our commitment to redouble our efforts to accelerate implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA), and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Chairperson,

10. Botswana continues to make notable strides in addressing her development challenges. In line with our national Vision 2036, the Government of Botswana recently adopted an Economic Recovery and Transformation Agenda, which is aligned to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
11. I wish to underscore that enhanced international partnership, particularly regional cooperation, is of paramount importance in the advancement of our transformation agenda. Botswana is thus actively pursuing strategies for regional cooperation on infrastructure development and integration as a means of

creating more active trade routes and expanding market access.

12. In that regard, together with our neighbours, South Africa and Namibia, we have built a Trans Kalahari Corridor. This highway is aimed at facilitating faster and cheaper movement of goods and services between our countries.

13. Furthermore **Mr. Chairperson**, Botswana and Zambia have embarked on the construction of the Kazungula Bridge project between two countries. This joint project is aimed at further facilitating movement of goods and persons, as well as trade, within the Southern Africa Development Community region and other regions.

Chairperson,

14. With regards to trade and trade facilitation, Botswana continues to work with her neighbours to harmonise policies that will support expeditious flow of goods and services. To further operationalise this objective, Botswana has completed the review of the National Trade Policy and the National Export Strategy, which are intended, amongst others, to contribute to economic and export diversification; improved global competitiveness; as well as poverty eradication.

Chairperson,

15. We are also confident that these objectives are attainable through enhanced South-South Cooperation, and effective mobilization of domestic resources, in partnership with the private sector. Such partnerships, which are based on mutual benefit and aligned with our national priorities, are critical for us LLDCs, especially during this period of COVID-19 crisis.

Chairperson,

16. Let me conclude my remarks by emphasising that for us LLDCs, unilateralism can never be an option. Productive partnerships and multilateralism are the driving force behind our survival and remain critical in advancing our interests and achievement of the Vienna Programme of Action and the SDGs.

I thank you for your attention.

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