

STATEMENT BY

**HONOURABLE MAJOR GENERAL MOENG R. PHETO
MINISTER
MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND HOME AFFAIRS**

HEAD OF DELEGATION

TO THE

**FORTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

ON THE

- a) Review of the implementation of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the outcome of the twenty-fourth Special Session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: Gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century";**
- b) Current challenges and forward looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls.**

**on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the
Beijing Conference on Women**

Madame Chair,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you and members of the bureau for the sterling work you have done to ensure that this meeting becomes the success that it should.

After ten years, this meeting should not just be an opportunity for review and appraisal, but it must also be a platform for rededication and commitment to the goals and principles espoused in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In order for this meeting to have any meaning to many womenfolk across the globe, who are yearning for empowerment and equality, it should devise clear, effective and concrete strategies to nudge the process of implementation forward.

Since the objectives of the Declaration and Platform for Action are consistent with the MDG's, it would only be in order that the review of the Platform for Action should serve as one of the tributaries to the mainstream review of the Millennium Declaration, scheduled for September 2005.

Be that as it may Madame Chair, after ten years, we should be in a position to show, both collectively and individually, our achievements in so far as the implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is concerned. It is in this light that I wish to briefly apprise this august gathering on the progress that Botswana has made since 1995.

Madame Chair,

Botswana has made significant progress in the area of the advancement and empowerment of women, although there are still challenges and constraints to contend with. So far we can proudly credit ourselves for having developed a very sound national policy and institutional architecture that includes the following:

- Policy on Women in Development in 1996;
- A gender sensitive legal framework;
- A review of all laws affecting the status of women;
- Adopted a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy;
- Adopted a National Gender Programme Framework in 1998.

We continue to engage our stakeholders in every step we take towards implementation of the Platform of Action, for it is our fervent conviction that the attainment of gender equality is not the sole responsibility of Governments. The Botswana Government together with Civil Society Organisations has thus initiated processes on developing skills and capacities in gender analysis and planning. This close collaboration with civil society continues also in the implementation of other areas of the Plan of Action, most notably the following six critical areas of major focus to the Government of Botswana:

1. Women and Poverty including Economic Empowerment

Madame Chair, since 1997, the Government and UNDP have been engaged on signing joint programming that provide financial assistance to projects that economically empower women, among others. In recognition of the vulnerability of Women to poverty, we have undertaken to mainstream gender in all our Poverty Reduction Strategies and Programmes. Challenges still remain, chief among which is gender based budgeting, in particular identifying methodologies and tools to be employed in the budgetary process in addressing gender inequalities.

2. Women in power and decision making

I regret to say that Botswana still lags far behind in achieving the 30% target of women in power and decision making position as stipulated in the Beijing Platform for Action. However, we pride ourselves of having a high percentage of women, by any standard, occupying leadership and managerial positions in both our public and private sectors. Cabinet, for example has 33% women and the Governor of our Central Bank is a woman.

3. Education and Training of Women

Madame Chair, true to the wise words of some great thinkers, that "if you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation", Botswana views education as a potent tool of women empowerment and gender equality. In brief, Madame Chair, in the field of education, Botswana has almost reached gender parity. This is however not cause for complacency, we continue to aim for greater heights.

4. Women and Health

We are constantly reminded that HIV/AIDS has now notoriously assumed the face of a woman. In Botswana Madame Chair, HIV/AIDS is not only a poignant reality, but a national tragedy that has reversed the socio economic gains that we have made over the years. Women are more affected than men. This high prevalence of HIV/AIDS among women continues to undermine efforts towards the realisation of our commitments to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

In response, Botswana has put in place effective strategies to combat HIV/AIDS, these include among others, provision of medication to prevent the transmission of the AIDS virus from mother to child; the provision of anti retroviral drugs for free, but most importantly, we emphasise on education as an instrument of prevention.

5. Violence Against Women

Botswana continues to work hard to eliminate all forms of violence against women. In addition to legislative measures, intensive advocacy campaigns have been mounted throughout the country to educate both men and women about the need to obliterate the scourge of violence against women from our nation. Botswana looks forward to the report of the ongoing in-depth study on all forms of violence against women with considerable anticipation. We hope the study will serve to inform our collective endeavour to effectively address the pervasive problem of violence against women and the girl child.

6. The Girl Child

Madame Chair, the girl child is a woman of tomorrow, whom we should as a matter of duty, free from inheriting a life of prejudice, fear and want. Regrettably, despite the standing commitments we have undertaken at Beijing 10 years ago, the girl child today still faces a plethora of problems and hardships. This should be a matter of great concern to us.

My country ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2000. Our first National Report was considered by the Committee in September last year. Efforts are continuing to ensure that the implementation of this Convention gives real meaning to the life of the girl child in Botswana.

In conclusion, Madame Chair, let us recommit ourselves to the full and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Let us refrain from any temptation to open the Platform for Action for negotiation. Botswana stands ready to cooperate in any effort geared towards translating the Platform for Action into a global reality.