

REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT BY

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ON AGENDA ITEM 28:

**ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN DURING
THE 65TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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Mr. Chairperson
Distinguished delegates

Ladies and gentlemen, Today we have the honour address you as youth Delegates of the Republic of Botswana. We thank you most sincerely for giving us the floor.

Chairperson,

1. Botswana attaches great importance to the issue of the advancement and empowerment of women. The international community further committed to promote gender equality and empower women at the Millennium Summit as one of eight goals to achieve sustainable people-centered development.
2. The country's commitment to issues concerning empowerment of women continues to be guided by, among others, the Beijing platform for action, the accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1996 and its Optional Protocol in 2006 as well as the Millennium Development Goals.
3. Since Botswana acceded to the Convention in 1996, a continuous and rigorous process of reform of laws that have had a negative impact on the status of women was intensified so as to achieve gender equality. These include the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 1995, the Mines and Quarries (Amendment) Act 1996, the Deeds Registry (Amendment) Act 1996, the Criminal Procedure and Evidence (Amendment) Act 1997, the Penal Code (Amendment) Act 1998, the Affiliation Proceedings (Amendment) Act 1999, the Public Service (Amendment) Act 2000, the Marriages Act (Amendment) Act 2000, the Abolition of Marital Power (Amendment) Act 2004, the Statute Law (Miscellaneous (Amendment) Act 2008, and enactment of the Domestic Violence Act 2008.
4. In addition, Botswana developed a number of gender responsive national instruments to guide its efforts. These include adoption of the Policy on Women in Development, the National Gender Programme Framework, an Advocacy and Social Mobilisation Strategy of the National Gender Programme Framework (NGPF) and Vision 2016.

Chairperson,

5. Empowerment of women is critical to the economic and social development of all societies. However, the current financial and economic crisis coupled with food and energy crises and climate change continue to undermine efforts to empower women to contribute effectively in public life and their development as a whole, as well as to achieve the internationally-agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. These crises put a disproportionate burden on especially women and girls despite their strength and importance as agents of economic, social, political and cultural change.

6. We also note the continuing existence of discriminatory laws, cultural stereotypes and practices against women in many parts of the world and the persistent and pervasive gender inequalities that hinder access to and control of resources with greater bias against women. This in effect contributes to social insecurity, lack of opportunity and a deep sense of frustration and despondency

7. In this regard, it is essential that concerted efforts must be made to assist in building capacity of developing countries in particular to respond to these crises taking into account the needs and priorities of women .

Chairperson

8. Botswana has made and continues to make appreciable efforts towards the improvement of the status of women in society. Botswana has made strides in ensuring equal access to education and health care by all especially the girl child. We have succeeded in effectively erasing major gender disparities within both the primary and secondary education systems. There is no significant gender disparity in secondary school enrolment, with full parity achieved in the primary schools in 1995.

9. Other noteworthy achievements include the first recruitment of women into the National Army in 2008. This was a milestone in the history of the nation and it demonstrated a general acceptance of the ability of women in careers that were previously dominated by men. Botswana also has Women Chiefs, First Woman Speaker of the National Assembly, First Woman Attorney general, First Woman Governor of the Central Bank, as well as Women Mayors in cities and towns.

In addition, most of the middle management and policy level positions in the public service and parastatals are occupied by women.

Chairperson

10. Despite major achievements, Botswana is still faced with many challenges. Infant and Maternal health as well as diseases including HIV and AIDS, Malaria and TB continue to be issues of highest priority for the country. Combating violence against women and girls also remain a challenge.

Chairperson,

11. We recognize the importance of a strengthened United Nations gender architecture in advancing women's rights. In this regard, we warmly welcome the establishment of a United Nations entity for gender equality and the empowerment of Women, UN Women and the appointment of Ms. Michelle Bachelet as the Under-Secretary General and head of this new entity. It is our belief that the new entity will bring an important paradigm shift in the work of the UN in the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Chairperson,

12. In conclusion Chairperson, I wish to reiterate Botswana's unwavering commitment to gender equality and the protection and promotion of equal rights between women, men, as well as girls and boys. We remain convinced that we must all do our part in taking the actions needed, as set forth in our common agreements, to meet the goals we have set for ourselves.

13. In this regard, we should spare no effort in fulfilling the commitments that we have undertaken to promote gender equality and empowerment of women, including by ending all forms of discrimination and violence against them, guaranteeing the well-being for women and their development, and expanding the quality of affordable public health-care services, enhancing their capacities, as well as increasing their access to full employment and decent work.

I thank you.