

REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

154 EAST 46TH STREET • NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017
TEL. (212) 889-2277

STATEMENT BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. MOKGWEETSI E.K. MASISI

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

DURING THE

GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 76th SESSION

OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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UNITED NATIONS



- **Mr. President,**
- **Your Excellencies,**
- **Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. Allow me, on behalf of the Republic of Botswana and indeed on my own behalf, to join previous speakers in extending our congratulations to you personally and the Republic of the Maldives on your well-deserved election as President of the United Nations General Assembly at its 76th Session.
2. Your election to the helm of this august body is a clear testament that the international community holds both you and your great country, the Maldives, in high regard and esteem. This is not surprising given the immense experience and career accomplishments you bring to this position, spanning over three and a half decades.
3. I am fully confident that the United Nations General Assembly will benefit tremendously from your extensive diplomatic, executive and legislative experience. As we continue to battle against and strive to recover from the dreadful COVID-19 pandemic and many other pre-existing global challenges such

as the climate crisis, your Vision Statement which is anchored on “**Five Rays of Hope**” serves as an inspiration to many, including my own country Botswana.

4. In this respect, it is gratifying to note that your Vision speaks to the topical issues confronting humanity to date, which should remain on top of the agenda of the United Nations. These include **human rights, climate change, gender equality and the empowerment of women, terrorism and violent extremism, inequalities and injustices**. As Botswana, we are pleased that you have prioritized these issues, and committed to deliver for **People, Planet and Prosperity** consistent with your firm belief in multilateralism and international cooperation.
5. **Mr. President,** Let me in the same breath, take this opportunity to pay a befitting tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Volkan Bozkir, for his effective guidance and leadership during one of the most challenging General Assembly sessions in the 75 years of the United Nations’ existence. The pandemic challenged us as Member States and him as President of this esteemed body to be innovative and

creative to ensure business continuity in order to keep the wheels of the United Nations running.

6. Notwithstanding the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, we welcome the fact that under the able leadership of the outgoing President of the Assembly we successfully convened some of the most important High-Level Meetings of the 75th Session. These included the Commemoration of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the United Nations; the first ever Summit on Biodiversity; the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women; dialogue on support to Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States; Digital Cooperation; reform of the Security Council and revitalization of the General Assembly.

7. Most importantly also was the convening of the 31st Special Session of the General Assembly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which ensured that as Member States we demonstrate our collective resolve to come together in support of effective global response to the unprecedented impacts of

the pandemic, and reinforce the principles of solidarity and shared humanity.

8. **Mr. President,** My delegation therefore, fully endorses your choice of the theme for the 76th Session, namely: ***"Building resilience through hope- to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people and revitalise the United Nations."*** The theme is consistent with the actions we need to take collectively to fulfil the legitimate expectations and aspirations of the people we serve, at this difficult time in our history.

A Clarion Call for Hope

9. **Mr. President,** We welcome your Clarion Call for Hope because it sets a much-needed optimistic tone for this Session, given the extreme urgency with which we must act under the challenging circumstances we find ourselves. Hope is a virtue that is at the very core of human progress. History is replete with examples of great things that can be achieved when hope is chosen over fear and despair. Our great Organization, that

was founded after the devastating Second World War is itself a product and manifestation of hope. Even in the midst of the worst pandemic in a century, our actions should be driven by the belief that things can and will be better.

Recovering from COVID-19

10. A year ago, when I had the honour of addressing this noble Assembly we were all in shock, as the pandemic wrecked through our national health systems, taking many lives, destroying livelihoods, overturning life as we know it and ushering in a “new normal” of lockdowns and social distancing. A year later, we are still in the throes of the pandemic. However, advances in science has enabled the rapid development of vaccines.
11. Given that science has delivered the vaccines, now it is time for world leaders, guided by the ideals of the UN Charter, to ensure that this life-saving resource is distributed equitably. Without a doubt, a worldwide vaccination campaign that ensures that all countries, especially the developing countries have urgent

access, if we are to contain the continuing spread of this deadly virus and its more transmissible variants.

12. **Mr. President**, it is for this reason that Botswana shares the frustration by many and strongly supports the call for the vaccines to be treated as a global public good, as this is key to recovery and rebuilding better from the COVID-19 pandemic. I take this opportunity to commend the efforts made by some of the developed countries to support developing countries, especially those in Africa which have very low vaccination rates.

13. I wish to thank sincerely our development partners who have donated the vaccines and other forms of assistance to Botswana in particular to help to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, which is spreading exponentially now in my country and claiming many lives. The donation is an indication that the global community is slowly heeding the call by the Secretary-General that "**No one is safe until everyone is safe.**" But we have also seen how the uncontrolled spread of the virus triggers the emergence of new variants. A more equitable global vaccination roll-out programme is urgently needed if we

are to win the race against the new variants. Let us be mindful of the fact that a variant somewhere is a variant everywhere.

14. **Mr. President,** I am happy to inform that my Government has prioritised saving our people from this pandemic. In addition to encouraging our people to practise the necessary COVID-19 preventive measures, we have also channelled extra resources to the health sector. This includes purchasing of vaccines through the COVAX facility, the Africa Vaccine Acquisition Task Team (AVATT) and through bilateral arrangements. While we have purchased enough vaccines to reach herd immunity, the current logistical supply challenges continue to hamper our vaccination plans.

15. However, the slow rollout of vaccination programmes in the Global South, including in my own country, cannot be solely viewed in terms of the economics laws of demand and supply. Let us accept that the prevailing vaccine inequity is the real problem and a reflection of the inherent weaknesses of our multilateral system.

16. We must therefore, recommit, both in deeds and words to the pledge we made at the commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of this Organisation, to **“strengthen international cooperation, coordination, and solidarity.”** One way of doing so is through the sharing and transfer of knowledge and waiver on intellectual property rights on vaccine production. We are ready to work with all stakeholders to make this a reality. The Botswana Vaccine Institute which is already a leading producer of veterinary medicine is open for capacity strengthening for the production of Covid 19 vaccines.

17. In order to make the desired impact under your able leadership, the United Nations system and especially the Principal Organs must work closely together and act jointly in a coordinated way. While my country holds the Presidency of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), we will strive, together with you Mr. President, to strengthen coordination and collaboration between the two Principal Organs of the United Nations that we lead. As you indicated in your Vision Statement, this will assist to make the United Nations stronger and more effective in discharging its mandate.

Rebuilding Sustainably

18. **Mr. President**, our economies, are still reeling from the impact of the heavy blow inflicted by the unparalleled scale of the pandemic. For small economies in particular, pre-existing challenges have been worsened on the economic mainstays such as trade, tourism and the extractive industry. This undermines our ability to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Unfortunately, it is the most vulnerable and neediest in our societies who run the risk of being left **furthest behind**.

19. However, all is not lost. I am **hopeful** that if we press the reset button, reaffirm our commitment to multilateral ideals, we can accelerate the implementation of SDGs in this **Decade of Action**. As you rightly pointed out in your Vision Statement, **Mr. President**, financing, trade, technology, and debt sustainability are some of the pre-requisites for attaining the Goals.

20. My delegation has also taken note of your call for “***Rebuilding back better, stronger, greener and bluer.***” We could not agree more. The idea of doing things differently is in line with our current approach at home. Upon realising the scale of disruption occasioned by the pandemic, my Government has instituted a “**Reset Agenda**” which comprises five (5) priorities that are also well aligned to the priority themes of your Presidency.

21. Firstly, Government is fully committed to “**Save Botswana’s population from COVID-19**” through health programmes that include vaccination. Secondly, we are **reforming the public service** to ensure effective implementation of Government policies. Thirdly, we are accelerating “**Digitalization**” in the delivery of services by Government, and creating enabling conditions for the active involvement of the private sector and society in the uptake and utilisation of digital technologies.

22. Our fourth priority is “**Value-Chain Development**”: this entails unlocking more value in key sectors such as mining, tourism, agriculture and education by way of the innovation and

creativity of our people, especially the youth. This priority is aimed at accelerating economic diversification and youth empowerment and their employment. The fifth priority relates to **Mind-set Change**. Here the aim is to inspire our people to own the national development goals, as well as to embrace the goals in both disposition and action.

23. My Government believes that the Reset Agenda and its priorities which are in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic will enable us to recover from it stronger and to realise our development aspirations as enshrined in our National Vision 2036 and the Eleventh National Development Plan (NDP11). These national frameworks are aligned to the global blueprint in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's continental Agenda 2063.
24. We are however mindful of the fact that, in an increasingly interdependent setting, Botswana's development trajectory is inextricably linked with that of the rest of the world. Now more than ever, multilateralism, international cooperation and global solidarity is imperative. The onus is therefore, on this Assembly as the main deliberative, policymaking, and representative

organ of the UN, to strive for a better world. A world where no country is **left behind** in attaining the 17 Global Goals.

25. Beyond what we can do as individual countries, it is also our hope that the lessons being learnt from this pandemic will enable the United Nations to find innovative ways of enhanced collaboration with regional and sub-regional organisations to ensure preparedness for future pandemics and epidemics.

Responding to the needs of the planet

26. **Mr. President,** You assume your global leadership role at a time when the world is grappling with a myriad of other pressing global challenges, including devastating natural disasters associated with climate change, with small island countries amongst the most vulnerable.
27. In recent months, massive and uncontrollable floods swept across Western Europe, Asia and other places destroying riverbanks, homes and killing hundreds in their wake. Hurricanes, typhoons and storms as we just again witnessed in countries like Haiti, the USA and other places are a major cause

of devastation to critical infrastructure worth billions, and contributory to humanitarian crises.

28. In the same wavelength, my own region Southern Africa has not been spared from the atrocious path of climate change, induced disasters as evidenced by the rainy seasons triggering floods and combined with the devastating Cyclones Kenneth and Idai and Cyclone Eloise. This recurrent situation also calls for our region to strengthen its early warning and disaster preparedness mechanisms through regional collaboration with all stakeholders with the support of the United Nations.
29. Whereas the past decade had already been the hottest on our planet, in recent months more record-breaking temperatures and other climate change-induced incidents signal the real danger of increased global warming. The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has again recently warned of a “code red for humanity”.
30. Today, more than ever before, our planet has evidently become dangerously warmer triggering melting ice, rising seas, floods, cyclones, hurricanes, droughts and other extreme weather

events. Combined with air pollution, these events destroy irreplaceable ecosystems, leading to negative repercussions for sustainable development, health and food production systems as well as food security.

31. **Mr. President,** We have all, long recognized that climate change is the greatest challenge we face and indeed a real existential threat, demanding the urgent need to take bold measures to regulate the manner in which we interact with our environment by among others adopting technologies that reduce carbon emissions.
32. I would like to still believe that, we can prevent the situation from getting much worse, and provide innovative solutions. As former Secretary-General Kofi Annan once reminded us: "***The world is not ours to keep. We hold it in trust for future generations.***"
33. In September 2015, we committed ourselves to working tirelessly for the full implementation of 2030 Agenda for sustainable development in all its three dimensions being **economic, social and environmental**, in a balanced and

integrated manner that also embraces the full respect for and enjoyment of all fundamental human rights.

34. Likewise, in November 2016 through the **Paris Agreement**, we committed and set for ourselves more ambitious goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Paris Agreement gave us a reason and hope that countries of the world can work together to prevent and reduce the likelihood of dangerous climate change we currently experience.

35. With these previous undertakings in mind, it is my ardent hope that the global community will utilize the opportunity presented by the forthcoming **26th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 26)**, the **United Nations High-Level Dialogue on Energy, Fifteenth Conference of Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, Fifteenth Conference of Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and the United Nations Ocean Conference** to make further ambitious and bold commitments to advance climate action.

36. It is against this backdrop that Botswana calls for an aggressive dialogue on climate change and for action-oriented solutions including effective, efficient early warning systems and disaster risk management strategies and strengthened collaborative efforts between the United Nations and regional and Sub-regional entities to also enhance predictive analytics and data.

Respecting the rights of all

37. **Mr. President,** For Botswana, the three pillars of the work programme of the United Nations, that is **peace and security, development** and **human rights**, are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing. It is impossible to achieve success in one pillar without concurrent progress in the other.
38. Particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the time to escalate our efforts in making human rights a reality for all peoples the world over without discrimination is now. Fundamental rights such as safe access to food, clean water, access to good quality healthcare, education services and decent work, to freedom of expression and association, the

rights of women, children and persons with disabilities is by far long overdue.

39. Our part, while we established a national Policy on Care for People with Disabilities in 1996, I am happy to inform this August body that Botswana has recently deposited an instrument of ratification to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This is a demonstration of Botswana's commitment towards the realisation of the 2030 Agenda and its principle of **leaving no one behind**.
40. I firmly believe that as Heads of States and Government the responsibility is on us to protect the citizens and advance all efforts to strengthen good governance and the rule of law as national Governments, to create an enabling environment for fundamental freedoms to flourish unimpeded.
41. We, the collective Member States of the United Nations, have the responsibility and mandate to strength international law, promote human rights and gender equality, and most crucial to protect civilians in challenging peacekeeping environments. In this context, Botswana shares the same ideals with many of

you present here today on the principle of **Responsibility to Protect (R2P)**.

42. **Excellences**, as has already been acknowledged at the **2005 World Summit**, States have the primary responsibility to protect their own populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity. As part of the **Group of Friends on Responsibility** which Botswana is Co-Chair together with Costa Rica and Denmark, we will continue to ensure that the membership of the United Nations pays attention to this important responsibility to reinforce needed global action.

International Peace and Security

43. **Mr. President**, We hold steadfast in the principles upon which this Assembly stands and by this, reaffirm Botswana's continued commitment to playing her part in the quest for lasting international peace and security. As an integral part of our strategies towards making this world a safer, more prosperous and inclusive place for both present and future generations, we should invest more on peacebuilding efforts including ensuring

effective support to countries emerging from conflict to avoid any regression.

44. It is regrettable that at a time when the main battle should be the one against an invisible enemy, COVID-19, we continue to witness acts of violence which seek to take advantage and further threaten international peace and security. In our sub-region, where I had the privilege to serve as Chair of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Organ on Politics, Defence and Security until recently in August 2021, we have committed to countering and eliminating the threat of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

45. At the national level, my Government continues to take step towards keeping our people safe and thus contributing to the larger ideal of the maintenance of international peace and security. In this connection, my Government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) in June 2021 with a view to enhance Botswana's capabilities and ability to better detect and deter terrorist's activities.

46. Additionally, in July 2021 Botswana also acceded to the United Nations International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. We are indeed honoured to join other States Parties in ensuring that these most destructive weapons do not fall in the hands of the most violent non-state actors.

Revitalising the United Nations

47. **Mr. President,** As I have already alluded, revitalization and strengthening the work of, and coordination among the Principal Organs of United Nations (i.e., General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Security Council and the Secretariat) as well as improving their working methods remains crucial. It is important that we ensure that this chief deliberative, policymaking and representative Organ becomes a true, universal “parliament of nations”.
48. This can only be achieved if we ensure that the role and authority of the General Assembly is strengthened. It is through the intergovernmental nature of the Assembly which enjoys a universal membership that we can effectively leverage our collective resolve to address a broad spectrum of interlinked critical issues related to development, disarmament, education,

environment, health crises, humanitarian assistance, human rights, peace and security and counter-terrorism, among many others.

49. But we must equally not waiver in our determination to deliver the long outstanding **reform of the Security Council**. Let us rise above our differences so that we do not leave this unfinished business as a burden of the future generation. We must achieve the reforms during our life time.

50. I therefore urge you, **Mr. President**, to continue dialogue on these matters, in collaboration with the Secretary-General who I am aware that upon assuming his role has been working tirelessly on reforming the Peace and security, management and the development pillars of the Organization.

51. **Mr President**, In concluding my remarks, let me reaffirm Botswana's abiding faith in the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the various multilateral instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other protocols calling for universal access to education, good quality healthcare, food, rights of people with

disabilities, women children, as well as creating adequate opportunities for our youth population.

52. In conclusion, let me reassure you, **Mr. President**, of my country's full support, commitment, and cooperation in enabling you to fulfil your mandate during this 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

I thank you for your attention.

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