

REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

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DURING THE 56TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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Check Against Delivery

1. The delegation of Botswana welcomes the deliberations of the Commission on the Status of Women on *"The Empowerment of Rural Women and their Role in Economic and Social Development and Current Challenges"*. Botswana is in line with the commitments delivered by the delegations of Algeria, Afghanistan, Iran, Group 77 and China, Tunisia on behalf of the African Group as well as Angola on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Chairperson.

2. Botswana has fully recognised and affirmed the critical role that rural women can play in eradicating poverty and hunger, as an integral part of development.

3. Poverty eradication is accorded a very high priority. His Excellency, the President has since 2008 made poverty eradication a rallying theme of his administration. In order to facilitate improved coordination, the implementation and monitoring of poverty eradication policies and programmes, have been moved from sectoral ministries to the Office of the President. This move has added the much needed inputs for the effective implementation of poverty eradication policy and programme reforms.

4. Botswana remains committed to address fully all its dimensions and the implementation of policies and strategies including national development plan, which is aligned to the National Vision 2016 Goals. The development plan based solutions outline the opportunities to be implemented towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Botswana's development plan articulates the need to achieve the full, equal and effective participation of women and men in the development process in all spheres of life.

5. Botswana is strongly committed to the promotion of national ownership of development processes and outcomes. This is demonstrated through the adoption of the bottom up approach of development planning process through structures such as Village Development and Health Committees where emphasis is laid on participation of women and youth in rural areas.

6. Consequently Botswana has made substantial progress in growing the economy, educating the nation, creating employment and expanding physical infrastructure to improve the living conditions and quality of life.

7. These endeavours, which are part of a holistic approach to poverty eradication, have achieved: Reduction of the headcount poverty rate from 59% in 1995/96 to 20.6% in 2009/10, accelerated access to education, basic health services, nutrition, sanitation and water as well as significant improvements in the quality of shelter with particular emphasis on the poor and vulnerable groups.

8. Moreover, Botswana has invested in rural infrastructure development to facilitate agricultural and manufacturing sectors development in rural areas as well as market accessibility. In addition the Economic Diversification Drive Policy was adopted in 2011 to facilitate enterprise and entrepreneurship development which are aimed at the improvement of livelihoods and food security at rural level especially in rural areas. For instance, the Livestock Management and Infrastructure Development Programme was developed as a deliberate effort to improve the economic status of women in rural areas.

Chairperson,

9. On the promotion of gender equity and the empowerment of women, Botswana has made significant progress as demonstrated by the alignment of its National Gender Equality and Justice Framework to

international and regional commitments to gender and development, such as the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

10. To this end, Botswana instituted a wide range of administrative, policy and legislative measures which are aimed at improving the status of women. These include review of laws that discriminate against women and enactment of gender responsive ones. These include the Abolition of Marital Power Act (2004) and the Domestic Violence Act (2008).

11. Following the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act of 2008, Botswana is currently taking steps to establish a gender violence referral system as well as the formulation of regulations to facilitate elaboration and effective implementation of the Domestic Violence Act. This is a major step towards curbing the escalation of Gender Based Violence and also enabling survivors, majority of whom are women, to saying no to this health and human rights violation.

12. I am delighted to state that the Government of Botswana has adopted Affirmative Action for women's empowerment through provision of both financial and technical support for women's empowerment projects and programmes. Furthermore, Government has made deliberate efforts to pursue Affirmative Action for Remote Area Communities through capacity building and skills development.

13. This special measure is intended for the promotion of social inclusion and equal opportunities and meaningful participation of remote area dwellers in development projects. The government's plan has been mainstreamed in national programmes across the development sectors as it is intended to address the existing inequalities between the urban population and remote communities.

14. Botswana assigns great priority to education and training as strategic means for the realisation of women's empowerment. As such the Ministry of Education and Skills Development has provided a comprehensive literacy and skills development programme. This

targeted and tailored services to mitigate the disadvantages that limit their income generating opportunities. This is done through addressing the policy environmental barriers that prevent women's access to resources as well as expanding their employment and income generating opportunities.

Chairperson,

15. Even though much has to date been done, we fully recognise that there are still many more challenges that need to be addressed in order to enhance full realisation of empowerment of rural women, with particular attention paid to their role in poverty and hunger eradication, contribution to development and confronting current challenges. Specifically, there is need to apply critical gender analysis process in order to firmly establish factors influencing the choice of opportunities by women, men, girls and boys to duly engage and derive significant measurable benefits from the empowerment initiatives.

16. The economic downturn presents a challenge given inordinarily compelling areas that need priority resourcing such as hunger and poverty eradication as well as gender responsive budgeting. In this regard, the need for continued support and enhanced collaboration with development partners and all relevant stakeholders cannot be overemphasised.

17. In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm my Government's commitment to bringing the National Gender Machinery to a sufficiently visible level in the public sector, so as to adequately execute its mandate to coordinate sectoral efforts to mainstream gender, as well as to hold government ministries, departments, agencies, parastatal and private sector organizations, as well as civil society organisations, ensuring that a gender perspective permeates their policies, programmes and activities.

I thank you.