



STATEMENT

BY

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Mr President,

My Delegation and I wish to join other delegations in congratulating you on your election. Allow us to also pay special tribute and respect to Madam Michelle Bachelet, the Head of UN Women. My delegation endorses her strategic and robust initiatives as so well articulated in the United Nations document E/cn.6/2011/2. Botswana takes this opportunity to align itself with the statement made by Argentina on behalf of Group of 77 and China. Let me take this opportunity to pay tribute to the bold leadership step taken by the Secretary General His Excellency Ban Ki-moon to facilitate and lead in the establishment of the UN Women. We are UN Women!

This year's theme 'Access and Participation of Women and Girls in Education, Training, Science and Technology, including for the Promotion of Women's Equal Access to Full Employment and Decent Work' is indeed appropriate particularly as all countries are hopeful, and are expecting a slow, but certain emergence from the economic downturn of the recent past. In this context equality and equity in education and employment are top most priorities for many governments. Infrastructural development, telecommunication and ICT are emerging as large employers in both primary and secondary industries. However for many young girls and women, science and technology education remains a distant dream due to constructive and systematic barriers that are often entrenched in socio-cultural practices, policies and legal construct.

Mr President,

The theme challenges us to examine the role of science and technology as a means and an end to the empowerment of women. Specifically it challenges us to have commitment to effectively follow-through the quantitative and qualitative outcomes. The impact of science and technology on the lives of women, especially in developing countries, should be value-adding in terms of global knowledge architecture in research and innovation, and affordable e-learning, e-services and health, especially HIV and AIDS and malaria.

In the context of decent work, equal pay for work of equal value, social protection, decent pay and collective bargaining are almost sacrosanct. Qualifications and skills acquired by women in science and technology often times puts them on equal basis with men, in high risk jobs, including heavy plant and machinery, or even working underground in mines. This phenomenon brings to the fore the need to reconstruct the Decent Work programmes and Global Jobs Pact in conjunction with the International Labour Organization (ILO) with a view to do away with gender-science stereotypes and the enhancement of women work related rights.

Mr President,

In specific reference to Botswana, I am happy to report that we have taken bold steps to promote participation of girls in science and technology from the national and regional perspective where Government is collaborating with NGOs and the academic institutions. For example, the Ministry of Education and Skills Development

is working with the Forum for Women Engineers and Girl Scientist in Africa (Forum-WEGSA) that is hosted by the University of Botswana on a Girl Scientist Mentorship Programme. Under the auspices of the project, we have at the national level established:-

- Secondary school mentorship programme under the theme "Adopt A School" where each woman engineer and technologist is encouraged to take responsibility for at least one secondary school, as a mentor and role model for young female aspiring scientist and engineer. The woman engineer also functions as a liaison between her adopted school and an engineering industry e.g mining, geology, diamond cutting and design, telecommunications, etc.
- We are also in the process of resuscitating school science clubs which will provide mentoring and handholding programmes for young scientists and engineering, with special focus on young girl scientists.
- A special nestling programme for increased learning of science and technology, known as Science Boot Camps are being intensified with a view to expose girl students to science and engineering through fun learning.
- The National Internship Programme introduced by His Excellency the President of Botswana has already provided an opportunity for young female university graduates to experience practical transition from university to the world of work.

At the grassroots' level, the encouragement of the learning of science and technology by the semi skilled and skilled , several avenues have been opened to expand access for women to science and technology education, thereby increasing access to employment through basic artisan training at the community based brigades for skills training, and vocational training schools. In the 1990s Botswana Government through the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs introduced competency based modularised skills training for illiterate and semi literate learners. These programmes, individually and collectively, enabled young girls' access to artisan skills such as auto trades, scaffolding and hoisting, welding, heavy plant and machinery and construction related skills, thereby increasing their employability.

It is important to mention that in ICT, where we see an almost equal access to ICT training, there are however disparities in terms of qualifications between boys and girls. While boys tend to choose to study computer engineering and software designs, girls choose to study in greater numbers network design, systems integration and data management, which brings about skewness in the comparative pay structure between men and women in ICT.

In addition, Botswana Government, has during the current National Development Plan 10 (2009 -2016) provided deliberate financial support to technical and vocational education, including provision of scholarships and student loans with flexible payment terms, as a way of encouraging youth to opt for vocational and technical education as an alternative to university education. Botswana has also made a deliberate decision to build a specialised university of science and technology; introduced degree and post graduate programmes at the Botswana College of Agriculture as well as the establishment of the Innovation Hub, and Food

Research and Technology Centre under the Ministry of Infrastructure, Science and Technology. The expected outcomes of these national initiatives are increased access, and encouragement of young girls to learn science and technology, including research and innovation.

Mr President,

In terms of policy infrastructure, Botswana has developed the National Human Resource Development Strategy, whose implementation is led by a multi-disciplined Council, which I am privileged to be a member of, with special focus on building a science and technology human capital in Botswana. In the long term we expect to develop local capacity in research, and to come up with innovations that will enrich humanity.

The legal environment has also been reformed to remove any impediments to gender equality. The Botswana Mines and Quarries Act was amended to allow women as equals to men to work in quarries and underground in the mines. The Employment Act was amended in 2010 to among other things, enhance conditions of work for women, and rights. Finally, Botswana signed a Descent Work Programme with the ILO on the 17th February 2011, which will be implemented through the tripartite structure, thereby ensuring equal access to work, equal pay and social protection for women and men. Botswana will in the implementation of the Programme give the necessary attention to the elimination of gender-science stereotypes.

With these remarks, Botswana supports the implementation of the outcome of the 55th session of the Commission, as added strategies to the Beijing Platform of Action, and the Millennium Development Goals.

I thank You, Mr President

