

REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT BY

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THE AMBASSADOR AND
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**UNDER AGENDA ITEM 28:
ON THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN:
IN THE THIRD COMMITTEE
(SOCIAL AND HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS)
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**OCTOBER 11, 2011
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Mr. Chairman,

Firstly I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for the comprehensive reports presented under this agenda item.

We also thank the Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Ms. Sylvia Pimentel and the Special Rapporteur on violence against Women, Ms. Rashiada Manjoo, for their reports.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the United Republic of Tanzania on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Kenya on behalf of the African Group and also by Argentina on behalf of G77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

Gender equality is, first and foremost, a human right. Women are entitled to live in dignity and in freedom from want and fear. The importance of gender equality is further underscored by its inclusion as one of the Millennium Development Goals, wherein it is acknowledged as being key to achieving the other MDGs. Empowering women is therefore an indispensable tool for advancing socio-economic development and reducing poverty. To this end, it is our belief that granting women's equal opportunity to realize their potential plays a pivotal role in their advancement.

We take note of the laudable efforts taken by many countries in the achievement of gender equality. We are, however, concerned that the space for women in leadership and broader social and political participation remains limited. Also, discrimination against women and girls including gender-based violence and economic discrimination, remain the most pervasive and persistent forms of inequality faced by all countries.

It is against this background that my delegation believes that ending gender imbalances must remain a priority for the international community. In this regard, we are confident that UN-Women will continue to advance the agenda towards a world-wide achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Mr. Chairman,

Since the 1995 Beijing Conference, Botswana has made significant progress in promoting gender equality by taking deliberate measures to create a policy environment that promotes gender equality.

Guided by the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development as well as our National Vision 2016 among other frameworks, Botswana has taken initiatives to review laws, policies and administrative procedures that have consequently had a

positive impact on the status of women. The amendments of these laws have significantly contributed to the empowerment of socially, economically and politically. To date, women can be found in positions of power and decision making in all sectors of society, including the public service, politics, the judiciary, corporate world as well as the church.

Botswana has demonstrated a strong political commitment to gender equality as reflected by appointments of women to Cabinet and senior positions in the public service, and the establishment of a fully fledged department responsible for coordination of the implementation of Government Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. The Department has further been charged with the responsibility of facilitating the integration of women in national socio-economic development processes through the promotion of and mainstreaming gender sensitive policies and programmes.

Mr. Chairman,

We are convinced of the importance of mainstreaming the gender perspective in national development strategies and actions so as to bring about equality for women and men in all fields. However, this is an ongoing process as more work still needs to be done to incorporate a gender perspective across all sectors and all levels of Government, including gender-responsive budgeting. Our greatest challenges are lack of adequate skills and experience and the absence of disaggregated data. These challenges are further compounded by the limited financial resources.

Mr. Chairman,

Botswana recognizes the vital role played by women in rural areas despite the multiple challenges that they continue to face in their families and societies. We remain committed to improving the situation of rural women in relation to expanding their access to social services, employment and entrepreneurship, as well as strengthening the implementation of commitments on rural development and women's empowerment and rights, in line with the provisions of CEDAW.

In this regard, Government adopted a number of policies such as the Policy on Women in Development and Rural Development Policy, aimed at the creation of an enabling environment for women across all sectors, including the informal business sector as well as those in rural settings.

Furthermore, Government has undertaken rural development programmes that seek to reduce poverty within rural communities through economic empowerment and to provide support for sustainable livelihoods with particular focus on women's participation. Special attention is paid to skills training, employment creation, improvement of access to credit, delivery of extension services, increased community participation in planning and implementation of development

programmes and income generating activities supported through programmes such as the Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA).

Mr. Chairman,

Violence against women and the girl child both violates and impairs the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. This scourge, which continues to be a challenge for every country in the world, reflects and reinforces inequalities between men and women and compromises the health, dignity and security of its victims. The impact of such violence against women on society cannot be overstated.

Concerned about the prevalence of violence against women, Botswana strongly condemns all forms of violence against women and girls, and has significantly strengthened law enforcement capacity in this regard.

Ending violations of women's human rights is therefore, a moral imperative and one which we must collectively combat. In this regard, Botswana supports United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's *UNiTE to End Violence against Women* campaign and all efforts aimed at preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls in all its forms.

Mr. Chairman,

Gender based violence remains a challenge and a serious threat to the attainment of gender equality for all countries including my own. While a great number of victims of gender based violence are women and girls, there is a growing trend in Botswana of men and boys also becoming victims of gender based violence. The problem, thus, requires a comprehensive solution.

Botswana has made progress in addressing violence against women and the girl child. The adoption of the Domestic Violence Act of 2008 is a reflection of the Government's commitment and determination to eliminate violence against women. The law provides victims of domestic violence with maximum protection against abuse.

Since the adoption of the Act, the Botswana Police in conjunction with the Women's Affairs Department have strengthened collection of disaggregated data on violence against women in areas such as rape, murder, defilement, incest and threat to kill. In addition, a National Action Plan to implement positive initiatives to end gender based violence was developed in 2007. Furthermore, Government continues to create a more multi-sectoral collaboration between the legal, medical, social and psychological service providers to assist victims and survivors of gender violence.

Mr. Chairman,

While Government of Botswana has undertaken significant measures to address violence against women, we believe that progressive legislative and policy reforms will not, by themselves, fully address the problem of gender based violence. It is therefore important to intensify efforts to turn policies into action by expanding the quality of support for effective prevention and support programmes on the ground. The need for the strengthening of monitoring and evaluation systems to provide credible information about the magnitude of the problem as well as capacity enhancement programmes for law enforcement personnel are also critical.

In this regard, we value the continued support and collaboration we have enjoyed and continue to enjoy with the relevant United Nations Agencies and development partners in our efforts to effectively manage the challenges posed by gender based violence.

Mr. Chairman,

While paying attention to the above critical issues, we also recognise the need to address emerging issues affecting women, including, climate change and related environmental issues.

I wish to conclude by reaffirming Botswana's commitment to the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and CEDAW for they provide a basis for strengthening our social harmony and cohesion, as well as equity in the process of development.

I thank you for your attention.