



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

**STATEMENT BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF BOTSWANA
HONOURABLE KAGISO P. MOLATLHEGI, MP.
AT THE 136TH INTER PARLIAMENTARY UNION
ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS**

03 APRIL, 2017

DHAKA, BANGLADESH

**THEME: "REDRESSING INEQUALITIES: DELIVERING
ON DIGNITY AND WELL-BEING FOR ALL"**

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President of the Assembly,

Your Excellencies,

Hon. Speakers,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Botswana is delighted to join you at this 136th Assembly of the IPU. We embrace the theme of this assembly as it draws our collective attention to the fact that *inequalities must be redressed in order to deliver dignity and well-being for all*. It cannot be over-emphasized that indeed rising inequalities undermine human rights and opportunities for all. Moreover, the theme, which draws from Sustainable Development Goal Ten (10), calls upon governments to **"reduce inequalities within and among countries"**.
2. **Madam President**, the call to address inequalities as championed by this year's theme, is an issue that should not be seen within the context of perceived inequalities in as far as they are observed from an abstract view. It is an issue and a responsibility that must be understood and carried by all of us with a view to enact the change we all want. As Parliaments in particular, we are better positioned to make a more meaningful contribution to effect that change. An example of what we can do as parliaments is to

identify and address offending national legislation that serve to, and continue to perpetuate inequality in all its forms, within and among our countries.

3. Madam President, Botswana is not only committed to the promotion and protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of her people, but to the promotion and protection of the rights of women and children, including their empowerment.

4. Madam President, Botswana is currently experiencing rising income inequality which creates economic, social and political challenges. Trends in borrowing at household level and growing unemployment rate attests to these challenges. It is for this reason that Botswana is committed to tackling inequality in all its forms. At socio economic level, the percentage of the population living below the poverty datum line decreased from just under 50% in the 1990s to under 20% in the 2000s. Other strategies to fighting poverty and reducing inequalities include the following:

- **National Strategy for Poverty Reduction (2003)**

Through its multi-sectoral approach the strategy guides the entire national effort against poverty.

- **The Remote Area Dweller Programme**

This strategy targets the disadvantaged minorities who live in the countries' remote areas.

- **Destitute Welfare Programmes**

Aimed at improving the living conditions of the poor.

- **Orphan Care programme**

Mainly targeting children orphaned by HIV/AIDS related deaths. However, it covers all orphans regardless of causes of parent's death.

- **Integrated Support Programme for Arable Agriculture Development**

Aimed at improving food security through assistance to farmers.

- **The Youth Development Fund and the Young Farmers Fund**

Both programmes aim to nurture youth entrepreneurship as well as providing employment.

- **The National Policy on Disability**

Outlines the national response to the demand for a co-ordinated delivery of service and care for people living with disabilities.

5. **Madam President**, it is an undisputable fact that education is a critical empowerment tool. Data shows that females in Botswana are leading in terms of literacy and enrolment despite their still limited access to productive sectors of the economy when compared to males. For instance, over the years gender disparity in the education sector has been reduced significantly, with the number of girls enrolled for primary school per 100 boys standing at 95.5% in 2012. Statistics also show that in the same year, 120 females enrolled at tertiary education for every 100 males.
6. **Madam President**, in the past women in Botswana were disadvantaged in the access and control of production resources due to absence of legislation, some practices as well as cultural stereotypes. Policies and laws have since evolved in order to ensure gender balance in respect of access to opportunities and control of resources. Over the years more women have taken up decision-making positions in the public and private sectors in Botswana and more of them continue to access paid employment in the non-agricultural sector. Notwithstanding these positive developments, ownership, particularly of agricultural assets like cattle and farmland, is still biased towards men due to cultural customs and

practices of inheritance. Representation in political office is another area that still require marked improvement. Women's representation in cabinet, parliament and local authorities stands far below the SADC threshold of 30%.

7. **Madam President**, as I conclude, based on the above experiences of my own country Botswana, I call upon parliaments to strengthen partnerships with civil society organisations to redress inequalities, in order to deliver on dignity and well-being for all. We must have systems in place to detect inequalities and to develop interventions timeously. I deploy all of us to make commitments towards addressing all forms of inequalities in defence of fundamental human rights.
8. The persistence of these inequalities also suggests that our efforts as Legislators, are far from enough. We must come up with effective legislation to address the problem in our countries.
9. **Madam President**, I stand here to pledge my country's support and commitment to this noble cause.

I thank you.