



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

STATEMENT

BY

HER EXCELLENCY TSWELOPELE CORNELIA MOREMI

**AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA TO THE
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY**

ON THE OCCASION OF

THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE

BERLIN GERMANY

30 SEPTEMBER 2016

Director of Ceremony,

Mr. George Schmidt, Regional Director for Sub-Saharan Africa and officials from the Federal Government,

Your Excellency the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps,

Your Excellencies and members of the Diplomatic Community

Mr. Thilo Schotte Botswana Honorary Consul

Representatives of the Botswana and German business community here present,

Batswana bagaetsho,

Ladies and Gentlemen.....Good Evening, Guten Abend,

Dumelang

It is with great honour and pride for me to welcome you all to this function, which marks a special day in the coming of age of the Republic of Botswana, **the 50th Anniversary of Independence from 81 years of British rule.** It was exactly 50 years ago today, when the then **Bechuanaland Protectorate** took her rightful position amongst the community of nations. It is important on this day to remember our fore fathers among them our founding president, H.E the late Sir Seretse Khama and his team who had very strong convictions on the oneness of purpose of Botswana, our resilience and our determination to be a strong, united and a proud nation.

The celebration of this significant milestone is also a testament of the solid foundation that our nation was built on, a foundation based on the principles of ***Self-reliance, Botho, Democracy, Unity*** and ***Development.***

Botswana has a long established democratic tradition. As stated by our founding president His Excellency the late Sir Seretse Khama at the opening the fifth session of Botswana's third National Assembly in November

1978" ***Democracy, like a little plant, does not grow or develop on its own. It must be nursed and nurtured if it is to grow and flourish. It must be believed in and practiced if it is to be appreciated. And it must be fought for and defended if it is to survive***" Indeed we have nurtured our democracy through the values of consultation, open dialogue and mutual respect which have become an integral part of Botswana's culture and development. These are not only rooted in our key governance institutions, but also underpin our day to day life.

One of the values that has taken us this far is being a tolerant nation, as symbolised by the colours of our national flag. The black and white bands in our flag represents harmony and cooperation between the people of different races. Botswana has been and remains, the home of people of different languages and ethnic traditions living in harmony with each other. The blue colour in our flag resembles water, as sustenance of life. As you will be aware, the Kgalagadi dessert covers 2/3 of Botswana's landscape making Botswana one of the most drought prone countries in the region. As a nation we are always thirsty for rain.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We take great pride in this 50-year journey as we reflect on our humble beginnings as a Nation State to the present day Botswana. Humble beginnings because 50 years ago, Botswana was one of the world's 10 poorest nations, landlocked and surrounded by hostile minority regimes. From an annual per capita income of less than South African Rand80 then to a per capita income of just over USD 14,000 (PPP) in 2015. Our exports have grown from about US\$ 2 million to over US\$ 6.5 billion, domestic employment has risen to about a half million, up from less than 14,000 at independence. Our journey to the present day Botswana was made possible by the discovery of diamonds in the early 1970s.

Of course the discovery of this natural resource could have easily been a "resource curse," not the economic wealth it has proved to be. It was through the visionary leadership of our fore fathers who established the basic principle that the natural resources of Botswana are a common heritage and therefore their ownership legally vested with the state irrespective of who owns the land

upon which they are found. Following on this established principle, the revenue from diamonds has been utilised for the economic development of the entire country and not just for the particular area where they were discovered.

As the main source of revenue diamond production enabled Botswana to build the required social and physical infrastructure, educate her citizens, and provide the basic social services of water, electricity and clinics. Today over 95% of our population lives within 8 kilometres of a health facility. Thus despite the setbacks caused by HIV/AIDS, our life expectancy has risen along with most of our other health indicators. We have also moved from 12 kilometres of paved roads to 15,116 km of paved roads, from 251 Primary Schools and 9 Secondary Schools to 755 Primary Schools and 241 Secondary Schools and from 22 university graduates to over 30,000 students enrolled in tertiary education programmes with a national literacy rate of 82%. As a result of the massive investment in education we have become reliant on the skills of our own people, to support and sustain the economy for the development of this great country.

In this our long journey we have had friends in the international community who welcomed us with open and warm hearts. I would like to take this opportunity to express our deepest and heartfelt appreciation to our development partners for having been part of this journey.

In this respect during the last 50 years we have enjoyed excellent bilateral relations with the Federal Republic of Germany. Germany has played a critical role in providing technical assistance to Botswana in the areas of Water and Sanitation; Education and Human Resource Development; Transport; as well as Conservation. Botswana and Germany share common values, of democracy, good governance, rule of law, respect for human rights, zero tolerance for corruption as well as pursuit for sustainable development. We take pride today to celebrate 50 years of successes and achievements against all odds that seemed impossible to overcome at the time.

Distinguish Ladies and Gentlemen

As we look towards the next 50 years it is Botswana's desire to further strengthen the bilateral relations between our countries through partnerships

especially in business to business promotion, research innovation and technology development, cultural exchanges and tourism. In this regard in April 2016 we partnered with Afrika Verein to field an inward business mission to Botswana. This mission provided the German business community with an opportunity to establish business contacts and learn first-hand the culture of doing business in Botswana. In October this year another business delegation from Rhineland Palatinate will visit Botswana.

Furthermore, as will be evident, we have within the audience students from a high school in Gaborone who are on a cultural exchange programme with a high school in Herrenberg in the State of Baden Württemberg. In addition we are currently negotiating with school in the town of Oelde in North Rhine Westphalia to partner with another high school in Botswana. To us these exchange programmes are extremely valuable as they expose our students at an early age and better prepare them to be active global citizens.

Finally since last year there has been four high level visits from Botswana at a Ministerial level aimed at strengthening cooperation between the two countries. In August this year the Minister of State in the Federal Foreign Office Professor Maria Böhmer visited Botswana. We look forward to further increasing high level political exchanges as a foundation for even stronger ties between Botswana and Germany.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

Despite the remarkable journey we have travelled, and as we rejoice our successes to date, we are acutely aware of the challenges facing us and are determined to find lasting solutions to these. For instance, while we have a high literacy rate, we are experiencing unprecedented high rates of unemployment particularly among the youth currently at 20%. Employment creation is therefore central to our national development strategies.

As you very well know, mining tends to be capital intensive and therefore does not always create the employment commensurate with the investments made. We also know that diamonds are not forever. Therefore we need to focus on economic diversification. In this respect, our strategy is to develop globally

competitive enterprises in sectors that will continue to grow long after minerals have run out and premised a robust entrepreneurship culture for business growth.

Secondly, with today's globalised and highly competitive economic order, further development of the Botswana economy has to be premised on a knowledge-based, research, innovation and technological development. In this respect Botswana is laying strong foundations in Science Technology and Innovation through a number of interventions. A key initiative is the development of our first Science and Technology Park that will facilitate commercialisation of technology based products and services. We are keen to establish collaboration with Research and Development Institutions and Universities for Applied Research here in Germany.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Regarding tourism as you will have noticed from the Slide presentation, Botswana is well known for her rich wildlife resource and for her efforts in promoting the tourism sector through robust conservation policies and programmes. As a result, Botswana was ranked as a tourism destination of choice, by the findings of the Lonely Planet's 2016 Destination Report. Germany has been and continues to be the largest source of European tourist arrivals in Botswana.

As part of our objective to profile Botswana and further enhance her visibility, Botswana will be the Official Partner Country of ITB Berlin 2017, the first Country from Southern Africa to partner with ITB. This will afford the Country, a unique opportunity, to continue to share Botswana's success story. We believe that this will not only be enhancing awareness of Botswana as a tourism destination, but will also focus worldwide attention on our potential for economic development and a destination of choice for foreign direct investment. I therefore I invite you to start making plans to be part of ITB 2017 and beyond the ITB event to go and experience for yourselves Botswana's rich culture, abundant wildlife resources and the pristine environment.

More importantly, as we celebrate the past 50 years and reflect as a nation where we have come from, we also wish to focus on where we wish to be in the **next 50 years** to ensure a brighter future for the next generations. As His Excellency the President Lieutenant General Dr. Seretse Khama Ian Khama recently said **“we have set our sights on another 50 years of a positive socio-economic trajectory that will give impetus to transformation towards a vibrant, diverse and resilient economy. We look towards the next 50 years with hope for a more vibrant and successful country”**. The Government of Botswana is committed to building and maintaining business friendly laws to create a conducive investment climate by resolving the administrative, legal and structural bottlenecks which may still hinder attracting Foreign Direct Investment.

Finally the people of Botswana remain a priority to the Government. In that respect adequate attention to social issues and maintenance of social programmes for the people is part of the Government’s top priority with renewed commitment towards eradicating poverty, education and skills development, research and innovation eliminating mother-to child transmission of HIV, fighting corruption, and creating jobs for Botswana. Maintaining a united and peaceful nation to a large extent depends on meeting these basic needs and providing equal opportunities. Another major priority is to address challenges of infrastructure particularly water shortage, and power generation with increasing focus on renewable energy.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our 50 year anniversary celebrations take place just one month after Botswana relinquished the position of SADC chair. Some of the challenges I have identified above not only affect Botswana but the entire SADC region. Botswana’s major priority during her chairmanship was to focus attention on some of the challenges currently afflicting the region in particular energy, water crisis and food insecurity following the severe drought. In this respect, Botswana welcomes the historic Paris Agreement of the 21st Congress of Parties (COP 21) together with the adoption Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development. We are convinced that we can only overcome some of these

challenges by collective action, through regional and continental cooperation as well as international solidarity.

As a ***United and Proud Nation***, we look to the future, but we will not forget our past. Neither will we forget the foundations and principles that built our nation. As our founding president the late Sir Seretse Khama reminded us to embrace the past ***"We should write our own history books to prove that we did have a past, and that it was a past that was just as worth writing and learning about as any other. We must do this for the simple reason that a nation without a past is a lost nation, and a people without a past is a people without a soul."*** Our future generation will need this for them to understand, value and preserve this inheritance. It is in this spirit that we look forward to another 50 years of success.

In conclusion, it is my singular honour to have you with us today, to share our excitement, our gratitude and our blessings on this our Golden Jubilee Celebrations. Allow me also to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the staff of the Embassy of the Republic of Botswana who have worked tirelessly to make this event a success. I also thank the Ngwao Boswa Museum representatives and their partners the German Botswana Friendship Association for the historic pictures we saw today, which graphically reminded us of our humble beginnings. My gratitude also goes to the management and staff of Maritim Hotel for the excellent arrangements made for this event. Finally, my sincere appreciation to the Re Batswana Music Ensemble Band from Gaborone for the entertainment and I invite you all to feast in their spectacular performance. Le ka moso.

As we would and should salute PULA! PULA! PULA.

I Thank You