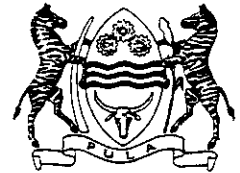


REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

154 EAST 46TH STREET • NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017
TEL. (212) 889-2277



**STATEMENT BY
MR. SAMUEL RATHEDI
COORDINATOR-REMOTE AREA DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMME, MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA**

**ON AGENDA ITEM 7 (a): HUMAN RIGHTS:
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE
DURING THE 14th SESSION OF THE PERMANENT
FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

**20th APRIL – 1ST MAY 2015
NEW YORK**

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Madam Chair,

1. I thank you for giving me the floor.
2. My delegation and I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the discussion under this very important agenda item.

~~Madam Chair,~~

3. Like the many delegations which have spoken before us, the Government of Botswana remains deeply committed to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights of 1948, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as other international treaties and conventions on human rights to which Botswana is a party. In this regard, the promotion and protection of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms is a top priority on the national development agenda.
4. Since attainment of independence nearly fifty years ago in 1966, Botswana has been resolute in her determination to build a strong culture of democracy and inclusive governance. These efforts have largely been guided by our entrenched belief in openness, transparency and dialogue at all levels, as well as the commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights of the people of Botswana.
5. The Constitution of our country guarantees the basic human rights, fundamental freedoms, which include equality before the law and proscribes all forms of discrimination including on the basis of colour, race, ethnicity, religion, gender or social status amongst others.
6. These principles have over the years become deeply entrenched in our social fabric, allowing a culture which values the diversity of its peoples, united by a common belief in the intrinsic value of, and respect for all human life. To this end, our national vision and development plans are geared towards living in peace and harmony with one another and sharing the fruits of our land without discrimination or favour.

Madam Chair,

7. In an endeavor to promote an inclusive society, the Government of Botswana has introduced various policies and programmes which enable marginalized communities to actively participate in the development of the country's economy as well as areas of education, social and economic empowerment initiatives and employment opportunities. The most comprehensive and most recent of these is the Remote Area Development Programme which aims to ensure regular consultations with marginalized communities and implementation of identified projects that respond directly to their specific and felt needs.
8. The land policy is another important tool which, in the main, recognises the significance of land in cultural identity and the historical background of families and communities. Whilst therefore seeking to protect land rights of all Batswana, it also remains highly cognizant of distinctive cultural identities.
9. It is against this background that the settlement and regional land use and development plans and other relevant legislations designate, protect and preserve places of cultural or historical significance to various tribes including marginalized groups, for use as may be determined by the respective communities. Such uses may be for medicinal, cultural, monumental or historical purposes, as well as, inter alia, for income generating activities like tourism run by the communities in their own localities.

Madam Chair,

10. Botswana further has laws, policies and programmes that are meant to address the special needs of women and children, irrespective of their ethnicity. These special needs include protection against abuse, child labour and all forms of discrimination, consistent with UN Treaties and Conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of

the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women.

11. In conclusion, Madam Chair, Botswana reaffirms her commitment to continuously uplifting the lives of her people, including those of marginalized communities and to the full observance of human rights as enshrined in her Constitution.

I thank you for your attention.