

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

DELIVERED BY

**HON. SLUMBER TSOGWANE
MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

**ON AGENDA ITEM – 8 “TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED
NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES: MEASURES TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THE DECLARATION”**

**DURING THE SIXTEENTH SESSION OF THE PERMANENT FORUM
ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

**24th APRIL 2017
NEW YORK**

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1. Mr. Chairperson, allow me to join other delegations in congratulating you on your election as Chair of the 16th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation.
2. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the discussions under this agenda item which touches on the foundation of this important Forum. Although as a general principle, Botswana Government's position is that all tribes and ethnic groups are indigenous to the country, we are committed to and fully support the "Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples".
3. It is within the framework laid down by the Declaration that we are cognizant of the fact that there are some members of our population who are disadvantaged, marginalized and deserve special attention. There are several of these communities spread across the country. We continue to affirm that people of Botswana are equal while recognizing the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves different, and to be respected as such.
4. It is therefore against this background that Botswana joins the rest of the world in commemorating the tenth anniversary of the declaration and embraces the theme: **"Tenth Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Measures Taken to Implement the Declaration"**
5. We believe that the declaration is an important step forward for the recognition, promotion and protection of the rights and freedoms of indigenous peoples of the world and in the development of relevant activities of the United Nations system in this field. We also reaffirm that indigenous individuals are entitled without discrimination to all human rights recognized in international law, and that indigenous peoples possess collective rights which are indispensable for their existence, well-being and integral development.

6. In the observance of Human Rights, Botswana continues to be guided by the various international human rights treaties and conventions to which we are a party. We also attach great importance to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights of 1948. Furthermore, the Constitution of our country guarantees fundamental freedoms and the basic human rights which among others include equality before the law and is against all forms of discrimination including on the basis of colour, race, ethnicity, religion, gender or social status, amongst others.
7. Consistent with the provisions of the Declaration, Botswana has put in place several policies and programmes that enable marginalized communities to actively participate in the development of the country's economy. They cover a wide range of areas like education, social and economic empowerment initiatives and employment opportunities.
8. The right to land and resources is important especially in view of increasing populations and resultant encroachment. Land administration in Botswana, through current policies, programmes procedures and statutes recognises the existence and vulnerability of all special groups or remote area communities. Through due process and consultations with all those affected, there is special consideration, dispensation, administration and management of all Tribal Land at the disposal of remote area Communities. This includes land for settlement, heritage sites, preserved natural resources areas, grazing areas etc.
9. Furthermore, still in the area of land rights and land use, relevant legislations and development plans designate, protect and preserve places of cultural or historical significance to various tribes, including marginalized or remote area communities, for use as they may determine. Such uses may include exploiting medicinal, cultural, monumental or historical values of such sites for income generating

activities like tourism. These are run by the communities in their own localities. The basis for this is recognition and respect for indigenous knowledge that can contribute to sustainable development and proper management of the environment.

10. As regards participation in decision making processes in line with Article 3 and 18 of the Declaration, this is done within the confines of our country's constitution.
11. Botswana has democratic traditional structures which predate the adoption of the Declaration mainly the "Kgotla" or traditional meeting place. These are used by remote area communities within their settlements or villages for consultations, information sharing and decision making. The traditional structures are used in addition to or alongside Local Authorities or Councils and Parliament structures which have democratically elected political representatives. A number of political representatives are from the marginalized or remote area communities.

I thank you.