



**Republic of Botswana**

**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**HONOURABLE DIKGAKGAMATSO N. SERETSE**

**MINISTER FOR DEFENCE, JUSTICE AND SECURITY**

Statement to the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the High Level Segment of the  
United Nations Human Rights Council

**3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2009**

**Geneva, Switzerland**

**Check against delivery**

**Mr. President;**

**Madame High Commissioner for Human Rights;**

**Excellencies;**

**Distinguished delegates;**

1. It is my singular honour and privilege to address the High Level Segment of the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council.
  
2. Three years ago, when the Human Rights Council was established, we all pledged to make it an authority on human rights issues. We all underlined the basic principles of credibility, efficiency, non-selectivity and transparency in the examination of human rights throughout the world. This was firmly grounded on optimism and a solid vision.
  
3. Botswana has remained a keen supporter of the entire Institution Building procedures of the Human Rights Council, including the operationalization of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

4. Mr. President, in December 2008, I took part in the meetings of the Human Rights Council Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review at which Botswana was assessed on her human rights record.
5. My delegation and I were most pleased by the demonstration of genuine and constructive dialogue and cooperation, which we experienced during the review process. We are convinced, as a nation, that by honouring our obligations, as well as genuinely cooperating with all stakeholders, we are facilitating a forum through which we can engage the international community on human rights issues on a regular basis.
6. We approached the review exercise in good faith and with an objective of exchanging views in a constructive manner.
7. **Mr. President**, Botswana is committed to the promotion and protection of human rights. We continue to implement policies and programmes that seek to safeguard and protect

the notion of the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights. In doing so we are guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. These two important instruments provide a necessary framework for planning, dialogue and cooperation.

8. The Government of Botswana remains cooperative and receptive to the Human Rights Council's special procedures and mechanisms.

9. I am happy to inform the Council that Botswana has recently invited the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People, Professor James Anaya, to undertake a country-visit. He is expected to visit Botswana in about two weeks. My Government has pledged its full support and cooperation.

10. **Mr. President**, I wish to inform this august Council that consultations towards the establishment of an independent national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles have been concluded. The recommendations thereof will soon be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

11. With regard to representation and transparency in clemency proceedings, the Parliamentary Law Reform Committee, has recently concluded its consultations with relevant stakeholders and is in the process of compiling a report that will be presented to Government for consideration.

12. Mr. President, the Children's Act is being amended to incorporate the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Amendment Bill has gone through the first reading in Parliament. Once the Act is amended Botswana will withdraw its only reservation to the Convention.

13. Mr President, regarding the problem of congestion in prisons, a Stakeholders Committee, chaired by the Attorney General has concluded its consultation and will be sending its findings and recommendations to Cabinet for consideration and approval.
  
14. On the issue of legal aid, a study that was commissioned to look into the modalities of instituting a legal aid programme has been concluded. A model has been proposed and we expect to pilot it beginning April 2009.
  
15. On the Basarwa issue in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, the terms of reference for the consultations have been drafted and will soon be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.
  
16. Mr. President, let me reiterate once again what I stated at the UPR Working Group last year, that while my Government is committed to the implementation of human

rights obligations we continue to face challenges in financial and human resources. To this end, we appeal to the international community for technical assistance towards capacity building and strengthening of the institutional machinery.

17. Mr President, it is important to reflect that, as we are meeting today, the current global economic and financial crises threaten to reverse the marginal gains that countries, particularly developing ones, were making to achieve the internationally agreed development goals for the full enjoyment of fundamental human rights.

18. I am happy to note that the Human Rights Council at its 10<sup>th</sup> Special Session held last week, was seized of this matter and has demonstrated that it has the ability to address promptly and effectively the relevant and urgent thematic issues aimed at furthering human rights promotion and protection.

19. We welcome the convening by the General Assembly later this year, of a high-level conference aimed at discussing the issue of the financial and economic crisis and its impact on development.

20. **Mr. President**, before I conclude, let me further welcome with appreciation the convening of the Durban Review Conference here in Geneva in April 2009. I am hopeful that the Conference will achieve universality of human rights norms relating to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. I pledge my country's support and cooperation in this regard.

21. In conclusion, Mr President, we need to always remember that the expectation of the majority of the international community on the Council is high. I have no doubt however, that the Council will deliver.

22. I thank you Mr. President.