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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

**REMARKS BY
MR. PHOLOGO J. GAUMAKWE
CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES, A.I.
PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

AT THE

**NINTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

**ON THE ISSUE OF
BOARDING SCHOOLS AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE**

**29 APRIL 2010
NEW YORK**

Chairperson,

1. Botswana wishes to respond to some issues raised in the comparative study on Indigenous Peoples and Boarding Schools prepared by the Special Rapporteur on the matter and discussed during this Ninth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.
2. My Delegation apologizes for presenting its response to the issue of boarding schools this morning, rather than in the previous meetings when it was under discussion.
3. My Delegation wishes to point to the paragraph in the Report of the Comparative Study on Indigenous Peoples and Boarding which states that:

Quote

"In Botswana, in order to address the problems of geographic isolation, the children of the San or Basarwa people are moved to hostels to which the Government transports the children every school term. In this way, the children get basic schooling, although not in their native languages. These "Remote Area Dweller Hostels" tend to be very unsympathetic places for San or Basarwa students. The idea of separating parents and children is foreign to San culture and the pain and alienation that San students feel at boarding schools can be acute."

Unquote

4. Regarding the use of native languages in schools, my delegation wishes to point to the fact that the official languages used in Botswana are Setswana and English and that it would not be feasible to use all mother tongue languages in schools for the following reasons:
 - There is a multiplicity of languages spoken in the country;
 - Different languages are spoken by a variety of groups of people spread across the country;
 - Some languages have many sub-languages and in some instances, within the same community. They are unrelated languages which are not mutually intelligible; and,
 - Suffice it to say it would be nearly economically impossible to develop the instructional materials needed to cover all languages indigenous to Botswana to be used as a medium of instruction.
5. Regarding the separation of parents and children, the Government of Botswana has committed itself to ensuring access to education by all children, including those residing in remote areas or small settlements. This is a direct responsibility of the Government of Botswana to achieve education for all in line with the Millennium Development Goals and a commitment that is already

achieved in as far as the increase and equitable access to education is concerned.

6. The provision of boarding facilities is one way in which the Government is providing access to education. There are 64 remote area settlements in Botswana, all of which have primary schools. However, there are smaller settlements in the outskirts of these established settlements which in some cases are up to 150 kilometers apart.

7. Some of these settlements have very limited number of children which makes building of schools in each and everyone of them a daunting challenge given the limited resources at our disposal. For this reason, boarding facilities are constructed in more centralized areas so that children do not have to endure long walking distances to school everyday.

8. Children are accommodated at boarding facilities in consultation with their parents, who also are free to visit their children at any time.

9. However, there have been cases of desertion by some students and to address this problem, the Government of Botswana is embarking on the implementation of Recommendation 15 of the Revised National Policy on Education of 1994, which states that measures should be taken to increase access and achieve equity in Primary Education including taking steps to establish one or two teacher schools where they are needed.

10. Currently, such schools are operating in some areas and some are still under construction. Resources permitting, it is the intention of Government to maximize the proven advantages of two-teacher schools in order to:

- Improve access to education in small settlements and eliminate the need to take children to boarding schools;
- Reduce the distance students have to walk to school; and,
- Reduce the need for boarding facilities, hence reducing the separation of children from their parents.

11. In addition to these efforts, the Government of Botswana has established a Task Force to come up with interventions that address the challenges posed by the use of Remote Area Dweller's Hostels. The Task Force started visiting such boarding facilities in February 2010 and is expected to produce a report by December 2010.

12. Other initiatives include improving the working conditions and provision of added incentives for public officers, as well as teachers in order to encourage retention of such officers in their service to the remote area dwellers.

13. In conclusion, Chairperson, my Delegation wishes to reiterate that it is the right of every citizen of Botswana to fully participate in all opportunities available for self empowerment, particularly educational opportunities, as well as to enjoy the fruits of the country's development.

I thank you for your attention.