

STATEMENT

BY

HONOURABLE SLUMBER TSOGWANE

**MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RURAL
DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

**ON AGENDA ITEM 4: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SIX
MANDATED AREAS OF THE PERMANENT FORUM WITH
REFERENCE TO THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE
RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

**DURING THE 15th SESSION OF THE PERMANENT FORUM ON
INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

**19TH MAY 2016
UNITED NATIONS HQ, NEW YORK**

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Chairman,

1. Allow me, at the very outset, to join others in congratulating you on your election as Chair of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and to assure you of the continued support and cooperation of the Botswana delegation..
2. My delegation has benefited greatly from the robust exchange of information during the duration of this Session of the Forum. We have found the discussions to be timely as well as relevant to the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted by world leaders in September 2015.
3. Botswana was amongst the 193 Member States of the United Nations who welcomed the new and transformative global Agenda which aims to leave no one behind in delivering people-centred development that prospers present and future generations.
4. Indeed, remarkable commitments have been made towards ensuring the full implementation of the Goals and Targets of the 2030 Agenda, which should also invariably result in the full implementation of the six (6) mandated areas of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Chairman,

5. Botswana reaffirms her commitment to the UNDRIP and continues to be guided by the various international human rights instruments to which we are a Party, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948.
6. The country's position has been that all tribes and ethnic groups in Botswana are indigenous to the country, but being mindful of the fact that there are other sections of our population, especially Remote Area Communities, that are generally socially and economically marginalized and still deserve special attention.

7. We remain steadfast in our resolve to uphold the human rights of all citizens including the human rights of vulnerable groups, women, children, youth, people with disabilities and remote area communities.
8. Botswana continues to make steady progress in addressing the needs of remote area communities. This is being pursued through consultations and creation of space for their active participation in the development of national policies and programs that are inclusive and respect cultural diversity, and promote equitable social development and land distribution. The Affirmative Action Framework for Remote Area Communities of 2014, was a targeted response by the Botswana Government to accelerate service delivery to, and participation by, Remote Area Communities.
9. There is a National Policy on Culture which outlines issues of cultural preservation and development. As a means to implement this policy, the Botswana National Cultural Council has been established as an apex body which advises the Government on cultural issues across all ethnic groups including those of remote area communities.
10. In implementing the Cultural Policy, communities in Botswana are assisted and facilitated to celebrate their culture through different media such as the Kuru Dance festival, Khawa dune challenge, Mbungu Wa Kathimana festival which are held by communities to celebrate and commemorate their culture.
11. In addition, the Botswana Government has instituted a period of national celebration in the form of dance, music, arts and crafts whereby Botswana from various ethnic groups participate to affirm their distinct and diverse cultural identity.
12. Botswana has also taken a considered position to respect the spiritual aspects in listing of world heritage sites. One of the basic tenets in the listing of such sites has been full consultation with affected communities. Due regard is given to ancestral beliefs of the communities residing around world heritage sites, and support is extended to them to utilize these sites for their socio-economic benefit.

Chairman,

13. Botswana is in the process of developing an Indigenous Knowledge Systems Policy as a framework to protect cultural practices and enhance the contribution of communities to their own socio-economic development.
14. In consultation with communities living in the central Kalahari Game Reserve, the Government has established a consultative structure, for remote area communities to represent their interest. This process has proved to be fruitful and Government has acceded to the needs of the communities by providing water to the Central Kgalagadi Game Reserve (CKGR) human settlements.
15. In the area of social development, efforts are made by Government to empower communities and these entail, amongst others, social protection, economic empowerment programmes and other national programmes aimed at improving their livelihoods.
16. Government provides universal education from early childhood to tertiary level which is accessed by all including children from remote area communities. A high percentage of Botswana have access to health services, even in remote areas where there are no health posts or clinics Government makes efforts to provide mobile health services.
17. Government considered and approved the use of mother tongue language and early childhood development through the Presidential Commission of Education. In large part delay in implementation of these essential aspects is due to economic and practical factors as opposed to willingness on the part of Government.
18. In July 2015, the Government of Botswana approved the National Land Policy which recognizes that all Botswana have land rights including remote area communities. The policy attests to the existence of people in vulnerable situations in our society whose rights and access to land should be acknowledged, realized and protected.
19. The policy dictates that allocation of land must be expedited and preferential treatment applied in their favour. In order to sustain livelihoods, Remote Area Communities living in the periphery of wildlife management areas and national monuments are given the opportunity to form community trusts to benefit from

the natural and cultural resources in these areas through the Community Based Natural Resource Management Programme.

Chairman,

20. We have endeavoured to demonstrate to this Permanent Forum how the Government of Botswana has taken bold steps in the implementation of the UNDRIP, and to the promotion of equity in the Remote Area Communities to ensure the health, education, economic and social development, as well as environmental and cultural preservation amongst these communities in order to realize the aspiration of leaving no one behind.
21. In conclusion, Chairman, Botswana wishes to reaffirm her commitment to ensuring that all citizens of the country enjoy their basic human rights and fundamental freedoms as enshrined in the Botswana Constitution and international instruments on human rights.

I thank you for your kind attention.
