

REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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ADDRESS BY

HIS EXCELLENCY MR. FESTUS G. MOGAE
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

DURING THE

62ND SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

WEDNESDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER, 2007
NEW YORK

Mr. President
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates

1. Mr. President, many speakers before me eloquently debated the theme for this Session. I am delighted, that no one disputes the evidence that science presents to us concerning climate change. Today we meet in this chamber as neighbours and residents of this one planet earth. We are bound together by our common humanity and shared future. We have in us the capacity to act resolutely to save our planet and now is the time. We cannot afford to squander any more opportunities, for tomorrow might be too late.

2. William Shakespeare teaches us in his famous Julius Caesar that,

"There is a tide in the affairs of men. Which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. Omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries. On such a full sea are we now all afloat. And we must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures."

3. We are convinced that we should focus on working together to save our planet, from the increasing threat of global warming and all its attendant consequences.

4. Mr. President, when we meet as the peoples of the world, we must of necessity remind ourselves of the original and higher purpose of the United Nations. Many of the global challenges we face persist, not because they are insurmountable, but because we have fallen short of the commitments and obligations, freely entered into under the Charter.

5. We, the peoples of the earth, have the human and natural resources and technology to end severe global poverty and disease, reverse climate change, prevent wars and alleviate human suffering. Unfortunately, substantial resources continue to be wasted on destructive endeavours rather than constructive work. We squander valuable assets in the production of weapons of war and mass destruction rather than on development.

6. The world would be a much better place, if the natural resources on this planet were exploited to feed, clothe, educate, care for the sick, prevent diseases and build communities. Young men and women should grow up looking forward to doing extraordinary things to advance the cause of economic and social progress, and not spending precious time manufacturing bombs, weapons of war or planning how to kill other human beings.

7. It is deeply regrettable, that nations continue to give higher priority to the narrow pursuit of national interests instead of cooperation for the common good and mutual benefit. This emphasis on rivalry breeds injustice, intolerance, extremism and aggression.

8. We must remind ourselves, that all of us are the people of this earth and no other. We are bound by our common humanity. We must rise to the challenge of the founders of this sole universal organization, so that we can live for our respective countries rather than die for them, and together build a more just and equitable future for all.

9. Mr. President, the United Nations has touched the lives of the vast majority of our people. We therefore reaffirm our abiding faith in its efficacy and usefulness to address global issues. The Organization embodies our hope and aspirations for peace, security, respect for human rights and development. In one word, a better life for all. In this respect, the search for consensus in all aspects of the UN reform must of necessity continue in a fair, just and balanced manner.

10. From 51 Member States in 1945 to 192 in 2007, the United Nations has grown in diversity and universality. It has also spread and consolidated its legitimacy and authority throughout the world. The UN is the centre for harmonizing the actions of nations towards the attainment of the common good. Its strength lies in its unparalleled legitimacy. Without the UN, states, both large and small, would encounter many formidable challenges.

11. It is hardly surprising therefore, that for this organization to live up to its mandate and people's expectations, it has to constantly reform itself to respond to contemporary global realities. In his inspiring and visionary statement at the closing of the San Francisco Conference sixty-two years ago, President Harry Truman of the United States proffered timeless wise counsel when he said,

"This Charter, like our constitution, will be expanded and improved as time goes on. No one claims that it is now a final or perfect instrument. It has not been poured into a fixed mold. Changing world conditions will require readjustments – but they will be readjustments of peace and not of war."

12. These visionary words of one of the founding fathers of the United Nations should guide us in dealing with UN reform. We call upon the original signatories of the United Nations Charter and, in particular the Permanent Members of the Security Council, to assume greater leadership in the search for consensus and compromise on the reform of the United Nations Security Council. They should be more flexible in responding to proposals put forward on the reforms of the Security Council.

13. As nation states we are encouraged to build sound democratic institutions. It is imperative, that the principle of a fairer, more inclusive, participatory and accountable institutions should be extended to global governance. In this respect, it should be perfectly understandable why, a substantial number of Member States consider it, not only necessary but also long overdue, to increase membership of the Council in both the permanent and non permanent categories. Today, important matters of international peace and security cannot be resolved through the monopoly of fire power. It requires greater participation and collaboration of nations large and small.

14. Botswana recognizes that we cannot all be members of the Security Council. There are those among us who have the capacity to carry the daunting responsibilities of permanent membership. This is why it should be possible for us to reach consensus in making "adjustments of peace and not of war". An all-or-nothing approach is not in our best interest. Botswana strongly supports the search for a compromise on this long standing issue, which if left unresolved can only become an unnecessary distraction to other equally pressing priorities.

15. Mr. President, conflicts in Africa cause the loss of hundreds of thousands of innocent lives. Many more people are driven into abject poverty and exposed to diseases due to the massive displacement of populations and destruction of their productive capacity. Huge amounts of resources are annually allocated to the United Nations peacekeeping budget to resolve conflicts. Even more resources are needed on the care and upkeep of refugees and the displaced peoples.

16. The situation in Darfur continues to cause concern. Concerted efforts are needed to bring that conflict to an end. In this respect we welcome the Security Council decision to deploy a peacekeeping mission in Darfur and call upon our brothers and sisters in the Sudan to work together to find a lasting political settlement.

17. Botswana is concerned about the situation in Chad and the Central African Republic. The loss of civilian lives is intolerable. We call upon Chad, the Central African Republic and other parties to the conflicts to commit to a peaceful political process to avert further loss of lives. It is clear, that the resolution of conflict in that region will require closer cooperation, collaboration and partnership between and among those countries involved in conflict situations.

18. Following elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo we are hopeful the country is on the road to recovery. It is important for the international community to continue to support the Democratic Republic of Congo in its post-conflict reconstruction and development efforts. The marauding lawless militias that continue to undermine the peace process should be left in no doubt that anarchy cannot be tolerated.

19. The DRC and the countries of the Great Lakes region of Africa will for the foreseeable future require the assured support and partnership of the international community not only in peace building but more importantly, in the prevention of conflicts.

20. Mr. President, we acknowledge the existence of these problems not because we consider the future of Africa to be hopeless or bleak. We do so in order to arrive at a correct diagnosis of the illnesses and hence prescribe the right medication.

21. The African Union is playing a pivotal role in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts on the continent. While the United Nations Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, Africa should be a dependable and indispensable partner in responding expeditiously, to the urgent need to end conflicts and save lives.

22. The countries and people of Africa should recognize, that the primary responsibility for durable peace, social and economic development lies with them. In this respect, we should adopt sound policies and programmes that promote economic growth and development, foreign direct investment as well as domestic investment.

23. Indeed we are witnessing significant economic growth in Africa. The latest IMF projections, are that, in 2007 the African economy is expected to grow by 6%, just below the 7% per annum target of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, that is necessary to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

24. We look to our development partners to deliver on the pledges to scale up official development assistance to Africa, effect meaningful debt relief, improve market access for African goods and services and encourage their private sectors to invest in Africa.

25. Mr. President, in the year 2000, at the dawn of the New Millennium, we convened in this hallowed halls to chart a new path for the United Nations development agenda. We adopted the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We made an undertaking to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, promote gender equality as well as combat HIV and AIDS.

26. The Millennium Summit followed many global conferences of the 1990s at which we made numerous commitments to combat poverty and underdevelopment. The outcome of these UN conferences and Summits provide a veritable template for addressing the debilitating scourge of poverty, disease, hunger and underdevelopment in the world.

27. Today as we meet here, seven years after the adoption of the Millennium Declaration and halfway to 2015, we should pause and take serious stock of the progress made or lack of it.

28. It is evident, that while other regions of the world are making progress towards the realisation of the MDGs, indications are that unless something is done to support Africa, the continent is unlikely to achieve any of the Goals by 2015. Statistics tell tales of a continent that is host to huge numbers of the poor and the hungry. Diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis, still kill many people in Africa. These factors require urgent response as they create conditions that pose a threat to peace, stability and security.

29. In this interdependent world the United Nations cannot realistically hope to achieve the MDGs by 2015 if one part of humanity is lagging so far behind. Something must be done to assist and support Africa. In March 2002 at Monterrey, Mexico, we recognized the imperative of global cooperation and partnership in the achievement of internationally agreed development goals. We agreed that:

"Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration demands a new partnership between developed and developing countries."

Let us honour our commitments and move forward.

30. Mr. President, let me conclude by reiterating the fact that Botswana has long recognized that sustainable development has to be a nationally owned and led process that requires sound democratic institutions and prudent economic management. Adherence to these principles coupled with the exploitation of mineral resources and donor support enabled us to achieve rapid economic growth and some measure of development.

31. Continued assistance is necessary to enable us to consolidate the gains of the past few years and ensure sustainable development. In this respect the scope of development co-operation should include private sector development, private investment, and access to technology.

32. Assistance to middle income countries such as Botswana is crucial and in the long term interest of global economic growth and prosperity. We are not asking for handouts but assured support, partnership and collaboration.

33. Thank you, Mr. President.