



**SPEECH ON THE SPECIAL THEME OF 26TH SESSION OF
UNHABITAT GOVERNING COUNCIL**

BY

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President,
Heads of Delegations,
Distinguished Delegates

- 1.0. It is an honour and a privilege to participate at this momentous occasion. On behalf of the Botswana delegation, I would like to express my appreciation for allowing us to share our efforts towards the realisation of provision of adequate housing and sustainable urban development in Botswana.

Chairperson,

- 2.0. The Government of the Republic of Botswana holds the New Urban Agenda in high esteem. We uphold the principles of the 2030 Development Agenda, and the recently adopted New Urban Agenda, as demonstrated by our vision to achieve inclusive human settlements development rooted in participatory approaches to planning. We fully embrace the notion of urbanisation as an opportunity for growth and development and are committed to positioning housing and urban planning as a priority in our urban development process as we believe they are an integral part of the urbanisation process.
- 3.0. As a country, we strive to ensure sustainable human settlements development. Our intention is to address development priorities that were identified in our Country Report to Habitat III. In this regard issues of affordable housing, proactive planning, land management, improved livelihoods, governance and local authority financing mechanisms and mitigating the effects of climate change remain critical.

Chairperson,

- 4.0. My Government is intensifying efforts to ensure provision of housing to the low income and vulnerable groups through amongst others the

Low Income Housing Programme, Destitute Housing Programme, and allocation of land to individuals and companies for residential development. In all these interventions, government levies partial and total subsidies to ensure affordability. In addition, the Certificate of Rights, which is a simple tenure option that was used in the past to provide security of tenure to the low-income groups in urban areas has been improved and made registrable. This has improved access to housing finance by the low income groups. Furthermore, we have embarked on a land registration exercise which is intended to survey all tribal land across the country. This is intended to provide secure land titles that are registerable and can facilitate hypothecation and investment in the housing sector.

- 5.0. In spite of these interventions, we are constrained by shortage of adequate and affordable housing and backlog in households' connection to basic services particularly in the old neighborhoods of our settlements. To address these issues we are currently undertaking the Housing Needs Assessment which will form the basis for the National Housing Strategy. Furthermore, the Government is also in the process of formulating a National Housing Act whose aim is to amongst others **bring about a governance system in the housing sector by defining the roles and responsibilities of different institutions and actors and ensure their commitment to housing delivery.** In addition, the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme is being implemented in three of our urban centers with a view to improve the lives of the urban poor. We believe that these initiatives are a step in the right direction and will guide government on appropriate housing interventions.

Chairperson,

- 6.0. Orderly settlements and sustainable urbanisation require the involvement of all relevant sectors. In this respect integrated human settlements development is being pursued to ensure all sectors are actively involved in sustainable urban development. Effort is made to

ensure proactive and responsive physical planning through implementation of the revised Town and Country Planning Act, 2013 the preparation of the National Spatial Plan and Settlements Revitalization Plans. To facilitate orderly development of our settlements, the government has taken a decision to declare the whole country as a planning area, with a view to operationalizing the Town and Country Planning Act in the entire country. This will address issues of construction of buildings which are not structurally sound, illegal changes of land use, inadequate plot accesses and circulation resulting in high cost of infrastructure provision.

- 7.0. The National Spatial Plan (NSP) which is currently being prepared is a model for integrated planning. It is a comprehensive plan to guide national spatial development and investment in Botswana for the next 20 years. It is a government land management strategy which directs spatial development of all ministries, departments, agencies, private sector and civil society organisations. The plan apportions land for all future developments, thus creating a balance around socio economic development of people, their location on space, and relationship with their environment. This plan is at an advanced stage and has already influenced the implementation of other projects such as the Capital City Region Integrated Master Plan which will guide urbanisation and settlement pattern of the capital city.

Chairperson,

- 8.0. Our governance system is underpinned by decentralisation of decision making, resource mobilisation and service delivery. A decentralization policy is being drafted to create a governance framework that defines and aligns the roles and responsibilities of central government, local governments and non-state actors to drive inclusive service delivery and sustainable local development. The decentralisation policy will also guide overall service delivery and the financing of councils and ensure active participation of the public

from the grassroots in order to ensure that we do not leave anyone behind.

- 9.0. I also wish to highlight that the Town and Country Planning Act of 2013 decentralised planning powers to Local Authorities by establishing them as Planning Authorities. This has brought planning services closer to the people, and has empowered local authorities to carry out local settlement planning and monitoring of developments within their jurisdiction.

Chairperson,

- 10.0. We answer the call to action, and have structures in place to ensure local physical implementation, monitoring and review of the New Urban Agenda. It is our view that it is only when we take everybody on board and make them realise their importance and role that we will achieve sustainable urban development. We will therefore work closely with grassroots people, women, youth and other special groups right from policy formulation to ensure that we achieve inclusive urban prosperity. We are also intensifying our efforts in managing the environment, addressing issues of climate change, disaster preparedness and urban resilience. We have put plans and policies to reduce carbon footprint of our human settlements.

- 11.0. Finally Chairman, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Botswana, allow me to express my appreciation for the sterling work done by UNHABITAT. I wish to reiterate that we value the technical expertise and support offered by UNHABITAT and look forward to strengthening our collaboration. We believe that if all members of the United Nations can play an active role in the implementation and monitoring of the New Urban Agenda, we would indeed create a better urban future for generations to come.

I thank you.