

**REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA**



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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STATEMENT BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY MR. FESTUS G. MOGAE
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA
AND HEAD OF DELEGATION**

AT THE

59TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Please check against delivery

Mr. President
Mr. Secretary General
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Let me start by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to the Presidency of the 59th Session of the General Assembly. Your election is a tribute not only to yourself, but also to your country, Gabon, with which Botswana enjoys the most cordial of relations. I assure you of the full support and co-operation of my delegation in the discharge of your onerous duties and responsibilities.

2. We also pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr Julian Hunte, of Saint Lucia, for his stewardship of the 58th Session of the General Assembly. Our words of congratulations are also addressed to our Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his visionary leadership of our Organisation and for his enduring spirit in the face of the complex challenges that the United Nations is called upon to address across our common universe.

3. I take this opportunity to join other delegations in extending our condolences to the Government and people of the Russian Federation on the tragic loss of lives in Beslan. There can never be any justification for this savage attack on innocent children, men and women. Botswana therefore joins the international community in condemning this horrendous act.

4. We also extend our sympathies and condolences to our dear brothers and sisters in the Caribbean and the Southern part of the United States of America for the loss of lives and destruction of property caused by Hurricanes.

5. Mr. President, we are gathered here today twelve months before the first review of the Millennium Declaration, an unprecedented compact of world leaders to unite in action in addressing the problems bedevilling humanity. It is our hope that we will use this gathering to reflect on whether we have done enough to realise the Millennium Development Goals.

6. We have to ask ourselves, individually and collectively, whether the enthusiasm and political commitment with which we endorsed the Declaration is being translated into programmes and projects. Simply put, we must be ready to answer, hopefully in the affirmative, that we are doing enough to meet the targets that we set for ourselves in the first five years of this millennium.

7. It would be recalled that pessimists proclaimed the Millennium Summit a talking shop and poured scorn on its intended outcome. Are we doing enough to prove them wrong? Mr. President, we owe it to the millions of our people who look up to us, to mitigate their suffering. Thus far, the evidence available suggests that our performance has been disappointing. Unfortunately time is not on our side. There is need to act, with vigour if we are to realise our commitments.

8. My delegation is fully aware that a multiplicity of factors combined to constrain and thwart some of our efforts in the past few years. There is no doubt, for instance that major international conflicts such as the war in Iraq have been a draw back on the efforts by the international community to focus on these goals. As a result of the war, oil prices have sky-rocketed, putting tremendous pressure on the world economy, and in particular on the vulnerable economies of developing countries.

9. In spite of these challenges, we have abiding faith in the human spirit and therefore remain convinced that it is not beyond the capacity of the international community to implement these noble ideals.

10. The Millennium Declaration recognised that poverty eradication is fundamental to achieving sustainable development, but many of our people still live in conditions of abject poverty. The alleviation of poverty and its eventual eradication therefore remains a top priority. Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) levels continue to fall in real terms, to below the agreed target of 0.7% of Gross National Product. I must however commend the few countries which have met this target. They have demonstrated that the target is realistic and achievable.

11. Mr. President, the continuing debt burden is contributing significantly to the failure to deal effectively with the problem of poverty. Most developing countries have undertaken courageous measures to implement painful structural reforms. The commendable steps taken to introduce sound macro-economic management and principles of good governance deserve urgent, positive and appropriate response. It must be acknowledged that some of the reforms can in the short term worsen the plight of the poor for a long time before the benefits of the sacrifices are realised.

12. Structural reforms have not been confined to budgetary matters alone. They cover the whole economic spectrum, including the creation of an environment conducive to private sector growth and development as well as the flow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). A number of developing countries have promulgated legislative and regulatory frameworks to stimulate greater private sector participation in their economies. It is only natural given the scope of the reform measures that developing countries should expect some positive reaction in the form of FDI flows which at the moment are regrettably, still very low.

13. In the area of trade we are concerned about the slow progress in the multilateral trade negotiations. As developing countries, we have more to gain from a more just, fairer and rule based international trading system, which would facilitate the integration of our economies into the global economy. We urge the major players in these negotiations to show a greater sense of urgency and commitment.

14. We are concerned that in spite of the strong commitments expressed at the Millennium Summit, almost half of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa continue to survive on one Dollar a day. This reflects no change in the statistics of 1990; 121 million children are still out of school; and the under five mortality rate is still as high as 174 out of a thousand life births.

15. Mr. President, the resources provided to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic remain inadequate, yet we all agree that HIV/AIDS is one of the greatest challenges of our time. Combating the scourge of HIV/AIDS must remain high on our priorities for action because the epidemic has a debilitating impact on everything that we do to improve the human condition. In 2003, it was reported that about 40 million people around the world were living with the virus, and well over 26 million of them were in sub-Saharan Africa alone. The epidemic killed over 2.3 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa alone out of a total of 3 million people who died of AIDS related illnesses globally.

16. In Botswana, our various intervention programmes are beginning to bear fruit. We are indebted to our friends internationally whose, partnership, support, assistance and indeed solidarity have combined to save lives and give hope to many of our people. However, a lot still needs to be done. Our immediate challenge is lack of capacity to rollout the Anti-retroviral therapy programme to all who need assistance. We shall therefore continue to rely on the international community for consistent and assured support if we are to assist our people in time.

17. Mr. President, international peace and security is under constant threat. Our collective memory appears to be failing to draw lessons even from the recent horrors of conflicts in Rwanda, Afghanistan and the Balkans. Millions of people continue to suffer and die needlessly in Africa and elsewhere because of unnecessary conflicts. It is once again Africa which has had to bear the brunt of these conflicts.

18. We are concerned by the protracted conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan, Burundi and Cote D'Ivoire.

19. As Africans, we accept our responsibility to find solutions to these conflicts. This is why we established the Peace and Security Council of the African Union in May this year. In its short history of existence the Council has already deployed peace-keepers in Burundi, peace monitors in Darfur in the Sudan, and sent mediators and peace envoys to help in negotiating solutions to conflicts elsewhere in the continent.

20. One thing is clear, Mr. President, Africa is an integral part of the international community. The problems of Africa are global problems. We cannot isolate ourselves nor be isolated from the rest of the world and be expected to single-handedly find solutions to such conflicts. We need consistent and continued international support. In this regard, we acknowledge the important and commendable role that the United Nations is playing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Cote D'Ivoire and Burundi.

21. The peace process in the DRC is at a critical stage. The international community has a duty and responsibility to assist the Government and people of the DRC in the search for national reconciliation and a lasting political settlement to the problems facing their country. It is our hope that the international community will provide the necessary financial and material support to ensure the success of the International Conference on the Great Lakes to be held in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania at the end of this year.

22. In Cote D'Ivoire, everything possible must be done to maintain peace and stability as well as promote national reconciliation by ensuring that the parties accept the Government of national unity.

23. Regarding the situation in the Darfur region of Sudan, Mr. President, the international community must take urgent measures to arrest the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in that country. The people of Darfur should be assisted to return to their homes in safety and dignity. We urge the Government of Sudan to be receptive to the proposals contained in the Secretary General's report and above all take due cognisance of the Security Council Resolution 1564, and in particular facilitate the speedy delivery by the international community of much needed humanitarian assistance.

24. Mr. President, we are troubled by the escalating conflicts in the Middle East which are a serious threat to international peace and security. How long can humanity stand the sight of human suffering that we see daily on our television screens? For how long can generations of mothers mourn the loss of sons in combat? For how long should succeeding generations fight wars which their forebears fought? We ask those involved in these conflicts, descendants of old civilisations who made enormous contributions to the growth and development of modern civilisation to live and let live, to find in themselves the courage to resolve their differences through dialogue rather than through indiscriminate violence.

25. Mr. President, terrorism is one of the greatest challenges to international peace and security. No one country can defeat this scourge which has caused the loss of many lives across the globe. The activities of terrorists have become very complex and sophisticated. We need united, stronger and concerted action by all the countries of the world to defeat this scourge which knows no boundaries.

26. Mr. President, in conclusion, I reaffirm the importance which Botswana attaches to the revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of the Security Council. We commend the President of the 58th Session of the General Assembly for his practical proposals in this area. We were disappointed that the General Assembly could not reach consensus on these proposals. My delegation will contribute in whatever way it can to the building of such consensus.

27. Regarding the reform of the Security Council we are concerned that after eleven years of consultations, not much progress has been achieved. The solution to this vexing question rests on the ability of Member States, in particular the Permanent Members of the Council, to master the political will to compromise. We should not tolerate this paralysis any longer. It is therefore my hope that action will be taken at this Session to continue the process of democratising the Security Council and make it more representative of the UN Membership.

28. Finally, Mr. President, I once again make a special appeal to the general membership of this Organisation to do more to facilitate the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. We must do all we can to transform hope into reality. Together we have the resources, the skills and science and technology to make the Declaration have meaning on the lives of our peoples. Botswana is committed to doing its part..

29. I thank you.