



**REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

**LECTURE**

**BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. MOKGWEETSI E.K. MASISI**

**PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
CELEBRATION OF THE AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS DAY**

**21<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER 2020**

- **Excellencies,**
- **Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. I take this opportunity to convey to you warm greetings on behalf of the people of the Republic of Botswana.
2. Thank you very much for extending this kind invitation to share Botswana's experiences and lessons in the prudent management of our natural resources in its development trajectory. I believe this will significantly contribute to our theme, on, "Human and People's Rights and the COVID 19 pandemic: Protecting the rights for Building Back Better", as we commemorate the Africa Human Rights Day.
3. I am happy that the African Union (AU) continues to direct its resources towards the attainment of a peaceful and secure Africa, in line with the aspirations of the 2063 Agenda of the Africa Union and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
4. Indeed, COVID-19 has had far reaching implications on our socio-economic development as a continent and has surely reversed the gains that we have made in pursuit of democracy,

peace and development. The pandemic has propelled us to redirect the scarce resources which could have otherwise been utilised to drive the sustainable development of this great continent.

5. However, we should not be discouraged, but rather refocus our efforts to defeat this invisible enemy. We, African people have shown commitment and resilience over the years in addressing challenges of political, social and economic nature, and we triumphed. It is this tenacity that gives me courage that we can collectively defeat this pandemic – for where there is a will there is a way.
6. **Excellencies**, I want to preface my presentation by paying tribute to Botswana’s founding fathers whose visionary leadership contributed immensely to modern day Botswana. The foundation that they laid is characterised by Botswana’s four National Principles of Democracy, Unity, Self-Reliance and Development, which essentially guided the development of the Constitution of our country.

7. Botswana's development path is also underpinned by the Rule of Law, Good Governance and respect for Human Rights. Thus, our Constitution protects fundamental human rights as enshrined in international instruments, including our own, African Union Charter on Human and People's Rights. This also guides the management of our natural resources and the development of Botswana.
  
8. **Excellencies**, Botswana like many African countries is endowed with a broad range of natural resources, including, land, water, minerals and flora and fauna, which if sustainably managed and used can ensure our success in eradicating poverty and achieving Africa's Agenda 2063, the Sustainable Development Goals, and in the case of Botswana, the National Vision 2036. Our natural resources can therefore contribute in no small measure, to the improvement of the standard of living of our people.
  
9. The management of Botswana's natural resources is governed by laws, policies, strategies and well established institutions. To this end, Botswana regards her natural resources as an implicit part of the human rights framework.

10. Statutory frameworks that govern the management of Botswana's natural resources include the following;

- The State Land Act
- Tribal Land Act,
- Mines and Minerals Act,
- Wildlife Conservation and National Parks Act, and
- The Water Act.

11. Central to our legislative framework is that Botswana's natural resources belong to the State. For example;

- in terms of the Mines and Minerals Act, no tribal grouping or community can claim ownership of minerals found in their area,
- Wildlife, except wildlife located in private game parks, is by law a national resource and the Wildlife Conservation and National Parks Act, prohibits the hunting of protected game animals throughout Botswana,
- The Tribal Land Act denounces tribal land claim for the benefit of all citizens, and as such, promotes a balanced

approach to the socio-economic development of our country.

12. In accordance with our laws, Botswana can acquire land 'anywhere' in the country and land allocation is solely based on proof of citizenship, and neither on ethnicity nor place of origin. Thus our legal framework has immensely contributed to the integration of tribes in Botswana, leading to the peaceful coexistence of our people.
13. It is on the basis of our national legislation, policies and strategies, that the revenue generated from our natural resources across the country, is deposited into a Consolidated Fund which finances the country's recurrent and development budgets.
14. Botswana's National Development Plans promote equal distribution of wealth to all its citizens. Our public policy design is premised on the principle that every citizen is entitled to social services provided by the State. These include free basic education, free health care services, safe drinking water, as well as, the provision of sustainable housing to the less privileged

and social safety programmes. The latter covers, among others, Orphan Care, People Living with Disability and Old Age Pension.

15. In line with the Constitutional right of equality, Botswana has adopted a National Vision which is themed, "Achieving Prosperity for All". The vision is a transformational blue print which defines Botswana's development road map. It is aimed at transforming Botswana from an Upper Middle-Income Country to a High-Income Country by 2036, through an inclusive development course which encompasses the empowerment of all Batswana.
16. The legal infrastructure which my country has put in place for public funds governance ensures that the country's revenues are utilised for people centred development. One of these legislations is the Finance Management Act. Notwithstanding our success story, Botswana recognises that cases of misappropriation of public funds are unavoidable and can only be managed.
17. In this context, we have established institutions, which are dedicated to fighting corruption. They include the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime, the Corruption Court, the Ethics

and Integrity Directorate, the Financial Intelligence Agency and the Office of the Receiver – which recovers revenue and property from the proceeds of crime.

18. **Excellencies**, I have also been requested to share lessons on our response to the Coronavirus pandemic. Let me therefore inform you that, Botswana's fight against COVID-19 is in line with our human rights based approach to development. In this regard, Government has introduced policies and strategies through consultation, which is the cornerstone of our democratic dispensation. A National COVID-19 Task Force, which I chair, was set up to coordinate all national activities pertaining to the containment of the pandemic.
  
19. A legal framework comprising, the constitutional and legislative provisions was created as a basis for the State of Public Emergency (SOE), which I declared on the advice of the Task Force. The SOE was subsequently affirmed and extended by the National Parliament, the main objective of which is to;
  - allow the country sufficient legal leverage in disease containment and control,
  - mobilisation of resources and,



- preservation of jobs.
20. Government adopted a COVID-19 Response Plan in April 2020. Subsequent to that, a Relief Fund was established with the support of Government, the private sector, civil society, development partners and individuals alike.
21. The COVID-19 relief funds were expended on;
- the provision of food hampers to those in need of support,
  - wage subsidies,
  - health supplies and services,
  - the education sector, and
  - Batswana in the diaspora.
22. Beyond the COVID-19 Response Plan, the Government of Botswana developed the Economic Recovery and Transformation Plan (ERTP) to respond to the economic challenges posed by the Coronavirus pandemic, as well as, to effectively implement a roadmap for the national transformational agenda.

23. In conclusion, I believe that the experiences of my country can positively contribute to the development of our region. My country is open to sharing the lessons we have learnt with our brothers and sisters on the continent.
24. I thank you for your attention.