STATEMENT

DELIVERED

BY

H.E. MR. CHARLES T. NTWAAGAE
AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE REPUBLIC
OF BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

UNDER AGENDA ITEM 64:
REPORT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

DURING THE PLENARY OF
THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NOVEMBER 13, 2013
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PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY
Mr. Chairman,

1. My delegation associates itself with statements made on our behalf by the regional groups to which we belong. We join other delegations in welcoming the President of the Human Rights Council, His Excellency, Remigiusz Achilles Henczel, Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations in Geneva, and thank him for the comprehensive and informative report of the three Human Rights Council sessions held this year in March, June and September respectively.

2. We also thank Mr. Henczel for the able manner and the professionalism with which he executed his mandate as the President of the Human Rights Council.

3. We also thank the High Commissioner for Human Rights Madam Navi Pillay and her Office for hard work in putting together the report of the Human Rights Council. The report gives us an appreciation of what our colleagues in Geneva continue to do in the quest for the promotion and protection of human rights.

4. We are grateful that this important organ of the United Nations continues to live to our expectations since its transformation from the UN Commission for Human Rights to the United Nations Human Rights Council over ten years ago. More still can be done in as far as the mandate and purpose of this organ is concerned. It is in this connection that we welcome the contents of this report presented before us today.

Mr. Chairman,

5. Botswana fully supports the work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in the protection and promotion of human rights. We are fully mindful of the budgetary constraints and resource limitations faced by the Council and sincerely commend Council Members for their resilience.
6. We, thus, call on the OHCHR to continue to engage with other human rights mechanisms by streamlining resources, both human and financial, in order to effectively address the situations on human rights around the globe.

7. As a member of the Human Rights Council, my country takes the promotion and protection of human rights seriously. We continue to engage with other members and the international community with the view of finding durable solutions to human rights violations worldwide.

Mr. Chairman,

8. We welcome the decision by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) to engage with the President of the Human Rights Council through the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The discussion of such a report at the UNGA helps to expose the wider membership to the decisions and recommendations adopted by the Human Rights Council, instead of confining such information to the forty-seven members of the Human Rights Council.

9. It is my delegation’s understanding that the discussions here are not in any way intended to re-open debates nor undermine the decisions and conclusions reached in Geneva. We can only hope that as members of this august body, we are all committed to the realization of our intended goals and the desire, that is, the promotion and protection of human rights.

Mr. Chairman,

10. During the period under review, my country actively participated in the proceedings of the Council, contributing to the adoption of resolutions and decisions which placed a high premium on the promotion and protection of human rights.
11. Among these is the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism of the Human Rights Council which, in the view of my delegation, continues to serve a very useful function. We note with satisfaction that Member States have actively engaged through this mechanism to further strengthen their national human rights policies and programmes in line with international human rights instruments.

12. We continue to be encouraged by the full participation of all members of the United Nations in this important process.

13. Botswana participated in the second cycle of the UPR at the beginning of this year. We are happy to report that Botswana accepted almost ninety percent (90%) of the recommendations made by our peers in that instance. We wish to thank them for their positive and constructive engagement in that regard. We remain committed to the UPR process in the quest to afford our citizens the full enjoyment of their basic human rights.

Mr. Chairman,

14. The proliferation of mandates emanating from the Human Rights Council remains a concern for many states, including Botswana. Even though the Human Rights Council has the mandate to address human rights violations, the creation of new mandates, some of which overlap with existing ones, has the potential to hinder the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council. This situation has basically resulted in over-burdening of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

15. It is in this connection that we call on the OHCHR through its reviews, to streamline its work and consider mainstreaming human rights in the UN system. It is our ardent hope that the intergovernmental process on the strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system will help address the challenges faced by the OHCHR.
16. Despite the concern of proliferation of mandates, Botswana attaches great importance to the work of Special Procedures and mandate holders. Their role in the promotion and protection of human rights is commendable.

17. My delegation also supports the work of the human rights treaty bodies. We recognize their important role in monitoring implementation of international human rights instruments by state parties. However, member states continue to face challenges in the implementation of their obligations. In this regard, technical assistance and capacity building remains critical.

Mr. Chairman,

18. While we acknowledge that there is no country with a perfect human rights record, we however remain concerned about the deteriorating situation of human rights in some countries, some of which have remained on the agenda of the Council without any improvement and solution in sight. In this regard, we encourage Member States to respect their human rights obligations, as well as international human rights and international humanitarian law.

19. In conclusion Mr. Chairman, Botswana reiterates her commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, and support for the work of the Human Rights Council, the Office of the High Commissioner and other UN mechanisms.

I thank you for your attention.