STATEMENT BY

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

DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE
FIRST COMMITTEE

ON THE OCCASION OF THE 68TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

8 OCTOBER 2013, NEW YORK

Please check against delivery.
Mr. Chairman,

1. Allow me to congratulate you on your election as Chair of the First Committee for the 68th Session of the General Assembly. My delegation assures you and the Bureau of our full support in guiding the deliberations of the Committee during this session.

2. Let me also take this opportunity to thank H.E. Ambassador Desra Percaya of Indonesia for his effective stewardship of the First Committee during the 67th session of the General Assembly.

3. My delegation aligns itself with statements delivered on behalf of NAM and the Africa Group.

Mr. Chairman,

4. Even though Botswana is a non-Nuclear Weapon State, we are fully committed to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, specifically with respect to the prevention of threats to international Peace and Security. We believe that the issue of Disarmament and International Peace and Security should continue to remain high in the agenda of the United Nations for as long as peace and stability are not realized.

5. The 68th session of the General Assembly is taking place at a time when the world is experiencing continuing conflicts resulting in gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms of innocent peoples.

6. Nuclear Disarmament, Nuclear Non-proliferation, the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons and terrorism continue to pose serious challenges and have devastating effects on peace, stability and development.

7. The various platforms presented before us, during the past sessions and this particular session, continue to provide us with the opportunity to assess achievements and identify challenges that we face on issues of disarmament and international peace and security.

Mr. Chairman,

8. My delegation, like all concerned parties, is extremely wary of the lack of progress in achieving a world free of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons due to non-cooperation by some Member States which refuse to destroy their nuclear arsenals.

9. Sustained efforts of the international community in this regard would remain in vain for as long as the concerned Member States do not cooperate and act accordingly. Effective implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear –Test Ban Treaty and the Non –Proliferation Treaty are of paramount importance in this regard.
10. Total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use. It is against this background that my delegation welcomed the convening of the First High Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament, on 26 September 2013. It is through platforms like these that exchange of views on achievements, challenges and best practices are achieved among countries for the betterment of the world we live in.

11. My delegation is in total support of the establishment of Nuclear – weapon free – zones and believes that this regional approach will bind States to respect de-nuclearization of the respective territories. Botswana is proud to be associated with the Pelindaba Treaty. We therefore urge other regional blocs to work together towards establishing zones free of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

12. The illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons also remains one of the greatest challenges of our time. These weapons pose the gravest danger to peace and security, not only in Africa, but the world at large. They also adversely impact on the socio-economic development process, especially in developing countries.

13. It is for this reason that my delegation recalls with pleasure and satisfaction the adoption of the landmark Arms Trade Treaty in April this year. I stand here today to express our deep appreciation for the strong spirit of compromise demonstrated by the international community during the conference.

14. We specifically welcome the fact that, upon entry into force, this Treaty will regulate the transfer of conventional weapons in order to avoid the risk of having them falling into wrong hands.

15. Botswana fully supports efforts towards the implementation of the Programme of Action to Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects as well as the International Tracing Instrument. We however, fully appreciate that due to resource limitations and differing capacities of States, realization of the goals of the Programme of Action remains a challenge. We therefore appeal to cooperating partners to provide technical assistance and capacity building in order to boost national implementation efforts.

16. In conclusion, my delegation wishes all members of the committee fruitful deliberations. It is our hope and expectation that under your leadership, Mr. Chairman, the Committee, with the usual positive spirit and determination, will be able to reach consensus on as many resolutions before it, as possible.

I thank you for your attention.