STATEMENT

DELIVERED

BY

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AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED
NATIONS

UNDER AGENDA ITEM 69 B & C: PROMOTION AND
PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

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

OCTOBER 31, 2013

NEW YORK

PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY
Mr. Chairman,

1. The promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms remains top priority for the Government of Botswana.

2. As a country, we have remained steadfast guided by our principle belief in openness, transparency to promote and dialogue at all levels; with the view to furthering the enjoyment of human rights by all peoples in Botswana.

3. And of course we have always mindful of the adage of the enjoyment of once rights start it where for others it ended. This approach also assist in balancing between the peculiarities of each country vis a vis a domestic and international obligations.

Mr. Chairman,

4. While it is irrefutable that every State has an inalienable right to choose its political, economic, social and cultural systems without interference, it is also true that we have collectively reposed trust into each other for strict observance for fundamental human rights as envisaged in the Charter of the United Nations and declared in Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Mr. Chairman,

5. It is well established that the rule of law and good governance should precipitate full enjoyment of human rights in any part of the world. However, we have witnessed in some parts of the world that the absence of these key and fundamental ingredients lead to serious deprival of human rights and in turn breed dissatisfaction and conflict.
6. Botswana is concerned about the violations of human rights in all forms, including gender violence and child trafficking.

7. Another area of concern is the deteriorating humanitarian situation as well as the rising numbers of the internally displaced persons and refugees in countries experiencing political and economic instability.

8. These human rights situations have led to overstretching of both financial and human resources on the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the quest to address them.

9. Like many other countries, we call for an end to impunity, and encourage Member States to fulfil their human rights obligations and respect international human rights law and humanitarian law, at home and abroad.

10. We note with appreciation the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in which she highlighted the work of her office and human rights situations around the world. We commend her office in Geneva on the enormous work they do in ensuring the promotion and protection of human rights around the world. Botswana is fully committed to supporting the Office in discharging its mandate.

Mr. Chairman,

11. My Government greatly values the role played by the civil society in the promotion and protection of human rights in the country, and indeed elsewhere. The role played by civil society, particularly the human rights defenders, in the promotion and protection of human rights in every country around the world is of paramount importance. There is, therefore, an absolute need for all Governments to ensure the protection of all human rights defenders.
Mr. Chairman,

12. Botswana attaches great importance to the fight against issues of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. We continue to make efforts both at the national and international level to effectively implement the ideals espoused in the Durban Declaration and Program of Action and the Outcome Document of the Durban Review Conference.

13. We have taken note with interest the findings of the Special Rapporteur in his Report, and share his concern about the impact of economic and financial crisis that many developing countries are still grappling with. We are in agreement that the world financial and economic crisis has the potential to undermine democracy and efforts by the States to counter the scourge of racism and intolerance.

14. Botswana continues to ensure that any window of racist and xenophobic attitudes is firmly closed to minimize the potential of weakening the rule of law and democracy. We therefore welcome the Special Rapporteur’s recommendation that States should ensure prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into these crimes, and that adequate measures be pursued for those found responsible.

Mr. Chairman,

15. At national level, my Government continues to make efforts in ensuring that every citizen enjoy their rights. We have, through our Inter Ministerial Committee on Treaties and Conventions, worked with key stakeholders to ensure that Botswana complies with her obligations to the treaties that we are party to. Through this process, Government has undertaken a decision to take the necessary steps to ratify or accede to other human rights treaties, to which we are not yet party.

16. In that regard, consultations are underway to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, as well as to consider withdrawal of Botswana’s reservation to Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, amongst others.
17. My Delegation notes the reports of the Special Procedures and Mandate holders. We are pleased that the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights continues to work closely with Member States to achieve their mandate despite limited resources and ever evolving human rights situations around the world.

18. Botswana has since extended invitations to the Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights and the Independent Expert on minority, religious and linguistic rights to visit the country in 2014. We stand ready to engage with the two mandate holders to learn and share best practices, and further strengthen human rights in Botswana.

19. We wish to reiterate our full support of the Office of the High Commissioner and its mechanisms. We believe that the work of Special Procedures should clearly focus on their mandates. To this end, we also believe that they should be supported and given full independence in carrying out their mandates.

**Mr. Chairman,**

20. Botswana remains fully committed to a strong and effective multilateral human rights system that impartially monitors the implementation by all States of their human rights obligations.

21. In this regard, we also attach great importance to the work of the UN human rights treaty body system. Treaty bodies form the heart of the international human rights protection system, as they monitor compliance with the norms and standards under various human rights instruments. Recognising the essential role of these bodies in the promotion and protection of human rights, we also believe that their independence is crucial.

22. In this connection, we support the strengthening of the treaty body system, and looks forward to the conclusion of the intergovernmental process on the strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the system.
Mr. Chairman,

23. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism of the Human Rights Council has proven once again to be a success. 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.

24. As a country, we have witnessed the evolution of this mechanism, as a fully cooperative platform that covered all the countries. Indeed, we are equally happy to see that the UPR has retained its form, following the review of the work and functioning of the Human Rights Council, a couple of years ago.

25. We are happy to inform that Botswana underwent her second review in January this year. Over the time since our first review in 2009, we have seen a tremendous enthusiasm from our political leaders, government and other players in the promotion and protection of human rights.

26. It is through this mechanism that we have identified gaps and best practices on the implementation of our human rights obligations, including the accepted recommendations made by our peers during our reviews. This has since stimulated Government to consult with national Non-Governmental Organisations and civil society to develop a National Human Rights Action Plan on the promotion and protection of human rights.

27. The current second cycle of the UPR is a clear testimony of the achievement of the Human Rights Council in discharging its mandate, as an effective global human rights body, able to continue undertake independent review assessment of the situation of human rights of all Member States of the United Nations.
28. Let me also add that the value of this mechanism depends on the acceptance by Member States that the promotion and protection of human rights can no longer be a side issue in the global discourse of human development.

29. As a Member of the Human Rights Council, we have actively engaged with Member States under this mechanism, with a high sense of responsibility, pride and fulfilment. Our decision to seek another term (2015-2017) in the Human Rights Council is clear testimony of our commitment to our human rights obligations.

30. In conclusion Mr. Chairman, I wish to reaffirm Botswana’s commitment to the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. We do so, convinced of the fact that human rights must be addressed within a global context through constructive dialogue, in a fair and equal manner with objectivity, impartiality and respect for national sovereignty.

I thank you for your attention.