



Republic of Botswana

## **BOTSWANA'S PLEDGES AND COMMITMENTS**

**BOTSWANA'S THEME: "CELEBRATING DEMOCRACY AND ENHANCING  
ITS FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY"**

**Gaborone, Botswana**

## **Introduction**

Botswana submits this paper to the Secretariat of the Summit for Democracy which has been convened by the Government of the United States of America.

By so doing, we demonstrate our commitment to the goals of the Summit, celebrate Botswana's Democracy; by continuing to uphold and enhance Democracy for its Future Sustainability.

The theme of this submission is, '**Celebrating Democracy and enhancing its future Sustainability**'.

## **SUMMIT THEMES**

### **Renewing democracy**

Botswana and U.S. relations are underpinned by respect for democratic values. Botswana is Africa's longest and continuous democracy. Hence, the theme proposed for Botswana's submission is "**Celebrating Democracy and Enhancing its Future Sustainability**". It is considered highly important that as a beacon of democracy in Africa, Botswana should capitalize on her track record to set herself apart and showcase her commitment towards advancing democratic principles.

The aforementioned theme is indicative of Botswana's posture in participating in the Summit, as a champion showcasing her democratic record, rather than a novice. The theme also recognizes that democracy itself, is not perfect. Therefore, further consideration ought to be made to continually improve the practice of democracy for it to be sustainable. For Botswana, the overarching goal is to build a more inclusive, participatory democracy.

There is no doubt that Botswana's democracy is like no other. Its architects and forefathers, founded it on principles already practiced in the Setswana culture such as:

- **“Botho”** -Humility
- **“Therisano”**- Consultation
- **“Puso ya batho ka batho”** – Government of the people, by the people, for the people.
- **“Mafoko a kgotla a mantle otlhe”** – Free speech
- **“Morero”** – Dialogue

These principles which were also centered around the “Kgotla” system of consultation, recognize the value of everyone’s opinion.

This kind of democracy is not found anywhere else but Botswana. It is the kind of democracy that Botswana have nurtured for over five (5) decades, and was championed by holding peaceful, free, and fair elections every five (5) years as well as ensuring that presidential term limits are strictly observed.

To date, democracy in Botswana is considered a way of life, a cultural expectation, and a treasure. Botswana’s commitment to enriching democracy, is based on an intentional socially inclusive national strategies based on the will of the people, the consent of the people and their participation.

For us as Botswana, fulfilment of commitments to democracy, cannot be achieved over-night. We believe that it is not realistic to achieve global democratic renewal in one (1) year. As a tried and tested practitioner in the art of democracy, we hold the view that our focus should be on long-term goals such as the following:

- Building strong, accountable, inclusive, and transparent institutions rooted on the rule;
- Constitutional review;
- Inclusive socio-economic development;
- Promoting civic education on democracy;
- Establishing frameworks to celebrate democratic achievements (regionally and globally);

- Continual electoral reforms to enhance women; civil society; and non-state actors participation;
- Sharing lessons, experiences, and best practices on the value of democracy to promote sustainable development, and;
- Promoting the teaching and understanding of democracy as a value and a norm.

### **Countering corruption**

In his inauguration address on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019, His Excellency the President, highlighted the need to improve service delivery to achieve national objectives, and strengthen robust institutional frameworks that are transparent, accountable, and free from corruption. He emphasised that government will put in place measures and mechanisms, through the application of best practices of good governance to ensure that corruption is defeated. To this end, The President informed that Parliament has passed a law on the Declaration of Assets and Liabilities, and to operationalise this law, the Ethics and Integrity Directorate has been established.

**Botswana is therefore committed to ending Corruption in all its manifestations.**

### **Promoting respect for human rights**

On 21<sup>st</sup> September 2021, His Excellency the President addressed the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly, wherein he emphasized the need for nations to escalate efforts in making human rights a reality for all peoples across the world without discrimination, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. He emphasized some fundamental rights such as access to food, clean water, good quality healthcare, educational services, decent work, freedom of expression and association, the rights of women, children, and persons with disabilities as long overdue.

**Botswana will therefore work with the democratic world to champion the promotion and protection of human rights.**

## **BOTSWANA'S PLEDGES FOR THE YEAR OF ACTION**

For the period dedicated as the year of action, the following activities are proposed as pledges Botswana commits to achieving:

### **Pledge No. 1: Hosting the National Democracy Institute (NDI) Democracy**

#### **Summit**

Botswana and the U.S. through the National Democracy Institute (NDI) are scheduled to host a two (2) phase Democracy Summit in Botswana in the first quarter of 2022, subject to the COVID-19 situation, under the theme **Constitutionalism and Democratic Consolidation in Africa**.

NDI is a U.S. non-partisan, non-profit organization founded in 1983. It works with partners in developing countries to increase the effectiveness of democratic institutions. The Summit will build on the successes of the Niamey Summit of 2019 on the same themes. The 2019 Summit was hosted by the President of the Republic of Niger, His Excellency Mahamadou Issoufou on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019, in Niamey, Niger. Special guests included former Presidents Goodluck Jonathan (Nigeria); Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (Liberia); Nicéphore Soglo (Benin); Amos Sawyer (Liberia); Mahamane Ousmane (Niger); and Catherine Samba-Panza (Central African Republic).

NDI has worked with both Former Presidents, H.E. Sir Ketumile Masire and H.E. Dr. Festus Mogae. In 2019, H.E. Dr. Mogae led an NDI and International Republican Institute (IRI) joint international election observer mission to Nigeria's general elections.

The holding of this Summit is testament to Botswana's commitment to Democracy both at home and abroad. Its objective is to promote dialogue on consolidation of Democracy in Africa and amplify Botswana's domestic track record. Further, recent trends of democratic "backsliding" across the world has given greater meaning to the Summit.

The proposed Summit may also be used as part of a broader engagement on Botswana's holistic constitutional review which is one of His Excellency the President's key goals during his Presidency. Botswana plans to deliver on hosting this Summit by May 2022.

## **Pledge No. 2: Collaboration between UB and Presidential Precinct on Strengthening Democracy**

Botswana is currently pursuing a collaboration between University of Botswana (UB) – Department of Political and Administrative Studies and the University of Virginia Presidential Precinct to strengthen democracy in Africa, in response to the worrisome trend of democratic backsliding across the globe. The partnership is aimed at facilitating a collaborative agreement between the University of Botswana's Democracy Institute and the Presidential Precinct, including the University of Virginia, College of William & Mary, James Madison's Montpelier, James Monroe's Highland, and William Short's Morven. Areas of collaboration under this partnership will include among others, the following:

- i. To support the Democracy Institute at the University of Botswana to become a leading Africa Leadership Centre on democracy and leadership, with a focus on engaging young people, as emerging leaders, about the value and functioning of democracy;
- ii. To incorporate UB expertise to design the Presidential Precinct Global Democracy Fellowship initiative, to be launched in Virginia, in spring 2022. This 12-month professional development and leadership program will bring together a cadre of emerging leaders from the United States and countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to gain knowledge and develop solutions to address the challenges of building and safeguarding democracy in their countries;
- iii. To invite UB and Presidential Precinct to participate in the NDI-Botswana Democracy Summit to be hosted by His Excellency President Masisi in Gaborone;

- iv. UB to consider hosting the Presidential Precinct Network, bringing together thousands of emerging global leaders from across Africa (alumni of Presidential Precinct programs) for a large gathering on the topic of democracy;
- v. To facilitate student and faculty exchanges between the institutions;
- vi. To explore collaborative research on the environment and natural resources management. Other top priority areas include: sustainability, equality, justice and women's leadership.

### **Pledge No. 3: Strengthening Support for Democracy Works Foundation**

#### **Botswana**

Democracy Works Foundation Botswana training academy was launched in October 2021 as a partnership between the U.S Embassy and the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). Its aim is training and mentorship support to enhance women participation in politics. The launch of the training was attended by political party leaders and IEC officials who highlighted the importance of the initiative to improve inclusivity of women in political leadership and participation.

Accordingly, the training covers essential themes such as: Democracy and Citizenship; Women Political Participation; Leadership and Politics; and Women in the Electoral Process. The objectives of the training include the following:

- Situate women political participation within clear understanding of democracy and citizenship;
- Articulate and motivate the involvement of women in political decision making within a political party; and
- Articulate the importance of greater women's political participation as candidates in the electoral process and design strategies towards achieving this goal.

There is recognition that although Botswana is performing well in terms of women leadership in other sectors such as business and civil service, the country has struggled to include more women to take on prominent roles in politics. To date, women make up only 9% of legislators in Botswana. Although His Excellency the President has undertaken to appoint more women in executive positions of government, their leadership in politics still lags behind. According to the National Democratic Institute (NDI), over the past decade, the rate of representation of women in national Parliaments around the world has gradually increased, from 15% in 2002 to more than 23% in 2021. Nonetheless, the percentage remains far below the 30% benchmark which is identified as the necessary level of representation to achieve “critical mass” of women who are more than half the world’s population.

Further, it is believed around the world that, the full and equitable participation of women in political life is essential to create and maintain strong and vibrant democracies, and that at a fundamental level, democracy without the participation of half the population, is not democracy.

A structured and clearly defined government support for initiatives such as training by Democracy Works, will greatly enhance His Excellency the President’s aim to see more women involved, not only in executive leadership but also in politics. This is essential for renewing Botswana’s democracy.

\*\*\*\*\*

Gaborone  
08 December 2021