



PARLIAMENT OF BOTSWANA

STATEMENT BY HONOURABLE P.T.C. SKELEMANI, MP

AT THE 145TH IPU ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS

11TH – 15TH OCTOBER 2022

KIGALI, RWANDA

**Your Excellency the President of the IPU, Mr Duarte Pacheco,
Our host, Hon. Speaker, Mukabalisa Donatille
The Secretary General of IPU, Mr Martin Chungong,
Honourable Speakers and leaders of delegations from National
Parliaments,**

Good Day.

1. It is indeed an honour and privilege to once again join you on the occasion of 145th Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly and related meetings here in the beautiful city of Kigali, Rwanda.
2. Ladies and Gentlemen, we meet this time with a very pertinent agenda before us as espoused in our theme for the Assembly, '***Gender equality and gender sensitive parliament as a driver of more resilient and peaceful world.***'
3. Democracy requires rigorous evaluation in modern day society and that is fundamental for global peace.
4. Such attainment of global peace could be realised and sustained when there is inclusivity and equality, including in our Parliaments which represents the voice and aspirations of our people.
5. We however have to first address inequalities especially those relating to gender, gender-based violence, economic inequalities, reproductive

health inequalities and harmful traditional practices, which remain the most pervasive and persistent forms of inequality.

6. We need to address as Parliaments, the plight of women and children who usually have to bear enormous hardship during and after pandemics, forced migration and humanitarian emergencies, especially armed conflicts.
7. The centrality of women's empowerment towards reducing poverty, promoting development and addressing the world's most urgent challenges remains pertinent. However, gender equality remains a work in progress for most of us.
8. One of the significant challenges modern democracy faces is the inclusion and increasing of women representation in Parliaments.
9. The 2012 IPU Plan of Action for Gender-Sensitive Parliaments provided a roadmap to dealing with key issues on gender as parliaments and in assisting and supporting parliaments' efforts to become more gender-sensitive institutions.
10. In taking stock of our progress today, we should proclaim in a single voice that gone are the days when advocacy and defence of women's rights and gender equality in parliaments was championed by only women MPs.

11. It is now our focus and responsibility as parliaments to collectively shoulder that burden, as institutions representing the interests of all citizens.
12. On the African Continent, equality including gender equality, is fundamental to our developmental agenda. The African Union Agenda 2063 requires us to live in a more inclusive society where all citizens are actively involved in decision- making in all aspects and where no child, woman or man is left behind or excluded, on the basis of gender, political affiliation, religion, ethnic affiliation.
13. Promotion of gender equality and non-discrimination is also a key factor in achieving universal access to SRH, realization of reproductive rights, reduction of poverty, prevention of HIV & other STIs, and achievement of sustainable development.
14. It is therefore crucial that as modern parliaments, we have legislation and policies that support the principles of gender equality and that starts with ensuring that our parliaments are more gender sensitive.
15. Part of our responsibility as Speakers of Parliaments should be to ensure that our parliaments are family friendly, more especially that we are also attracting youthful Members and women in Parliament.

16. We should shun with impunity sexist language and behaviour in Parliament and have codes of conduct to guide Members and staff of parliaments.
17. We should ensure our parliaments meet the requirements of both women and men in the way they are run, structured and where women and men have an equal right to participate without discrimination or recrimination.
18. Ladies and Gentlemen, Botswana takes very seriously, the issues of gender equality. I must admit however, that we can still do more especially in areas such as political participation of women which remains very low, at only 11%.
19. **Allow me here to also congratulate Rwanda for their achievement on women representation in Parliament. We all stand to learn from their lessons.**
20. In Botswana, we have an opportunity as a country, as the process for reviewing the Republican Constitution is underway. I believe Members will use that opportunity to further strengthen issues of rights and equality, including gender equality.
21. Notwithstanding, Botswana has made significant progress in promoting gender equality. We have reviewed various pieces of legislation to strengthen equality amongst our people.

22. While at the political level progress has been slow, women's representation in decision-making positions, including political office, senior management in both the public and the private sector, and in traditional male domains such as chieftainship and priesthood, has risen. We can now report that Botswana has managed to attain over 60% of women representation in middle and senior management positions.
23. Botswana continues to recognise gender equality as central to socio-economic, political and cultural development through its National Policy on Women in Development and National Vision 2036.
24. The National Development Plan 11 passed by Parliament also provides for gender mainstreaming and prevention and elimination of Gender Based Violence under the Governance, Safety and Security Thematic Area as aligned to Sustainable Development Goals.
25. At Parliament level, we have established the Parliamentary Caucus on Women as a Standing Committee of Parliament, with a mandate to *inter alia* promote equal representation of women in all elective bodies, and decision-making positions.
26. This Committee further examines measures adopted by Government in relation to the development of women and their empowerment including those in Parliament.

27. Our Parliament has also strengthened its laws to protect the rights of persons in Botswana, and with particular emphasis on women and children. These are intended to promote the dignity of women and children, and the supremacy of the Constitution, including laws for economic inclusion.
28. Notably, Parliament has enacted; The Domestic Violence Act; Children's Act; Affiliation Proceedings Act; Abolition of Marital Powers Act; Penal Code Amendment Act; Sexual Offenders Registry Act; and Economic Inclusion Act, just to mention a few.
29. At regional level we are also working with other SADC Parliaments under the SADC Parliamentary Forum to further strengthen parliamentary focus on sexual health and reproductive rights, which has strong bearing on promoting gender equality.
30. As parliaments we should bring international commitments into national laws and progressive policies that embody gender equality and deliver better to our constituents for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.
31. I stand before you to re-affirm my Parliament's and indeed Botswana's unflinching commitment to the prioritisation and mainstreaming of gender in the national development agenda, as well as ensuring its effective implementation and close monitoring across all sectors of development.

32. I thank you for your kind attention.