



PARLIAMENT OF BOTSWANA

**STATEMENT BY THE LEADER OF THE DELEGATION,
HONOURABLE DEPUTY SPEAKER - PONO P.P. MOATLHODI, MP**

ON

***Promoting peaceful co-existence and inclusive societies:
Fighting intolerance***

AT THE 146TH IPU ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS

11TH – 15TH MARCH 2023

MANAMA, BAHRAIN

The President of the Inter Parliamentary Union

Our Host, The President of the 146th IPU Assembly

The Secretary General of the IPU

***Distinguished Speakers, Presiding Officers, Leaders of Delegation
and Honourable Members of Parliament;***

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Botswana is once again honoured to join world Parliaments for the 146th Assembly of the Inter Parliamentary Union. The Honourable Speaker Skelemani conveys his best wishes for a successful meeting. He would have wanted to be with you here today but could not.
2. Ladies and gentlemen, the theme for the 146th Assembly talks to promoting peaceful co-existence, building inclusive societies and fighting intolerance. Given the state of the world today, this is a very appropriate time and setting for Parliaments of the world to take stock of the state of democracy and our contribution towards building better inclusive societies.
3. We have an opportunity at this meeting, to not only share experiences as a global community, but to also identify those factors underlying intolerance and division, locally and globally. Through our discussions, my hope is that we would galvanise and catalyse action for sustainable and comprehensive approaches to promoting inclusion and supporting peaceful coexistence, in order to build resilient and cohesive societies.

4. Parliament of Botswana continues to strengthen its laws to protect, mainstream and empower historically marginalised groups. A new Ministry of Entrepreneurship was established last year, specifically to take over responsibilities towards entrepreneurship development, gender and youth empowerment through the gender business finance mechanisms and youth Development Fund amongst others.
5. To further reduce economic inequalities and promote fair economic participation, Parliament also passed a new law on Citizen Economic Inclusion, which seeks to mainstream amongst others, historically marginalised groups such as youth, women and rural settlements into economic activity. This law is further supported by the newly passed laws on public procurement and the amended Public Finance Management law to protect various disadvantaged demographic sectors.
6. To ensure that no one is left behind and in line with our National Vision 2036, Parliament continues to prioritise funding for ICT development and roll out, in order to provide connectivity and access to services to all villages through the village connectivity and Smart-Botswana ICT programmes. This has seen public institutions being connected to the internet and government services available online, while all learning institutions have been provided with ICT gadgets to support E-learning.
7. As a bastion of peace and ardent guardians of the rule of law, Botswana embraces and promotes all faiths and religions for a peaceful co-existence.

8. Other laws are also under review which include strengthening laws to curb gender based violence, promoting land ownership and bestowing equal land rights for married persons.
9. To further promote inclusion as well as social and economic rights, the teaching of mother tongue in primary schools will also commence in the financial year 2023/2024, with budget appropriation from Parliament.
10. Parliament of Botswana also continues to invest significantly on education and health with a view to providing universal health access to all, more especially safeguarding and promoting sexual and reproductive health rights and access to education for all. Programmes such as Treat-all, prevention of mother to child transmission, youth friendly services and comprehensive sexuality education continue to receive funding from Parliament.
11. Parliament of Botswana holds meaningful public engagement at the centre of its activities and work. Public consultations remain the cornerstone and hallmark of economic and political development in Botswana.
12. In that regard, Parliament has strengthened its public engagement through the roll out of Botswana Speaks programme, an initiative to connect constituents with their elected representatives for policy dialogue and decision making. The programme is funded by Parliament and uses

ICTs to connect Constituents with the work of Parliament and the Members of Parliament.

13. Distinguished delegates, the main goals of tolerance is unity and harmony in diversity. Co-existence requires all diverse communities to enhance togetherness, respecting each other, to work together in maintaining harmony of living, preventing communal conflict, and resolving conflict together.
14. As democracy and peaceful co-existence across the world continues to suffer decline owing to wars, intolerance, hate speech, economic inequalities, racism, xenophobia and rising migration, Parliaments need to lead with one voice and take action.
15. As representative institutions, it is through the laws that we pass that we can reduce inequalities, protect human rights and promote peaceful co-existence amongst our people and globally.
16. It is through the budgets that we pass and appropriate that the marginalised can be empowered, the rising economic inequalities reduced and make our young people and women reach their full potential. It is also through our oversight role that we can ensure the rule of law, the protection and enjoyment of human rights and justice for all.
17. If we are to indeed contribute towards the Sustainable Development Agenda, our impact as parliaments must be on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies.

18. As parliaments we need to ensure that we use the power and responsibility bestowed on us through the ballot to safeguard citizenship, identity and linguistic and cultural diversity. Let us promote cultural pluralism and peace through the laws that we make and support interfaith and inter-ethnic dialogue. These have been the resolutions of past IPU Assemblies, which today carry the same weight if not more, as the time we adopted them.

19. In conclusion ladies and gentlemen, all these developments are but small steps towards contributing to the global efforts in ensuring that no one is left behind and harnessing the power of diversity to foster peace and drive development. However, attaining world peace and strengthening of democracy requires our collective efforts as representative institutions. These efforts must ensure the protection of human rights, empowerment of minorities and upholding of democratic principles that promote the rule of law, good governance, tolerance, including political tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

On that note, I thank you for your kind attention.

