



Republic of Botswana

**STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER OF THE PARLIAMENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA,**

**SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, HONOURABLE
DITHAPELO L. KEORAPETSE, MP**

152nd IPU ASSEMBLY

**THEME: NURTURING HOPE, SECURING PEACE, AND
ENSURING JUSTICE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS**

- President of the IPU
- President of the IPU Assembly
- Secretary General of the IPU
- Distinguished Honourable Speakers
- Presiding Officers
- Leaders of Delegation
- Honourable Members of Parliament
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning!

Opening Remarks

1. It is a privilege to join this **152nd IPU Assembly** in Istanbul under the theme of hope, peace, and justice for future generations. The challenges before us are immense: **widening inequalities, climate emergencies, disruptive technologies, and declining trust in institutions.** Yet, as parliamentarians, we are entrusted with the responsibility to transform these challenges into opportunities for renewal.
2. As Kofi Anan wisely stated, *"The future of peace and prosperity that we seek for all the world's people's needs a foundation of tolerance, security, equality, and justice."* This timely reminder serves as our guiding principle in these deliberations.

3. The symbolism of our gathering here is striking. Not far from this hall lies the site of a devastating conflagration, a reminder of the fragility of peace and the urgency of our mission.

Multilateralism and Parliamentary Responsibility

4. Honourable colleagues, despite its imperfections, the multilateral system remains the time-tested solution to the complex challenges confronting our world. It was true for nations rebuilding from the ashes of World World II, and it remains true today as we confront the rise of artificial intelligence, climate change, and interlinked global crises.
5. This year's theme, *nurturing hope, securing peace, and ensuring justice for future generations*, is not merely aspirational. It is a call to action. It demands that we embed foresight into our national plans, ensuring that peace and justice are not deferred dreams but living realities.

Botswana's Commitment to Human Rights and Development

6. Distinguished colleagues, in September, Botswana celebrates its **60th year of independence**, marking the longest uninterrupted democracy in Africa. This year also signifies the **second year** of the new administration, under which the new government has placed human rights at the epicenter of our nation's development trajectory.

7. As the founding President of the Republic of Botswana, the late Sir Seretse Khama declared, "*Human dignity, like justice and freedom, is the common heritage of all men. It is indivisible.*" This enduring belief underpins our commitment to promoting dignity and rights for all.
8. Human rights are the foundation of our foreign policy engagements. Botswana engages with other nations with integrity and conviction. Our government supports causes promoting peace, stability, and sustainable development at home and abroad through a human rights-based approach.

Strengthening Trust in Institutions

9. Ladies and gentlemen, trust is the lifeblood of democracy. In Botswana, we have sought to deepen citizen engagement through platforms such as "*Botswana Speaks*", which allows direct communication between citizens and Members of Parliament.
10. By opening channels of dialogue, we strengthen accountability and ensure that governance reflects the voices of all, including those in remote communities. Such innovations remind us that democracy must be participatory, not distant.

Forward-Looking Law-Making

11. Distinguished colleagues, the laws we enact today must anticipate tomorrow's realities. Botswana has a **Digital Services Act of 2025**, which establishes a unified legal framework to

regulate, standardise, and promote secure, accessible digital services across Botswana. It mandates the digitalisation of public and private sector services, including electronic records, data sharing, open data, and information security requirements, to accelerate transformation.

12. Alongside this, the **Data Protection Act of 2024** regulates the collection and processing of personal data. It protects privacy rights and sets obligations for public and private data controllers, ensuring that individuals' personal information is handled with the utmost care and respect. These frameworks are moral commitments to ensuring that technology serves humanity and not the other way around.
13. Therefore, parliaments are key to aligning digital policies with international human rights standards, including freedom of expression and privacy. As the **Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Responsible AI** upholds, parliaments must set ethical guardrails so that innovation does not compromise peace or justice.
14. Additionally, parliaments must promote the ethical use of AI, big data, and emerging technologies, ensuring that these advancements are harnessed responsibly to benefit society while protecting fundamental rights. Beyond digital governance, our role as parliamentarians extends to fostering cooperation on a global scale, reinforcing the principles that unite us in this assembly.

15. Ladies and gentlemen, the Parliament of Botswana remains steadfastly committed to multilateralism and is a proud participant on the global stage, advancing parliamentary diplomacy to foster a just, peaceful, and prosperous world for all. We recognize that multilateralism today faces numerous challenges, with contending ideas on peace and security and the legitimacy of multilateral institutions being questioned by some.
16. Despite these imperfections, Botswana holds firm in its belief that the United Nations (UN) System, though not without flaws, remains a vital framework for global cooperation. We stand resolute in our commitment to the UN System, advocating for reforms where necessary to enhance its effectiveness and legitimacy.
17. Colleagues, peace cannot be secured in isolation. Botswana has consistently championed parliamentary diplomacy, recognizing that cross-border dialogue is indispensable for addressing contemporary issues such as **cybercrime, data flows, and global digital governance.**
18. In this spirit, we reaffirm our dedication to the **UN Pact for the Future and its Declaration on Future Generations**, which call upon us to institutionalise foresight and uphold intergenerational responsibility.
19. As legislators, we must advocate unwaveringly for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, ensure that resources are allocated towards

human safety and security, and promote the full enjoyment of fundamental human rights and freedoms for our people.

Development, Climate and Innovation

20. Ladies and gentlemen, hope cannot flourish where hunger persists, or inequality deepens. Botswana's, **SmartBots Village Connectivity Project** bridges the **digital divide**, ensuring that rural communities are not left behind.
21. Coupled with efforts to connect schools and expand **digital literacy**, these measures reflect our belief that education and inclusion are the true engines of peace and prosperity.
22. Our abundant solar resources are being harnessed through Independent Power Producers to power green data centres, advancing both climate commitments and digital transformation. As Vice President of the Republic of Botswana, Ndaba Nkosinathi Gaolathe has emphasised, frontier technologies—AI, robotics, biotechnology, and satellite systems, must be harnessed responsibly to diversify our economy and secure justice for generations to come.

Youth and Gender Inclusion

23. The frustrations of young people worldwide echo loudly in our chambers. Yet only **2.8%** of parliamentarians globally are under 30. This is a democratic deficit we must urgently address. Botswana has taken steps to empower youth through digital literacy and e-commerce strategies, but more must be done.

24. Equally central to our aspirations are the voices often underrepresented, those of the youth and women, whose inclusion is pivotal for a just and equitable future.
25. Likewise, advancing gender equality is not optional. By ensuring women's full participation, we strengthen legitimacy and secure justice across generations. However, the current Parliament includes only **six female MPs** (1/6 of whom we are here with today) representing **8.95%** of the total membership, a decline from the nine female MPs who constituted **11%** of the **12th Parliament**.
26. This **2.55%**-point decrease is a blemish in women's representation and represents a step backward in our journey toward gender equity in political leadership. Of the current membership, **21 are returning MPs (20 male and one female)**, indicating a significant turnover from the previous Parliament. As such, addressing both youth underrepresentation and the decline in women's parliamentary presence is critical for a truly democratic and inclusive future.

Concluding Remarks

27. Colleagues, the future will not wait for us. As the African proverb teaches: "The child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth."

28. Let us embrace future generations with foresight, justice, and peace. Let us ensure that technology, diplomacy, and law-making are harnessed not as instruments of division but as bridges of hope. The digital future, the climate future, and the democratic future—these must be consciously shaped by us, for the benefit of all humanity.

29. May this assembly be a turning point where parliamentary diplomacy, dialogue, and inter-parliamentary cooperation deepen, and our collective will be channelled towards a future defined not by conflict but by peace and inclusion and justice and shared prosperity.

30. Thank you