



**Republic of Botswana**

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

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

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**153<sup>rd</sup> IPU ASSEMBLY  
ARUSHA, UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA**

**THEME: ENHANCING GOOD GOVERNANCE AND  
EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES THROUGH INCLUSIVITY,  
TRUST AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL**

- 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
- Clerks of Parliaments
- Members of the Press
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning!

Let me begin on a humble note of piety and recognise you all in your different roles and responsibilities.

1. We meet here in the cradle of humanity, the land of diamonds, gold, platinum and other critical minerals, the land of the Sahara Desert, the River Nile and Lake Victoria. Indeed, as one great son of this soil, Ali Mazrui, said: "You are not a country, Africa. You are a concept... You are not a concept, Africa. You are a glimpse of the infinite." We meet in Arusha, a gateway to the Serengeti and its Great Migration, the Ngorongoro Crater, Mount Kilimanjaro and Lake Manyara. For these few days, it is a place where we will dialogue on how parliaments can help create a better world for all who live in it.
2. Let me from the outset express my warmest gratitude to the Government, Parliament and people of the United Republic of Tanzania for your warm hospitality and support in hosting this 153rd Assembly. We thank you most profusely for your daughter, Dr Tulia

Ackson, a woman of substance, a woman of many firsts, a leader who has stood the test of time, like an oak tree which has survived all kinds of weather. We thank her for her wonderful service to our Parliamentary Union. She served the IPU in the high office of President with honour, distinction and dignity. We are eternally grateful. She has proven beyond any iota of doubt that Africa and women can be entrusted with world leadership. Thabo Mbeki's words best describe Dr Ackson's resolve when he said: "Those who complete the course will do so only because they do not, as fatigue sets in, convince themselves that the road ahead is still too long, the inclines too steep, the loneliness impossible to bear and the prize itself of doubtful value." We wish you, Madam President of the IPU, the very best in your future endeavours as you hand over the baton. God be with you!

3. The theme, ***"Enhancing good governance and empowering communities through inclusivity, trust and opportunities for all"***, invites us to reflect not only on those who govern, but also on those who are governed. It calls on us to look beyond institutions in isolation, and to recognise governance as a shared responsibility, one in which the state, its institutions and its people work together to turn democratic ideals into tangible improvements in the lives of citizens.
4. Indeed, it was Baba wa Taifa, Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, who reminded us that:

*Governments bear the final responsibility for the state of the nation - its internal and external peace, and the well-being of its people. It is the distinction between the words*

*'governance' and 'government' which draws attention to the reality that, despite its enforcement agencies, government (in the sense of the executive authority) is not the sole determinant of whether those responsibilities are fulfilled. For there are always other forces within a country which, in practice, can help or hinder the effectiveness of a government, and which it therefore ignores at its peril.*

5. As we reflect on his words, we need to ask ourselves these uncomfortable questions: Is it acceptable and sustainable that today the top 10% of the world's population captures 53% of global income, while the bottom 50% receives only 8%? Are we really building an inclusive and equitable system when the top 10% owns 75% of global wealth, whereas the bottom 50% holds a mere 2%? What can we, as parliamentarians, do to build inclusive economies that work for all, and jobs that honour the dignity of work? Are we legislating and providing effective oversight for good governance and the empowerment of our communities?
6. Nyerere's words remind us that government and governance are not one and the same. The Executive bears ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the state, but the quality of governance is shaped by a far wider constellation of institutions. Parliament stands among the most important of these: not as a substitute for government, but as the constitutionally mandated institution through which citizens give meaning to democratic governance.

## **The Case of Botswana**

7. For my country, Botswana, which celebrates sixty years of independence this year, the theme of this Assembly speaks to a very real question: how do we translate the stability of our democratic institutions into greater inclusion, greater trust, and greater opportunity for our communities? Over these six decades, we have a lot to be proud of. We have sustained functioning democratic institutions, and our Parliament has continued to fulfil its constitutional role in legislation, oversight, representation, and the allocation of public resources. Yet democratic stability does not, on its own, guarantee that every citizen enjoys the benefits of governance equally.
8. It is for these reasons that, under the new Government elected in 2024, we have seen strong gains in governance and democracy: in perceived press freedom, in trust in accountability mechanisms, and in confidence in free, fair, and credible elections. Botswana has enacted laws and formulated policies and regulations for basic services, achieving near-universal access to safe drinking water (98%) and sanitation (97%), and expanding access to electricity from 53% to 84%. In education, preschool attendance has surged from 18% to 97%, and primary enrollment is near-universal at 99%. Human trafficking of children has been reduced to 0%, and birth registration has reached 100%.
9. The new Government has enhanced social welfare and social safety nets by increasing the Old Age Pension and introducing an allowance for new mothers. To protect the dignity of girls, it has launched an

initiative to provide free sanitary pads to school-going girls, a decisive step towards ending period poverty, ensuring that they can pursue their education with dignity and without interruption. On the same vein, pink tax abolition has begun with VAT exemption on sanitary pads and related products. We continue to invest in our youth through near-free tertiary education, in which university and TVET students receive allowances from Government. The new Government has also boosted incomes and job security through a living wage policy and laws on fair labour practices, namely the Employment and Labour Relations Act and the new Public Service Act.

10. Languages and multilingualism play a vital role in advancing inclusion and supporting the Sustainable Development Goals' commitment to leaving no one behind. Language is how power is accessed. Trust collapses when people feel governance is being done to them not with them. It is in this regard that Botswana has moved from bilingual to multilingual as a way of converting majority rule into genuine inclusion. Our national television, radio and other state media outlets broadcast news and other programmes into different languages spoken across the country.
11. The Parliament of Botswana has begun a journey towards becoming a high-performing institution that is independent, well-resourced and sufficiently capacitated to legislate and provide effective oversight. We have banned paper, and we are fast moving towards a green Parliament through digitisation. Parliament of Botswana has launched a bridging the gap project to enhance civil society and citizens' participation in law and policy making. We have enhanced

our Parliamentary Committees role for more pre-legislative and pre-policy oversight. We continue to build capacity for our MPs and staff. We have established and continue to harness wonderful relations with friends of democracy, human rights, and inclusive governance.

12. For Botswana, then, the task before us is increasingly one of moving from commitment to implementation. That means strengthening parliamentary research and oversight capacity; improving accessibility within our own institutions; building more systematic mechanisms for youth and community engagement; deepening post-legislative scrutiny; and ensuring that the voices of marginalised communities, including our San communities in the Kalahari, inform both our laws and their implementation.
13. Botswana's commitment to multilateralism is firm. As the President of the Republic of Botswana Advocate Duma Gideon Boko, affirmed during a courtesy call on the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr António Guterres, Botswana "remains steadfast in its commitment to multilateralism and to the core pillars of the United Nations: development, peace and security, and human rights." Parliamentary diplomacy is the parliamentary expression of that commitment, and an important avenue through which we can strengthen our capacity to meet these challenges. Through our relationships with other parliaments, and through forums such as this Assembly, we can exchange experiences, learn from different approaches, build institutional capacity and forge partnerships. For climate resilience, youth empowerment, disability inclusion, digital transformation and

economic opportunity are not challenges confined to any one country.

### **Closing Remarks**

14. Ultimately, the success of our democracies should be measured not only by the strength of our laws or the stability of our institutions, but also by whether citizens feel that they belong within those institutions; whether they trust them to act in the public interest; and whether they have genuine opportunities to participate and to prosper.
15. That, I believe, is the deeper meaning of empowering communities through inclusivity, trust, and opportunities for all.
16. For Botswana, as for many of the countries represented in this Assembly, the foundations are in place. Our task now is to ensure that those foundations translate into lived democratic experience: where inclusion is felt, trust is earned, and opportunity is within reach for all.

**I thank you. *Asante sana.***