



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

**ADDRESS BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY DR. MOKGWEETSI E.K MASISI  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE**

**OPENING SESSION OF THE 2022 MINISTERIAL SEGMENT  
OF THE HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT**

**DATE: 13<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2022  
TIME: 09:00 - 10:15 A.M  
(NEW YORK TIME)**

- **Ambassador Collen Vixen Kelapile, President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Botswana to the United Nations;**
- **Mr Abdulla Shahid, President of the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly,**
- **Mr António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations;**
- **Your Excellency, Mr. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of the Portuguese Republic;**
- **Honourable Ministers here present;**
- **Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.**

1. It is a great pleasure for me to address this august gathering on the occasion of the **Opening of the Ministerial Segment of the 2022 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).**
2. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Collen Vixen Kelapile, for having invited me to this important event, which provides an annual platform for follow-up, review and monitoring of the

implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Goals.

3. In April this year, I had the opportunity to participate virtually at the Opening Session of the 2022 ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development (FfD) where the focus was on how to source the financing necessary to restore past achievements and to rekindle our economies so as to forge ahead towards the expected sustainable development outcomes by 2030.
4. I am delighted that the Declaration adopted at the Forum was able to make concrete recommendations for unlocking financing for development; for responding to the multiple crises; as well as for productive investments towards recovery, climate action and accelerating implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.
5. It is therefore fitting that I commend you, Mr. Secretary General and your team, for your selfless efforts and continued leadership in steering global actions towards sustainable development and transformation during these challenging times with so many complex situations to manage.

6. Approximately thirty months on, when COVID-19 has so much ravaged the world, causing unprecedented human suffering, the world has to brace itself for yet another crisis, the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
7. Already, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased poverty levels, hunger and economic vulnerability of hundreds of millions of people as most countries could not provide adequate social protection to their peoples. Mental health, violence against women and children have also increased.
8. Advances in science have enabled the rapid development of vaccines. Yet, we still need to ensure that these life-saving resources are distributed equitably while being collectively guided by the ideals of the United Nations Charter.
9. I take this opportunity to thank the efforts made by the United Nations, as well as some of the developed countries, to support developing countries, especially those in Africa that have very low vaccination rates. In this respect, I appeal to Member States to heed the call by the Secretary-General for a Global Vaccine Plan.

10. There has been so much disruptions to education, particularly in low income countries with limited Internet access when online instruction had to suddenly become a substitute for classroom training. These are just a few examples of the many social and economic ills brought about by COVID-19.
11. On the other hand, indications are that the effects of the Russia-Ukraine conflict will present themselves largely in three main ways:- rising food prices; rising energy prices; and a tightening of financial conditions. This again, will worsen poverty, hunger and debt servicing obligations, causing severe economic impacts on developing economies especially, and greatly affecting sustainable development outcomes. This notwithstanding, we have to remain resolute in our efforts towards advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
12. Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, this year's HLPF will review progress made on **SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 14 (Life Below Water), SDG 15 (Life on Land), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)**.

13. It is my conviction that the choice of these Goals was inspired by the challenges that confront us today in the education, gender and climate change space, hence, highlighting the urgent need to forge partnerships that could tackle the realities threatening success in these important areas.
14. It is therefore my hope, that the reports that will be presented during this Forum will not go only as far as demonstrating the impact of the COVID-19 and the magnitude of the challenges countries face, but will also provide an opportunity to share experiences with regard to what works, and what does not, and most importantly, provide concrete solutions and policy options based on well informed research and analysis.
15. Indeed, much more focus on the issue of climate change is necessary. There is no doubt that many of us represented here today have in the recent past encountered a disaster of one form or another. Our experience in the Southern African region has been rather an unusual mix of extremities.
16. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) region as a whole has recently been prone to disasters that range from recurrent droughts to tropical storms and cyclones;

torrential rains and floods; volcanic eruptions; plant and animal pests; and disease outbreaks, to mention just a few. These have caused loss of lives, displacement; damage to homes and property, thereby adding to the already miserable situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

17. To mitigate the effects of these unfortunate developments, the region is in the process of establishing a Humanitarian and Emergency Operations Centre in Mozambique, which Centre we can only hope to fast track and ensure it meets its objectives through strengthened partnerships, which are critical to supplement and consolidate the regional response effort. Goal 17 therefore remains relevant and key, in achieving this important global agenda that we all subscribe to.
18. Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, the SDGs are about fundamental change and are crucial for guiding our path to recovery and strengthening resilience against the impending and/or future crises.
19. As UN Member States, we need to set our social, economic and environment priorities right for increased recovery and

action towards achieving them. The pandemic has highlighted, among others, the need to reform our health systems to ensure efficient, quality, integrated primary health care. This is vital for improved access to health care services and a better distribution of health outcomes.

20. For Botswana, we are committed to achieving universal health care coverage as part of building back better from the pandemic. In this regard, the Government has allocated the largest share of 18.7 percent of the Ministerial Recurrent Budget to the health sector, primarily to continue efforts to contain the pandemic during the current fiscal year.
21. I am also happy to inform you that Botswana has approved the manufacturing of a patent-free Corbevax COVID-19 vaccine, and the construction of the vaccine manufacturing plant has already commenced.
22. The Facility will produce other vaccines to address various other diseases, such as cancer. This initiative is being undertaken in partnership with NantWorks, the Texas Children's Hospital Center for Vaccine Development, and the Baylor College of Medicine.



23. **Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,** the policy pronouncements and other measures adopted to steer recovery and to build back better from the pandemic should be fully aligned to the SDGs. Deliberate efforts should be made to fully comprehend the various synergies and trade-offs between the SDGs, their targets and indicators, so as to guide project prioritisation during the onset of recovery.
24. Moreover, the recovery measures should be geared towards fighting poverty, addressing inequality, unemployment as well as strengthening governance and enhancing sustainability. Poverty remains one of the key constraints in the realisation of the SDGs. In this regard, there is need to bolster efforts to eradicate poverty, in the spirit of leaving no one behind.
25. The Government of Botswana's stance is that recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic should reflect and stimulate change, rather than a return to the status quo. As has been said before, we must never let the opportunity presented by the pandemic go to waste.

26. Therefore, the Government of Botswana has put in place new reset priorities in response to the pandemic's devastating socio-economic effects. The Reset Agenda priorities include, **"Saving Botswana's population from the COVID-19 pandemic; Digitisation, and Mindset Change."**
27. Through our "Reset Agenda" we are transforming how we do things in order to build back better and we are reforming our public service to ensure effective implementation of the Government policies, projects and programmes. We are accelerating "Digitalisation" in the delivery of services by the Government and creating enabling conditions for the active involvement of the private sector and society in the uptake and utilisation of digital technologies.
28. We are engaged in "value chain development," to unlock more value in the key sectors of Botswana's economy such as agriculture, tourism, mining, and education, through the innovation, creativity and employment of our people, especially our youth. We are also engaged in inspiring our people to own the Sustainable Development Goals and to embrace them in both disposition and action.

29. We have developed an Economic Recovery and Transformation Plan (ERTP) to support the restoration of economic activities and incomes; expand the productive capacity and facilitate economic growth and transformation; and to build the resilience of the economy.
30. The ERTP complements other ongoing plans and programmes such as the National Social Protection COVID-19 Recovery Plan, aimed at delivering a seamless system of social welfare programmes and improve the targeting of the most-needy.
31. **Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,** we need to firm up our SDG Acceleration Actions as part of transformative recovery from COVID-19. These Actions should be solution oriented, ambitious and ensure that **“No One is Left Behind.”**
32. Let us by no means forget the pledge we made during the 2019 SDG Summit, to mobilise financing; enhance national implementation; as well as strengthen institutions; in order to achieve the SDGs by 2030. We need to be more ambitious, decisive, and urgent in action, as well as forge and strengthen

multi-stakeholder partnerships towards SDG implementable solutions.

33. The pandemic has constrained many developing countries' fiscal space and put them at the risk of debt distress. This remains one of the challenges for building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic. However, I encourage Member States to pay attention to the **2022 Financing for Sustainable Development Report**, which outlines explicit recommendations that can help bridge the finance divide and create a better international financing architecture.
34. Without progressive fiscal systems, Governments will face challenges in tackling poverty, inequality, providing quality education, health care as well as achieving sustainable economic growth all of which are embedded in the 2030 Agenda and its underlying SDGs.
35. I call upon countries, especially developing ones, to prioritise developing local financial systems, boosting domestic revenue mobilisation and ensuring good governance and the effective use of financial resources to address their fiscal challenges.

36. Let us continuously share experiences, lessons on what works better and, most importantly, reinforce multilateralism. International cooperation remains one of the overarching responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.
37. I further call upon Member States to pay particular attention and implement the resolutions of the Ministerial Declaration to be adopted at the end of this Forum. The blueprint will be vital in providing political leadership and guidance in **“Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,”** which is the theme for this year’s Forum.
38. Lastly, but not least, let me take this opportunity to congratulate all those countries that will be presenting their Voluntary National Reviews during the next three days. Botswana is among the forty-four countries that will be presenting their reports and the twenty nine conducting their second reviews.
39. We look forward to reporting to you about our actions to build back better, integrate the SDGs into national development

frameworks, develop a gender-responsive and climate-smart SDG recovery and financing strategy and achieve inclusive and quality education and access to health for all.

40. I was delighted that Botswana convened some of these countries this year to attend the Second Global Workshop for the 2022 Voluntary National Reviews. I am informed that the meeting was very informative and has helped advance preparations of the Reports that will be presented during this Forum.
41. I also wish to thank the seventy-seventh President of the ECOSOC, and the Permanent Representative of Botswana to the UN, Ambassador Collen Kelapile, for the sterling job during his reign. You have guided the 2022 ECOSOC session very well, especially during this difficult time of the COVID-19 pandemic.
42. Let me conclude by wishing you all a productive Ministerial segment of the 2022 High Level Political Forum.

**I thank you for your kind attention.**