



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

ADDRESS BY

HIS EXCELLENCY MR. FESTUS G. MOGAE
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

TO THE

UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY

IN TOKYO, JAPAN

18TH MARCH, 2003

11:30 HOURS

Mr Chairman

Dr. Ramesh Thukar and Vice-Rector of the United Nations

Honourable Ministers

Your Excellencies Heads of Diplomatic Missions

1. I am delighted to have been invited to this prestigious institution. In making this appearance, I am acutely aware that I am joining a line of luminaries who have graced these halls in the past.
2. I hope my address will add to the growing reputation of this institution not only as a centre of academic excellence but also as a living symbol of international understanding and co-operation.
3. Let me also thank the Japan Institute for International Affairs for organising this programme and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Japan for its support. I also recognise the presence of a number of students from Soka Gakkai University. I welcome their presence as an indication of the interest they have in Botswana.
4. The topic I have to address this morning: Botswana's Success Story – Overcoming the Challenges of Development, provides an opportunity for me to share with you the story of our development process and the challenges we still face as a young nation. When Botswana attained independence in 1966, the economic situation in the country was bleak. There were only six kilometers of tarred roads, three secondary schools and no university, economic activities were limited. Consequently a large number of our able-bodied men were migrant workers in the gold mines of South Africa. Income per capita was less than US\$100-00.

Beef was the mainstay of the economy but was also affected by a severe drought during the three years that followed independence, which resulted in the country losing nearly half its cattle population. The Government budget was dependent on British grant-aid.

5. In addition to the unfavourable economic situation, the geopolitical environment was such that Botswana was completely surrounded by racist and hostile white minority regimes. In the south and east was apartheid-ruled South Africa. In the north-east was the white minority-ruled Rhodesia and in the west, South African-governed South West Africa.
6. The picture of Botswana on the eve of independence, therefore, made some to question the viability and sustainability of the country as an independent and sovereign nation. The people of Botswana were, however, determined to be the masters of their own destiny. They committed themselves to establishing a society that could feed and clothe themselves. A number of factors combined to ensure the establishment of a solid foundation for our national development, and the attainment of relative success. In the first instance, Botswana was blessed with leaders who had a vision to establish a country built on the values of multi-party democracy, free enterprise, respect for human rights and the rule of law, including the sanctity of commercial contracts, at a time when the rest of our sister republics were one party states. Not only did the leaders hold strong to these fundamental values, but they also worked hard to ensure the emergence of national consensus around these principles.
7. Our belief in these values helped consolidate a multiparty system, open and accountable governance as well as the development and growth of a free market economy, in a continent in which the majority of states were experimenting with nationalisation of the factors of production.

It helped to entrench the peace and stability which we have enjoyed in the past three and a half decades, and also created a conducive environment for private foreign investment. This encouraged investors to come to Botswana to engage in, among others, mineral exploration and subsequent exploitation of copper, nickel, coal and above all diamonds.

8. I must also underline that the peace and political stability that we enjoyed generated a lot of international goodwill and solidarity from development partners, among them Canada, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Japan, the United States and subsequently the European Union. In this regard, we received considerable capital development and technical assistance which contributed immensely to our growth and development. Technical assistance was particularly important in that it helped us build capacity to make better use of our own resources and the aid we received.
9. Through successive five-year national development plans which prioritised government spending, concerted efforts were made to construct infrastructure in the form of roads, schools, hospitals, clinics and towns to stimulate manufacturing and modern agricultural production. Rural development through improved social services and encouragement of manufacturing industries in rural areas became a major pre-occupation of government.

10. Considerable progress has been achieved in a number of fields. For instance, for a country the size of France, with a population of only 1.7 million people, where there were six kilometres of roads, today there are more than six thousand; where there were three secondary schools, there are now more than three hundred; we guarantee ten years free basic education for all; everyone lives within fifteen kilometres of a health facility; everyone lives within four hundred metres of a portable water source; our GDP per capita has risen to US\$3 500; and our telephone system is one of the most modern in the continent.
11. In recent times you may be aware that Botswana was ranked very favourably by Transparency International on corruption perception index; and Moody's Investors Service and Standard and Poor on credit worthiness.
12. We are humbled by these favourable ratings because they mean that we have been doing something right.
13. Mr. Chairman, the positive socio-economic developments which I referred to occurred at a time when the majority of the people of Southern Africa were still living under minority rule regimes and racial oppression. We could not isolate ourselves from these problems. As the saying goes, "no man is an island."
14. We could not avoid the moral imperative of supporting the just struggles of our brothers and sisters for independence and freedom. Apartheid and racism dehumanised all of us in the region.

We were convinced that, ultimately, the best guarantee for our own survival and stability depended on a Southern Africa free from apartheid and racial discrimination; a Southern Africa based on equality, freedom and justice. However in pursuing that noble objective, we did not have to commit suicide. What was necessary was to insist on asserting the dignity of our humanity and our belief in a non-racial and democratic society.

15. Botswana therefore pursued a pragmatic and realistic policy approach in its relations with its white-ruled neighbours, by maintaining economic and trade dealings while encouraging negotiations with liberation movements.
16. Happily, a light at the end of the tunnel began to shine with the independence of Mozambique in 1976. However, the minority white regimes became ruthless in their attempts to stem the tide of liberation. Civil wars developed in Angola and Mozambique and the liberation struggles continued in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa. Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 brought renewed hope for a peaceful resolution of the other problems. As things turned out, It was not until Namibia's independence in 1990 and the democratic transition in South Africa in 1994 that the region normalised and became peaceful.
17. As countries of the region, we set out to be pro-active on the destiny of our sub-continent. This is why even before the demise of apartheid, Botswana together with other majority ruled countries in Southern Africa founded the Southern African Development Conference in 1980 to promote economic co-operation.

This organisation, now called the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has made commendable progress in promoting regional integration in areas such as transport and telecommunications, water and sanitation, health and education.

18. Chairman, I have spoken at some length in an attempt to give your audience some background of our journey. At this point I must say that indeed, the way we have managed our politics and our economy as Botswana has paid handsome dividends. However, I must also acknowledge that we still face many challenges.
19. From the late 1990's onward, we have had to contend and deal with many challenges. These include HIV/AIDS, globalisation, economic diversification and animal diseases, scarcity of water, low food production and environmental degradation. Infact, I am happy that during my visit here, I took part in the activities of the Africa Day at the World Water Forum. Hopefully, we shall gain new insights on this matter from our Japanese and other friends taking part in the 3rd World Water Forum.
20. We are doing all in our power to respond to these challenges by adopting short-term, medium term and long-term strategies. For instance, on HIV/AIDS apart from public awareness programmes, my Government has introduced anti-retroviral drugs which we are gradually rolling out to all parts of the country. We also introduced the prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV/AIDS programme. In the long term, Government stresses the importance of abstention and faithfulness among the population as a preventive measure.
21. On the broad economy, through a combination of incentives and specific policy initiatives, Government has taken a lead in seeking to attract foreign direct investment and diversification of the economy.

The main objectives are to reduce over-dependence on mining, especially diamonds and to create more employment opportunities in the fields of manufacturing, service industries such as tourism and international financial services.

22. We have adopted a new Agricultural Policy known as The National Master Plan for Arable Agriculture and Dairy Development (NAMPAADD). The policy is aimed at boosting agricultural production for both local consumption and export. A competition policy as well as an Industrial Development Act aimed at addressing impediments to foreign investment are being introduced. These are but some of the measures we are taking to deal with current challenges.
23. In our interaction with our friends abroad who believe that we are now a rich country, we keep reminding them that yes, Botswana has attained some measure of progress, but that we are still a country in need of help because as I have just explained, the challenges we face are many and daunting. The country's large geographical spread and scattered settlements means that we spend more in terms of unit costs for the infrastructure and services that we provide compared to a developed country or a smaller and more densely populated developing country.
24. This is an aspect that we hope our friends around the world, including, Japan will appreciate and maintain their assistance and support to enable us to reach a stage of sustainable development.
25. Mr. Chairman, during the last three years we have spent resources in explaining to consumers in North America, Europe and Japan that Botswana diamonds are for development.

We use our diamonds to educate our people, provide health care, clean drinking water, roads and housing. Botswana Diamonds are not used to fight conflicts which kill and maim women and children. We hope the Japanese people will keep on supporting us by continuing to buy our diamonds.

26. There are some non-governmental organisations who are trying mischievously to link our diamond mining with the relocation of our Basarwa compatriots (otherwise referred to as the Kalahari-Bushmen) from the Central Kgalagadi Game Reserve. They go around propagating a fallacy that says that my Government is forcibly removing these communities so that it can proceed with diamond mining at Gope. The main reason for the relocation is to ensure that the Kalahari-Basarwa, like other Basarwa in the rest of the county and all Batswana, benefit from the economic progress that Botswana has achieved. It should be noted that those who lived in the game park were about one thousand out of a Basarwa population of about 60,000 in the rest of the country. We believe that by settling outside the game reserve, Basarwa who are not game but people will be able to engage in self sustaining economic projects that can improve their livelihoods.
27. With the help of U.N. Aids, the U.S. Government, the Bill and Melinda gates foundation, the Merck Company foundation and the Bristol Myers Squibb Corporation, we have embarked on the provision of anti-retroviral for the prevention of mother to child transmission. We also now provide anti-retroviral therapy free to all patients.
28. Because of overcrowding in our health facilities, we also provide care to patients at home, providing anti-retroviral therapy, food, protective clothing to care givers and professional counselling.

29. We register and care for all orphans, providing food rations, clothing, medical care, free education either in the care of relatives or in the near future, in institutions where necessary. We of course face financial constraints but have all skilled human resources.
30. Regarding the H.I.V. Aids epidemic, on the occasion of the Millennium U.N. Summit we declared that we were the nation most severely affected and infected by H.I.V. Aids. Since then we have embarked on a number of prevention and treatment measures.
31. Prevention remains the main objective of our campaign. We have established a multi-sectoral National Aids Council which I chair, and a National Aids Co-ordinating Agency to direct our multi-faceted response, instituted National Radio and Television programmes on Aids, we produce magazines and other publications targetted at the youth, have produced billboards everywhere warning people against Aids, and I never make a speech without mentioning Aids.
32. Mr. Chairman, I cannot conclude my address without addressing the broader issues concerning the African continent. As Africans we accept the responsibility to address our problems. In doing so, we are conscious of the fact that the rest of the international community has an interest in an Africa that is more peaceful, stable and economically prosperous. The newly-founded African Union has agreed some permanent mechanisms to deal with these issues, namely, the Peace and Security Council and NEPAD. Both mechanisms are meant to promote peace and stability, good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law, as well as improving the living standards of our people. These are objectives or ideals for which we in Botswana have been striving and some measure of which we have attained since our independence 36 years ago.

33. We are hopeful that the industrialised countries, including Japan will continue to support our efforts. In this regard, we commend the ongoing commitment of the Japanese Government to the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD). We look forward to TICAD III and hope that it will, in the spirit of partnership, address in concrete terms issues of market access, debt relief and combating HIV/AIDS among others.
34. Mr. Chairman, I have spoken at some length and I hope that I have generated some interest in the subject, “Botswana’s success story – Overcoming the challenges of Development.”
35. Let me end by expressing my gratitude for the opportunity to share my ideas with you. It is clear from the foregoing that Botswana provides some lessons on how to tackle the challenges of development. Any successes that have been achieved are a result of a shared commitment and partnership with our development partners. I am pleased that this institution is promoting greater international understanding by allowing open dialogue on critical matters of our time.

I thank you for your attention.