

INAUGURATION ADDRESS BY H.E. LIEUTENANT
GENERAL S.K.I. KHAMA PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA
TUESDAY 1ST APRIL 2008
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
0830 HOURS

Your Lordship Chief Justice Nganunu and Mrs. Nganunu Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr Balopi and Mrs. Balopi Former President Sir Q.K.J. Masire and Lady Masire Former President Mr F. G. Mogae and Mrs. Mogae Leader of the Opposition Judge President of the Industrial Court Your Ladyships and Lordships Judges of the High Court and Industrial Court, and your Spouses Your Excellencies Heads of Diplomatic Mission and International Organisations and your spouses Honourable Members of Parliament and your spouses Your Worship the Mayor Chairman of Ntlo ya Dikgosi Kgosi Seepapitso IV Dikgosi le bahumagadi Honourable Councillors and your spouses The Right Reverend Bishop Boniface Setlalekgosi The Right Reverend Bishop Mwamba Distinguished Guests Batswana betsho, ke lo dumedisa ka Pula!

1 Let me from the outset pay tribute to Rre Mogae as he begins his retirement after years of exemplary service to our nation. When looking back at his lifelong commitment to national service, it is hardly surprising to anyone that he eventually ascended to the highest office in the land. Rre Mogae's achievements and the legacy he will bequeath us are well documented, as indeed outlined in his last State of the Nation Address in November last year. Immense strides in areas such as economic management, gender equality, HIV/AIDS, infrastructure development and social transformation, to mention but a few, have been made under his stewardship of our country. As president, Rre Mogae was recognized locally and abroad for these achievements. He can boast an admirable track record that serves as an example for future leaders of this country and elsewhere in the international community.

2 An example of Rre Mogae's wise leadership is best re-stated by his own words during his last State of the Nation Address when he said and I quote "I have not allowed political expediency and the pursuit of populism to cloud my judgement and service to the nation. For the road to political expediency and populism may be lined with cheering crowds, but in the end we cannot escape the cold hard facts of our limitations as a developing country. Harsh punishment awaits a nation that spends unwisely in pursuit of immediate gratification rather than sustainable development" end quote. These are indeed wise words, and words I wish to identify myself with. On behalf of the nation, Rre Mogae I wish to thank you Rraetsho for all you have done, and we wish you all the best in your retirement. Please feel free to call on me at anytime to render advice on any issue, and I hope I too can call on you for the same.

3 A change of leadership does not mean radical changes in the way we have been setting out our objectives as agreed upon by the ruling party and government for this nation. Our party has a manifesto that I signed on to and the government has a national development plan that I am also a party to. However, in the course of the incoming administration you may detect a change in style

and special emphasis on a number of issues. This should not cause any alarm or uncertainty.

After all, changes should be seen in the context that no two people are the same. However the overall objectives remain the same and not least because we, Rre Mogae and I, have been working together for quite some years to achieve them.

4 Leadership changes can be a time of unease. I can only allay any disquiet by once more evoking President Mogae's words in his State of the Nation Address and I quote "Let us therefore face the future with confidence and determination: determination to lift our nation to greater heights, and determination to use our current achievements as stepping-stones towards prosperity and greater success" end Quote. I certainly intend to carry out my duties within the spirit and intent of those words.

5 I am confident in the future, and I am determined to build upon the solid foundation that has already been laid since independence by my predecessors. For me to succeed, we must all be growing in success. No one can achieve anything on his or her own. This is our country, the only country we have. Botswana can achieve greater success only if we show a collective will and when we all participate fully in her affairs. Therefore whatever we do or whatever we say must be done and said in the best interests of this country.

6 We have a clear vision of what we want Botswana's future to be. The successful implementation of our economic diversification policies and all this implies, will require focussed and a single-minded pursuit of our goals and objectives. I am confident that with the right leadership at all levels and the appropriate mindset, we can, together, secure that success.

7 Botswana have every right to reflect with pride on four decades of independence, stability and major economic and social development. But we cannot bask in past glory forever as has been the tendency. We need to think of the coming decades and about the prosperity and welfare of future generations. Botswana has become a middle-income country by prudently managing and investing the proceeds from her natural resources. This in turn, has provided a stable and fulfilling environment for its citizens and business. Today, the country faces challenges that require further responses and initiatives. Areas that I feel need special emphasis are employment creation and poverty alleviation, programmes for the youth, health, housing and the fight against crime, to mention a few.

8 But we also face new challenges such as environmental protection, and changing social values, brought about by rapid urbanisation. The external perceptions about Botswana have also changed:

Botswana is no longer seen as the only beacon of success in Africa. A growing number of countries on our continent have become stable, democratic and increasingly attractive for investors, tourists and like spirited people.

9 These are some of the issues I am mindful of as I take the oath of office. Hence my roadmap for the nation will be underpinned and characterized by the principles of Democracy, Development, Dignity and Discipline. That they all start with the letter D is purely by coincidence.

10 The first D, Democracy, has served our country and its people well. It is an important cornerstone of good governance and prudent economic management. Only democracy guarantees human rights, the rule of law, accountability and basic freedoms that we have enjoyed over the years. Yet again it is President Mogae who said "we are a country with a rich democratic political tradition and something positive to demonstrate and contribute to the rest of the world" end Quote.

11 All the success we have registered is on account of our adherence to democratic ideals. Nothing should be allowed to detract us from this path. There is no substitute for it. I believe that Batswana recognise that only democracy can create the most favourable conditions to ensure that our aspirations can be fulfilled.

12 I am a democrat. I have always believed in democratic ideals, and joined the military to defend this democracy. I consider myself an integral part of this system of governance that has become entrenched in the life of Batswana.

13 The second D, Development, refers to improving the standard of living of Batswana. This will manifest itself through the continued provision of national infrastructure such as roads, hospitals, electricity, schools, stadia and other life affirming opportunities, most importantly jobs. For this to happen, we have to create an enabling environment for the private sector, and to actively encourage it to become the driving force of and the main investor in our economy.

Government cannot alone bring about change. I also expect the private sector to do much more in support of the change process, especially in areas such as innovation, staff training and skills development.

14 We need to change the mindset among Batswana by encouraging and helping them to fully develop their talents, and through stimulating creativity and hard work, so they can contribute to the economic development of our country. This must include a change in the way in which we see ourselves relative to non-Batswana stakeholders in different spheres of life, and the absolute need to embrace the realities of the internationalisation and globalisation processes. It will also demand an acceptance that Government's empowerment policies will

increasingly be based on ability, effective delivery, wealth creation and capacity building through skill development and hard work, rather than on entitlement.

15 With reference to the third D, Dignity, no one should need to live an undignified life as a result of poor shelter or health and abuse in a domestic environment. Anything in life that brings you suffering affects your dignity as a person and we shall seek to address and overcome some of these challenges.

16 Living in dignity must go hand in hand with being treated with dignity. In this regard I call upon all of us, politicians, the public service, and the private sector to ensure that our interaction with the public must at all times be underpinned by dignity. Both is an integral part of our culture. Every citizen must (especially the political leadership) strive to maintain our culture of modesty and avoid extravagance at all costs.

17 Last, but not least the fourth D, is the principle of Discipline. Nothing can be achieved successfully without discipline in any society. May I quote President Mogae again when he said, "As I prepare to leave office, let me ask that we take a firm stand against all the negative tendencies that are creeping into our society and defacing our image." end Quote.

18 Allow me to highlight some of the social problems in our society that we need to address as a nation. These range from alcohol abuse, reckless driving on our roads, disrespect for elders, vandalising of school property, wastage of scarce resources such as water, the use of abusive language in public discourse and defamation, slander and false statements in the media. The examples I have cited reflect a lack of discipline by some sections of our community.

19 Botswana must be reminded that in a democracy, the rights and freedoms of one individual end where those of other citizens begin. Freedoms go hand in hand with responsibility.

20 The 4 D's, I believe will help guide us towards our National Vision 2016. As Botswana we have formulated a clear roadmap of our future. We can only realise this noble vision through focussed actions, by government, business and citizenry. Two major strategies have recently been developed to help realise Vision 2016. They are the Business Economic Advisory Council's Economic Strategy designed to drive our country's much needed economic diversification, and a Brand Strategy - to inform ourselves and the world what Botswana holds in store for investors, visitors, traders and foreign residents.

21 To actualise the contribution these two strategies will make

towards realising Vision 2016, it will be necessary to make some changes in the way our country operates. This requires decisive and inspirational leadership in both government and business to instil self-confidence in the workforce and inculcate a results-oriented culture. It also necessitates better organisational skills and capacities to effect the changes required. Our young people need jobs-ready training and education to obtain the skills business requires. They need to be equipped with the abilities and mindsets to excel in their jobs and to start and grow their own enterprises.

22 Accelerating globalisation and the rapidly changing international economic environment and related competitive pressures will continue to have a dramatic impact on Botswana. This change process also fuels the international fight to attract scarce and often highly sophisticated skills and know-how, and the Foreign Direct Investment which can commercialise such skills and thus help achieve longer term economic success.

23 These developments dictate that Botswana must reposition itself. Botswana must learn to benchmark itself internationally, and we, collectively and individually, must develop the capacity to compete internationally on equal terms. This is the basis for our policy "Citizen Empowerment through Excellence".

24 I shall set up a special Committee of Cabinet responsible for economic issues and employment that will report to Cabinet monthly on progress made with regards these various initiatives. This committee will be headed by the Vice President.

25 Finally I intend to try and find ways to phase out any excessive or counter-productive bureaucracy. Our public service, at both central and local level, must become optimally efficient, transparent, motivated and disciplined. Within Government I will continue to attach importance to team work, accountability, effective co-ordination and providing staff with clear objectives and targets.

26 To this end I shall start by laying out to the Cabinet and the entire senior management of government in a meeting later this week and with local authorities next week, my expectations of them with respect to making good on the pledges we have made to Botswana. As part of a team charged with delivering services and development to the nation, I hope they are all up to the task because those unable to deliver cannot be kept on the team.

27 Bagaetsho, "Success starts with a vision, but nothing will come of it unless the follow-through is swift and only single minded pursuit of goals brings success"

"We cannot stand still - we must improve further on our past gains. With the support of the nation I will do my best to lift Botswana to the next level of development"

28 Let me conclude by thanking all of you for your attention, and to all those who have sent messages of goodwill to me, and to those who have travelled from afar to be here for this occasion. PULA PULA PULA
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