



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA



WELCOME NOTE

BY

CHAIRPERSON

HONOURABLE EDWIN J. BATSHU

MINISTER OF LABOUR AND HOME AFFAIRS, BOTSWANA

AT THE

ORDINARY MEETING OF SADC MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR

GENDER/ WOMEN'S AFFAIRS

GABORONE, BOTSWANA

23RD JUNE, 2016





Madam Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Botswana;
Honourable Gladys Kokorwe
Honourable Ministers and Colleagues from the SADC Region
SADC Executive Secretary; Ms Stergomena Lawrence Tax
United Nations Coordinator and Co-Sponsor; Anders Pederson
European Union Ambassador and Co-Sponsor; Alexander Baum
Members of the Diplomatic Community
Our Valued Development Partners
Captains of Industry
Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs; Ms
Pearl N. Ramokoka and your Colleagues
Civil Society Organisations
Our much valued Friends from the Media
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning!

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to this important meeting which is; **the Ordinary Meeting of SADC Ministers Responsible for Gender and Women's Affairs.** This is a unique occasion for the SADC Region as we are not just gathered in the dawn of Sustainable Development Goals; but to strategise for effective implementation especially that we will be deliberating on an imperative matter that has a

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direct bearing on achievement of Sustainable Development Goals' targets.

Honourable Ministers, you will recall that our journey in striving for gender equality dates as far as the 1990s when SADC Heads of State and Government signed the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development in September 1997, followed by its Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women and Children in September 1998. These instruments were not an end but a means facilitating further development of the SADC Gender Agenda as evidenced by the August 2008 Protocol on Gender and Development.

I therefore trust that as Ministers responsible for Gender, we shall actively interrogate our progress in the implementation of all our gender instruments and commitments, identify key challenges and develop strategic interventions to ensure achievement of Sustainable Development Goals particularly Goal No. 5 on Promotion of Gender Equality and Empowerment of all Women and Girls.

Honourable Ministers, I trust that you all arrived safely to the colourful city of Gaborone and are well rested to start the day with vigour. You might have noticed upon arrival that our Country is painted Blue, Black and White; our National colours. This is because we are celebrating Golden Jubilee; that is, fifty (50) years of independence. This meeting could therefore not have come at any better time.

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Honourable Colleagues, you will recall that in January, 2016 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia we had to conclude the SADC Sponsored Resolution on Women, The Girl Child and HIV & AIDS for tabling at the 60th Commission on the Status of Women. It is with great delight that we successfully negotiated with the United Nations Member States and the Resolution was adopted by consensus on 24th March, 2016 as we had all desired; and for this, I applaud you Honourable Ministers.

The Resolution Honourable Ministers remains vital to SADC as our Region has about 1% of the world's population with majority of Member States having the highest number of HIV&AIDS cases. Our Region also bears nearly 40% of the world's HIV infections with the most affected being women and girls.

The Resolution mainly focuses on eliminating gender inequalities and gender-based abuse and violence as well as increasing the capacity of women and adolescent girls to protect themselves from the risk of HIV infection. The Resolution further emphasizes on the provision of health care and services including sexual and reproductive health, full access to comprehensive information and education as well as ensuring that women exercise their right to have control over their sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. It also



stresses on creating an enabling environment for the empowerment of women and to strengthen their economic independence.

The Resolution also reiterates the importance of the role of men and boys as well as the civil society in achieving gender equality. It also requests Governments to make available comprehensive disaggregated data on age, sex and other characteristics relevant in national context to inform targeted responses on gender dimensions of HIV&AIDS.

Most importantly, the Resolution calls on Governments the private sector, the international donor community and the UN agencies to intensify financial and technical support to national efforts to end AIDS and achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; a must for the SADC Region, as the most affected.

Finally, the Resolution is anticipated to stimulate global commitment to addressing gender equality and HIV&AIDS at the United Nations Heads of State and Governments High Level Meeting on AIDS in June 2016.

Let me emphasise that I would have erred if I fail to recognize and appreciate the support from yourselves, the Africa Group, United Nations Member States as well as UNAIDS and UNWomen who were highly facilitative in the success of the Resolution. I trust that as the Sponsors, we would ensure its full implementation to relieve our citizens, particularly women and girls of the burden of HIV & AIDS.



Honourable Ministers, mine is not to give a sermon this morning, but to welcome you. In our tradition, we say; **“Dintša di bofilwe”**, literally translated to mean; **“Dogs are tied”**. I therefore, assure you Honourable Ministers of the utmost safety during your stay here.

In conclusion, let me cease this opportunity to welcome you to **Botswana; Our Pride, Your Destination**. I trust that you will indeed experience the beauty of this our beloved Country. Let me once again; reiterate my deep appreciation for your commitment to the SADC Gender Course.

I thank you!

