

SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT AND  
LEADER OF THE BOTSWANA DEMOCRATIC PARTY  
LIEUTENANT GENERAL SERETSE KHAMA IAN KHAMA  
DELIVERED AT THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS OF THE BOTSWANA  
DEMOCRATIC PARTY YOUTH WING

'WELDED TOGETHER BY PATRIOTISM AND VOLUNTARY  
DESIRE'

Your Honour the Vice President

Party Chairman

Secretary General

Treasurer

Members of the Central Committee

Fellow Democrats

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. Today you are gathered here to converge the thoughts of the Youth; aggregate your resolutions and then elect the leadership of the Youth Wing.
2. In electing your leadership, it is important that you take cognizance of the caliber of leadership you want; the expectations you will place on them; and the need to ensure that the BDP gets to 2014 stronger than ever before. The role of the Youth Wing is to provide forums, activities and opportunities to allow youth to flourish and it is from these

activities that we should see a growth of potential leaders and contribution to the development of Botswana.

3. I have been rather concerned with the atmosphere within the Youth Wing. Just recently the Central Committee had to ask for the intervention of the Council of Elders. I am glad following this intervention, it looks like the team is committed to working as a unit. I sincerely hope that the spirit that prevailed following the intervention of the Elders, as I am led to believe, will stabilise the Youth Wing now and forever in future. Let me remind you all, despite what you see and hear of a problem youth movement in a neighbouring country, the Youth Wing here and there are supposed to mobilize the youth in support of the party and not be some kind of independent organization with some loose alignment to the main party free to do and say as they please. Until now, the Youth Wing has tended to underperform, and time and again has developed signs of a problem child and that it cannot manage on its own. It is my hope going forward from today on, you will demonstrate your commitment to developing your structures country wide and drive the BDP agenda.

4. There is no doubt that strengthening the exchanges of information and experiences among the youth to promote youth involvement in political ideas and policy formulation is not only crucial but will also serve to enhance their effectiveness in performing their elected functions and increase intra party efficiency. As I have stated on several occasions, my government remains committed to youth empowerment through various programmes, which I am certain most of you are aware of including the new Youth Empowerment Scheme.
  
5. One of the challenges at the moment is that the participation of youth in developing youth employment policies is minimal. I urge the youth to occupy a vital role in transforming the role they will play in resolving youth development.
  
6. One area I also want to encourage for the youth is instilling the spirit of volunteerism. Volunteerism is a pathway to integration and employment and has always worked in improving social cohesion. As the youth, you need to lead in establishing channels in which volunteerism can be used as a mechanism to improve skills and knowledge thus getting practical working experience.

7. Social responsibility through guidance and counselling of the youth is of paramount importance to the long term success of this country. The foundations of morality and the benefits of righteous living are of utmost significance in the grooming of future leaders. I therefore call on the Youth Wing to be exemplary in building upon the knowledge and wisdom that has been conferred upon you through various government initiatives to curb substance abuse. At this point, allow me to turn to the leadership and older members present here and state that they be mentors of the good behaviour I ask of and lead by example. In this way the fundamental principles I have alluded to will be re-enforced and expanded upon.
  
8. Our Youth Wing needs to do more to modernize our youth programmes that will endear and win the trust and confidence of large numbers of the youth countrywide to the BDP as the party of choice that is fashionable, appealing and offers real hope for the future. This Youth Wing Congress must therefore be used to build a platform for a new beginning for our Youth Wing, to enable it to play a meaningful role henceforth in shaping the future destiny of our Party.

9. During the delivery of my speech at the 50<sup>th</sup> National Council I cautioned the youth and asked that they desist from this pre-occupation with internal fighting of factions. We also asked that events leading to this Congress be monitored so that the Party leadership can act swiftly and decisively in the event of actions that threaten peace, stability and tranquility in the BDP. Don't disappointment me or the BDP by allowing competition from your executive committee to descend into factionalism or internal fighting.

10. Fellow Democrats, as you deliberate on how you will continue with your mandate going forward, please take cognizance of resolutions of the 50<sup>th</sup> National Council and find how best you can use your skills to deliver on these resolutions. It should be our collective responsibilities as members of the BDP to play our roles in ensuring that there remains no alternative in Botswana.

11. With those few remarks I officially declare this Congress opened and wish you the best of luck in all your thorough and thoughtful deliberations.