

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

‘WELDED TOGETHER BY PATRIOTISM AND VOLUNTARY  
DESIRE’

His Honour the Vice President

Party Chairman

Secretary General

Treasurer

Ministers

Members of the Central Committee

1. We are gathered here today in the back drop of our recently held and I must say highly successful celebrations marking 50 years of the formation of our Party. We are holding this National Council at the beginning of what should be a roll out of regional 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations throughout 2012 and ending on February 28<sup>th</sup> 2013.

2. The recent event in Gaborone not only marked the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the BDP but afforded us a critical milestone in the life of our Party for reflections and renewed commitment going forward. As we celebrate we must critically assess where we are today, both as individual members and as the collective called the BDP in terms of overall effective delivery on our respective mandates. Let us once again give thanks and show appreciation to the role played by our Former Presidents and other party veterans for the foundation they laid for us and future generations to build on.
  
3. Sir Ketumile Masire once stated quite categorically that one of the real contributors to both this Party's growth and electoral successes was a committed, energetic and zealous membership who explored and exploited all available opportunities to propagate its policies, promote its interests and well-being. That membership was driven, and fired, in all that they did by their commitment to the Party's core values and ideals; and their activism and participation in this party's activities flowed from their desire to serve, and their perception that they had something they could usefully and purposefully offer to Domkrag's cause and glory, rather than from self-serving

interests or motivations. Whilst we have undoubtedly advanced from our humble beginnings under that morula tree, it may be sobering for today's Democrats to undertake a reality check and ask themselves the following: whether we are as committed and passionate about our party and its cause as the earlier membership? Additionally, whether the underlying motivations for our individual memberships and activities are as pure and selfless as those of our forebears?

4. Fellow Democrats, another feature which emerges from our past, and which must have undoubtedly played no small part in our organizational development and resultant political dominance, are the qualities of personal sacrifice and volunteerism of those earlier members. Let it be recalled that the Botswana of yesteryears was considerably different from today, whereby now you can practically reach the remotest parts of our country within a day by road. Elderly Democrats will inform you of how individuals sacrificed personal and family resources in order to access the remotest parts of this country on practically non-existent roads in the service of Domkrag.

5. Others will inform you of how loyal members, not well-resourced, contributed a bag of mabele here or a drum of petrol there, or provided a night's accommodation or rest to this party's functionaries, as their contribution to this party's cause. I would like, on this occasion, to acknowledge all those contributions, which though undocumented, but without which we could not have been what and where we are today. Essential to the propagation of our dominance as a ruling party, is the understanding by party functionaries and officers (including Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament, Councilors) is that they are basically servants. It must be more clearly understood by today's Democrats, and particularly by our younger generations, that there is little romanticism or even financial and material gain about these exalted positions because they are all about hard work, and I wish to reiterate – service.

6. Fellow Democrats, I believe that the strength of Domkrag has always been our party unity, and that the same party unity is the bedrock of our future strength and growth, and the bedrock of its future electoral hopes. Those earlier Democrats, in spite of their individual and ethnic and regional and ideological

differences, subordinated all those potentially divisive factors to the promotion of Domkrag's core ideals, principles and values which bound and united them. Those members also subordinated factional and sectarian interests and positions to the higher interests of internal party cohesion and stability which enjoyed pride of place in all its internal and public affairs.

7. We are here today as we renew our resolve towards building a robust and much stronger and united Party. We must also remember that unless we are diligent, factions will continue to rear their ugly heads and in the process destroy our Party.
8. Every democrat needs to bear in mind that we will always have differences of opinion on many issues. This is the reality in any democracy. What is intolerable is when such otherwise normal differences and preferences are allowed to undermine the collective good of the Party. This will not be tolerated by me and all others who are genuinely committed to growing this Party, and protecting it.
9. As we approach the Youth Wing Congress let us bear all these in mind. Let us remember that we tried a number of measures geared towards ensuring that our Party remains united. One of

the measures we implemented during the cooling off period was the compromise approach which we utilized to avoid open electoral contest in an environment of deep divisions.

10. Many of you could be aware that the compromise approach has been effective. Our Party has stabilized and is increasingly attracting new members who are coming forward to take membership for the first time. We have recently seen many members of our society taking life membership. This is testimony to the fact that the stability I have been alluding to is not just imagined. Even those outside the BDP can see the stability I mention.
  
11. I wish to call upon you, including and especially the Party leadership to refrain from any actions that might lead to disturbing the peace and encourage a fall out in the Youth Wing congress. As I have indicated earlier, we have to take responsibility for the good health and cohesion of our Party. When elders circulate lobby lists at night and not allow the youth to canvas support amongst themselves and conduct their elections, it is unacceptable. They are taking us back to the times of instability and threatening our peace as a Party.

12. It should be remembered that this year's Youth Congress takes place during a period when we otherwise would be preparing for primary elections. Given the timetable for delimitation, we have had to review our resolution from Congress and accept that we await the delimitation exercise. We have just had a successful campaign in Mokobaxane and shortly will be moving into Lenganeng Ward in Tlokweng.
  
13. Fellow Democrats, we are now hearing of a spirited, but stillborn or futile, attempt by our opposition parties to establish some form of united formation or, perhaps, coalition. Even without our utterance of a syllable, this project has seemingly collapsed on its own emptiness and demerits. We learned, of another umbrella number two formation, which umbrella could not, and has not, opened in spite of its enthusiastic midwives and sponsors. We are presently hearing, from the same sources, of a pact formation that is being proposed by one opposition party with another, whose leadership is seemingly not desirous of attending that party, but would prefer to party with yet another.

14. The simple truth underlying these confusing and repeated and failed attempts at opposition party unity is that these diverse opposition parties are driven by an over-arching and desperate desire or determination to oust Domkrag from office at all costs as the government of the day, irrespective of their antagonistic historical origins; their unresolved ideological or policy positions; and, even in, the absence of the barest pronouncements with respect to their common standpoints. They all seemingly labour under the misconception that the affections and electoral support of Batswana can be harnessed by merely capitalizing upon the very problems which we are solving, without any disclosure of the details of what they would do, or even do differently, if elected to office.
15. Fellow Democrats, other than Domkrag there is no party in this Republic which can lay claim to any experience in the governance of this country.
16. Therefore we may be entitled to certain measures of humour and mirth deriving from the desperation of our opposition parties in their attempts to unseat Domkrag from office.



17. Fellow Democrats, opposition shenanigans and strategems aside, there are other disconcerting features in our party that we need to come to grips with, and ascertain whether these are helpful and stabilizing matters, or are more destructive and unhelpful. As is widely known, we shall very shortly be going into various elective undertakings in this party, starting with party primary elections to identify our candidates for the 2014 General Elections, as well as elections for membership of our next Central Committee; and all of which elective undertakings have, in the recent past, proven to be the most acrimonious and divisive exercises.
  
18. We have seen in elections for members of the Central Committee how Democrats who are normally co-operative and supportive of one another suddenly break ranks to stand behind one or other of the competing factions and embark upon the worst of back-biting, back-stabbing and treachery in order to ensure victory for the candidate of a particular faction regardless of the merit/worth of the individual. We have also witnessed how post-election bitterness, especially in our primary elections, has been so turbulent and long drawn - out as to result in the loser with-holding assistance or support from

the winner; and, even worse, how the sorest losers have actively instigated other Democrats and our supporters to vote for opposition candidates.

19. Over the few years of my leadership of this party, I have frequently had cause to wonder why it is, for the most part, that our party's internal elections are fought or undertaken, with substantially more energy, intensity or vigour than in general elections. I have little doubt that if Democrats exerted a fraction of the intensity, passion and vigour in general elections as they do in internal party elections, we could quite reliably and predictably expect victory from every national election! I have been concerned by the desperate lengths to which people go, and the destructive measures to which they resort, in order to win internal party elections. Vigorous and intense as these contests may be, there is no reason why some should be characterized by underhand tactics; and nor is there, in my judgment, any justification for post-election acrimonies and rivalries between contestants.

20. Many of us appear to have lost sight of the fact that no elections - whether internal to this party or not - are won on

the basis of others subjective opinions of our capabilities and deservedness, as it is the persons entitled to vote who make the choice. Further, given that there are, at any time, a limited number of positions open to competition or contest, is it unreasonable for some of us to expect that we may be disappointed? It seems to me that if we school and tutor ourselves into this basic understanding, and accept that other Democrats may not necessarily share our views about our own capabilities and deservedness with respect to the offices for which we are competing, we can enter upon such contests in a more cordial atmosphere and consequently accept the outcomes with greater measures of pleasantness and maturity, not in ways which leave deep wounds and scarring in our party.

21. The BDP I am sure is desirous of a situation whereby all internal party elective contests bring to the foreground the best candidates, and the most stimulating competitions, but which leave this party intact and ready to face the most rigorous and stiffest competition which opposition candidates may pose or present. When all is said and done, it must be recalled that the electorate does not compose solely of members and supporters, but also members and supporters of opposition

parties - including the unaligned or undecided - so that our internal party elections must, so far as it is possible to do so, bring forth electoral candidates whom it is broadly felt even by those outside our party have something in which they can usefully offer to this country.

22. Fellow Democrats, the electoral success of any party candidate in any parliamentary or local government constituency cannot be a matter for individual toil or struggle of the candidate, or their solo effort. These are, when all is said and done, approved candidates of this party who are entitled to the maximum and willing assistance of all our members and the maximum support of all party resources and structures in those areas. All too often one hears, from both successful and unsuccessful candidates, how they could have fared better with greater assistance and support. What, I suspect, contributes to this problem is the misconception among some of you that it is only those candidates who were your preferred candidates in the primary elections who are entitled to your support, with the result that when someone other than your preferred candidate emerges the winner, you withhold your assistance and sit back. Once a candidate has been elected, and regardless of our

subjective feelings about the individual, all of us are enjoined to assist that individual as best as we can for the advancement of that candidate's, and indeed our party's success. Equally, however, candidates for their part must understand that whilst they are the representatives of our party in designated constituencies, such constituencies are not their personal property whereby it is only themselves who can direct and control party activities, including campaigning in those areas.

23. Fellow Democrats, another issue I have been concerned for a long time now about our party structures at ward, branch and regional levels which seemingly exist in name only, but whose efforts and industry for the most part are not consistently visible. One does not see their programmes and action plans with respect to their proposed activities, and nor does one receive reports of what they have actually achieved. It does not appear that many of these structures are meeting with the frequency that they should, if at all; and it also appears that some of the persons manning them are treating their offices as mere positions without work. As Party President, I preside over the Central Committee of this party, who come from all over

the country, and I can assure you that it meets at least once a month and occasionally even more frequently.

24. I am therefore unable to understand why these party structures under discussion are not meeting, especially as long travel is not an issue and nor do I understand the motivations of the persons who agreed to be appointed or elected to them if, as it now emerges, they do not want or are unable to serve. This sorry state of affairs often results in distortions about the party's available manpower resources and its strength on the ground, and the depth of its outreach and penetration into the furthest and remotest parts of this country. As we approach the next election, we really have to ask ourselves whether we can afford to embark upon some with such laid back attitudes on the part of party office - bearers to their responsibilities. We will seriously need to improve on this, and must change our mind-set about the people whom we elect to positions so as to ensure that the party is always capably and properly served, by active, committed, dedicated and enterprising office bearers.

25. Fellow Democrats, in as much as I am exhorting you to emulate the sense of mission, sacrifice and voluntarism of

earlier Democrats, let us not lose sight of the fact that today's Botswana differs in many ways from the Botswana of earlier times. So that the rekindling of membership commitments and efforts to the party's cause does not necessarily entail the adherence to old methods of outreach in each and every case. We are living in an ICT age, and the era of Social Networks (such as twitter, face-book, internet, you tube etc) and all such should be employed to our party's cause, and particularly to our election campaigns. So if, for example, it may not be likely to attract the attendance of the youth at a political rally or freedom square as was the case in earlier years, let us devise alternative methods to capture their attention, interest and support.

26. Whereas it may once upon a time have been advantageous to demonstrate our record of achievement since 1966, let us recognize that today's youth may be less concerned about the historical or the past, and are likely to be more concerned with the present and the future, including likely prospects for the realization of their potentials, future security and prosperity. But that said, we cannot reasonably hope to achieve any of these aims with unproductive party structures, unimaginative

campaigns, or even tired and unappealing candidates. We will therefore in the period that remains up to the next general election have to seriously up our act.

27. We need to remember that the BDP is a voluntary organization. As members work on these elections, they all draw inspiration from the spirit of volunteerism which has always been a major thread binding Democrats together. We must continue to work together in unison, towards a common vision as a Party. The Mokobaxane bye election demonstrated the spirit of putting the Party first, the spirit of volunteerism and team work as bedrocks upon which we should continue to be admired.
  
28. I would like to conclude by wishing every one of you great happiness and sense of renewal during our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Let me assure you that our great party, inspite of certain challenges, is structurally sound and continues to resonate with the overwhelming majority of Batswana, and further that we shall surpass all our previous efforts to maintain its premium standing as the party of first choice for Batswana.



Given the state and condition of our opposition parties, it remains the indisputable truth that there is still no alternative to Domkrag and that this party shall continue to dominate our political landscape for the foreseeable future.

29. I thank you.

**TSHOLETSA DOMKRAG!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**