

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA AND LEADER OF THE  
BOTSWANA DEMOCRATIC PARTY LIEUTENANT  
GENERAL SERETSE KHAMA IAN KHAMA AT THE  
PARTY'S 33<sup>RD</sup> NATIONAL CONGRESS HELD IN  
KANYE FROM 18<sup>TH</sup> TO 21<sup>ST</sup> JULY 2009.**

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Fellow Democrats,

1. I must applaud our members on their choice of venues for our congresses. Last year we were in Gumare for the Youth Wing Congress; last month we were in Tsabong for the Women's Wing Congress; and now, for the national congress, we are assembled in Kanye, the Capital of the Southern District.

2. Kanye is an outstanding venue in its own right. A quick look at its physical profile, shows an outline of one of the most picturesque villages in our country. It has produced icons of Botswana's history, including Bathoen I, his grandson Bathoen II and of course Kgosi Seepapitso IV who

has had great impact on the development of our Ntlo ya Dikgosi.

3. Kanye was also the site of the first ever Teacher Training College in Botswana. This institute produced talents such as our veteran, K.P. Morake – the teacher, the poet, the untiring politician and the footballer of all seasons. Maharaj our treasurer also claims some association with this village.

4. Kanye is also the birth place of the second President of the Republic and of our Party, Sir Ketumile Masire, who is the principal architect of our development planning strategy and one of our Founding Fathers. This congress therefore qualifies to be a pilgrimage for most of our members and a tribute to Former President Masire and all the great citizens from this part of our country.

5. For me this is a momentous congress. It takes place in an election year. It is also the first congress I am privileged to address as leader of the party. Botswana will be awaiting the outcomes of our deliberations here with great expectation. I am confident that we will not disappoint them.

6. The party manifesto we issued in March this year has predictably generated a lot of constructive debate and positive responses. We welcome the support. The message has gone home in all the 57 constituencies. This message is clear and unequivocal that the Botswana Democratic Party is the only party that has a comprehensive and well thought out programme that will lead to the achievement of our Vision 2016 objectives. We have delivered on our promises in the past and I am determined to ensure that we perform even better in the future.

7. Fellow Democrats, in just under three years the Botswana Democratic Party will be celebrating fifty years of existence. As we approach this major landmark and, as we prepare for a parliamentary term that will get us there, it is appropriate that we should pause for a moment and take stock of what has been achieved, accurately assess its asset value, critically analyse the strategies we have hitherto employed and determine where improvement must be effected.

8. As a party we can be proud that we founded the Republic of Botswana and established a firm legacy of democratic governance. Through our pragmatic policies, we

have developed plans, executed projects and constructed an economy that has witnessed average real GDP growth of about 8.7% per year between 1966 and 2007/8 and used all this growth and wealth for the good of our people. This is unparalleled in Africa. Some commentators may claim that we are blowing our own trumpet. But Botswana's democracy and relative economic success are realities that all should acknowledge. These realities are the reference point from which the Botswana Democratic Party derives its confidence to assure Botswana that it has acquired the skill and the experience that will enable the nation to avoid some of the risks and pitfalls that could cause a reversal of what has been achieved so far. This is an undertaking that none of our opponents is qualified to give.

9. Our achievements are not pies in the sky but visible developments on the ground which have increased cumulatively over the years with significant impact on the wellbeing of our people. These are the developments that have created the stability which has become Botswana's trademark, even during turbulent times in the world.

10. Our development strategy has been simple but functional and effective. Botswana find it appealing. It

entails a judicious combination of government intervention where necessary and aggressive promotion of the private sector in the hope of attracting foreign and local investment. Government has remained active in such key areas as the provision of water for human consumption, supply of electricity, the building of high quality infrastructure in the education and health sectors and the establishment of reasonably strong social safety nets for our weaker and more vulnerable citizens.

11. To complement government efforts, the private sector has been encouraged to be a partner in development. Both personal and corporate taxes have been reduced to far less onerous levels than in most tax regimes in order to lure more investments and forge diversification within the economy.

12. It is on the basis of this strategy that the Botswana Democratic Party has won all the nine general elections that the Republic of Botswana has had since independence. This is the strategy that has enabled Botswana to achieve fiscal sustainability and balance its budgets in all but two of the last 35 years. This is the strategy that has delivered cash balances which have enabled successive BDP

governments to improve capital spending and finance critical development priorities. This is the strategy that has yielded robust foreign exchange reserves which are now being drawn down to mitigate the effects of the global economic downturn. It is a viable insurance policy for all Batswana and indeed worthy of their continued support.

13. Our opponents have as yet not come up with any model that is demonstrably and qualitatively better than the BDP strategy. They have been desperate and have become very frustrated in their attempts to punch holes in the BDP programme but they have found it solid and impregnable. What is also evident is that all our opposition parties are parasitic. They have pegged their whole existence to perceived mistakes of the BDP and failed to develop alternative policies. They are inherently obstructive and devoid of any power of initiative. This is why at times they become wayward and attack personalities within the BDP, conveniently forgetting that they live in glass houses and are prone to engage in acts of self destruction by even throwing stones at each other. Their attempts and their behaviour are neither positive nor admissible as credentials for running a government and managing an economy. They have therefore failed to convince Batswana that they are a viable

alternative to the BDP. We are still the only credible party, hence our appeal to Batswana to renew our mandate.

14. Accordingly we will proceed to restate our priorities for the next term and build on the solid foundation that has been laid. We have made a pledge to Batswana that we will improve performance, create more employment opportunities for our labour force, reduce poverty levels further and reverse the declining economic growth rates caused by the turbulence and recessions in the major economies of the world. We are facing a global economic crisis of significant proportions. It is ravaging the economies of many countries like a pandemic. Our own economy will not be spared. This is why we have had to restructure our development plan in order to conserve enough resources to enable us to survive the crisis. We are the only party that has the experience to lead Botswana out of this economic situation.

15. In the last week of May, I met in Gaborone all managers in the Ministry of Local Government including District Commissioners, Council Chairpersons and their Executives, and departmental heads to discuss improved service delivery and efficient project implementation. We

deliberated and agreed that unjustified cost overruns on projects will not be tolerated and all loopholes through which corruption creeps in would be plugged. My Ministers and I will remain vigilant in monitoring progress in these areas and I am confident that we stand to reap some dividends. I must emphasise though, that improved performance is the responsibility of all of us. If we all refuse to co-exist with poor performance, then Botswana's competitiveness in the global economy will be enhanced and we will be able to create more jobs than currently projected.

16. Fellow Democrats, as a party that Botswana have entrusted with the responsibility to lead them and manage their affairs constructively and efficiently, we cannot afford to lose focus. We should continuously update one another on those policy priorities that promote the wellbeing of all Botswana. Our internal dialogues should enable us to develop the ability of self-renewal so that we can progressively add value to the lives of all our people. Our previous congresses have produced resolutions that have struck a healthy equilibrium between party interests and the interests of the nation at large. Never have we ever faltered and come up with decisions that only promote the interests

of a few individuals. We have always been national in our disposition. I do not expect this congress to be any different, even in the election of our Central Committee. It is imperative that we elect a team that will galvanize our unity as a party and as a nation.

17. Elections the world over, any elections, generate tensions and are potentially polarizing, particularly if those involved in them do not approach them with the right spirit. We tasted our fair share of tensions during Bulela Ditswe (our primary elections). Contrary to wild predictions of our detractors, and notwithstanding a few mekoko, we survived the Bulela Ditswe tensions.

18. My proposal to the National Council in March that we should broaden the leadership base of our party by not having Cabinet Ministers in the executive of our Central Committee was made in good faith. My primary objective was to improve the performance of people in the leadership cadre by reducing the workload associated with multiple positions at both national and party level. I am grateful that your representatives at the national council supported this reform.

19. The proposal also had two secondary objectives. One was to create more opportunities for more democrats for leadership development and opportunity within the party and not let only a few dominate positions. As the largest party in the country we need to empower more of you to be leaders and be equipped with the necessary tools that will enable you to face the complex challenges of modern day Botswana. I consider this not only to be desirable but imperative. The other objective which is equally important was to rationalize spheres of potential conflict by limiting the number of positions for which each individual had to contest and lobby for. This rationalization would minimize the development of hardcore factionalism within the party hierarchy. I still feel that these objectives are worth pursuing, especially as factions in our party remain a challenge.

20. There are, however, some in our midst, though few in number, and in the opposition and some in the media, who would like to see factions perpetuated and institutionalized. They are continuously undermining and demonizing the leadership of the party and glorifying whatever aspect they perceive as posing a potential challenge to party leadership. They claim that democracy and the constitution is under

threat, but don't then go on to give examples. Our democracy and our constitution are not under threat and never will be. What is under threat is our unity. If I ask anyone of you to consider not doing something that might undermine unity and I ask you to sacrifice your personal right to stand in the interests of the Party, my asking you is not unconstitutional because it is then your decision alone and not mine whether to stand or not. Whatever phenomenon it is that we are witnessing, we must never allow the enemy of unity to divide us.

21. One of the national assets which we all have an obligation to develop, promote and protect is our image. Over the years we have invested enormous resources in its promotion as it is the structure which houses all our interests. Both government and the media have a patriotic duty to ensure that it is not unjustifiably tarnished. Everything that we say or write about Botswana must be well researched and balanced. We live in the information age where communications are instantly disseminated to the rest of the world through the internet and other airwaves. We cannot afford to shoot ourselves in the foot and destroy Botswana's good name.

22. We have seen how the power of the pen can be used to build a good name. The British author Alexander Mc Call Smith has through Mma Ramotswe and his No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency series put Botswana on the world map in a much more effective way than most of our media could have ever hoped to do. Through this series, Botswana, its culture, its economy and its political systems are now intimately known in the five continents of the world. Heads of corporations who had never heard of Botswana before are now considering investing in our country because of the good story that Mr Mc Call Smith has written about us. We are grateful for this development.

23. All our institutions should build on this achievement. We have established a sophisticated infrastructure of institutions to promote our good image. The government media are part of this infrastructure. Ordinarily I would regard the private media as an integral part of the same infrastructure because they too have a duty to defend their motherland.

24. For our part we are prepared to be helpful. We would like to build and not to destroy; to educate and not to

misinform; to unite and not to alienate. We will continue to train journalists so that they can further improve their professionalism. We want to avail government information to the media so that it should be communicated to Batswana. The government and private media should become more active in information dissemination and public education.

25. There are many government programmes which Batswana have not yet fully accessed because of inadequate information dissemination. Schemes such as ISPAAD, which have huge potential to progress our strategy towards food self-sufficiency have not been fully exploited. Through ISPAAD, established farmers could develop a mentoring relationship with some of our young farmers so that farming becomes a national culture as it used to be and not the painful chore that some currently think it is. Through good reporting and good education attitudes could change and we could see more Batswana embracing a more positive disposition towards work.

26. This year, largely through our ISPAAD intervention, Batswana communal farmers have ploughed a total of 280,000 hectares. This has never happened before. It is a record achievement. Our farmers deserve commendation.

Hopefully, performance will even be better in the next season, as both government and private enterprise have acquired more tractors for use by farmers. We may even exceed this years target of 300,000 hectares.

27. If this trend continues, the contribution of the agricultural sector to GDP could increase and we could also see more job opportunities created. Although climatic conditions tend to affect expected yields adversely, we plan to diversify our initiatives to counter these adverse effects. We are embarking on the Pandamatenga development project and Chobe-Zambezi water transfer scheme to improve our potential for arable agriculture. The Thune and Lotsane dams will also have provision for irrigation in their vicinity. All these efforts are designed to improve our chances of diversifying the economy, create more job opportunities, reduce poverty levels, and cement our stability.

28. Government continues to improve ways to empower the youth so that they can make a meaningful contribution to the national economy and development of our country. To this end, the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture has set up several programmes to empower the youth. In recognition of

these ideals, Government has set up Youth Offices in all Ministries and Districts and is setting up Youth Offices in Constituencies with the aim of improving service delivery to the youth, as we believe. We believe that no one is better placed to plan and coordinate youth programmes than the youth themselves hence the creation of these youth offices.

29. In conclusion, we have been fortunate as a nation in that we have had peaceful development without any internal strife. This is largely a result of our good naturedness as a people and our determination to solve problems through dialogue and consultation. It is this consensus driven approach that has enabled us to be a united stable nation that is at peace with itself and enjoying the spirit of Kagisano. The 4D's principles which I outlined at my inauguration are intended to reinforce this spirit. This spirit can only flourish if Batswana continue to accommodate one another in their diversity.

30. Fellow democrats, only a party that is acceptable to all and has national coverage would have the necessary ability to sustain the bond that constitutes the national interest. At this point in time only the Botswana Democratic Party could genuinely claim to have real national outlook. It is the only

party that has the credibility to pursue our vision 2016 objectives.

31. Accordingly I feel privileged to congratulate all Batswana who have registered to vote. A vote is a right that could be a multiple-edged weapon. It has to be exercised and utilized responsibly to be of benefit. Our democracy has survived because Batswana have voted responsibly in the past. That is by voting for the BDP.