

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT
LIEUTENANT GENERAL SERETSE KHAMA IAN KHAMA
AT THE 2014 BDP YOUTH WING CONGRESS HELD AT
MASUNGA**

06TH FEBRUARY 2015

Your Honour The Vice President

Honourable Ministers

Kgosi Thabo Maruje of Masunga

Chairman of the BDP

Secretary General of the BDP

MCC for North East Region

Members of Central Committee

Chairperson of Youth Wing and Members of your committee

Members of the Women's Wing

Members of the Party Electoral Board

Members of Sub –committees of Central Committee

Honourable Members of Parliament

Fraternal Guests

Distinguished Guests

Fellow Democrats

A very good morning to you all.

1. I am very delighted to once again be delivering a keynote address at this very important gathering. The 2015 BDP Youth Wing Congress comes at a special time indeed, post the 2014 national elections. I am sure you will agree with me that this is indeed an opportune time for us Democrats to come closer in action and in purpose today and beyond, in pursuit of reaffirming to the electorate that indeed ***there is still no alternative.***
2. Let me from the outset thank the people of Masunga for having agreed to host us and their wonderful hospitality since our arrival here. I am hopeful that some of you will subsequent to this meeting find an opportunity to visit some of the historic and scenic sites here in the area.
3. I wish to take this opportunity to thank you the youth for having been part of our democratic process that afforded us the opportunity to lead this great nation at the last general elections, and your agreeing to postpone this meeting from last year to accommodate and focus on the national election process. Your support and the significant role that you continue to play in the party is further demonstrated by your solid stand in articulating the party's policies and also defending the party.

4. Taking into consideration that this congress will be deliberating issues pertinent to the role of the youth within the BDP and their consequent contribution to the growth of this country, I implore you all to ensure that your words are turned into action. Every resolution made at this gathering should thus, be a result of collective discussions and transferred into tangible deliverables for the advancement of both the party and this nation. I also want you to assess the 2014 elections at this Congress of yours and give the Party Congress in July feedback on that assessment and your proposals.

5. As you all know, Government remains committed to addressing issues concerning youth in Botswana, with a view to make them part and parcel of the country's socio-economic processes or key contributors in this regard. The BDP led-government is keen on ensuring that every aspect of our economy has a fair representation of Batswana youth, whose ideas are incorporated into final decisions that we make.

6. This is why we have, over the years as government, put in place various programmes or mechanisms aimed at supporting youth to enable them to play a meaningful role

in this regard. Against this backdrop, I wish to urge all of you to take advantage of these programmes, and not only take them up yourselves but to also sell them to the rest of Batswana and very importantly for you to suggest what more we should be doing for youth in this country.

7. It was quite encouraging to note that during the last elections, throughout the 57 constituencies, there was quite an impressive number of youth keen to represent us at both Council and Parliamentary levels. Over and above, the endorsement of such candidates by the voters, we took a decision yet again to appoint nominated councillors to ensure an increase in youth representation at these levels.

8. It is therefore pleasing to note that we, in the BDP are making progressive strides in the area of youth representation within the leadership pipeline. It was, in this regard not surprising that we had within our party, a total of 75 youth councillors and 1 Member of Parliament elected to office in last year's general election. I wish to take this moment to sincerely congratulate all the candidates for being confident enough to stand for candidacy, and reassure all those who made it, as well as

those whom the electorates felt should try again, of my continued support. It should also be noted that, out of **119** specially elected councillors, we have **42**, adding to the aforestated **75** to make a total of **117** youth councillors across the country.

9. It is through your sterling efforts and relentless drive to advance the party's agenda as the youth that these young people found the opportunity to step up and be counted upon as your representatives. Your encouragement, solidarity, support and blessings for their candidatures gave them the motivation and belief that indeed it was their time.
10. I wish them the very best of luck as they advance their constituents interests and furthermore implore all party members to support them fully to ensure that they succeed in this regard as they gain the requisite experience to move Botswana forward.
11. With all the above highlights I have given, I wish to thank the current Youth Wing Committee for their efforts in pursuing the objectives they set for themselves when assuming office.

12. As you will be voting your leaders for the next 2 years, I want to strongly urge you all to remember that elections are part and parcel of democracy. We all go into elections knowing that we will either win or lose. Elections are an opportunity for the voters to choose their preferred candidates to hold political office. They should therefore be fully embraced in this regard. Let us refrain from allowing the election process to divide us as a party.

13. Let us instead, learn to accept election results and embrace them as the people's voice, taking into consideration that in every election process, there are procedures in place that we all have to adhere to. Let this year's BDP Youth Wing Congress be testimony to those inside and outside the party, that we accept the diversity that exists within us and that we will remain united despite our differences. In fact, our diversity is what makes us stronger.

14. It would be remiss of me to focus on positives only, without underscoring to you the youth, the value system that has guided this party through the years, that seemed to have deserted us during the last election process. Allow

me to touch on BDP Youth as ambassadors of the ruling party, that the Party's integrity should be paramount at all times, lest we become our own worst enemy. We need to introspect on what the challenges were during the last elections, identify the gaps and put our heads together continuously, from now till elections so as to bridge or fill those gaps and reassure Batswana that ***there is still no alternative*** and we are the best placed Party to ***move Botswana forward***. The presupposition is that this is the first of many high profile meetings for the Party this year, and that these sentiments are therefore not reserved for the youth only. We need to be united and in concert as we advance towards making Botswana the beacon of democracy it is renowned for.

15. I also have to highlight that I noted, with great concern, over the past months a tendency by some BDP members, including youth members, to write tarnishing messages about the party on social media. I strongly believe the social media can be used more positively to promote the Party and its candidates. I implore all those who have made it a habit to use the social media negatively to desist from doing so. As we all know, the party has structures through which any grievance or query

can be routed. Let us all be encouraged to utilise these structures optimally, at all times. We cannot allow ourselves to derive any pleasure from rebuking or tarnishing fellow democrats or the party itself in public.

16. In conclusion, allow me to request all democrats to continue serving the party diligently and tirelessly in everything you set out to do. Remember to familiarise yourself with the party manifesto and cascade it to Batswana, highlighting the successes we have had as a party since inception and the many opportunities that lie ahead of us as a party and country. Reiterate to them that, yes we are still the only party that can represent their ideals, and that we indeed remain united in our endeavours in this regard, for the advancement of the party and this great Republic.

I thank you all for your attention.