

KEY NOTE ADDRESS

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT

LIEUTENANT GENERAL DR. SERETSE KHAMA IAN KHAMA

AT

THE

2016 BOTSWANA DEMOCRATIC PARTY

WOMENS' GENERAL ASSEMBLY

MAHALAPYE

02 DECEMBER 2016

"MOVING BOTSWANA FORWARD"

Your Honour, the Vice President, and Party Chairman
Honorable Ministers,
Secretary General,
Members of the Central Committee,
Chairperson of the Women's Wing,
Chairperson of the Youth Wing,
Members of the Party Electoral Board,
Members of Sub – Committees of Central Committee,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Councillors,
Distinguished Guests,
Fellow Democrats,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon to you all.

1. It is indeed a pleasure for me to be here today to officiate at this inaugural gathering of the General Assembly of the BDP Women's Wing. This is certainly a historic moment because it ushers in a new era of General Assemblies for both our Women's and Youth Wings. The theme for this meeting is indeed very apt "Our Empowerment, Our Structures", especially looking at the fact that it speaks directly to the very essence for creating this Assembly.

2. Let me from the outset, take this opportunity to kindly thank the people of Mahalapye for having agreed to host us and for their wonderful hospitality. Mahalapye is a village with a very rich history, linked to the railway line. I would, in this regard, like to encourage you to utilize this opportunity, to take a moment to tour some of its historic sites and also visit some of the scenic spots in this area.

3. It will be recalled, from my speech at the National Council meeting earlier this year that I mentioned that the 2015 BDP Mmadinare Congress resolved that it was critical that both the Women's and Youth Wings should be empowered through having this forum, that would assist them with decision making processes pertaining to some of their key issues.

4. This meeting comes at an appropriate time, just subsequent to our 50th Anniversary of Independence, as well as the launch of our Party Museum through an exhibition that ran for a few weeks just before and post-independence Day 2016, underscoring that the history of this Republic cannot be separated to that of the BDP. Most importantly, is to underline that women have always played a prominent role in the affairs of this Party. I therefore, wish to take this opportunity to encourage you to donate paraphernalia that would show in detail the trail of the significant and fundamental role played by

women into turning the BDP into the formidable force it is today.

5. Our independence was premised on our values, and doing the basics right, it is therefore critical for us to introspect and perhaps revisit and live some of these values. I, therefore, wish to indicate that at the National Council early this year, I highlighted that the focus as prescribed by the theme "*Our Structures; Our Strength – Another 50 years in Government, #Goyagoileng,*" was "**Team Building.**" Consequently, over the last year and a half, I have been travelling around the country visiting Regions in an effort to ensure all our structures stay active. I am happy to inform you that the second round of visits showed heartwarming improvements. I can only hope that our structures and fora continue on that path. I shall continue to do this next year as well.

6. The Women's General Assembly, thus, offers another opportunity to stay on the path to further improve the force that is our BDP. We are proud of the women of the BDP because they form part of the backbone of the Party. It is an open secret, as we all know, that the BDP has been triumphant in the past 5 decades because of the substantial role played by women. Therefore, as leader of this Party, I am encouraged by this conference and look forward to the outcome of the

conference and resolutions which will be presented to the Central Committee for onward transmission to the next National Council, which I have no doubt will certainly enrich the deliberations at the aforementioned gatherings.

7. On the whole, it is critical to mention that for you to be afforded roles within the political sphere, it is crucial that you also take seriously that responsibility and the need to support each other in this respect. However, this is only possible if the women take themselves and their role in politics seriously. Women across all sectors of society need to take responsibility for their own empowerment, perhaps now even more, going forward than was done over the years.
8. At Government level, I wish to reiterate that the BDP is committed to the advancement of women as shown by our policies and programmes. To underscore and demonstrate our focus in this regard, following the re-organization of Ministries, we named part of the divided old Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs, Ministry of Nationality, Immigration and Gender Affairs.
9. Within this Ministry, there are a number of crucial on-going mechanisms such as the Women's Economic Empowerment Programme(WEE), which aims to develop entrepreneurs.

Subsequent to identifying individuals and groups to be capacitated in this regard, the Ministry assists them on basics of business management, guiding them or hand holding them throughout the processes until they are self-sustaining. Furthermore, it hosts 2 expos for them to market their products. The expos are held annually, one in the north in Francistown and the other in the south in Gaborone. To this end, I am reliably informed that to-date, 25 groups or entrepreneurs have been assisted through this programme.

10. Some of the elements achieved through the aforementioned Ministry's initiatives include, inter alia, the launching of a Women's Business Directory on the 14th of June this year. The primary purpose of which is to expose more women entrepreneurs to available markets. Currently, 3000 copies have been printed and 1,500 distributed to various stakeholders, including Business Botswana.

11. I should also take this moment to commend you the BDP Women's Wing for your initiatives, especially the Paper Brick Project, which is demonstrating a dual effect of employment creation, as well as being environmentally user friendly. These efforts complement the aforesaid Government programmes aimed at empowering women, and is also as a result of your

objective of Empowerment Training within your 10 point Agenda. All these efforts have the cumulative effect of improving livelihoods.

12. It will be recalled that the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) link economic progress and poverty reduction to equal opportunities for women and men, and also recognizes the importance of narrowing disparities between them. Consequently, in 2015, Government adopted the National Policy on Gender and Development. The policy speaks to the issue of gender mainstreaming as a core strategy to sustainable development.

13. In light of the foregoing, I wish to appeal to you, Democrats, to go out there and inform others on the policies and opportunities availed by this Government, for all Batswana. Let me also highlight that women's participation in the socio-economic development of this country remains paramount in our agenda. The uptake of programmes has also been very encouraging. It is, in this regard, our objective as the BDP to continue to build a united Botswana where everybody irrespective of gender or origin can play a meaningful role in improving their own lives and that of the broader community, *as has been the case in the past 50 years and will continue to be the case in the next 50 years.* **Tsholetsa Domkrag.**

14. Before I conclude, I wish to reiterate that communication and recruitment is key to our success. To this end, use this meeting to among others, strategize on how you are going to recruit new members into this Party. Use new methodologies and platforms of communication, like social media, but also be mindful not to be caught up in unbecoming tendencies of using contemptible language or even attacking your own members.
15. I strongly believe that social media can in fact be used positively to primarily attract new members and send out our Party message and programmes, to promote the Party and its candidates. It can also be used as a platform for interaction and positioning the Party in good light, to remind Batswana that there is still no alternative and we are still the best placed Party to move Botswana forward, for better development and better livelihoods.
16. In conclusion, this is a momentous, history making maiden assembly where we expect the BDP women to engage on issues affecting the Party in a much deeper manner. This assembly offers you to have value adding discussion aimed at improving the status of women, not only within the BDP but in Botswana as a whole.

17. Finally, I wish you fruitful deliberations and that you continue to serve this Party diligently and tirelessly. Inform Batswana that there we are still the only Party that cares for their welfare, the only Party that stands for the truth, the only Party that is truly compassionate and caring. Most importantly underline to them that there is still no alternative, we are the only Party that can take Botswana forward.

18. Thank you for your attention.