

STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY
LIEUTENANT GENERAL DR. SERETSE KHAMA IAN KHAMA,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON POVERTY ERADICATION
20TH MARCH 2018 GABORONE

A very good morning to you all!!!

1. I am delighted to be able to join you this morning for the official opening of the International Conference on Poverty Eradication.
2. To those of you who are visiting Botswana for the first time, I hope that you will have time to enjoy the generous hospitality extended to you by Botswana during your short stay here.
3. The participation of many countries and international organisations at this Conference that is jointly hosted by the Government of Botswana and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is an indication of the importance that you attach to the topics that you will deliberate upon pertaining to the effective policies and programmes for eradicating poverty.
4. The theme for the Conference “Leave No One Behind-in the Fight Against Poverty, Exclusion and Inequality“ is a clear testimony to your unwavering commitment to finding lasting solutions to issues of fighting abject poverty.
5. The theme, ‘Leaving No One Behind,’ is also a guiding principle for the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs), which world leaders made a commitment to implement in 2015.
6. As you are all undoubtedly aware, the first of the 17 commitments of the Sustainable Development Goals is to eradicate poverty based on the international poverty datum line. It is therefore, gratifying that the international community, through the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, has placed poverty eradication at the centre of the Sustainable Development Agenda, a noble cause that will undoubtedly contribute immensely to humanity.

7. Similarly, the African Union, through Agenda 2063, has also committed Member States to eradicate poverty in one generation, while building shared prosperity through social and economic transformation.

8. Taken together, these are bold, but necessary and achievable undertakings. At the end of the day if some are vulnerable to impoverished conditions, we are all affected. A truly prosperous nation is one which provides for all of its citizens to enjoy dignified livelihoods.

9. It is therefore my hope that the interaction between Government officials, non-governmental organisations and experts over the next two days will contribute in no small measure to the development of robust poverty eradication programmes whose implementation will not only be efficient but will also be results oriented.

10. In this respect, I need to point out that this conference is taking place at a very challenging time because millions of people continue to live in abject poverty around the world.

11. The global picture of people living in poverty, particularly in the developing countries is not encouraging. The latest statistics from the 2016 World Bank Report indicates that more than 700 million people or 10% of the world's population still live in extreme poverty. The majority of the vulnerable groups are children.

12. It is of great concern that whilst other regions such as South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific are making notable achievements in the fight against poverty, Sub Saharan Africa is still lagging behind. This Conference is a welcome opportunity for us to learn from the experience and success of others around the world. The participation of countries beyond the SADC region will definitely give a broader and global perspective to the discussions and the recommendations that this Conference will come up with.

13. To this end, I am informed that this Conference is meant to take stock of how far countries that have introduced poverty eradication programmes have gone in terms of implementation of their national poverty eradication strategies. This assessment will enable conference participants to identify areas of progress, obstacles and possible solutions as well as appropriate interventions in fighting poverty and importantly to share strategies.

14. As the nation's President, I made a commitment that one of the priorities of my Government would be to eradicate poverty with a view

to ensuring that every citizen of this country does indeed enjoy a dignified life.

15. Previously there was emphasis on poverty alleviation but since 2009 we made a major policy shift geared towards poverty eradication. The policy shift was meant to take Botswana out of poverty, strengthen and increase the scope of the poverty eradication programmes and social safety net programmes.

16. Amongst the changes in terms of focus, which are clearly articulated in our current National Development Plan, was recognition of the need for greater effort to secure a pattern of economic growth that is more inclusive with a corresponding reduction in inequalities.

17. Our National Long Term Vision; 2036 also recognises the fact that poverty eradication is attainable. The Government's shift from poverty reduction to eradication was in view of the recognition that to achieve this objective would require changes to the approaches that were adopted in the past. In this regard, an understanding of the non-income dimensions of poverty such as access to education, health, shelter and nutrition also recognised their role in poverty eradication.

18. Further changes in the national approach to poverty eradication took place through the launching of the Poverty Eradication Guidelines in 2011. This resulted in the Poverty Eradication Programme being rolled out to a number of targeted income generating projects aimed at enhancing the capacity of households to exit poverty through self employment. This outcome is based on the provision of materials to beneficiary households in the form of grant asset transfer and the necessary training in the area of enterprise development to ensure sustainability.

19. As the poverty eradication programme was rolled out, emphasis was given to targeting more vulnerable groups such as women and the youth through additional initiatives such as the Youth Development Fund and the Women Economic Empowerment amongst others.

20. I am happy to announce that this move has significantly improved the lives of our people and the latest information from the Multi-Household Survey 2017 conducted by Statistics Botswana attests to this. Survey results show that the proportion of people living below the poverty datum line has been declining over the years.

21. The timing of the convening of this conference is especially appropriate as we are working on the National Strategy on Poverty Eradication. I am happy to announce that my Government is finalising the Poverty Eradication Strategy, which will be of great assistance to us in our implementation of the goals and targets that we have set ourselves to take everybody out of poverty.

22. I note that the agenda for this Conference has a range of interesting topics, speakers and experts who certainly would provide insight into what needs to be done.

23. In this connection, I am confident that the conference discussions will be stimulating and in the end require us to review and reshape our strategies towards the implementation of poverty eradication programmes.

24. I wish to conclude my remarks by once again welcoming with gratitude the convening of this important conference in Botswana and express my fervent hope that it will benefit all our countries and our development partners. I am confident that your deliberations will enrich our knowledge of issues pertaining to poverty eradication such as targeting, assessment, monitoring and evaluation and graduation models.

25. I urge you to explore ideas that could concretise efficient systems that can be of great value to all of us.

26. I wish you fruitful deliberations and success in implementing the outcomes and recommendations of this Conference, which I now have the singular honour to declare officially opened. Thank you for your attention.

Pula!!! !! Pula!!!