REMARKS BY
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AT THE
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND:
THE FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY, EXCLUSION AND INEQUALITY

DATE: TUESDAY 20 MARCH 2018
Your Excellency, Lieutenant General, Dr. Seretse Khama Ian Khama, the President of the Republic of Botswana

Honourable Ministers
UNDP Representatives
Moderators
Fellow Panelists
Members of the media
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good morning to you all,

Firstly, I wish to express my gratitude to the Botswana Government and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), for the great honour of being selected to be in the company of such distinguished persons. This is indeed an important forum for us to discuss how we can leverage our efforts to Leave No One Behind in the Fight Against Poverty, Exclusion and Inequality.

This forum is of importance to Debswana, a company with a history of implementing various programmes to address poverty, exclusion and inequality. Debswana has played an active role in the growth and development of Botswana. According to Statistics Botswana, at Independence in 1966, Botswana’s GDP stood at P39.3 million compared to P169.7 billion in 2016. Currently diamond revenues contribute 19.9% to GDP; 89.1% to total export earnings and 28.6% to Government revenues.

Through diamond revenues, Botswana’s fortunes turned from being one of the poorest countries in the world to becoming an upper middle income economy.

Despite successes achieved in reducing poverty, there still remain several challenges that we face:
- According to Vision 2036 document there are segments of our society who live in poverty, and that this is more prominent in female-headed households.
- The Vision 2036 document further states that the country is still faced with considerable unemployment rates, with the youth being the most impacted.
- According to UN Women Botswana gender equality remains a challenge with only 30% of women holding Chief Executive Officer positions in the private sector; and 17% of women in Cabinet;
- Our economy is still largely dependent on diamond revenues, as per a recent report from Statistics Botswana.

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

When Debswana started mining in central Botswana in 1971 and a decade later in the south, there were no towns nor villages in the vicinity, except for cattle posts. Therefore, Debswana had to start from scratch in terms of developing social services and infrastructure. We sourced labour from various areas of the country and the world; as such we had to provide services for our employees. Over time the population around our mines grew and we began to extend our services, such as access to our hospitals, to these communities.

In 1974, Debswana introduced a Corporate Social Investment (CSI) programme, which at the time was called the Donations programme, aimed at funding projects that would uplift communities and create a sustainable legacy of prosperity. Our focus was largely on communities around our mines.

In 2015 we adopted a more structured process of profiling our communities, identifying those left behind and working with them to categorise their development needs. The process is the Anglo American Social Way which is a framework that we use for delivering the Social Performance programme. The Social Way reflects evolving international standards and best practice. Social Performance is a programme that aims to minimise negative social impacts and maximise socio-economic benefits to host communities.
Ladies and gentlemen,

Debswana plays a role in supporting national goals and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Botswana’s National Development Plan 11’s theme is “Inclusive Growth for the Realisation of Sustainable Employment Creation and Poverty Eradication”. Inclusive growth, development and leaving no one behind can only be realised when Governments, the private sector and civil society work together.

Ensuring access to health facilities:

Debswana invests in Health and Wellness in the communities within which we operate and for the benefit of our employees. Debswana spends over P160 million each year running the two district referral hospitals at Jwaneng and Orapa. Our hospitals, which are Council for Health Service Accreditation of Southern Africa (COHSASA) accredited, are open to communities and provide essential services to over 160,000 community patients per year. Debswana, through its hospitals, assists Government in availing anti-retroviral drugs to over 30,000 people in the Boteti and Mabutsane sub-districts.

In 2001, Debswana was the first company in the world to introduce anti-retroviral therapy to employees and spouses living with HIV and AIDS. At the time, anti-retroviral therapy was not freely available and Debswana wanted to save lives and increase the productivity of employees who were infected. We extended this to children in 2008 because we acknowledged that it does not help treating the parents and leaving out their infected children.

Ensuring access to education:

Community development organisations are correct in saying that a key empowerment tool is through greater access to quality education. In 1969, the company sponsored the first four students to obtain technical skills appropriate to the mining industry. Back
then, the country relied heavily on expatriate labour and this sponsorship programme resulted in rapid localisation of some positions in the early ’80s. The scholarship programme initially focused primarily on core diamond mining and recovery disciplines before expanding into other support disciplines critical to the value chain.

The Debswana scholarship programme has produced over 1000 graduates. Currently there are 50 students studying degrees at some of the leading universities across the world, at an annual budget of P28 million.

Debswana identified human capital development as an imperative in its formative years. The company runs an apprenticeship training college in Orapa which dates back to 1974. Since its inception, the college has produced over 1200 artisans, which is a mix of riggers, fitters, electricians, boiler-makers and instrument technicians. Our technical training curriculum and artisan development model have been adopted by technical colleges in Gaborone and Francistown.

To enhance the quality of teaching and learning in government schools, Debswana runs a Government School Development Programme (GSDP) for three primary schools in Jwaneng and four from the surrounding villages. This initiative offers an in-service training and development programme for Government teachers. The programme has trained an estimated 27 teachers in supervisory development and information technology related courses thus far. The main objective of the programme is to develop teachers in the core subjects of Mathematics, English and Science.

Gender diversity:

At Debswana, before the 1990s, there was no provision for women to work in the core disciplines of Mining, Engineering and Ore Processing. Currently we have ladies in all the aspects of the organisation working as plant operators, drivers of big trucks, fire engines and artisans. Deliberate efforts were made to close this gap like offering scholarships to young women to pursue technical
degrees and work in various technical disciplines across the company.

Notwithstanding this achievement, we have identified diversity as a strategic focus area. In 2015, we conducted a study to determine the current reality which informed a diversity and inclusion plan with clear key performance indicators which are now being rolled out.

One of the key findings from the study was that out of our workforce of over 5000, women accounted for 21 percent of which 19 percent were in senior leadership positions.

We have taken a position that these figures fall way below what we stand for. Debswana leadership has therefore committed to building a stronger business by creating a more inclusive culture, where diversity of all forms is highly valued. We are implementing our programme this year and indeed are committed to ensuring that we reach our Gender Diversity and Inclusivity goals, such as achieving 30% women representation in the workforce by end of 2018.

We have partnered with the United Nations Women in Botswana with the aim of increasing women’s representation in leadership and decision making positions. Specifically targeting our zone of influence, the programme aims to equip women with business management and leadership skills, as well as UN’s empowerment principles.

Youth development:

Government of the Republic of Botswana, Debswana, The De Beers Group of Companies and Anglo American Corporation have partnered to setup the Tokafala programme for Supplier and Enterprise development. This year, Tokafala will introduce a youth-focused programme titled Strengthening Youth Development (STRYDE) to address the challenge of rising youth unemployment. The STRYDE programme will target 200 youth based in
communities around our mines, with a minimum of 50 percent female participation over 18 months.

In conclusion
Debswana is the oldest and most successful public-private partnership in Botswana. It is a good example of how Government and private sector can partner to transform an economy and the lives of many. Our commitment as a company is to continue to support the agenda of Leaving No One Behind.

Finally, I challenge all corporate and business entities to identify programmes that would assist in uplifting those left behind. As corporate citizens, we also have a role to play, to complement efforts to leave no one behind for it is these very same citizens who define and determine both our existence and our corporate success.

I thank you and God Bless.