

**Mr. Chairperson,  
Honourable Ministers  
Delegates, ladies and gentlemen,  
Mr. Chairperson,**

I wish to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the host country, the Government and the people of Italy for the warm welcome and generous hospitality that has been accorded our delegation.

Eradicating poverty among citizens is my county's priority to which Government is committed. Botswana with a population of 2.2 Million majority residing in the rural areas, has adopted a strategy to eradicate abject poverty amongst citizens. The Government accentuated her commitment to counteract poverty and hunger by providing programmes and projects for the vulnerable and resourceless persons.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

The theme of this Conference, "***Breaking the Cycle of Poverty and Hunger by Strengthening Rural Resilience: Social Protection and Sustainable Agricultural Development***", could not have been more appropriate. This is so because poverty and hunger are a result of failure to harness opportunities and if not attended to, it becomes a vicious cycle that can be passed from generation to generation.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

Though the World Bank reports indicate decreased poverty in the world in the past three decades from more than half of citizens in the developing world living on less than \$1.25 a day to 21 percent in 2010, still more than 1.2 billion people live in extreme poverty which is of concern and needs escalation of efforts in finding solutions that could reduce poverty.

**Mr. Chairperson,** In our country as a consequence of efforts being made, there has been a steady decline in poverty since 1993-1994 as the proportion of people living below poverty datum line has declined from 47% to 21% in 2009-2010. This was achieved through enhancement of policies and interventions aimed at cushioning vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of our society. Other achievements include the completion of the Remote Area Development Programme (RADP), 10 year Affirmative Action Framework and effective implementation of Poverty Eradication Programmes, Remote Area Development Programmes, Youth Empowerment Schemes (YES), Women Empowerment Schemes and Provision of Social Safety Nets.

**Mr. Chairperson,** for our National Development Plan 11, the Government of Botswana has identified amongst others the under-listed as priority areas for eradication of poverty:

- 1) Revamping of Integrated Poverty Alleviation and Housing Schemes for different citizens at different levels.
- 2) Eradication of severe multi-dimensional poverty and interrupting the intergenerational transmission of poverty.
- 3) Improved disaster preparedness and response that ensures resilience of our communities and

- 4) Investing in young people's future to harness the demographic dividend by providing quality education, decent employment and comprehensive sexual education that emphasis gender equality.

The vulnerable and poor populations who are mostly rural based, have agriculture as their main source of livelihood. As a result, we emphasise on rural development especially through strengthening of the agricultural sector to enhance rural resilience against poverty and hunger. It is noted that the performance of agriculture sector has not been that impressive as a result of unfavourable changing climatic conditions, poor rate of technology adoption, pests and disease outbreaks. This year my country was hit by drought as we received very little rain and experienced high heat waves which led to poor vegetation and crop failure which reversed the gains of good harvest of 2013-2014.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

To address these challenges, Botswana Government continues to develop policy programmes, strategies and interventions to uplift the sector. The current agricultural policy, commits to shifting the agricultural sector towards environmentally friendly practices that would not degrade the environment.

Commitment to the Agricultural Sector for sustainable agricultural development linked to social protection we believe is the way to address the challenges of poverty and hunger in the developing world. Our programmes range from provision of inputs such as fertilizers, seeds and herbicides to small holder farmers through the Integrated Support Programme for Arable Agriculture Development (ISPAAD) and support for animal feeds and

medicines through Livestock Advisory Centres (LAC's) and various packages including small stock, poultry, borehole drilling, water reticulation and construction of crushes through the Livestock Management Infrastructure Development (LIMID). All these programmes are to ensure that rural communities are able to produce for their sustenance for food security.

**Mr. Chairperson,** my Ministry continues, through its various parastatals to provide markets for the Agricultural produce. The Botswana Meat Commission (BMC) provides market for cattle producers majority of which are in communal land whilst Botswana Horticultural Market (BHM) provides market for horticultural products a sub-sector that is growing and currently covers almost 50% of the national requirements for horticultural products.

We also have the Botswana Agricultural Marketing Board (BAMB) which provides a market for grain farmers who are mostly subsistence farmers in order to encourage domestic production of cereals. In liaison with Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development fresh farm produce is purchased from small scale farmers for school feeding programmes. I must state that this provides small scale farmers with a market and encourages them to grow. Income from sales of agricultural products greatly contributes to eradication of poverty.

In conclusion Mr. Chairperson, let me take this opportunity on behalf of Government of Botswana to applaud and appreciate contributions by Food and Agricultural Organization in their support through Technical Cooperation Programme in such areas as pest and disease control, capacity building, environment and sustainable natural resource management and nutrition and consumer protection. Interventions in the stated areas has reduced

losses in agricultural production and enhanced food security at household level. Let me also confirm Botswana's joining the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement, a renewed global effort to eliminate all forms of malnutrition, based on the principle that everyone has the right to food and good nutrition.

**Mr. Chairperson,** I must emphasize that the strong correlation between breaking the cycle of poverty and hunger and strong social protection is undeniable. While rural economies continue to rely on agriculture as the main source of livelihood, sustainable agriculture development remains crucial to sustenance of the rural resilience.

I assure you that my Ministry and Government remain committed to the courses of sustainable rural development, social protection and sustainable development in general.

I thank you!

**Pula!!!!**