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BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

**HON. MR. ONKOKAME KITSO MOKAILA, MP.
MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, WILDLIFE AND TOURISM**

AT THE

**15TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**

*“Turning Commitments into Action, Working Together In
Partnership”*

NEW YORK

9th MAY 2007.

Mr. Chairman
Distinguished delegates
Ladies and gentlemen

1. Botswana joins the rest of the international community at the 15th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) to consider the thematic clusters under discussion. This session is an important follow up to the fourteenth technical session that noted the significance of the thematic clusters, and their relevance to the growth and development of all our countries.

2. Issues of sustainable development are central to our collective endeavour and ability to secure our common future, whilst ensuring improvement of the human condition in a more just and equitable world order. We have a window of opportunity to protect our ecosystems and build better standards of life for ourselves today and for posterity. We must not squander the enthusiasm and opportunity.

3. Botswana is firmly aligned to the full implementation of global initiatives outlined in Agenda 21 and in particular Chapter 9 on the protection of the atmosphere. We have ratified the Montreal Protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer, and have taken initiatives to control and eventually phase out the use of Ozone Depleting Substances. We are also in the process of developing a Climate Change Adaptation Policy Paper, which will be linked to the activities in other development planning initiatives such as the National Development Plan, among others.

4. Mr. Chairman, Botswana's specific strategies for implementing the Climate Change Convention include policy and strategy initiatives on the establishment of a Designated National Authority (DNA) to actively participate in the Clean Development Mechanism (DCM). We are currently preparing the Second National Communication which will address cross-cutting issues such as poverty eradication, health and sustainable development, gender equality, education and loss of livelihood. These are critical issues which are at the core of our efforts to improve the living standards of our people.

5. A growing or increasing pollution is one of the challenges with which we must contend. Whilst industrial development is important for employment creation and income generation, it is unfortunately often or always accompanied by air pollution. In this regard, we have intensified our pollution monitoring networks to include a wider coverage in the urban centres and other major settlements. We are committed to playing a constructive and dependable role in regional initiatives aimed at addressing trans-boundary air pollution. We actively participate in the AIR Pollution Information Network for Africa (APINA), which is a vital mechanism for the exchange of scientific information and knowledge by scientists, policy makers, industries and other stakeholders.

6. Mr. Chairman, the potential impacts of climate change on human health are amongst the least understood. We need to acknowledge as the world community, that climate change has and will continue to have major consequences for human health. As seen with other health problems such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, the poor will bear the brunt of climate related illnesses, resulting from heat waves, air pollution, waste borne diseases and malnutrition.

7. One of the cross-cutting issues which must receive greater attention within research and policy is gender. It is important that climate vulnerability assessment adequately reflect the different circumstances, particularly of women and children, who often face unique vulnerabilities and are more sensitive to climate change impacts. Policy follow up actions must therefore be in accordance with the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, as well as relevant principles enshrined in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, recognizing that poverty eradication and economic development are the overriding priorities of developing countries.

8. With respect to energy matters the economy of Botswana relies on a limited basket of energy resources. The majority of our people continue to depend on fuel wood and other solid fuels. A major challenge for the country therefore is the urgent provision of alternatives and renewable energy sources. The technology to harness such alternative sources needs to be availed through North – South, South-South and triangular cooperation and transfer.

9. Botswana's efforts to address this challenge include the provision to rural communities with conventional energy sources that are cleaner and efficient. Some of the major strategies undertaken to use cleaner, renewable and affordable sources of energy include phasing out leaded petrol, beneficiation of locally mined coal and a Government subsidized photovoltaic programme. Government has also established a revolving fund to provide households access to subsidized loans for grid connections.

10. Mr. Chairman, let me conclude by reiterating that an integrated approach to the four thematic issues would enhance the effectiveness and assist in the realization of co-benefits of policy initiatives. The means of implementation are critical to turning commitments into action. We cannot achieve the Millennium Development Goals if we fail to implement Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI). We therefore look forward to consistent and assured cooperation in research needs to enhance knowledge on pollution exposure, dose-response relationship and indoor air pollution; capacity building and technology transfer; public awareness on the effects of air pollution, research and development in cleaner technologies.

11. Lastly, the challenges at hand are complex, multi-dimensional and globally interlinked, and require commitments from all of us because it is our united and collective efforts which will enable us to succeed at the country, regional and international levels. Botswana continues to assume its responsibilities and welcomes the support of development partners in the search for effective and sustainable solutions, for an equitable, sustainable common future.

I thank you.