AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE ASSISTANT MINISTER OF STATE PRESIDENT AT THE 7TH SESSION GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION BALI, INDONESIA

DATE: 23-28 MAY 2022

Theme: From Risk to Resilience in a COVID-19 Transformed World

Salutations

1. **Director of Ceremonies**, distinguished guests, I am honoured to be amongst you and in person today in a vastly changed global arena that we find ourselves in due to the advent of COVID 19 pandemic, to share experiences on what the Republic of Botswana has done in addressing issues of Disaster Risk Reduction at the country level to save-guard human life, people’s property and infrastructure.

2. Disasters have as far back as the early 80’s and 90’s particularly bouts of drought always threatened to undermine the development gains the country achieved. Hence Botswana Government put in place a framework being the National Policy on Disaster Management of 1996 to effectively and proactively deal with impacts of disasters in the country. This also included the creation of the National Disaster Management Office in 1998
as the agency responsible for the overall coordination of DRR in the country. To provide robust and timely programmes and interventions to ensure the wellbeing of our society.

3. The most prevalent disasters that impact Botswana are floods, wild land fires, extreme weather events such as heatwaves and in early 2021 the Country also experienced its first confirmed COVID 19 case and this was subsequently followed by a interventions by Government including amongst others the setting up of a Presidential Task Force, State of Emergency, lockdowns, activation of National Emergency Operations Centre, all these with the objective of containing the spread of the virus.

4. Director of Ceremonies, Botswana subscribes to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction therefore we continuously monitor and track progress against the set seven targets of the Framework. Although there are various challenges often encountered in the implementation of the Sendai Framework, the country ensures that the people affected by disasters are timely assisted depending on their needs be it shelter, food provision or any other type of assistance. Some of the successful highlights of progress attained, is the low numbers of people
directly impacted by disasters in the country which stands at under one percent of the population. This therefore emphasizes that the mitigation and preparedness measures post disasters put in place by the relevant sectors and the coordinating office are effective. However more concerted efforts are needed to address issues around economic losses due to disasters, as this is a crucial link to better inform, plan and take decisions based on relevant data on disaster economic losses. When economic loss information due to impacts of disaster becomes easily available on this will enhance development planning at all levels of society and can motivate for partnerships particularly with the insurance industry.

5. **Distinguished guests,** At both National and District levels the development and implementation of DRR plans and strategies is an opportunity to further protect and safe guard communities and organizations. Hence Botswana Government through the coordinating office always prioritizes this intervention because such plans and strategies when in place they empower local communities, National and District level authorities as well as various organization. I am happy to inform you that in terms of District level, all the districts in the country have been trained
to develop their own District level Disaster Plans and this has been a successful undertaking.

6. For a progressive and holistic approach to DRR there is a need to always be willing to seek new partnerships for the benefit of the nation and ultimately members of the community. Hence, it is imperative to engage in relationship building with neighboring countries and cooperating partners essentially on DRR related areas because this could lead to other avenues that stand to benefit the nation. In this regard I can note a few partnerships that the coordinating office has engaged on, the first is an MOU with all the private mobile operators in the country to send early warning messages through an SMS to members of the public’s mobile phones. Another MOU is between three government organizations (NDMO, DMS & DWA) to share and relay information on severe weather-related events. The country will further engage neighboring countries on transboundary disasters for better preparedness and response.

7. The Country acknowledges that Disasters will continue to impact human life, and in this regard has recently reviewed the National Policy on Disaster Risk Management (2022) which was approved by Cabinet and is awaiting
discussion by Parliament. This is to bring the Policy up to current cross cutting and emergent issues such as COVID 19, people with Disability, and gender. Another major step the country is soon to undertake is the process of drafting a Law on Disaster Risk Management, this will be a huge step in the country’s efforts to deal with disaster risk reduction as currently various fragmented legislations are being used.

8. Ladies and gentleman let me take this opportunity in conclusion, to indicate that measures are in place to mitigate against the impact Climate Change in the country.

9. With those few remarks Director of Ceremonies, I thank you.