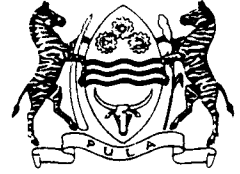


REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT BY

**HONOURABLE PHANDU SKELEMANI,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION**

**AT THE
UNITED NATIONS HIGH LEVEL MEETING DEVOTED TO
THE MID TERM REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE ALMATY PROGRAMME OF ACTION**

2 OCTOBER, 2008

NEW YORK

1. Mr. President, Botswana welcomes the convening of this High Level plenary meeting to review progress in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries.

2. The meeting is very timely especially as it takes place shortly after the High Level meetings on the Development Needs of Africa and the Review of the Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. The effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action which is one of the crucial enablers for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals will open up opportunities for trade, economic growth and development.

3. Mr. President, the Almaty Programme of Action adopted by this body in August 2003, was the first comprehensive global strategy to address the special needs of, and challenges facing landlocked developing countries. It recognized the constraints posed by lack of efficient transit transport routes and the associated high costs of land transportation, which have a negative impact on both the competitiveness of exports of landlocked countries and access to imported goods. Botswana is doing her part to implement the Almaty Programme of Action.

4. Botswana lies at the centre of the Southern African plateau and is surrounded by four (4) countries, with the nearest seaport approximately 762 kms (472 miles) away. Our geographical location puts us at a disadvantage with regard to access to cheaper means of transportation. Though landlocked, we are a key transit route with responsibility to facilitate smooth and efficient flow of transit of goods. We take this responsibility seriously as demonstrated by the programmes we have undertaken at national level, bilaterally with our neighbours, and within the framework of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). We take a large amount of transit traffic from the South to the North as well as from the East to the West. The Walvis Bay Corridor or Trans Kalahari corridor runs through the western part of Botswana, linking Namibia, Botswana and South Africa. Whilst the Durban – Lubumbashi corridor traverses a section of Botswana connecting us with the DRC, Zambia, and South Africa. In this context, Botswana envisages the creation of One Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) in order to address delays at the border. The one stop border posts will benefit the adjoining countries in terms of reduced transport costs and transit time.

5. Mr. President, Botswana highly appreciates the assistance, support and cooperation it receives from transit and coastal neighbouring states. It is most gratifying that Botswana's imports and exports go through our neighbours roads, railways and ports unhindered. It therefore follows that any assistance extended to coastal and transit states in the development of efficient transport infrastructure is crucial to the trade routes of landlocked countries. In this regard, ongoing efforts to intensify economic cooperation and regional integration deserve increased financial and technical support.

6. As a developing country, Botswana imports most of her production inputs which, for an economy like hers dominated by mining activity, amounts to a large volume of equipment annually. It is vital therefore that we secure efficient transport routes and services to facilitate movement of goods. Botswana therefore attaches great importance to bilateral and regional arrangements to simplify, harmonise and standardise rules on transport and transit so as to minimise trade costs and make our products competitive in the international markets.

7. It is the view of my delegation, that there is an urgent need to strengthen and harmonise initiatives and programmes of Regional Economic Communities, the United Nations, Bretton Woods Institutions and Development Banks, in order to achieve proper synergy and coordination in their operations, so as to complement the Almaty Programme of Action.

8. Assistance for the rehabilitation of existing transport infrastructure is critical. This would ensure viability of transport corridors and sustained economic spin-offs for communities residing along these corridors.

9. in order to further facilitate the speedy and efficient flow of trade, Botswana is currently undertaking expansion of the Sir Seretse Khama International Airport in Gaborone. The airport will be able to accommodate bigger aircraft which will enable the transportation of large volumes of goods.

10. Mr. President, Botswana's classification as a middle income country presents some challenges as we cannot access development assistance from donor agencies. The unique circumstances of landlocked countries in terms of infrastructure development should therefore be taken into account as they present serious capacity constraints. As a result, achievement of the objectives of the Almaty Programme of Action will continue to be a challenge. However, we shall endeavour to live up to our commitments in partnership and collaboration with our neighbouring countries.

11. In conclusion, let me once again reiterate our commitment to the Almaty Programme which if fully implemented, will enhance trade opportunities for Botswana and indeed promote equitable development of the SADC region as a whole.

12. I thank you for your kind attention.