



Republic of Botswana

**KEYNOTE SPEECH**

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**MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE  
REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

**DURING THE 6<sup>TH</sup> AFRICA ANIMAL WELFARE CONFERENCE  
HELD IN TRAVEL LODGE HOTEL,  
GABORONE, BOTSWANA ON 31<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER 2022**

## **Distinguished Delegates:**

- Director of Ceremonies
- H.E.Gobopang Duke Lefhoko - Botswana High Commissioner to Kenya
- H.E.Dampsey B. Asare - Ghana High Commissioner to Kenya
- Dr Moetapele Letshwenyo - World Organization for Animal Health Sub-Regional Representation
- Mr.Horvath Balazs - UNDP Botswana Resident Representative
- Dr Nick Nwankpa - AU-IBAR Acting Director
- Mr Alexander Juras - UNEP Chief of Civil Society
- Dr Rene Czudek - FAO Botswana Representative
- Dr Gaolathe Thobokwe - representing SADC
- Hon.Garba Datti - Nigeria Member of Parliament
- Distinguished ladies and gentlemen

1. Good morning to you all! Dumelang!
2. It gives me much pleasure to welcome you all to Gaborone, and indeed, in Botswana! Please enjoy every moment while you are here. I am also delighted to address you this morning, during this momentous occasion, of this 6<sup>th</sup> edition of Africa Animal Welfare Conference – Action 2022.

### **3. Ladies and Gentlemen:**

First and foremost, I would like to pass my sincere gratitude to the organizers of this continental conference for choosing Botswana to host this year's edition of the Africa Animal Welfare Conference. We are delighted as a country, that you chose us as the venue for this most impactful assembly, and we pledge to give our best to ensure the conference is a success.

### **4. Distinguished Delegates:**

In Africa, animals - both domestic and wild, are a key part of the livelihood component in families, and in almost each of the homesteads, an animal is to be found.

5. Additionally, it has been observed that animals make significant contribution to the livelihoods of most people in Africa and their value is steadily gaining interest and finding its way into many conversations about development in Africa. These conversations have helped in a

very significant way, by growing consciousness about the nexus between people, animals and the environment, and the reality of a shared destiny in this web of interaction.

6. I am, further informed that, the founders of this conference had a firm belief that animals are sentient beings and should never suffer at the hands of people, as oftentimes happens, and they should always enjoy the Five Freedoms - these are freedom from hunger and thirst, freedom from pain, injury and disease, freedom to express natural behaviour, freedom from discomfort, and freedom from fear and distress.

## **7. Ladies and Gentlemen:**

I am aware that since the first assembly in Nairobi – Kenya, in 2017, the mission of this conference has been to annually congregate animal welfare stakeholders to deliberate on critical issues that affect animals, the environment and people, and seek solutions to prevailing challenges as appropriate.

8. Now in its 6th run, it is to be appreciated that Africa Animal Welfare Conference has steadily gained ground as a premier continental forum for discussion of animal welfare, and with it the related contexts of health, sustainable development and environmental conservation in Africa.

9. I find this year's theme, "*Animals, People and the Environment in a Rapidly Changing 21st Century*" to be both captivating and timely. Timely because in this 21st Century, we are witnessing rapid and sometimes phenomenal changes globally, and Africa is part of this change, that must be addressed, now.
10. Captivating because, in Africa, like in other parts of the world, immense change is being witnessed in the areas of technological advancement, infrastructure development, increased industrialisation, changing patterns in food production and consumption, climate change and variation, new health concerns and emergence of pandemics such as Covid-19, and concerns about pollution. This requires coordinated efforts from all stakeholders not only in Africa, but globally.

**11. Honourable Delegates:**

We are fully cognizant that these changes affect people, animals and the environment due to the interlink of the three, and hence there is a call to look at modest and effective means for attaining the delicate balance of nature that is fundamental for optimum health of the planet.

12. It is, therefore, my desire that this conference will try to awaken consciousness that incentivizes the continental community to invest in interventions that will ameliorate the negative impacts where the balance is already altered and take deliberate steps towards preventing any further detrimental actions that could grossly affect this delicate relationship.

13. Many African nations represented here, and those not represented, and indeed, Botswana is not to be left out, are currently experiencing massive growth in terms of infrastructural investments, and the continent is on the verge of experiencing its own industrial revolution. Consequently, this economic reawakening is coming with a good measure of challenges of pressure on land, and animals are almost always, made to give way for industrial projects as their habitats are disrupted or altered.
  
14. Moreover, with these projects, also come the effects on the environment where trees and vegetation are cleared and even wetlands disrupted in the desire to achieve development. The onus is, therefore, on us, the people – especially those of us gathered in this hall today, and those participating in this conference online, from different corners of the globe - to ensure that we undertake to do all that we can to ensure that development is attained, but with minimal harm to animals and the environment, and hence purpose to achieve the ideal balance of nature.
  
15. Furthermore, changes in food production systems and consumption patterns have cascaded into ecological paradigm shifts that call for humanity to re-evaluate and refocus our actions to ensure sustainable life on the planet. For example, it will be interesting for this congregation to discuss the nexus between commercialization of agriculture and the desire for mass food production to feed the growing population in the continent.

16. This, conference should also discuss the pros and cons of the inclination towards adopting factory farming systems, which have been shown to compromise animal welfare; and an increase in the use of chemicals in industrial agriculture and general food production, all of which have been shown to increase hazards to human, animal and environmental health.

17. Finally, Botswana, as a friend of the conference, through the Ministry of Agriculture and other relevant ministries and departments do hereby commit to do all that it is policy wise possible and undertake any necessary actions to accommodate enhanced growth without compromising the integrity of the environment and maintaining good welfare of animals.

18. With these few remarks, allow me to welcome you once again to Botswana, and wish you fruitful deliberations even as I look forward to the Conference Resolutions at the tail end of this 6<sup>th</sup> Africa Animal Welfare Conference – Action 2022!

Thank you very much!