



**Republic of Botswana**

**2021 WORLD HABITAT DAY RADIO SPEECH**

**DELIVERED BY**

**HONOURABLE DR. THAPELO MATSHEKA**

**MINISTER OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**

**4 OCTOBER 2021**

1.0 Fellow citizens, today the world is commemorating the World Habitat Day. The primary objective of this day is to call for all stakeholders in the human habitat to reflect on the state of our settlements, and to raise awareness on the challenges that are facing our settlements. Specifically, we should take stock of our housing situation.

2.0 The theme for this year's commemoration is "**Accelerating Urban Action for a Carbon-free world**".

3.0 This day was designated by the United Nations General Assembly in 1985. The first commemoration was held in 1986, in Nairobi, Kenya. That particular year, the day was observed under the theme "**Shelter for All**". As a country (Botswana) we started commemorating this day in 2005, where the town of Selebi Phikwe was chosen to host the national commemoration. Subsequently, we have continued to observe this day in various districts every year during the first Monday of October.

4.0 The commemoration for this year, and last year, is being held under unfavourable conditions of COVID-19 disease outbreak.

5.0 The theme for this year's World Habitat Day observance is— "**Accelerating Urban Action for a Carbon-free world**". This theme recognizes that cities are responsible for some 70 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions with transport, buildings, energy, and

waste management accounting for the bulk of urban greenhouse gas emissions.

6.0 This therefore calls for us all to we explore how as national, regional and local governments and organizations, communities, academic institutions, the private sector and all relevant stakeholders can work together to create sustainable, carbon-neutral, inclusive cities and towns. The need and urgency to limit carbon dioxide emissions calls for concerted action by all of us.

7.0 Bagaetsho, you will agree with me that across the world humanity is experiencing challenges that are associated with the effects of Climate Change. These challenges are brought about by our human activities from different nations. Such activities includes, but not limited to, cooking and lighting, use of fire wood, coal, kerosine, as well as use internal combustion vehicles, mining, and other industrial activities. These have an adverse impact on the quality of air. The bad air quality is bad to our health and socio-economic activities.

8.0 Other observable results of climate change are erratic rainfalls and flush floods, droughts, increase in temperatures, low agricultural produce, increased water scarcity and escalation of diseases. These have all contrived to highlight the importance of good habitat among others. It has shown that those with durable housing are better able to withstand some of these natural calamities.

9.0 As we continue striving to improve our lives, we also must be cautious not to do damage to our environment and polluting the atmosphere. I urge all of you all that as we build our homes, traveling with different modes of transport such as vehicles, when we use different sources of energy, when we dispose and manage waste, let's do all these in an environmentally friendly manner.

10.0 The Government aligning is our policies, laws and practices to that of international, continental and regional organizations such as the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU) and Southern African Development Corporation (SADC). Botswana continues to recognise and commit to the adoption and implementation of such instruments, which include but not limited to, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), New Urban Agenda (NUA), Africa Agenda 2063, SADC Indicative Strategic Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030, and Climate Change Action Plans. It is only when we align our practices to these kind of visions that our national desire to build a carbon-free environment could be attained.

11.0 My Ministry is reviewing the Housing Policy to bring it in line with contemporary imperatives. It is expected that the review will lead to promulgation of the Housing act which will address some of the issues of durability of our housing.

12.0 It is apparent that Government cannot provide everything for its citizens. The role of Government should therefore be that of facilitation. Government is increasingly moving to facilitating the private sector to thrive and generate wealth and grow the economy, in an environmentally sensitive manner, in manner that reduces carbon dioxide emissions. That way as a country we will be in a much better position to be environmentally sensitive and be in a position to generate yet more wealth for our citizens.

13.0 Bagaetsho, as I conclude I encourage you all, individually and collectively, to endeavour to lower greenhouse gases emissions. Let's change the way we think, the way we do things in order to have sustainable and resilient communities with less or no gas emissions. Let us do what we can, for ourselves and our fellow citizens, to improve our housing situation.

14.0 The issues raised above contribute to provision of decent housing. Dignified housing is critical for our wellbeing in all aspects of our lives, including and especially this COVID era.

15.0 Last, I invite you to virtual commemoration which will be held later today. Please continue exercising caution during this COVID era.

**Nelwang ke Pula Batswana Betsho!!!**