



Republic Of Botswana

2020 WORLD HABITAT DAY SPEECH

DELIVERED BY

HONOURABLE MMUSI KGAFELA

**MINISTER OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND HOUSING
DEVELOPMENT,**

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Fellow Batswana

Ladies and gentlemen

- 1.0. Today marks the 16th Anniversary of World Habitat Day, at national level. This is a day that was set aside by the United Nations agency responsible for housing and urban development, the UNHABITAT, to raise awareness on issues affecting the human habitat. It provides a platform to objectively and openly discuss and share ideas on how best to tackle key challenges that constrain access to adequate housing and sustainable human settlements development. It is driven by the notion that we all have the power and responsibility to create the human habitat that we want, and advocates for the involvement of all, right from the grass roots.
- 2.0. Each year, a theme is chosen to focus on the requisite components and indicators of Sustainable Development Goal 11 - "**cities and human settlements that are inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**". These components include housing, slum upgrading, safety, sustainable transport and energy, vibrant public spaces, safe and clean drinking water and sanitation, healthy air quality; improved urban planning and waste management.
- 3.0. We normally commemorate the World Habitat day at various districts annually. This is meant to be as broad and inclusive as possible in our efforts to share information and create awareness across the country as possible. This has been particularly important in involving communities in awareness creation and developing local homegrown solutions to challenges bedeviling our efforts to meeting the nation's housing needs. However, the advent of COVID-19 has disrupted our norm.
- 4.0. This year's theme "**Housing for All: A better Urban Future**" emphasises the centrality of housing to urban planning and development. It underscores the importance of social inclusion and equity in providing access to adequate housing and basic services,

supported by holistic legislation, policies and housing programmes and projects.

- 5.0. Urban planning and prudent land management play very crucial roles in the provision of housing and basic services. As such, urban planning needs to be proactive, responsive and inclusive in order to accommodate the ever rising housing needs. This therefore requires our planning policies and standards to facilitate delivery of housing. To this end, there is more emphasis on densification and mixed use, particularly in urban areas, to optimize utilization of available serviced land for housing.
- 6.0. The environment in which housing is situated is as important as the housing unit itself. We therefore, cannot talk of adequate housing if issues of sanitation, water, waste management, health sustainable energy and transport are not addressed. It is therefore, necessary to adopt an integrated development approach that not only focuses on the provision of houses but also environmental conservation and social facilities.
- 7.0. As government, we are greatly concerned about individual actions that counteract efforts to improve access to adequate housing. For example, the sale of plots by beneficiaries of government housing programmes is retrogressive and undermines efforts to meet the housing needs of and to empower marginalized households.
- 8.0. We have also noted that government provided sewer and water infrastructure in the low income urban areas and major villages, but is not fully utilized to achieve its objective of creating a sanitary living environment. Site connections are below expectation despite levying of subsidies to reduce the financial burden on the households. There is continued reliance on pit latrines, most of which are overcrowded and unsanitary, with the resultant negative impact on quality of life and the environment.

9.0. Ladies and gentlemen, climate change and Covid-19 pandemic have made it more critical and urgent that we revisit the structure of our housing policy and programmes as well as the pace of implementation. The dignity and wellbeing of our households have to be sustained through provision of adequate housing in a sanitary environment. It is in view of this that we are actively reviewing the National Policy on Housing and our low income housing programmes.

10.0. In conclusion, I wish to emphasise that in as much as it is government's responsibility to facilitate housing delivery, we all have a collective responsibility in achieving sustainable human habitat and communities. A little change of our habits in the way we manage land, water, sanitation, household waste, energy will go a long way in building a better urban future. I therefore, appeal to you to join hands with us so that we can achieve our goal of providing housing for all in a safe and sanitary environment.

11.0. I thank you.