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SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY
FOURTH CONGRESS OF THE BOTSWANA DEMOCRATIC PARTY
PALAPYE, 13-16 JULY 1991

Mr Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates and Fellow Delegates,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY
PRESIDENT Q.K.J. MASIRE
AT TWENTY-FOURTH CONGRESS OF
THE BOTSWANA DEMOCRATIC PARTY:
PALAPYE: JULY 13 — 16, 1991**

1. My Chairman, we are meeting here today at the time when peace in our region and the world at large, are moving in a positive direction. There is a new spirit of optimism. These include the independence of Namibia last year, political changes in Eastern Europe, the end of East-West rivalry, and recent peace progress steps taken by President De Klerk in South Africa.

2. The people of South Africa are now engaged in talks which, we hope, will lead to political changes, peace and stability in the region. To this end, I am happy that our government has always committed itself to playing an active role in contributing to peace, stability and prosperity. We have done this through our membership in regional and international organisations.

3. Our commitment that has kept us going because, as a small country, our future will to a large extent be influenced by events that take place around us. In the O.A.U., the Commonwealth, the Frontline States, SADC or, indeed, the Common Market, we have been consistent in ensuring that we play our role as effectively as possible.

4. SADC remains a viable organisation. Its potential as a force for regional economic integration, stability and prosperity has to be developed to the full, with the signing of the peace accords in Angola, negotiations underway in Mozambique, and promising developments in South Africa.

5. Until recently the SADC programme of action was mainly devoted towards the development of physical infrastructure, mainly in the field of transport and communication. This was with the aim of improving accessibility to and among member states and the outside world. The agenda now for the 1990s is to review macro-

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*Mr Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates and Fellow Democrats,
Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentleman,*

1. It is my great pleasure and honour to extend a warm welcome and greetings to you all as we convene for this twenty-fourth Congress of the Botswana Democratic Party here in Palapye. I would also like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank our guests for having honoured us with their presence here today. Their being here is a demonstration of their continued support and solidarity with our cause.
2. Before proceeding with my remarks I would like to invite all of you to stand up and let us share a moment of silence to pay tribute to the memory of those of our colleagues and friends who are no longer with us since our last Congress.
3. Mr Chairman, we are meeting here today at the time when events in our region and the world at large, are moving in a positive direction. There is a convergence of circumstances. These include the independence of Namibia last year, political changes in Eastern Europe, the end of East-West rivalry, and closer home, the positive steps taken by President De Klerk in South Africa.
4. The people of South Africa are now engaged in talks which, we hope, will lead to political changes, peace and stability in the region. To this end, I am happy that my government has always committed itself to playing an active role in contributing towards peace, stability and prosperity. We have done this through our membership in regional and international organisations.
5. It is this commitment that has kept us going because, as a small country, our future will to a large extent be influenced by events that take place around us. In the OAU, the Commonwealth, the Frontline States, SADCC or, indeed, the Customs Union, we have been consistent in ensuring that we play our role as effectively as possible.
6. SADCC remains a viable organisation. Its potential as a force for regional economic integration, stability and prosperity has to be developed to the full, with the signing of the peace accords in Angola, negotiations underway in Mozambique, and promising developments in South Africa.
7. Until recently the SADCC programme of action was mainly devoted towards the development of physical infrastructure, mainly in the field of transport and communications. This was with the aim of improving accessibility to and among member states and the outside world. The agenda now for the 1990s is to review macro-

economic policies and to undertake political reforms aimed at improving economic management and the investment climate.

8. Ladies and gentlemen, our Congress takes place today, a few days before the July session of Parliament which will be considering our Seventh National Development Plan (NDP VII) covering the years 1991 to 1997. This will be yet another occasion to reflect on past achievements, limitations and the needs of our nation. And on this basis devise appropriate policies and programmes for improving further our standard of living.

9. There are indications that there will be a need for us to make trade-offs and establish priorities and objectives that relate to the level of skilled manpower, and resources that are expected to become available over the next six (6) years. We have to balance properly the long and short term considerations. A sustainable economic base can be created by carefully and correctly allocating the current production between consumption and investment.

10. Any plan that fails to take full cognisance of the anticipated level of resource is an exercise in wishful thinking. I must emphasise, however, that the plan will not be rigid but will be subject to amendment throughout the annual budget process and the mid-term review. These in built corrective devices are an integral part of our planning system which is continuous and dynamic in nature.

11. Botswana's resolve and commitment to sound planning through "therisanyo" or mutual consultations, with the nation at large is an essential part of our democratic process. The preparation of NDP 7 started in early 1989. Keynote Policy Papers were discussed with representatives of local authorities at a Special National District Development Conference in December of the same year. The formulation of the strategy and policies for the Plan drew heavily on the District Development Plans. Local authorities provided valuable inputs to the draft Plan.

12. I have, together with Cabinet Ministers and others addressed several meetings outlining the strategy for NDP 7, to solicit the views of our populace. The pinnacle of our "therisanyo" process is the submission of the Draft Plan to your representatives in the next session of Parliament for their approval.

13. As we all know, the growth of our economy is heavily dependent on the revenues derived from the sale of diamonds in the international market. Unfortunately, the outlook for the diamond market is not very encouraging. Consequently, economic growth is projected to average just under 5% per annum over NDP 7 compared with actual growth of about 13% recorded over NDP 6. In other words, we have to contend with less than half of the growth that we had become accustomed to in recent years. Total Revenues will grow very slowly during NDP 7 as no major new revenue sources are expected to supplement the less buoyant diamond revenues. Because

recurrent expenditures are expected to grow at approximately 13% per annum, large deficits are projected during the early years of the plan.

14. The international economy is presently in recession. The output in the industrialised world is falling, unemployment is rising, with the rate of investment declining and high inflation and interest rates persisting. In many developing countries, abject poverty is still rampant. A lasting and conclusive resolution to the external debt crisis is still to be found, amidst promising signs of stronger commitment by the developed countries.

15. Economic growth in developing countries continues to be stymied by rising cost of imports, declining revenue from traditional exports, employment of rudimentary technologies in production, poor economic management and low productivity of capital and labour. For the betterment of our lives, we have to explore national as well as regional solutions where these are more appropriate.

16. NDP 7, like its predecessors, translates the four national principles of Democracy, Development, Self-Reliance and Unity into concrete action programmes. Programmes that are guided by the four planning objectives of Sustained Development, Rapid Economic Growth, Economic Independence and Social Justice. Greater priority will be given to Sustained Development and Social Justice. Sustained Development will be achieved through greater economic diversification and the identification of new sources of growth.

17. The pursuit of Social Justice will enable Batswana to participate fully and effectively in the development of the nation and share more widely in the benefits of that development. Social Justice continues to be predicated on encouraging all households to utilise national resources to improve their living standards through their own productive efforts. Creation of employment and other economic opportunities, universal access to basic education and a "safety net" for indigents under clearly defined eligibility criteria will be pursued as a matter of Social Justice.

18. Nobody should be deprived of the basic necessities of life on account his or her economic circumstances. A corollary of this is that able bodied people must not seek interminable support from such schemes. They should embark on activities in keeping with the preservation of their self-fulfilment, self-fulfilment, self-esteem and dignity. The "safety net" is not for cuddling people who are not prepared to do anything for themselves. We should cherish these ideals both as individuals and as a nation.

19. A well managed economy and a conducive macroeconomic environment are indispensable to a thriving and dynamic private sector. My Government will strengthen policies that ensure stability in the nation's monetary and trade relationships with the rest of the world. With regards to Foreign Exchange Policy, my

Government will aim at as few controls as possible, and maintain a sufficient level of foreign exchange reserves to make this possible.

20. The financial sector will pursue market oriented policies in the provision of deposit, credit and other services. For this reason, greater competition is being actively promoted and such financial facilities will become both more cost efficient and more convenient to the customer.

21. Over time, as the development deepens, a wider array of Financial instruments will be offered. These developments will be closely supervised by Government to ensure that they proceed in an orderly and stable manner without prejudice to the interests of the customers, nor the viability of the private and development finance institutions concerned.

22. Government is also deeply committed to removing unnecessary regulations that encumber private sector development, apt responsiveness and timely delivery of service to the general public. No stone will be left unturned in fighting laxity and wastage in the public service. These unwelcome practices are an economic cost in terms of resources and time forgone which the country can least afford in these difficult times.

23. During implementation of the plan, particular attention will be paid to the development of skilled manpower, and increased productivity of our work force within the framework of our Revised Incomes Policy. Government will establish a national productivity centre early in NDP 7. Development of physical infrastructure will be carried out carefully to ensure that the rate of growth of physical assets does not outstrip our capacity to maintain them.

24. Equally important, existing facilities should be used efficiently and effectively before new ones are constructed. Private initiative will be actively promoted and consideration given to hiving off activities that can be undertaken competitively by the private sector.

25. Appropriate pricing of our resources, increased cost recovery, clearly targeted and time limited subsidies will be the cornerstones of Sustainable Development. Certain basic needs, such as primary education, primary health services and essential water supplies, will continue to be extended to people as a matter of priority. Basic foods for the needy will continue to be provided through carefully targeted food and income supplements. Services provided in excess of basic needs will, to an increasing extent, be provided at prices that cover the full cost of supplying them.

26. An important statistic of our country, and one which we must never lose sight of, is that almost two thirds of our population live in the rural areas. And that the majority of our people will continue to live in the rural areas throughout NDP 7. This means that rural development has to continue to be accorded high priority. The main

strategy will be diversification of the rural economy through improvements in agricultural efficiency, especially for smallholders.

27. This strategy is bound to reduce the vulnerability of the rural areas to drought, as well as the identification and implementation of productive non-farm rural opportunities. Rural industrialization will be promoted through improving infrastructure that promotes economic interdependence. Industrial sites that have the potential to become self-sustaining, will be encouraged through the provision of financial assistance continued under the Financial Assistance Policy.

28. Botswana implemented a comprehensive Drought Relief Programme from 1982 to 1988, and a two year Drought Recovery Programme until 30th June, 1990. The total expenditure of the Drought Relief and Recovery Programmes amounted to about P400 million of which Donor Agencies provided 11%. In addition, Donor Agencies provided a large amount of aid in kind, mainly food aid. Once again, we are most grateful for this generosity.

29. Government has undertaken a comprehensive evaluation of the Drought Relieve Programme. Whilst positive about the conduct and impact of the programme, the evaluation also revealed that the arable components of the Agricultural Relief programme had unintended negative effects on the farmers.

30. It tended to provide subsidies for farming activities which individuals would normally not undertake in a drought year. The livestock subsidies reduced the incentive for herd owners to sell part of their stock and thereby reduce the pressure on the range. There was loose targeting of the supplementary feeding programme, with the general tendency to over-provide rather than risk missing genuine cases of need.

31. On the basis of the evaluation, it has been decided that in future, all aspects of the past Drought Relief and Recovery Programme that tended to largely benefit the less needy, those that resulted in price distortions, and those that were generally neither effective nor efficient in rendering the required relief be abandoned. In addition, Government shall, as part of its Drought Preparedness, put in place measures and programmes that will reduce the long term vulnerability of the rural areas to the serious adverse impact of any future drought.

32. My Government has adopted the National Conservation Strategy whose goals are the conservation of all the main ecosystems. This includes wildlife, vegetation, water and soils, the protection of endangered species, increasing sustainable yields of renewable resources, the control of the depletion of non-renewable resources and the prevention and control of pollution.

33. These goals will be achieved through the provision of economic incentives and disincentives required to stimulate Sustainable Development. My Government will

discourage over-utilisation of natural resources and strengthen the enforcement of existing laws and regulations. Public education programmes that foster environmental awareness and appropriate public responses will be intensified.

34. I have outlined, the economic prospects facing our country. I have in particular outlined the pessimistic outlook for our budget scenario, and some salient elements of the strategy that will be pursued during NDP 7. In addition to clearly targeted and time limited subsidies, there may be need to introduce tax measures to deal with the anticipated budget deficits. This could include various measures like widening the net for both direct and indirect taxation and introduction of new taxes and revision of the existing rates of tax.

35. Furthermore, we need to renew our resolve to development through Self-Reliance. I am a bit worried that over the years our commitment to Self-Reliance has tended to wither away. If the favourable economic state of our country has been the reason for the apparent apathy, then time has come for us to stand to the challenge, to harness our energies, re-kindle and invigorate the spirit of Self-Reliance. A renowned politician once said "Ask not what my country can do for me, but what I can do for my country". Let this to be a source of inspiration and a guiding tenet as we implement NDP 7.

36. The preparation of the plan document is not an end in itself. The real challenge is to implement the policies we have set out. This requires further consultation with the nation and a committed, selfless, disciplined, and productive work force as well as a cooperative, understanding and united nation. I trust that we shall all live up to the challenge facing our country and continue to improve the standard of living for all our people.

37. Fellow Democrats, let me now turn to the party itself. We are here today, assembled as we were two years ago in Zwenshambe. We are to examine our programmes and Party. And in so doing we should draw from the experience of those who came before us, use their lessons to build an even stronger Party. The Party which is founded in unity, loyalty and discipline. For this is what the founding fathers intended twenty-nine years ago.

38. As Democrats, you are expected to truly demonstrate selflessness, discipline and be exemplary behaviour in conducting your Party affairs. The complexities and rigours of leadership still require that each and everyone of us strive to give their personal best. The BDP cannot lead the nation to the desired prosperity and progress if we, as a Party, are self-seeking, disunited and indisciplined.

39. We should for ever be vigilant and sensitive to the needs of others. We should exercise tolerance and restraint, and constantly place the interests of the Party above self. These are the qualities of a Democrat. They are the hall-marks of true leadership

inspired by our motto of Therisanyo (Consultation) and Puso ya batho ka batho (Democracy).

40. Fellow Democrats, 29 years is a long time. The majority of today's electorate was perhaps not born when the BDP formed the first Government of an independent country. It will not be fanciful therefore, to suggest that the majority of the people in Botswana today were raised under the political teachings of the BDP, which for the period of our independence, has preached social justice and progress, nurtured through our sound constitutional structures and a dynamic tradition of peace through consultation.

41. Peace is not just the absence of war. It means social stability, the rule of law, progress, security, and patriotism. The BDP has strived hard to achieve these goals and the successes thus gained have not been without obstacles. But our sense of patriotism and discipline as a party has enabled us to unite the nation of Botswana, and to guide it with a singleness of purpose.

42. Under the BDP leadership, Botswana were inspired to resist attempts at destabilisation from whatever source. BDP has charted a progressive path for Botswana in times of natural hardships and calamities, particularly the drought that engulfed this entire sub-continent in the early 80's. Botswana responded positively to drought relief programmes because the BDP did not hide the truth or pretend that they could achieve the impossible. We simply worked out practical solutions to the drought problem and requested Botswana to cooperate with us.

43. The message here is that this nation can only be led by men and women whose commitment to the truth, public duty, loyalty to their Party and the nation are above question.

44. Your guiding principle should be unity, strength and social justice. To achieve this, the BDP must close ranks in order to deny our detractors the opportunity of splitting us. I am glad that the results of the bye-elections which were conducted after the last general elections have disillusioned those who thought their marriage of convenience would stand to weaken us. I want to seize this opportunity to thank all our members who actively campaigned and led our party to victory. We have tasted the fruits of solidarity and this should spur us to work even harder to consolidate our unity. This we can do by playing down things that divide us and promoting those that unite us.

45. Before we conclude our meeting in Palapye, we shall, as our Party Constitution demands of us, select our team leaders. I am confident that you will, as usual, place the needs of your party and your country first. As you are aware, the management of our party has become more complex and demanding. We will therefore, need to bear this in mind when electing our executive body. Merit and seriousness of purpose

should be our guiding principles. Every member has, of course, the right to aspire to be elected to any position in the party. All I am emphasising here is that those who elect should, as the 1965 manifesto says, bear in mind the “sacredness of that responsibility.”

46. Fellow Democrats, I have indicated in my earlier remarks that the July session of Parliament will consider our seventh National Development Plan. I expect the general membership of BDP to seriously acquaint themselves with the contents of the Plan, both in total and in detail in the same way as you do with your Election Manifesto. For it is from your own Election Manifesto that the Plan derives its authority. In other words, the Plan is a document that sets out how the BDP Government plans the way forward for Botswana during the next five years.

47. You must popularise and defend it to ensure that it is implemented smoothly for the benefit of Batswana. As a dynamic instrument the plan will be subjected to constant reviews, where appropriate, during the period of its implementation. You are all expected to keep pace with all these developments so that all sections of the party are fully apprised of the progress we are making as a nation. You should not be misled by anybody claiming to achieve the impossible. As members of a pragmatic BDP, you should be guided by what you know is possible and desirable for Batswana.

48. Turning now to a matter that is probably easier and more pleasing to deal with. Mr. Chairman, our party will be 30 years old next year. With the achievements we have notched so far, the successful membership drive, the wide network of external relations with other fraternal parties in the region and far afield, the electoral victories, and the consolidation of our party programmes and strategies, we deserve a celebration. The BDP 30th birthday celebration.

49. I have already directed your Central Committee to start consultations, first within the party machinery and then during this Congress, to determine the form such celebrations should take. It is not for me to pre-empt your decisions on this matter. But we should, in considering the issue, remember that the BDP is a national party with strong national support. Any decision we take on the scope of our 30th anniversary celebration, must of necessity reflect and take this into account.

50. Naturally, what is practical and what is desired should be harmonised in order to take account of the wishes of the greater majority. We all know that it is not easy to please everyone in these matters but true and serious consultation should assist us in making decisions that are both practical and appropriate. Our characteristic pragmatism should, as usual, guide us in arriving at a workable consensus.

51. Finally, remember that the BDP has a mammoth task ahead. The task of keeping pace with the development of the society and the country. This National Congress

must create an atmosphere conducive to intensive and comprehensive consultations that will lead to a rejuvenated and strengthened party and which will continue to give effective leadership to Botswana. I would like to call upon everyone gathered here to work tirelessly to strengthen our party.

52. It is my wish that we have fruitful and rewarding deliberations.

53. I thank you.

TSHOLETSA DOMKRAG!

