

**STATEMENT BY DIRECTOR, NATIONAL
DISASTER MANAGEMENT OFFICE, MISS JOYCE
MOSWEU, HEAD OF BOTSWANA DELEGATION
AT THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON DISASTER
REDUCTION, KOBE JAPAN, JANUARY 18-22, 2005**

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Chairperson

Distinguished Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. On behalf of my delegation, I would like to congratulate you the Chairperson and other members of the Bureau, on your election to preside over the proceedings of this important Conference. We would like to express our confidence that under your guidance and leadership, the deliberations of this Conference will be successfully concluded. The Botswana delegation would like to register its appreciation for being afforded the opportunity to address this international gathering on disaster reduction.

2. We also applaud the UN and member states for the resolution they made to convene this important World Conference on Disaster Reduction. My delegation appreciates the financial assistance availed to our delegation by the United Nations ISDR office, which made it possible for our country to be represented here today.

3. We further wish to express our gratitude to the Government and people of Japan for their generosity in hosting this conference. We are mindful of the mammoth task they faced and the extra mile that they took in order to make arrangements for this historic event. We appreciate their hospitality since our arrival and are looking forward to an enjoyable and memorable stay in this beautiful country. We also acknowledge the leadership role that Japan continues to play in issues of disaster management, recalling that it was Japan which hosted the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction in Yokohama in 1994.

Chairperson,

4. My delegation fully subscribes to the Statement of the Africa group as delivered by the distinguished delegate of the Sudan, with the conviction that addressing issues outlined therein, would indeed address the many challenges faced by my country in particular and Africa in general.

5. This Conference comes against the backdrop of a terrible disaster, which having occurred in South and East Asia, spread as far as Africa and also affected people the world over. We wish to take this opportunity to convey our deepest condolences to the bereaved families and Governments of all countries affected. We also thank the

donors and the international community for their humanitarian relief efforts to alleviate suffering and commend them for the speed with which this was done. Of the lessons learnt from the events of December 26, 2004 is that sustainable development is severely compromised by inadequate disaster reduction strategies and disaster risk reduction should indeed be given high priority.

6. Those events have underscored the need for early warning systems, disaster response capabilities at national, regional and international levels. The international community faces a challenge to establish these, as a matter of urgency where they are non-existent and to strengthen and improve those existing in order to avoid disasters of similar magnitude and severity. The international community must strengthen its resolve to integrate disaster reduction into development planning and commit itself to a defined Programme of Action. Equally, there is need for stepped up efforts for the utilisation and sharing of the available technology for reducing disaster risks.

7. It is therefore appropriate that countries should converge and share expertise and collectively devise ways to halt and minimise destruction caused by disasters, which impede the attainment of human development targets nations have set themselves in the 2015 Millennium Declaration and at the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

8. In Botswana, prevalent disasters include veld fires, droughts, floods, pest infestations, animal diseases, epidemics and HIV/AIDS. There is not a year when one of these has not occurred. The collective impacts of these disasters with HIV/AIDS, a declared national emergency and disaster in Botswana having the most adverse effect, include loss of human and animal life, damage to both private and public assets such as homes, farms, businesses, roads, railway lines, bridges and disruption of power, water, telecommunications services and drainage systems.

9. In the aftermath of such destruction, the Government has been compelled to divert scarce resources from National Development Plans to provide relief to victims, using the National Disaster Relief Fund, a contingency Fund set up for relief purposes. Relief provided is usually in the form of food, blankets and other necessities for meeting the most basic human needs. Funds earmarked for other projects have to be diverted to repair the damaged infrastructure and systems.

Chairperson

10. Botswana is a drought prone country. To mitigate the impacts of drought, the Government Policy has been to incorporate drought management into the regular planning processes. In this regard, the non-emergency aspects form an integral part of the regular

development programmes. Second, in an emergency, Government uses the existing development and recurrent budget projects and programmes to respond to drought, primarily through expansion of the coverage of the existing programmes and acceleration of their implementation.

11. The drought relief programme has three main components, human relief, livestock relief and arable assistance packages. Human relief comprise targeted feeding programme of vulnerable groups such as the under 5, expectant and lactating mothers, provision of a second meal for remote area dwellers children, labour based public works and the human water supply programme. The livestock programme comprise free vaccinations, an expanded livestock water development programme, subsidised livestock feeds and requisites and where feasible, incentives for increased take off. Arable packages comprise free seed.

Chairperson

12. We note with great concern the emergence of new disasters. For instance, a global emergency such as HIV/AIDS, which affects the most important of all resources, people and mostly in their productive ages, which has adverse effects on our national economy. Our country is one of those worst affected by this scourge but it is one of the first countries in Africa to provide free anti retroviral treatment to its people. This has come at a huge cost to the

Government. We are currently grappling with problems of AIDS orphans, low economic production as our young and trained labour force lies in hospitals. Furthermore, some of those still going to work and school children have the added responsibility of allocating part of their time to care giving for spouses, parents and siblings. National budgets have been seriously affected as more funds are allocated for provision of anti-retroviral drugs, prevention of mother to child transmission, home based care and orphan care programmes.

13. Disasters destroy modest development gains and progress made over decades, derail current planned projects and impact negatively on poverty reduction measures and sustainable development.

Chairperson

14. I assure you of the Government of Botswana's full support and solidarity in your efforts to find solutions to the challenges posed by natural disasters in order that this world could become a safer place for us all and future generations.

15. I thank you.