

SPEECH BY THE COUNCIL SECRETARY FOR NGAMILAND DISTRICT COUNCIL MR. KWELE PUSO AT THE NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLANS – MAINSTREAMING BIODIVERSITY AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT WORKSHOP HELD IN MAUN ON THE 14TH TO THE 16TH OF NOVEMBER 2012

Chairperson,

Distinguished Guests from International Organisations,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am indeed honoured to be given this opportunity to address this important gathering here today. On behalf of our government and the people of Botswana, I welcome you to Maun and our country Botswana. I am also happy that the workshop organizers have seen it fit to host it in Maun, which is the center of tourism and biodiversity in Botswana.
2. This gathering is another positive sign that the global community has not only realised the importance of biodiversity but have also taken sound steps towards ensuring the sustainability of our biological resources.
3. Ladies and gentlemen, the global community has collectively set itself goals in the form of international conventions such the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity; Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance; United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification; United Nations Convention on Sustainable Development; and the Millennium Development Goals to mention a few.
4. In line with the global collective, the government of Botswana has long recognised the importance of biodiversity management towards development in both the socio-cultural and economic arena. This is demonstrated by setting aside a total area of 39% of the country for conservation, and that, ladies and gentlemen, is a large area for biodiversity conservation. The land dedicated to conservation is far more than the 17 % recommended by the 2011-2020 Strategic Plan of the CBD. However the Government of Botswana acknowledges that protected areas alone are not enough to achieve biodiversity conservation, the adjacent areas and connectivity of protected areas is key. Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation in different land use and livelihood activities is therefore of paramount importance.
5. Ngamiland District has played a leading role in biodiversity mainstreaming, for example the recently concluded Biokavango project was specifically geared towards mainstreaming biodiversity in key production sectors of water, tourism and fisheries. Furthermore Ngamiland is the epicentre of the CBNRM programme which is aimed at improving livelihoods through the sustainable use of natural resources in rural communities.
6. Furthermore, environmental management institutions have been established, and relevant laws and regulations as well as strategies have been developed all in the quest for sustainable management of biodiversity. We have successfully developed and are currently implementing the Okavango Delta Management Plan, Makgadikgadi Wetland System Framework Management Plan, and national action plans for Multilateral Environmental Agreements.
7. The Okavango Delta Management Plan is particularly important in this district in that it provides us with a framework for conservation of our natural capital while creating opportunities for improving livelihoods of local communities. Ngamiland is one of the poorest districts in Botswana despite its rich endowment with natural resources. This

therefore presents a challenge to us in the environment sector to see how the natural resources we have can be used to uplift the lives of our people. Failure to address this challenge will pose a threat to the long term conservation of our biodiversity.

8. The organisation that I lead, namely North West District Council plays a major role in rural development and poverty alleviation. It is therefore important that gatherings like these provide us with the tools to achieve our goal of uplifting the livelihoods of the poor and rural populations without compromising the sustainability of the resources that they are dependent on. NWDC commit to play a meaningful role in biodiversity mainstreaming of biodiversity.
9. Relevant to this workshop, the government of Botswana became party to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity in 1995. Following this, the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan was developed. This has been the guiding document on how Botswana has been managing her biodiversity. This has also been strengthened by the recent development of the Environmental Assessment Act of 2011.
10. However, in the midst of all this achievements, lies a host of challenges which we are currently faced with. Some of the challenges relate to the harmonisation and strengthening of environmental legislation, plans and strategies. One of the main challenges is the issue of mainstreaming biodiversity into key aspects of national development.
11. Ladies and gentlemen, we are here today to discuss, deliberate and come-up with recommendations regarding the issue of mainstreaming biodiversity into the domain of development. Our success in forming sound and effective recommendations in this regard has the potential to greatly assist our countries in the area of sustainable development and most importantly in the poverty and environment interface.
12. Distinguished delegates, this workshop will also contribute positively towards updating of our National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans in line with the 2011 – 2020 CBD Strategic Plan that was adopted in October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan at the Tenth Conference of Parties. It is my expectation that this workshop will ensure that we develop biodiversity plans which are integrated and which have the ability to influence development decisions and create an enabling environment for poverty eradication.
13. Let me further take this opportunity to thank our partners, the International Institute of Environment and Development, the United Nations Environment Programme-World Conservation and Monitoring Center for having found it necessary to partner with our countries in this important process of mainstreaming biodiversity and development. This is a partnership that we as Botswana greatly value and it is our hope that this partnership will be sustained even beyond 2020.
14. Ladies and gentlemen, as you deliberate on issues during this workshop, let us at all points be reminded of the vision of the strategic plan, which is that;

“By 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people.”

15. On behalf of our government and the people of Botswana, I wish this workshop a success. With that ladies and gentlemen, I declare this workshop officially opened.