

Statement on The People's Assembly 2023

Gaborone, 06 September 2023 – Civil society organisations and communities have gathered to reflect and recommend critical priorities for Botswana's progress in Agenda 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This year marks the mid-point, with only seven (7) years left to accelerate climate action, eliminating poverty, hunger and ensure gender equality among thirteen (13) other goals. The global commitment has been integrated across National Development Plans (NDP) and aligned to regional integration mechanisms and multilateral interventions. Botswana should not be an exception to ensuring the fulfilment of the SDGs; from ensuring capacity to collect data,¹ to addressing governance shortcomings and service delivery.² The People's Assembly joins the rest of the world in galvanizing stakeholders towards ensuring no one is left behind.

Civil society ensured priority issues were raised at the 2022's Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) that the Government of Botswana reported on;³ illuminating the gaps and aspirations for more meaningful engagement and inclusion.⁴ This year, challenges and shortcomings remain the same.⁵ Increasing concerns on Gender-Based Violence (GBV), safety, media freedom, civil society resourcing, stigma, discrimination, Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), and HIV/AIDS among other notable health challenges across the public health spectrum. Civil society continues to raise concern across different platforms and mechanisms to ensure commitments are fulfilled and shortcomings are addressed. For example, a recent joint dialogue on the high level meetings on Universal Health Coverage (UHC), Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response (the Pandemic Summit), and Tuberculosis (TB) were held with stakeholders across the health spectrum including government.⁶ This reflects civil society's commitment to ensuring no one is left behind.

We call for the Government of Botswana to strengthen the baseline for measuring and collecting data on SDGs. Also, to strengthen avenues for collaborative partnerships that leave no one behind. Representation in social participation mechanisms should reflect those most impacted. This should translate to expanding the 'who' and 'how' communities and civil society are invited to decision making mechanisms. Harnessing the demographic dividend of Botswana's youth and diverse communities should be institutionalized and encouraged under the Mindset Change Campaign. We implore for increased opportunities for dialogue and complimentary implementation in ensuring no one is left behind by engaging civil society meaningfully. This

¹ Statistics Botswana's 2018 'Botswana Domesticated Sustainable Development Goal Indicators' reports only 158 of a possible 209 indicators in the Botswana SDG Domesticated Indicator Framework as globally measurable.

² Botswana's civil society African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Working Group identified 12 governance issues including human rights, separation of powers, crime and security, foreign policy and sustainable development among others.

³ In 2022, the Government of Botswana submitted a Voluntary National Report after a 5 year hiatus and whilst elected as the 77th President of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

⁴ BOCONGO's '[People's Scorecard](#)' and a [CSO statement](#) was made during Botswana's review.

⁵ As previously expressed at BOCONGO's [Youth Forum](#)

⁶ See highlight: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/success-capital-africa_uhc-botswana-health-activity-7095364798644723712-zFGG?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_android



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includes formal inclusion, representation and resourcing for civil society to participate in national, regional and global fora.

We further call on the private sector to engage civil society to advance the SDGs. Multi-sectoral approaches can only strengthen development outcomes if hard-to-reach communities are included. Civil society are on the ground, as complimentary partners to the country's development agenda. As Maipelo Phale, Executive Director, a.i. implores: "For SDGs to be accelerated, implemented and realised – all sectors of society should come up with robust partnership models to leverage the country's development agenda. The People's Assembly is a collective global form of solidarity and action reflecting how, even with limited resources, we can gather and unite for accelerating progress for the Decade of Action. Our members should continuously engage for our issues to be heard in spaces such as the UN General Assembly." In support, Dumiso Gatsha, Founder of Success Capital Organisation added that "Botswana is leading in reported rape incidents and inequality, this should not reflect in the SDGs progress and implementation. We should harness our leadership at the World Health Organisation's Executive Board, SADC Secretariat and SADC Parliamentary Forum to improve Botswana civil society engagement. This can only be achieved through harnessing, strengthening and including grassroots civil society, communities and groups in Vision 2036 and Agenda 2063."

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