

REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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ADDRESS
BY
HIS EXCELLENCY MOKGWEETSI E.K. MASISI
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

AT THE
NELSON MANDELA PEACE SUMMIT
24 SEPTEMBER 2018
NEW YORK



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Madam President;

Secretary General of the United Nations;

**Excellencies Heads of State and Government
Members of the Civil Society**

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

1. It is a great honour for me to address this august gathering, convened befittingly to pay tribute to the world's venerated Nobel Peace Laureate, late President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela.
2. His lifelong mission in pursuit of unity, human dignity, peace and stability for the betterment of humankind, remains an inspiration and a clarion call for all of us, as we grapple with the challenges that confront humanity today.
3. As we celebrate the centennial of a man who lived as the embodiment of the liberation struggle, we should be reminded of his sacrifice and the legacy of peace he bequeathed to future generations. Today, we bask in the very freedom that he has fought for with gusto. We can only truly honour him, by jealously guarding the freedom we so greatly enjoy.

Madam President;

4. My own country Botswana, as a founding member of **the Frontline States**, a coalition of countries that sought to end apartheid and white minority rule in the

southern African region, made a modest contribution to the liberation struggle.

5. Botswana provided safe haven and assisted the freedom fighters in any way we could; sometimes with dire repercussion from the South African apartheid regime. We tactfully and skilfully defied the ultimatums issued to us, as we fully understood that none of us could be truly free when our brothers and sisters next door, remained under the shackles of oppressive regimes.
6. We joined in the great jubilation of the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990 and equally in 1994, when he was inaugurated as President of a free South Africa.
7. We remain humbled that Botswana was the first country that Nelson Mandela visited in 1962, in his quest for international support for the liberation struggle, and again upon his release from prison in 1990.
8. I must say, Mandela's visits to Botswana served to cement ties between our two countries. In his own words at Kgotla meeting in Serowe, on 6 September 1995, he stated that "**.....The ties between our peoples reach far in to the past, yet it is only now that they can flourish to their full potential. With the defeat of apartheid, democratic South Africa and Botswana can look forward to a relationship of mutual benefit between equal partners.**"

9. Since then, the relations between our two countries which are founded on strong bedrock of solidarity, cultural and historical ties, have continued to flourish.

Madam President;

10. I am confident that if Mandela were here today, he would without reservation endorse our mantra of leaving no one behind.
11. Let us therefore leave here with these wise words from Rohlhlahla: ***"No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite"***.
12. In conclusion, Madam President, Botswana fully endorses the Mandela Peace Summit Declaration. It is an honour befitting an exceptionally great man and one of the greatest leaders of our time. He lived a purpose-driven life which has touched and enriched us all, directly or indirectly. Let us do good by him.

13. I thank you for your kind attention.