



MINISTER OF LAND MANAGEMENT, WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES – HONOURABLE PRINCE MAELE STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE THIRD CONFERENCE ON ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE- HANOI, VIETNAM (17TH NOVEMBER 2016)

Salutations.....

1. It is indeed a great honour and pleasure for me to address the Hanoi Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade on behalf of the President and people of Botswana. I wish at the inception of my speech to pay tribute to the Government and the people of the beautiful country, Vietnam for hosting this historic conference. The warm reception that my delegation and I received is indeed a source of great comfort and happiness. To your Excellencies and delegates here present, your resolve to attend this conference and level of participation is without doubt a clear demonstration of your commitment and selflessness to defeating the illegal wildlife trade. Let me put it on record that my President Lt. General Dr. Seretse Khama Ian Khama and the Minister responsible for Environment, Natural Resources Conservation and Tourism, Hon. Tshekedi Khama would have loved to join you today but had to represent the country at the Climate Change deliberations

currently taking place in Morocco and you will agree with me that climate change is equally important to our conservation efforts, particularly in desertified countries like Botswana. However be rest assured of my president's and country unwavering support towards the fight against illegal wildlife trade.

2. Ladies and gentlemen, it will be recalled that Botswana hosted the Kasane Conference in March 2015 which culminated in the endorsement by those present of the Kasane Statement. The Kasane Statement called for the implementation of a suite of actions focused on eradicating markets for illegal wildlife products; ensuring effective legal deterrents and frameworks; strengthening law enforcement; and sustainable livelihoods and economic development. At the conclusion of the Kasane Conference, the Government of Vietnam graciously agreed to host the third conference on illegal wildlife trade.
3. It is common knowledge that available evidence shows that Africa remains a major source for elephant ivory, rhino horn, lion body parts, pangolin scales and meat among others which more often than not destined to Far East Asia. The illegal trade in fauna and flora is fuelled by demand in countries in this part of the world due to rising living standards. Countries like Botswana cannot hope to eradicate poaching of the above mentioned species as long as this demand persists. The frontline to combat poaching must shift from the source

countries to those where the demand exists. This, ladies and gentlemen is the reason why we supported Vietnam for hosting this third conference. We hope that the conference will raise awareness and capture attention of all transit countries and those where the demand exists, resulting in greater cooperation between wildlife enforcement networks in our continents. It could be only fair that proceeds accruing from wildlife crime must be seized and repatriated to range states where they can be used to implement wildlife protection programmes and initiatives.

4. At the recently held Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species Conference of the Parties (CITES) 17th Conference of the Parties held in Johannesburg, South Africa, it was abundantly clear that the existence of many species continue to be threatened by poaching and illegal trade. This was evidenced by the number of species of fauna and flora that were uplisted to CITES Appendix I. The MIKE and ETIS reports presented at the conference once again identified poverty, poor governance and corruption as the major drivers of elephant poaching and illegal ivory trade. More Parties were added to the list of countries of concern or countries to watch in the fight against ivory trafficking, an indication that much remains to be done to bring the scourge of elephant poaching and ivory trafficking to an end. All is not doom and gloom, however, and a number of key resolutions and decisions were made at the CoP. These include agreement on an amendment to CITES Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev CoP16) calling on Parties to close domestic markets

which are implicated in driving elephant poaching and ivory trafficking.

5. Ladies and gentlemen, while it is heartening to see so many countries committing themselves to many resolutions and decisions, it is incumbent upon all of us to demonstrate the necessary high level political will across range states, transit and consumer states, through assigning the necessary financial resources and manpower to combat wildlife crime.

6. As a country, we are acutely aware of the importance of our wildlife resources in promoting the development of our country. Botswana is home to the largest population of the African elephant, standing at about 131 000, a third of the world surviving population. To this end, wildlife based tourism is a major contributor to our GDP and the community based natural resources programme has allowed communities living with wildlife to improve and diversify their livelihoods. Wildlife crime, therefore, has the potential to undermine Botswana's economy. In this connection, Botswana is committed to working with the international community to combat wildlife crime.

7. Ladies and gentlemen, over the past year Botswana has been at the fore front in hosting and participating in key initiatives to address the rise in poaching and the illegal trafficking of wildlife. In May 2016, we hosted the first meeting of the African Wildlife Forensics Network

which again brought experts from the region to develop a coordinated approach to bringing the advantages of forensic science to regional illegal wildlife trade enforcement in Africa. Through the assistance of a technical advisor, Botswana along with her neighbours in southern Africa is working on the development of a Wildlife Enforcement Network.

8. The Elephant Protection Initiative (EPI) is a another global initiative which brings African Elephant range States, non-range States, NGOs, IGOs, Private Sector and Private Citizens together to work in partnership to protect elephants and stop the ivory trade. Botswana has participated in this initiative since its launch at the London Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade in February 2014 and we are happy to announce that the EPI has grown into the pre-eminent African-led, Partnership-based and Results-oriented elephant conservation initiative. It recognizes common challenge of the illegal wildlife trade, respects national sovereignty and proposes a consensus position developed by all four regions of Africa's elephant range.
9. Through the EPI, all countries have committed to close domestic ivory markets, observe a moratorium on any consideration of future international trade for a minimum of 10 years (2015-2024) or until African elephant populations are no longer threatened. All EPI Signatories commit to work together to implement the African

Elephant Action Plan and join the political global leadership to protect elephants and stop the ivory trade.

10. Ladies and gentlemen, it is pleasing to note from the self-assessments which have been shared with all of us at this Conference, that governments, inter-governmental organisations and non-governmental organisations are stepping up efforts to combat wildlife crime, along the entire illegal wildlife trade chain. The collaboration, cooperation and commitment of sectors such as finance, customs, transport and civil society deserves special mention. The Kasane Statement called for countries to engage with the transport industry with a view to agreeing on industry-wide protocols aimed at eliminating illegal wildlife trade. Several countries have reported progress in this regard. It is, however, a matter for concern that of the four thematic areas of the Kasane Statement relatively less progress has been made in promoting sustainable livelihoods. Without the buy-in of communities who live side by side with wildlife resources, it is unlikely that the war on poaching will be won. Fully empowered communities will serve as eyes and ears on the ground and jealously protect wildlife against those who would rob them of their ability to derive benefits from these resources.

11. To protect our communities and wildlife from this unfortunate onslaught, we have invested heavily in strengthening our anti-poaching efforts often at the expense of other competing national imperatives. A rhino squad has been set up to protect our growing

rhino population. Additional manpower has been recruited and equipment including vehicles and aircraft have been purchased to improve our ability to respond rapidly to any threat from poachers. We are very conscious that the cost of protecting our wildlife resources is not only measured in monetary terms. Many brave rangers across the African continent put their lives at risk for this cause and this sacrifice often goes un-recognised by the international community.

12. We recognize the dangers that corruption poses to conservation efforts. Existing evidence has also demonstrated that the poaching and trafficking crisis facing species such as elephants and rhino is being driven by poverty, poor governance and corruption. Botswana has a zero tolerance to corruption in all its forms but we are particularly conscious of the potential of corruption to undermine the gains we have made in protecting our biodiversity.

13. Ladies and gentlemen, we proposed hosting the IWT conference on a biennial basis in Botswana. While we are keen to deliver on the promise, conferences of this nature must be viewed as opportunities to take stock of real progress achieved rather than simply being held for their own sake. We, therefore, strongly recommend reducing the frequency of the conferences to allow adequate time for implemented actions to produce measurable progress on the ground. Implementation of such actions will require

resources. I, therefore, wish to encourage us all to reflect on establishing effective mechanisms to mobilise such resources.

14. In conclusion, I wish to thank once more the Government of Vietnam for the excellent organisation of the conference and hospitality. I look forward to constructive and meaningful engagement during the course of the day and commitment to concrete actions by all present.

15. I thank you.