

**Statement by H.E Mr. Mothusi B. R. Palai, Permanent Representative of Botswana to the UN Office at Geneva**

**During the 19<sup>th</sup> Special Session of the Human Rights Council on the Massacre in the town of El-Houleh in Syria**

(1<sup>st</sup> June 2012, Geneva)

**Madam President,**

1. Botswana welcomes the convening of this Special Session on the massacre of innocent civilians in the town of El-Houleh in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. Last Friday's massacre in El-Houleh, which left around 108 people dead, mostly children and women, and hundreds others seriously wounded, was indeed horrific and inhuman by all standards imaginable. It therefore deserves condemnation by the entire international community in the strongest possible terms.

3. According to reports, entire families were shot dead in their homes in summary executions using artillery and tank fire, guns and knives. This is, no doubt, a heinous crime that will definitely leave a permanent dark spot on the human conscience throughout the world.

Madam President,

4. Botswana has consistently and persistently condemned the human rights violations in Syria. As such, we will continue to lend our voice, and support, to all international efforts to bring pressure to bear on those responsible for the atrocities. Those responsible should realise that no amount of terror on the Syrian people can be condoned.

5. We have, therefore, indicated our strong support for the imposition of robust diplomatic measures on Syria, as well as strong targeted sanctions on that country's leadership, including the recent expulsion of Syria's diplomatic envoys by a number of countries, in protest for the El-Houleh massacre.

6. It is our fervent hope that those responsible for these unjustified killings of innocent people, including the El-Houleh massacre, will be identified and held accountable. We will, therefore, join other delegations today in calling for an urgent investigation into the El-Houleh massacre and report to the upcoming session of the Human Rights Council.

7. In this regard, we call on the Government of Syria to fully cooperate with the investigation teams and to grant them full access into the country.

8. Botswana will also continue to support the recommendations to the UN Security Council to consider referring the Syrian situation to the International Criminal Court, including the El-Houleh massacre. The El-Houleh massacre itself should definitely render this recommendation more compelling to Members of the Security Council.

9. We continue to implore our friends in the Security Council to review their position with a view to take heed of the cries of the Syrian people. They need our protection.

10. For, as we have stated in the past Sessions, no country can afford to remain complacent and indifferent to the suffering of any people, in any part of the world.

11. Botswana also wishes to reiterate her support for the joint Special Envoy to Syria, Mr. Kofi Annan's six-point peace plan for Syria, especially the stopping of military assaults on Syrian towns and withdrawal of heavy weapons.

12. Let me end, Madam President, by affirming our support for the Security Council position in its recent press release on the El-Houleh massacre, that "the outrageous use of force against civilian population constitutes a violation of applicable international law and of the commitments of the Syrian Government under United Nations Security Council Resolutions", and other international human rights obligations.

13. I thank you!