

**Statement by Charles Masole, Deputy Permanent Representative at  
the Permanent Mission of Botswana to the UN Office at Geneva**

**During the 18<sup>th</sup> Special Session of the Human Rights Council  
on the Human Rights Situation in Syria**

(2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011, Geneva)

1. **Madam President,** I wish to thank the distinguished High Commissioner for Human Rights for her excellent report on the human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic.
2. The report reveals a serious human rights catastrophe, which if left to continue any longer, will leave a permanent mark on the international human conscience. According to the report, there is a clear pattern of human rights violations constituting widespread or systematic attacks against the civilian population, which may amount to crimes against humanity. These include summary executions, sexual violence and rape, torture as well as other inhuman and degrading treatment of civilians.
3. What is even more alarming are reports that children have not only been targeted by security forces, but also repeatedly subjected to the same human rights and criminal violations as adults, including torture, with no consideration for their vulnerable status. We couldn't agree more with the report's observation that the fact that Syrian forces have tortured or killed children on several occasions is a cause for grave concern. Of equal concern are reports of denying the civilian population the essential services, such as medical supplies, water and food.
4. We agree with the delegation of the Maldives, among others, that the Syrian government has a primary responsibility to protect the human rights of its people. If the government is failing or is, itself, killing its own people, the international community assumes that responsibility to protect the people. That is our responsibility to all humanity.

5. Botswana has consistently and persistently condemned the human rights violations in Syria. We have since taken the view that the shocking brutality instigated by the Syrian Government against its own citizens, both the peaceful protesters and the innocent bystanders alike, have created a moral discrepancy on the part of President Asad to continue leading the Syrian people. He has clearly failed to lead a democratic transition in Syria. The continued violence perpetrated against innocent people will only lead to continued instability and heightened sectarian tensions, as well as increase the Syrian people's distrust and anger at their government.

6. It is our hope that those responsible for these untold brutalities and gross human rights violations will be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law, and the victims and their families will be appropriately compensated.

7. In this context, Botswana welcomes the decision by the 17<sup>th</sup> Special Session of the Human Rights Council to establish an International Commission of Inquiry to investigate the continued human rights violations in Syria. It is our hope that the Commissioners will be dispatched as soon as possible to avoid any further violations that go unchecked. We urge the Syrian authorities to fully cooperate with the Commissioners in discharging their mandate.

8. We also welcome the recommendation of the report to invite the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, in particular the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, to visit Syria to monitor and report on the human

rights situation; and for the UN Security Council to consider referring the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic to the International Criminal Court.

I thank you.