

**Statement by Botswana during the Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on Syria at the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council: (16 September 2013)**

1. Botswana wishes to thank the Commission of Inquiry for the comprehensive and informative update.
2. Like many other countries, Botswana continues to be deeply concerned by the human rights and humanitarian situation in Syria, resulting from the ongoing conflict in that country.
3. As already pointed out, the number of Syrian refugees has now reached two million, while those internally displaced are now more than 4 million. All these people are in dire need of humanitarian assistance.
4. What is more alarming is that the parties to the conflict have made it part of their war tactics to target those trying to provide such assistance and medical care. As the Commission indicated, since the beginning of the conflict, at least 20 Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers have been killed while aiding the wounded or delivering relief supplies, and many others have been arrested and detained by the Government.
5. We agree with the Commission that the Syrian Anti-terrorism laws issued in July 2012, which criminalize medical aid to the opposition, contravene customary international humanitarian law. We therefore urge the Syrian Government to repeal such laws in accordance with its obligations under international law.

6. **Mr. President**, as the Commission observed, a military solution to the conflict will be very difficult to achieve, and would come at a very high price, involving unbearable loss of life.

7. We therefore agree with the Commission that the conflict will end only through a comprehensive and inclusive political process.

8. It is in this regard that we still believe that the 2012 Geneva Conference created a framework within which the parties could work towards an amicable solution.

9. Mr. President, Botswana joins other delegations in strongly condemning the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We commend the Russian Federation and the United States for the deal they concluded over the weekend, which provides a concrete step toward moving Syria's chemical weapons under international control mechanisms.

10. Like many other countries, we see the deal as an important milestone toward reviving international peace talks under the framework of the 2012 Geneva Conference.

11. We therefore encourage the US and Russia to continue their political and diplomatic consultations aimed at convening an international conference to follow-up the Geneva Conference.

12. However, we continue to stress that the desire to have a meaningful international conference should not brush aside the need for accountability. The Commission has been consistent in documenting

what they perceive as war crimes and crimes against humanity. We will all agree that there can be no enduring peace without justice.

13. We believe that the UN Security Council, as the principal UN organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, can still do more in the efforts to finding enduring peace in Syria while ensuring that there is accountability for the victims.

14. Finally, we wish to add our voice to calls on the parties to the conflict to allow unimpeded access of humanitarian agencies to deliver the much needed assistance to the Syrian people within the country.

I thank you.