

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

**During the Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on Syria at
the 23rd Session of the Human Rights Council: (27 May – 14 June 2013)**

1. **Mr. President**, Botswana wishes to thank the Commission of Inquiry for the comprehensive and informative update.
2. It is clear from the update that the conflict in Syria has the potential of spreading throughout the region. There is clear evidence that the conflict is already having negative impact on the internal stability and political dynamics of the neighbouring States.
3. In addition, the involvement of extremists in the conflict raises serious concerns about Syria becoming embroiled in the global jihadist cause.
4. All these, coupled with the ongoing sectarian propaganda in Syria, have the potential of further complicating the situation, if not immediately addressed. This makes efforts to find a lasting solution to the conflict even more urgent.
5. What is also clear is that 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.
6. We therefore agree with the Commission that the conflict will end only through a comprehensive, inclusive political process.
7. It is in this regard that we think the 2012 Geneva Communiqué creates a framework within which the parties could work towards an amicable solution.

8. We therefore welcome, and fully support, the recent joint political initiative by the USA and the Russian Federation aimed at convening an international conference to follow-up the Geneva meeting of June 2012.

9. The Commission couldn't be more right that such a conference, involving all parties to the conflict, could break the diplomatic stalemate and start a comprehensive political process to end the violence.

10. Mr. President, given the precarious situation in which we find ourselves, it is clearly desirable that the diplomatic or political initiatives be given a chance. Consequently, measures that could detract from this should be avoided.

11. Botswana, like many other countries, is also troubled by recent allegations of the use of chemical weapons by both parties to the conflict.

12. We therefore call upon the Syrian Government to allow unhindered access to the country by both the Commission of Inquiry and the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons, in order to conduct investigations.

13. We wish to stress that the desire to have a meaningful international conference should not brush aside the need for accountability. As the Commission rightly observed, the imperative to stop the violence cannot obscure the reality that there can be no enduring peace without justice.

14. We also 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.

15. According to the update, the number of internally displaced Syrians is now 4.25 million. All these people are in dire need of humanitarian assistance.

16. Botswana also believes that the United Nations Security Council, as the principal organ of the UN responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, can still do more in the efforts to finding a lasting solution to the conflict. This would not only be a good discharge of its functions, but they will also owe it to humanity.

17. We therefore recommend that the Human Rights Council should transmit the Commission's report to the Security Council; and that the Commission should be given an opportunity to brief the Security Council on the situation in Syria.

I thank you!