

Botswana Statement during the Interactive Dialogue with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic during the 21st Session of the Human Rights Council

17th September 2012

1. **Madam President**, let me join other delegations in thanking the Commission of Inquiry for its comprehensive update on Syria.
2. The updates continue to reveal a worsening human rights and humanitarian tragedy, developing before the eyes of the international community.
3. The Commission continues to document a clear and systematic pattern of human rights violations, which in its view, may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes. These include murder, torture, indiscriminate attacks, arbitrary arrests and detention, as well as pillaging and destruction of property.
4. It is alarming to note that the Government forces and the *Shabbiha* even have the moral audacity to employ sexual violence, including rape and sexual assault, against men, women and children under the age of 18, as an instrument of war.
5. They also continue to indiscriminately target and kill small children, women and unarmed civilians, as well as vandalise schools and use them as military staging grounds and sniper posts.

6. What is even more shocking is the evidence that the Government itself is mostly responsible for the horrific massacres of the people of Syria, including the El-Houleh massacre, and the gross violations of their fundamental human rights, pursuant to State policy. This should lead everyone to question the political and moral authority the Government has to continue leading the people of Syria.

7. We, therefore, wish to reiterate, **Madam President**, that, the situation in Syria calls upon the international community to shoulder the responsibility to protect the people of that country. That is our noble responsibility to all humanity.

8. In this respect, Botswana will continue to implore her friends in the Security Council to review their position with a view to helping the Syrian people. It is our hope that members of the Security Council will find the Commission's updates more compelling to put aside their differences on this issue.

9. Madam President, The Commission's update also reveals that anti-Government armed groups have also committed serious human rights violations, such as torture and enforced disappearances. All parties to the conflict have an obligation to uphold international humanitarian law, including individuals and non-State actors.

10. It is therefore our hope that the Council will find it compelling to renew the mandate of the Commission, so that it

can continue its outstanding work with a view to ensuring that all perpetrators are held accountable.

11. We call on the Syrian Government to allow the Commission access to all areas in the country so that it could effectively carry-out its mandate.

12. We also appeal to the Government of Syria to allow unhindered access to all areas in the country by the humanitarian agencies to provide the much needed assistance. Despite its budgetary constraints, Botswana has found it necessary to pledge financial assistance to humanitarian efforts in Syria.

13. Finally, we wish to assure that Botswana will continue to lend her voice and support to all international efforts to bring pressure to bear on those responsible for the atrocities in Syria, as well as recommendations to refer the Syrian situation to the International Criminal Court.

I thank you for your attention!