

16 May 2013

EU

## CELEBRATION OF EUROPE DAY 2013

GABORONE, 16 MAY 2013

*ADDRESS BY AMBASSADOR GERARD MCGOVERN  
HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION  
TO BOTSWANA & SADC*

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is my pleasure to welcome all of you to the European Union residence. Thank you very much for accepting to celebrate Europe Day 2013 with us. It is 63 years since Robert Schuman called on the nations of Europe to make war on the continent impossible and to spread peace and prosperity globally. In recognition of the progress achieved in Europe in this regard, the EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012. Even in times of austerity, I believe that we can permit ourselves to celebrate that achievement!

But today we also celebrate our ever deepening relationship with Botswana and the SADC region. Recently we have stepped up political dialogue between Europe and SADC as a sign of the growing maturity in our partnership.

As we look to the year ahead, our globalised world looks ever more complex, and there are certainly many mountains to climb, but we believe that the road to peace and prosperity is about international cooperation, about partnership, about basic values that Botswana and the European Union share in abundance.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to share with you a few thoughts about Europe today and about the Europe-Botswana relationship.

### **THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Today in Europe, we have a Union of peace - a 27-nation, soon to be 28 nation Union, that is now the world's largest economy, the largest trading bloc by value, the world's first donor of development assistance - a market of 500 million people with more than 20 million registered companies. But of course, with such strength comes responsibilities, not least

towards partner countries and regions.

You will all know about the impact of the financial crisis on Europe and the economic problems that we are facing. But the basis of the European economy remains strong. And the common values that bring us together are more important than ever.

We wish to assure partner countries that we are putting our house in order by introducing the fiscal discipline and oversight but also the creativity that will be necessary conditions for recovery and sustainable growth.

The European Union considers itself as outward looking and open. We have consistently advocated throughout the world our values – about trade, the environment, climate change, human rights, the role of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to name a few.

I take the opportunity to congratulate Botswana on being the first country in Africa to sign off on the amendments to the ICC Statute. Europe must remain actively engaged in world affairs and we must continue to act responsibly.

EU diplomacy is active in the Middle East Peace Process, in the Iran nuclear talks, and closer to home in the Balkans. Like the people of this country, Europeans are horrified at what is unfolding in Syria and we are doing what we can through diplomatic and other channels to bring an end to the civil war and alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people.

## **THE EUROPEAN UNION AND BOTSWANA**

Over the past four decades EU relations with this country have matured. Today our relationship with Botswana is political, it is economic and although Botswana is an Upper Middle Income country there is still an important strand of financial and technical cooperation about which I will say more later.

In the political sphere we work closely with Botswana in the UN with regard to peace and security, political, economic, social and human rights. I take the opportunity to commend Botswana for the pro-active and constructive role it plays as a member of the UN Human Rights Council, and, during the current semester as Chair of the ACP Group of States. The EU fully supports the mediation work by Botswana and its SADC partners in addressing the situation, for example, in Zimbabwe and Madagascar. Of course the EU continues to support and encourage the African Union to play an active role in conflict prevention and resolution. The fight against piracy in the Indian Ocean is an excellent example in this regard. Politics

and peace go hand in hand - without peace, it is hard to achieve prosperity.

Botswana has known peace and prosperity since independence. But the recent economic crisis has shown the vulnerability of dependence, virtually, on a single source of wealth, namely diamonds. Our collective prosperity and well-being can be threatened at any time. Many of you will know that Botswana's fortunes are very much tied to the health of the world economy and to none less than that of the EU. Over the years Europe has accounted for an important share of Botswana's diamond sales, tourism revenues and beef exports. And European companies continue to seek investment opportunities in Botswana.

Diversification of the economy is the key thrust in NDP 10 and Vision 2016. In this context, the EU has had a long-standing relationship with Botswana in support of education and skills to meet the requirements of the labour market. The staff and students from Gaborone Technical College who are helping us with the hospitality here today are a product of that collaboration. Thank you for being here.

At the same time, we are also actively supporting Government in critical areas such as reform of Public Finance Management, HIV/AIDS and the health of women and children. We support partnerships in the water sector as well as economic diversification efforts in the Selebi-Phikwe area. And we work with civil society on community-based initiatives with a particular focus on self-reliance as well as supporting human rights defenders. Mr Minister, at this point I would like to commend Botswana for the commitments it has undertaken following the recent Universal Periodic Review at the UN and I can confirm that the EU will support you in your efforts to develop a human rights strategy and action plan.

### **SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

But now I would like to return briefly to the theme of economic diversification. As you look around you will notice several small locally-owned businesses advertising their products and potential. As Botswana seeks to diversify its economy we agreed to partner with the Ministry of Trade and Industry to focus on the challenge of growing small business and placing it at the heart of the economy. The Centre for the Development of Enterprise (CDE) – an EU-Africa joint institution – will over the next three years implement a Private Sector Development Programme (PSDP) throughout Botswana. The Programme will be formally launched on the 23rd May 2013, just across the road from here in the new CBD.

The PSDP is part of the Government of Botswana's overall Private Sector Development Strategy (PSDS) and Economic Diversification Drive. It is part of a larger Euro 8 million Non-State Actor programme agreement signed between the EU and the Government of Botswana

at the end of 2012. So far, the following partners are involved in this new programme: BOCCIM, BITC, LEA, CEDA, BEMA, BOBS, BNP, HATAB, BTO and BIH. The project will provide capacity building to Small, Micro and Medium sized Enterprises (SMMEs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) with a view to increasing their competitiveness. It will also support Intermediary Organizations (IOs) to upgrade service delivery to their members. Finally, the PSDP will assist the Botswana authorities to improve the business environment for small enterprise. Additional resources have been mobilized to support Women's entrepreneurship.

We are grateful to the Government of Botswana and the MTI for providing support and logistical facilities for the implementation of PSDP. But of course the entire endeavour will and should be judged by results – therefore, job creation and business development must now be the focus once the programme is launched and I look forward to that event next week.

### **REGIONAL INTEGRATION**

At regional level, in view of the experience of our own Union, we strongly encourage and support regional economic and political integration in SADC and the wider Tripartite. As a landlocked country, Botswana stands to gain much from improved regional transport links, more free trade and cross-border cooperation. Europe is ready to invest in such initiatives for the benefit of Botswana and its neighbours. We are pleased to have been able to assist SADC Secretariat in its institutional reforms – and in modernising donor coordination efforts.

I take this opportunity to commend Botswana for its positive role in leading the ongoing trade talks between the Southern half of SADC and the EU. We feel that, after years of uncertainty, an agreement is within sight and we do hope that we can agree on an ambitious trade package before the end of this year.

### **CONCLUSION**

The people of Europe as the people of this beautiful and bountiful country and the rest of the region aspire to nothing else than a decent life, to peace, security and prosperity both now and for future generations. By working together we can make that a reality.

In closing, I invite all of you to join me in a toast to the health and long life of His Excellency Lieutenant General Seretse Khama Ian Khama, President of the Republic, to the prosperity and happiness of the people of Botswana and to the ever growing friendship between the European Union and this country and region.

To the President of the Republic of Botswana, H.E. Seretse Khama Ian Khama,  
Pula!