



**CLOSING REMARKS**

**BY**

**THE MINISTER FOR PRESIDENTIAL AFFAIRS  
AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION,  
BOTSWANA**

**HON. MOKGWEETSI E. K. MASISI**

**5<sup>th</sup> GLOBAL ELECTORAL ORGANISATION  
CONFERENCE**

**GABORONE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE**

**MARCH 09, 2011**

**GABORONE**

**BOTSWANA**

Director of Ceremonies;

Honorable Ministers here present;

Your Excellencies members of the diplomatic corps;

Executive members of the International IDEA;

Honourable Chairman and Commissioners – IEC, Botswana;

Members of the GEO Steering Committee;

Government officials here present;

Representatives of the electoral management bodies of the world;

Ladies and gentlemen,

good afternoon.

It is a great honour to have been requested to perform the official closing of this historic conference, being the first in Africa and held in Gaborone, Botswana.

2. The world of elections has come to Gaborone over the last 10 days. Just a few days ago, prior to this conference, we hosted the United Nations Development Programme, which held a global meeting for their elections staff here in Gaborone.

3. Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, with this, the fifth Global Electoral Organisation Conference (or GEO as it is called), we see the largest gathering of election experts from around the world sharing and exchanging experiences, ideas, challenges and stories here, on Botswana soil.

4. We are therefore honoured that Botswana has been chosen to host the first GEO on the African soil. Botswana as a nation stands as one of the most respected democracies on the African continent. We are privileged to have

contributed to the development of the elections and democracy world by hosting this event, and also that we will have the opportunity to learn from other parts of the world on best election practices.

5. Elections, as you may be aware, are one of the key foundation stones upon which a democratic society is built. Recent events in North Africa and the Middle East show that there is a great yearning across the world for human dignity and respect. This has seen dramatic changes take place in Tunisia and Egypt and we are seeing dramatic events unfold also in Libya and other Arab-speaking countries.

6. It is worth noting ladies and gentlemen, that these events for change are largely driven by the youth in these countries, we see a quest for inclusivity where citizens want to have a voice, where they want to have their rights and dignity respected and where they wish to see greater choice with regards to who represents them and how they are governed. The degree of social change that is required is immense and the expectations even greater. While these countries and the international community battle with these changes, it is clear that credible and legitimate elections will be key in this social transformation.

7. When one looks at the entire process of nation-building, elections represent important moments where the social, political and economic temperature of a country is tested. Elections are not one-off events and neither are they the only aspect of democratic practice that describes a country. Yet the world looks at them as a moment of great public reflection

and issues of social justice and equality come into sharp contrast during that time. The whole process of growing a country's democracy therefore relies on credible elections to fuel its growth. The very same will be true in not only Tunisia and Egypt, but we will see the same rings true for Africa's newest state in Sudan and even here in Botswana.

8. Allow me, Director of Ceremonies, to now make reference to our own electoral management body, Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). When I look at the role of elections in Botswana, I see an intricate linkage with our own Independent Electoral Commission. One cannot separate the process from those who administer it. The current IEC has now overseen more than ten years of elections in Botswana and has over these years conducted three general elections which were given a clean bill of health. Over the years it has come to represent an important interface between Botswana citizens and the public institutions.

9. We are proud of the role that it has played in that they are a trusted institution, held in high esteem not only by the politicians, <sup>who they referee over;</sup> but also by the citizens of a country. They willingly subject themselves to an independent performance audit after each general election, which is not a legal requirement. In doing so, they show themselves to be open and transparent in their dealings and this helps build their own independence and demonstrates a willingness to learn and develop.

10. In co-hosting this conference, as well as the UNDP meeting last week, the IEC Botswana further shows that it is a world-leader. They have opened their

arms to the elections world and hosted, along with the International IDEA and the other organisations, a world-class event. For this I thank and commend them for such an initiative.

11. I am happy that this global conference now has a link with Botswana that will stand for an eternity. The Gaborone Declaration that was discussed and adopted here will forever link the GEO with Botswana, not only because the event was held here, but also because it comes at such an important time. Events on the continent and around the world are forcing a renewed discussion on democratic practices and processes and the role of elections in this development. The Gaborone Declaration therefore represents an important document that we trust the next GEO will reflect upon and see what advances have been made since meeting here in Botswana.

12. Botswana have, as always, a clear legacy that they need to leave for the next generation. Democracy opens the path to guarantee basic freedoms and in the process promises good governance and prudent economic management. Elections provide one of the many keys to opening that door to freedom, dignity, good governance and economic development.

13. I am therefore confident and trust that this conference has allowed you the opportunity to take away lessons that you can apply back home that will help improve your own democracies. You, as election experts, have an invaluable role to play in the growth of your own democracies. You serve not only as midwives who regularly oversee the rebirth of your own democracies, but also as the role models of how public entities should function.

14. Before I conclude ladies and gentlemen; let me thank the GEO Steering Committee for bringing the GEO to Africa and in particular to Botswana. You have helped show the world that Botswana has a lot to offer the world of elections and democracy and in the process also helped our own institutions to reflect on their role on the global stage. As you leave on your different journeys back home, I hope that you leave with pleasant memories and good experiences of my country and that we will see you back here soon.

Do travel safely and thank you for attending this important conference.