



Botswana National Day Celebration: 40 Years of Independence

Carol Thompson, Deputy Assistant Secretary

Remarks at Embassy of Botswana Celebration
Washington, DC
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Thank you, Ambassador Lekoa, for that kind introduction. It is an honor to be here this evening to celebrate a very special milestone. I bring greetings and good wishes on behalf of President Bush, Secretary Rice, and the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Dr. Jendayi Frazer.

One piece of my portfolio as the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Africa Bureau at the State Department is to oversee America's relationship with 10 Southern African countries. So, it is my distinct pleasure and honor to join you all tonight in celebrating the 40th anniversary of Botswana's independence. Congratulations to the Botswana on this great day!

The United States and Botswana have shared a strong friendship, since your independence in 1966. Americans feel a sense of kinship because we share a common language, history, values and dedication to democracy. With this solid foundation, in Africa and elsewhere Botswana plays a leadership role as a peaceful, prosperous country. And that is not by accident. Botswana is an independent, self-governing country, which has held a series of democratic and peaceful elections and smooth transitions of power. Botswana has been a model of stability and good governance throughout Africa.

And as a result of that stability, since independence, your nation has had the fastest growth in income anywhere in the world. The government of Botswana has consistently demonstrated prudence in managing money, and maintaining transparency in your financial system. In fact, your experience has become the benchmark for success in Africa, and in the developing nations of Latin America and Asia. The United States enjoys working in partnership with you in many areas. One of the most critical is to support your fight against the horrible scourge HIV/AIDS. A few years ago President Bush launched his Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief also known as PEPFAR. Through this program we have worked with the people of Botswana to save lives and keep families and communities together.

We are also proud of our economic ties and our strong trade relations under the rubric of AGOA, the African Growth and Opportunity Act. Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to see for myself what all the fuss was about Botswana. And it was all true. I met some of the warmest, kindest, hardest working, and most dedicated people I've encountered anywhere. And, I learned some interesting things preparing for that trip, namely that Botswana is approximately the same size as Texas. I also learned that both Botswana and Texans love good beef – something that both countries are very proud of. As a former Texas resident, who has spent the last several years working for a President who is proud of his Texas roots, I know of which I speak!

You have so much to be proud of in your homeland. And much to be proud of in Ambassador Lekoa, who is an outstanding representative of the people of Botswana here in Washington. Thank you again, Ambassador Lekoa, for inviting us all here this evening. And now, I hope you will join me and raise your glasses to celebrate the tremendous success and 40th birthday of Botswana.

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