

**Statement by Honourable Kgotla Kenneth AUTLWETSE  
Assistant Minister of Agricultural Development and Food Security, BOTSWANA  
at the 41<sup>st</sup> Session of the IFAD's Governing Council: 13 – 14 February 2018**

1. First and foremost, let me take this opportunity to express my delegation's gratitude to the Government and the people of Italy, for their warmth once more in hosting us.
2. This is indeed a strategic gathering in that its discussions are multi-faceted as they are geared towards steering the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) into a new era and as such we are humbled to be part of it. It is without doubt that this year's theme, "*From fragility to long-term resilience: Investing in sustainable rural economies*", is a relevant one more so that we are talking of influencing change for the future in as far as interventions to address challenges that affect food security in our countries are concerned. In addition to that, it is also comforting that the theme addresses the status quo on the food security situation in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, South-Eastern and Western Asia, which is gradually dwindling.

**Chairperson,**

3. There is no doubt that agriculture will continue as the bedrock for the future growth of our economies, despite challenges such as the lack of access to land and basic financial services. To address these challenges, we must create an enabling environment that would lead to the development of new financial solutions and foster financial inclusion.
4. This is so because financial inclusion provides opportunities that re-invigorate and bolster economic growth that has more profound gains.
5. As is the case in most sub-Saharan countries, over 70% of Botswana living in the rural areas, derive most of their livelihoods from agriculture. It is for this reason that we are committed to developing the rural economies through various policies and programmes. Our thrust should, therefore, be geared towards developing policies that will drive a vibrant, sustainable and a resilient agricultural sector.
6. It is my sincere hope that this Session will consider interrogating ways in which smallholder farmers could access markets, which is one of Botswana's biggest challenges. We are battling with harnessing Public Private Partnerships as well as strengthening such stakeholder linkages towards realising agricultural commercialization.

**Chairperson,**

7. We are looking forward to engaging in interactive debates that could lead to effective solutions for our constituents, especially the youth and women who remain marginalised in our societies.
8. In conclusion, Botswana wishes to express appreciation for the fruitful partnership particularly in the just ending Agricultural Services Support Project (ASSP) and sincerely hope it was just one of the many to come. This partnership proved to be worthwhile especially in assisting with technical expertise and as such, we can only hope for continued interactions.

**I thank you for your attention.**