

**UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD), twenty-third session (virtual meeting)  
Geneva, 10-12 June 2020**

**High-level segment on “Harnessing science, technology, and innovation to  
accelerate progress on the SDGs and addressing COVID-19”**

Statement submitted by

H.E. Dr. Douglas Letsholathebe  
Minister of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology  
Botswana

DISCLAIMER: The views presented here are the contributors' and do not necessarily reflect the views and position of the United Nations or the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

**SPEECH**

**BY**

**HON DR DOUGLAS LETSHOLATHEBE**

**MINISTER OF TERTIARY EDUCATION, RESEARCH,  
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, BOTSWANA**

**AT THE**

**23<sup>RD</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SCIENCE  
AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT VIRTUAL  
MEETING**

***TOPIC: HARNESSING SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION  
TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON SDGS AND ADDRESSING  
COVID-19***

**WEDNESDAY 10<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2020**

1. Good afternoon

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

2. I am delighted to join you on this virtual platform and make my contribution on this important session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development annual meeting. I take this time to thank the Member States for allowing Botswana to be chair of this 23<sup>rd</sup> session. It has provided us an opportunity to contribute at a world stage level.

3. Chair, The first time in recorded history, human kind experienced health disaster of epic proportions and looked up to technology was during the “Spanish flu” pandemic of 1918. The pandemic at the time spurred innovations that changed the face of innovation. Similarly the demand for technological solutions has heightened as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic where small and big economies find themselves looking up to scientists and engineers for all sorts of solutions.

4. To progress beyond where we find ourselves, we need to urgently harness rapidly changing technologies and use them to enable us to be inclusive and promote sustainable development. These rapidly changing technologies include

among others, big data, Internet of Things (IoT), machine learning, Artificial Intelligence (AI), robotics, 3D Printing, biotechnology, nanotechnology, renewable energy technologies as well as satellite and drone technologies. Countries must act swiftly to take advantage of the opportunities inherent in these technologies to develop solutions to help address COVID-19 as well as other society challenges.

5. Chair, now than ever before, the international community is called upon to save mankind from this COVID-19 pandemic. An invisible agent that threatens to annihilate mankind, especially those communities living in places where needed resources to fight COVID -19 are lacking. This disease threatens to undo progress that has been attained over the years on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Targets that were set for all the 17 SDGs may not be achieved unless science, technology and innovation find solutions to combat this scourge. We cannot wish away COVID-19.
6. Recently in my country, prevention measures for COVID-19 led to a period when extreme social distancing was implemented. It was during this period that innovators sprang into action and came up with solutions. We are currently processing these proposed solutions to help improve the prevention measures. This is to ensure that

COVID-19 is contained before it decimates our population. During this time also strong collaborations are required, and these could be south-south or north-south collaborations to take advantage of available resources to control this pandemic. I also participated in the regional meeting where the African Union was leading countries in the fight against COVID-19. To deal with COVID-19, all must join hands as science, technology and innovation community all over the world.

7. My country embraces collaborations in science, technology and innovation. For that reason, Botswana has engaged United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) the review of her policy on research, science, technology and innovation. We recognize the vast resources available to UNCTAD and that other Member States have been assisted the same way. This will enable Botswana to embrace latest policy developments to enable her to be at par with her peers.
8. In conclusion Chair, I wish to thank the Secretariat for enabling me to make these comments. I also thank my team which is also participating on this virtual session. The outputs of this session will also benefit my country and look forward to how we can equally participate in accelerating progress on the SDGs, as well as addressing COVID-19. Once again, I thank all the CSTD Member

States for allowing Botswana to be your chair for the 23<sup>rd</sup> session. We remain available to also serve the community in any other capacity you would desire.

9. I thank you