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Presentation of reports on science, technology and innovation policy reviews

Statement submitted by

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Republic of Botswana

**25th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT VIRTUAL MEETING**

THE STI POLICY REVIEW OF BOTSWANA

STATEMENT

BY

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TECHNOLOGY**

REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

1st April 2022; 1430hrs

Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Ms. Rebecca Grynspan,
CSTD Chair, Mr Al-Qurashi
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon/evening/morning,

It is a pleasure to be here to share the experience of Botswana on STI policy review. Let me start by outlining the context for the STIP review of Botswana.

Mr Chair, Our national efforts in research, science, technology and innovation, what we in Botswana call RSTI, are geared towards enabling the process of transformation of Botswana into a high income, knowledge-based economy with dynamic job creation and economic diversification. These are among the key national goals that STI should contribute to. To achieve this, in Botswana we have sought to align our efforts on STI with Botswana's Vision 2036 and the National Development Plan number eleven (NDP11). I believe that the STIP review has acknowledged the importance of achieving such an alignment.

Botswana has been actively pursuing policies on STI since 1998 when the first National Science and Technology Policy was created. It was followed by

the design of a National Research, Science and Technology Plan (BNRST Plan) in 2005, which set out priority areas for R&D in the country. These were the first major attempts to create a strategy to strengthen the STI capacity and manage the STI system in a coordinated manner. The 1998 National S&T Policy was updated by the Research, Science, Technology and Innovation (RSTI) Policy of 2011. The 2011 RSTI policy aimed to build on the 1998 policy and the BNRST Plan of 2005, and improve the integration of STI into different sectors in Botswana. The policy was to be reviewed after five years.

Since 1998 we have made progress in some important areas, in terms of building human resources for STI, establishing a framework for governance of STI, and building our RSTI capacity. But there is much more still to do. So it was in this context that my ministry decided to collaborate with UNCTAD in undertaking an STI Policy Review for Botswana, in order to review the RSTI policy and its implementation, and to assess the STI system and the capacity of Botswana to harness STI for sustainable development.

Mr Chair, We are pleased with the approach of the STIP review in undertaking broad stakeholder consultations as part of the process of the implementation. The project started during the COVID-19 pandemic, which not only created some delays, but also led to the need to implement the project by virtual means due to the many restrictions on travel and physical meetings put in place for health reasons in response to the pandemic. This

complicated the implementation of the review and the process of achieving as widespread stakeholder engagement as we would have liked to see.

The STIP review has nevertheless progressed and it is in the advanced stage of preparation. A process of validation within Botswana will be conducted before finalisation of the review. We had a presentation of key findings from the fact finding mission for the STIP review at a meeting of our internal Steering and Working Committees in Botswana in October 2021.

Mr Chair, One of the findings is the fragmentation in the STI system, particularly with regard to R&D. I would agree that this finding is a valid one, and we are aiming to work in this direction and to establish national priorities for STI in order to provide direction to guide our efforts on R&D, technology and innovation going forward.

Other findings noted were the need to improve the management of the R&D system and to increase investment in R&D, technology and innovation. I would likewise agree that this is important for Botswana. We have been establishing a management system for research, and will soon be establishing a National Research Fund, which will be used to strengthen research management and provide a mechanism for funding research activities. There are other issues raised in areas where we are working hard to improve, including monitoring and evaluation and private sector engagement in STI. I am confident though that post the review my country will move swiftly to address these as already we are in the process of

finalising both the Private Sector Engagement Strategy on Research and Innovation, and a Research and Innovation Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

Mr Chair, as part of the STIP review process, we have just gone through a series of activities under an STI foresight exercise to help provide future direction for STI in Botswana. The foresight aimed to stimulate a participatory discussion among stakeholders in the STI community in Botswana on the future direction of STI and set the STI agenda for the future. Foresight is by nature an exercise based on active stakeholder participation, which we value in Botswana.

The foresight was an interesting exercise, and the first experience that we have had with using foresight for strategic thinking on STI. I believe that it has indeed helped to stimulate a discussion among STI stakeholders in Botswana on the future direction of R&D, technology and innovation activities in the country. We hope that the results will help inform our research agenda. We will use foresight as a strategic tool for planning in the future. We look forward to the report on the STI foresight exercise and the insights that it can bring for informing our discussions on the future STI agenda.

Mr Chair, We in Botswana also value international collaboration and partnerships. Our collaboration with UNCTAD will build our national capabilities and strengthen our framework for governing STI so that they

contribute to achieving the goals outlined in our Vision 2036 as achieving other goals outlined in relevant SADC and AU policy documents, as well as Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. I thank UNCTAD for their support to Botswana and the collaboration that we have enjoyed on STI policy for sustainable development. We are also open to collaboration with other countries and international bodies that are interested in collaborating with us on research, science, technology and innovation.

I look forward to a fuller discussion of the STIP review once the review has been finalized along with the report on the STI foresight and other related activities on capacity building on STI policy. I hope that our experience will be useful for other countries in terms of exchanging national STI policy experiences for mutual learning among countries.

Thank you for your attention.