

**Remarks by Ambassador Michelle D. Gavin**  
**U.S. Independence Day Celebration**  
**U.S. Ambassador's Residence, Gaborone**  
**July 5, 2012**  
*As prepared for delivery*

- Thank you President Bush. Again, it is a true pleasure to have you and Laura join us today.
- Once again, it is an honor to welcome you all to our home to join us in celebrating America's Independence Day.
- Those of you who have joined celebrations here in past years will notice some changes – we're trying to share a bit more of our culture and traditions with you. Americans are, in general, deeply informal people, and our Independence Day celebrations tend to be very casual, friendly, come-as-you-are affairs.
- Our country is wonderfully diverse, and the different culinary and cultural influences that make us who we are find all sorts of expressions on this day, but hotdogs and burgers on the grill, music in the air, and a welcoming atmosphere are constants at American Independence Day celebrations, from the White House in Washington to small towns in rural America.
- It's not so easy to recreate that in the context of official diplomatic work, but we wanted to try to give you a more authentic American Independence Day experience. I hope that you enjoy it. Be sure to sample the apple pie and chocolate chip cookies for dessert.
- Our celebrations are casual and relaxed, but the depth of our feeling, when we reflect on our Independence Day, could not be more serious. Yesterday marked the 236<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence – my country's first step toward freedom and democracy for its people.
- For citizens of the United States, that Declaration stands for something absolute and unassailable. It establishes what independence means to an American.
  - Unalienable rights,
  - Life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, and
  - Government powers derived by the consent of the governed.
- These concepts form our essence – and they are as real today as they were 236 years ago.
- We stand on the notion that from freedom, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, spring the dynamism and economic activity that builds a nation – alongside the political and social order that sustains it.
- It is clear that these concepts are well understood, and are valued, here in Botswana as well, a country with a remarkable record of stability, democracy, and development.
- I marveled at Botswana back in my student days, as I read about all that had been accomplished in this country's short history as an independent state, and I continue to be astounded by your achievements, and inspired by what is possible for the future.
- If you'll permit me a personal reflection – I stood here last year having arrived just weeks earlier, looking out over the crowd, and the truth is, most of the faces were not familiar to me. I was too new to know most of you. I was a stranger in this land.
- Today, I have a completely different realization. I am thrilled to look around and see colleagues and friends. I am so very lucky to be representing the country I love, the United States of America, here in Botswana, a country I admire deeply.
- I cannot adequately describe how grateful I am for the many, many gestures of kindness and welcome that my family and I have received.
- On behalf of my husband Dave and our daughter Clara, I just want to say thank you for an incredibly gracious and hospitable welcome to this wonderful country.

- From our frequent Sunday brunches at Sanita’s – Clara’s favorite playground –
  - to the impromptu “Aren’t you the American Ambassador” in the neighborhood Choppies,
  - to the real friends we have made with professional colleagues across all sectors,
  - to the gracious welcomes I receive from local leaders when I travel across the country,
  - to the smiling faces of the children I have had the chance to spend time with and read to in rural libraries,
- I and my family have been welcomed here with open arms. Botswana truly beats with a big heart and we thank you.
- Speaking of traveling across the country, one of the best pieces of advice I received from Steve Nolan who preceded me as Ambassador here was “Don’t be the Ambassador to Gaborone – get out of town and be the Ambassador to Botswana.”
- I have worked hard to act on that advice, and I’m very pleased to say that by the end of this month, I will have traveled to every district in the country at least once, some several times.
- Botswana is an incredibly vibrant place north to south, east to west, and it has become very clear to me that Foreign Minister Skelemani’s frequent admonishment to diplomats is quite right – you cannot know the heart and soul of Botswana based on what you encounter in Government Enclave.
- As I said, I have received a most gracious welcome and greeting from across the land, but I also have to mention the members of the U.S. Mission community, many of whom are here today.
- I’d like to acknowledge in particular one of our mission employees who really symbolizes the cooperation between Botswana and Americans that is so critical to our success. Many of you know Dintle Mphele, who has served our Embassy well over a career of more than 30 years.
- Dintle will be retiring this year, and in recognition of his many years of service, as well as the ongoing hard work and dedication of our many talented Botswana colleagues at the Embassy, I want to take this opportunity to extend my thanks and congratulations.
- I truly appreciate the consistent support and the hard work from all the Mission’s staff. It has made the past year a tremendous success.
- When I arrived, I worked hard to make clear the importance with which I viewed the U.S. – Botswana relationship, and what I thought we could accomplish together.
- I told our staff that there is something special here and we must make the best use of our own resources to complement the extensive investments Botswana’s Government and civil society are already making in the country’s future.
- I am very proud of what we have accomplished over the past year. While we continue to build on our strong and broad partnership, we have focused particularly on three areas of great importance to us and the Government and people of Botswana: youth engagement, health, and economic diversification.
- First, we recognize that nearly 40 percent of Botswana’s citizens are between the ages of 15 – 24. These are the Botswana who will determine whether this country’s next decades will match the achievements of its recent history. In the view of the U.S. Mission, it is a tremendous opportunity to have an impact on making Botswana’s future even brighter than today.
- To add value to what the Government and civil society are already doing in Botswana, the Embassy has established a variety of programs that engage youth.
  - We have supported mentorship programs;
  - we have organized roundtable discussions on family and peer communication, led by a psychologist and broadcast both on radio and television,
  - we have supported activities addressing the troubling prevalence of gender based violence that so disproportionately affects young girls;

- we have facilitated networking opportunities for future business leaders; and
- we have established essay contests and photo contests to challenge students to stretch their abilities and consider what tomorrow will look like in Botswana.
- An exciting activity that we have just undertaken is the Ambassador's Leaders of Tomorrow program, which will select one Form Four student from each district based on merit and demonstrated leadership ability, and bring them all to Gaborone two or three times per year to participate in leadership development and civic awareness activities.
- Another strategic area in which the U.S. Mission focuses a great deal of attention is in the health sector. This is where Botswana faces some of its greatest challenges, and this is where the U.S. Government focuses most of its resources.
- It is fitting that President George W. Bush is with us today when we talk about our health activities. America turned a corner when his administration kicked off the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief nine years ago.
- Thanks to PEPFAR and the massive resources it directed from the American people to assisting people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, the United States, working with host nation partners like Botswana and with courageous and visionary leaders like President Mogae and now President Khama, has helped to save countless lives around the world, particularly in Africa.
- PEPFAR was the largest commitment by any nation ever to combat a single disease. With bipartisan support from Congress, President Bush spearheaded this groundbreaking investment, and for that, I invite you all to join me recognizing his contribution. <<CLAP, CLAP>>
- The story does not end there. The United States remains the single largest external provider of public health assistance to Botswana.
- American support is being carried out by many different arms of the U.S. Government – the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Peace Corps, USAID, and the Departments of Defense and State — and with different sources of funding, including PEPFAR and grants from the National Institutes of Health.
- America's commitment to Botswana goes beyond government. The University of Pennsylvania, University of Washington, Harvard University, Baylor University, University of California at San Francisco, Johns Hopkins University, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and many other U.S.-based private sector and NGO organizations are also heavily committed to improving health and development in Botswana.
- But these different entities and funding streams essentially come from the same source – the American people – and they all pursue a common vision to work alongside the Government and citizens of Botswana in improving public health throughout the country.
- Indeed, earlier today at the Princess Marina Hospital, we launched with President Bush a U.S.-funded \$3 million program that will dramatically decrease the time needed for examination, diagnosis, and treatment of cervical cancer, the second most common cancer in Botswana and the leading cause of cancer-related deaths for women in the country.
- The third strategic area in which the U.S. Mission is focusing is in economic diversification. We recognize that Botswana's unprecedented economic success over the past 40 years is sustainable only with a more diversified economy.
- Finding and supporting the next engines of growth in Botswana is obviously a challenge that the government and the entire nation face – but the U.S. Mission intends to do all it can to assist in meeting that challenge.
- Our objectives are:
  - to assist entrepreneurs to network and learn from each other, inside the country, regionally, and globally;
  - to encourage a culture of independent thinking, innovation, and creativity;

- to help build private sector capacity to improve Botswana's business climate;
- to assist in reducing barriers to investment and commercial activity; and
- to bring together Botswana and American businesses to improve prosperity for both our nations .
- We have conducted a series of workshops and video conferences on entrepreneurship, business ethics, and access to the U.S. market for exports and investment;
  - we are supporting the Botswana Confederation of Commerce, Industry, and Manpower to hire a consultant that will help promote a voluntary code of business ethics and leverage that code into greater interaction among the business community;
  - we have worked hard to support the establishment of an American Chamber of Commerce in Botswana; and
  - we are letting U.S. businesses know about opportunities here in Botswana through multiple outreach opportunities, including a solar trade mission to the U.S. and a recent conference call I held with almost one hundred U.S. business operators and other participants.
- Alongside the strategic focus areas of youth engagement, health, and economic diversification, we are also actively working with the Government and civil society in a wide variety of other areas, such as media freedom, military to military engagement, conservation of natural resources, respect for basic human rights, and the elimination of trafficking in persons.
- One particular area I would like to highlight is our work together in law enforcement training. Some 34 African countries send their law enforcement professionals here to Botswana to sharpen their skills at the International Law Enforcement Academy, which is jointly managed by the United States and the Government of Botswana.
- Clearly, the U.S. Mission in Botswana is a busy place, and I am very pleased with what we have accomplished and are accomplishing. But where do we go from here?
- Americans know well that democracy is not easy. It requires constant vigilance and engagement from its citizens. From the day the Declaration was signed, we have been a nation evolving, and we remain so.
  - We built our country based on opportunity and equality, but we face ever greater challenges in ensuring the welfare of all Americans;
  - We have confronted aggressors far afield and on our own soil, but our troops remain in harm's way, fighting for a lasting peace.
  - We have come closer and closer to achieving the just, inclusive society we aspire to be, overcoming the burning social and racial injustice of slavery and discrimination, confronting sexism and ensuring that American girls and women have the opportunity to achieve their limitless potential, and we are working to root out discrimination and injustice based on sexual orientation. But in all of these areas, our efforts must continue, our steps must be purposeful. Every day, every year, Americans have to work together to be worthy of our ideals.
- Over the past 236 years, we have established and sustained our independence based on simple ideas that we still hold dear: unalienable rights; life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness; and government powers derived by the consent of the governed.
- About two weeks ago, President Obama announced a new strategy toward sub-Saharan Africa, saying "America's partnership with this new generation of Africans will extend beyond our Government to the broad and deepening relationships between our peoples, businesses, and institutions." He added, "These roots will drive our path to a future of democracy, peace, and prosperity for generations to come."
- Botswana and the United States have the extraordinary opportunity to move down this path together – as strong partners.
- So, as Americans recall our independence, and renew, as we must, our commitment to a nation built on the fundamental concepts of unalienable rights; life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness; and government

powers derived by the consent of the governed, all in Botswana should know that as you move down a similar path of commitment to democracy and broad-based economic opportunity, the United States stands strong at your side.

- With that, please join me as I raise my glass in a toast to the continued good health of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Botswana, Lt. General Seretse Khama Ian Khama, and to the health, prosperity, and well-being of the people of Botswana, that they too may enjoy the benefits of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
- To the President --