



SPEECH BY LEADER OF OPPOSITION

OPENING OF THE LEGISLATIVE MEETING OF PARLIAMENT

Hon. Dumelang Saleshando

MP, Maun North

13TH JULY 2026

National Assembly, Gaborone, Botswana

SALUTATIONS

- Mr President, Advocate Duma Gideon Boko
- The Vice President, Hon. Ndaba Nkosinathi Gaolathe
- His Lordship the Chief Justice, Gaolapelwe Gee Ketlogetswe
- The Speaker of the National Assembly of Botswana – Hon. Dithapelo L Keorapetse
- Honourable Justices of Appeal and Judges of the Superior Courts, serving and retired
- Their Excellencies, Former Presidents of the Republic of Botswana, Dr. Seretse Khama Ian Khama and Dr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi
- Former Vice President, Hon. Slumber Tsogwane
- Honourable Ministers
- Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Helen Pushy Manyeneng,
- Assistant Ministers here present
- Honourable Members of Parliament
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- Chairman of Ntlo ya Dikgosi, Kgosi Malope II
- Members of Ntlo ya Dikgosi

My dear wife, Dineo Saleshando

Distinguished dignitaries, members of the fourth estate

Ladies, gentlemen and children here present and those listening online

1. Bagaetsho, ke a le dumedisa.
2. Today, we make history. For the first time, Parliament formally opens its Legislative Meeting, affirming that law-making is at the heart of

our constitutional mandate under Section 86. I hope this ends any perception that this Meeting is secondary to the State of the Nation Address or the Budget Session.

3. I also welcome another important milestone: the Leader of the Opposition addressing this opening. I commend the Rt Honourable Speaker for making this a truly inclusive parliamentary occasion, reflecting the vital role that both Government and Opposition play in our democracy.
4. Parliament is where democracy acquires substance. It is where the aspirations of ordinary citizens are examined, refined and ultimately transformed into law. It is where government is held accountable. It is where national consensus is forged despite political differences. And it is where future generations will judge whether we were faithful stewards of the Republic.
5. The 13th Parliament occupies a unique place in Botswana's history. For the first time since Independence, political power changed hands peacefully through the ballot and not the bullet. That moment was not a victory for one political party over another. It was a victory for every Motswana who believes that power belongs not to governments, but to the people. It was a victory for the Constitution. A Constitution that has brought us thus far and needs a full comprehensive review to take us to the next heights.
6. We must prove that democratic change delivers democratic maturity. And we must leave this Parliament stronger than we found it.
7. Mr Speaker, Government has the responsibility to govern. The Opposition has the responsibility to ensure that government governs

well. Those responsibilities are different. Neither is superior. Both are indispensable.

8. The Opposition does not exist to oppose progress; we exist to improve it. We question where necessary, strengthen legislation before it becomes law, defend the Constitution, and hold Government accountable on behalf of the people. Where Government advances Botswana's interests, it will have our support. Where improvement is needed, it will have our constructive engagement. And where the national interest demands it, it will have our principled opposition. That is not obstruction—it is constitutional patriotism.
9. Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate this historic occasion, let us also strengthen the institution we serve. Parliament's greatest asset is public confidence, built on fairness, impartiality and integrity. The Offices of the Speaker and the Clerk must therefore ensure that every parliamentary process inspires trust and treats all Members equally, regardless of the offices they may hold and from which side of the aisle they sit.
10. There is also an urgent institutional challenge that demands attention. Parliament cannot effectively fulfil its primary responsibility of making laws without an adequately resourced Office of Parliamentary Counsel. It is simply unsustainable for an institution whose core mandate is law-making to rely on only two lawyers serving both the National Assembly and Ntlo ya Dikgosi.
11. I wish to recommend setting up a real time dashboard that shows the process of each private members bill from the day an MP submits an instruction to PC. This dashboard should be accessible to the

general public too. We are accountable to the electorate and they must see if indeed we are at work.

- 12.** Mr. Speaker, outside these walls, thousands of Batswana are watching us. They are not interested in who wins parliamentary arguments. They are interested in whether Parliament improves their lives. They want jobs. They want quality healthcare. They want better schools. They want employment opportunities for young people. They want ease of doing business for entrepreneurs. They want safer communities. They want an economy where success is determined by merit rather than connections.
13. Every Bill introduced into this House should therefore answer one fundamental question: ***Will this improve the life of an ordinary Motswana?*** - If the answer is yes, then we should proceed with courage. If the answer is no, then we should have the humility to reject it.
14. Mr Speaker, the challenges before Botswana cannot be solved with yesterday's thinking. Our economy must diversify. Our institutions must become more transparent and independent. Where there is no profit, shut down must be considered. Technology is changing the nature of work. Climate change is reshaping livelihoods. Our young people seek opportunity rather than promises. These realities demand leadership of uncommon courage. Leadership that makes uncomfortable yet necessary changes and decisions. The kind of decisions that would be deemed, **"very foolish or very brave"** - to quote former President Sir Ketumile Masire.
15. Mr. Speaker, as the Opposition, we pledge today as from day 1, to discharge our constitutional responsibilities with dignity, integrity and unwavering commitment to Botswana. We shall scrutinise without hostility. We shall criticise without malice. We shall cooperate without compromising principle. And we shall always remember that our highest loyalty is owed to the Republic of Botswana and to the people from whom all constitutional authority ultimately flows.

16. Governments are remembered for the promises they make. Parliaments are remembered for the laws they leave behind. Let us leave Botswana laws worthy of her people.
17. On that note, I am happy to share that despite capacity challenges in the PC's office, we have **six (6)** fully matured private member bills from myself, Honourable Taolo Lucas and Honourable Pheny Segokgo. I must applaud my fellow opposition MPs who have submitted several private member bills. I know that many of them are still yet to mature but I want to really commend you for taking this mandate so seriously.
18. Before I conclude Mr. Speaker, I wish to say to Batswana - we see you. There are parents who leave home each morning uncertain whether the medicines they need will be available at the clinic, young people who wonder whether opportunity will ever find them, workers whose salaries no longer stretch as far as they once did, business owners struggling to keep their doors open, pensioners watching the cost of living rise, and households making difficult choices every single day.
19. To every Motswana carrying these burdens, I want to say this: your struggles are seen, your frustrations are heard, and your hopes remain valid. *Bagaetsho, re a itse, re a lemoga ebile re thaloganya diemo tse le di raletseng.*
20. Botswana has overcome challenges before. So I ask Batswana not to lose hope. As the opposition and specifically, the social democratic movement that is **Botswana Congress Party**, I once again reaffirm our commitment to serving you and collaborating with you to make Botswana better for all. I believe, that Botswana's greatest chapter has not yet been written. It lies ahead of us. Ke a leboga. Ndaboka. Ke leboga gô. Okuhepa. Natji ndangi. Shangwee. I thank you.