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TACKLING COMPLEX CHALLENGES IN COMPLEX TIMES: A CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA H.E. MOKGWEETSI MASISI

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**PARTICIPANTS:**

**Introductory Remarks:**

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**Fireside Chat:**

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. COULIBALY: Excellency, President Masisi of Botswana, First Lady of Botswana Madam Masisi, Ambassador Mokaila of Botswana, Honorable Ministers, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good morning and a warm welcome to Brookings. I am Brahim Coulibaly, the Vice President of the Global Economy and Development program, on behalf of the Brookings Institution, I'm delighted to welcome Your Excellencies. I believe this is your first visit to Brookings. In the past few weeks Ambassador Mokaila and the AGI Director, Dr. Ordu, and their teams have worked closely to make this possible, so my special gratitude to both teams.

Botswana is by far one of the best-managed economies in Africa. Even with the current multiple and overlapping shocks that Africa and the broader global economy are facing, the Botswana economy recovered a lot of ground from the pandemic. The country has one of the highest vaccination rates in Africa, and after falling sharply in 2020, government revenues have bounced back to pre-pandemic levels. The robust stockpile of foreign exchange reserves and low debt levels have helped the country to make the investment necessary for economic recovery without compromising Botswana's financial stability. And Botswana continues to be recognized for its good governance, as illustrated by the high ranking of the Mo Ibrahim Government Index.

Nonetheless, like most countries, Botswana faces some challenges. Inflation reached double digits this year, and unemployment rose to its highest level in three decades. And achieving inclusive growth, prosperity for all, remains a priority. There is clearly a great deal to learn from His Excellency's stewardship of Botswana. Before his election as President, he held many positions of trust and responsibility, including Vice President of Botswana from 2014 to 2018, Minister of Education and Skilled Development, and Minister of Presidential Affairs and Public Administration, among others. We are very privileged to have you with us, Your Excellency, and once again, Mr. President, welcome to Brookings. I now turn it over to my colleague, Dr. Ordu.

MR. ORDU: And welcome on behalf of AGI.

PRESIDENT MASISI: Thank you. Thank you very much. Director Ordu, First Lady,

Ministers, Ambassador, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, a very good morning. I'm humbled by the invitation to speak to you on the Botswana Transformation Agenda, a subject that is very dear to my heart. My deep appreciation also goes to the Brookings Institute, Vice President Global Economy and Development Brahim S. Coulibaly. I hope I didn't massacre that name, but exclusive of changing it to give a public lecture at this prestigious institution, and I mean to commend you for the work that you do. You've assembled great depth of knowledge from more than 300 leading experts in government and academia from all over the world who provide quality and in-depth research, policy recommendation, and analysis on a range of public policy issues. Your institution is playing a pivotal role in contributing new ideas and solving problems facing society at the local, national, and global levels. Many continue to do this on a non-profit basis leads to conclude that Brookings Institute is one of the greatest gifts to humanity. Applause, applause (Applause).

The mandate of the Brookings Institution and the near convergence with our very own Botswana Institute for Development and Policy Analysis, BIDPA, for short, and therefore a fitting collaboration between the two, in terms of work, different research in fields of economics, in fields of development, governance, and analysis of public policy issues will go a long way towards fresh thinking and guiding innovative policy formulation and solutions.

Tim Marshall, an author and journalist, is a hero for his participation on the frontlines of conflict, from which he draws inspiration for his popular works. From this vantage point, he was able to illustrate some dramatic events he witnessed around the world. He used his experiences to pursue popular themes and truisms in his books, Prisoners of Geography, as well as the power of geography. He writes his thoughts on the forbidding limitations of geographical factors, such as mountains, rivers, and deserts, which influence and contribute to the historical dynamics on how society develops their preconceptions, their fears, and their hopes.

Well, my own country, Botswana, hemmed in the center of southern Africa, is not far removed from these geopolitical and historical perspectives. Inasmuch of its landscape defined by the vast Kalahari Desert, the geographical size of Botswana is similar to that of the Lone State, Texas, Lone

Star State, not somewhat lone sometimes (laughter). Sorry, I hope there are no Texans here. Though at 2.3 million, our population is not compatible. However, in Okavango Delta, the UNESCO World Heritage site, juxtaposes the arid and sandy Kalahari with a vibrant and transformed wetland, home to some of the most endangered mammals, like the white and the black rhinoceros, lions, cheetahs, and yes, the African wild dog. In addition to Botswana being attributed to the first origins of humankind, there is therefore no second guessing that iconic wildlife species like the elephants have been on full display in their natural habitat that is Botswana since the first story of creation evolved. This might just explain why then Botswana is home to the highest number of elephants in the wild in the world. That is our geography, our ecology, and our reality.

By fortune and misfortune of this geography, those who held the reins before our Independence in 1966, overlooked the potential mineral wealth that lay beneath, hidden in the sands of the Kalahari. For indeed, at Independence, we inherited a country in deplorable development state. Thankfully, the soul and fabric of our society, the way of life of our people, the norms and cultural practices, were left pretty much unadulterated. Using the springboard of these standards and values, we set for ourselves national priorities and the national principles of democracy, self-reliance, unity, development, and (inaudible). Some of you might pronounce it (inaudible), but it's (inaudible) will continue to guide our national vision (inaudible) giving expression to our agenda for social and economic transformation.

We learned early on that we should, as a country, incline our persuasive spirits beyond the limiting factors of our geography. We determined that our future should not be held hostage by the present phase of the history of subjugation imposed by hostile regimes who surrounded us at the time, and almost overwhelmed us with their refusal to accept the noble principle of multi-racialism. We use the multinational platforms to denounce injustices and really accept the libel and label of punching above our weight. We united our strength with the cause and fight to those in the struggle to rid themselves of segregation policies and who are inimical to the interests of the representative majority of the entire southern Africa. Our hopes were not diminished, even against a siege that threatened to influence our

misconceptions.

We recorded some success along the way, due to the pursuit of democratic norms upon which we based our economic transformation ensured and let the dust at our feet will one day be replaced by a sparkle when our investment infrastructure expands from the pitiful (inaudible) network of only three kilometers inherited from the departing colonial administration in 1966, to include fiber network connectivity from the workplace to the home. We did this for us. We consolidated the gains of our self-rule and held elections every five years since Independence in 1966 to continue the mandate to govern, the counter-narrative that was not too common in our part of the world at the time. We continue to build that profile as Botswana and shall never stop.

All the while we risked to others what we cherished at home: a plural society that respects norms and standards, democratic ideals that strengthen institution-building. To that end, we contributed to troops to peacekeeping missions in early 1990 to Somalia, and presently deploy a guard against insecurity in the Province of Cabo Delgado, Mozambique. Our original institutions, such as the frontline state established to shore up anti-Apartheid resistance and provide support to liberation struggle of neighboring states, have now transformed into an agenda for more regional integration in the make (phonetic) of the Southern Africa Development Community, SADC, headquartered in our capital, Cameroon.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, as a country, it is not that we have our fair share of challenges along the way. The transitioning from being among the poorest in the world in 1966, and achieving middle-income status in 1986, as well as reaching the World Bank classification of upper middle income by 2005, was fraught with obstacles and a steeplechase of impediments. Similarly, developments and uncertainties taking place in one corner of the world manifest in hardship by communities in another. An example of these external shocks is the global supply chain disruptions experienced during the COVID 19 pandemic, and the Russia-Ukraine conflict that has threatened food security.

As a result, structural differences and depletion of foreign reserves could not be avoided.

Inflation is also above the Bank of Botswana's monetary policy range of three to six percent, while levels of unemployment, especially among the youth and graduates, remains a serious concern. However, Botswana's economy continues to display signs of recovery. This is attributed to successful mitigations and the improved performance of the mining sector, particularly, the diamond subsector. The momentum of recovery is likely to be sustained in the medium term, with domestic economy growth projected to be 4.2 percent and 4.1 percent in 2022 and 2023, respectively.

Despite the positive trend and outlook, the range of goals falls far short of the 5.7 percent required to attain a high-income status by 2026, which is what we aspire. It is for this reason that we are intensifying our efforts to restructure the economy. This is being done through ramping up industrialization, development of delivery chains, diversification, and (inaudible) of our minerals.

So the need for transformation to high income has never received greater emphasis. According to BIDPA, the first generation during the period after Independence was from rural agricultural economy to a fast-growing mineral-led economy. In terms of the aspirations of our national vision 2026, we identified the need to develop a comprehensive national transformation strategy, NTS, and observe in a single strategy referenced document, subject to periodic reviews. The NTS provides the framework for fully coordinated, articulated, and aligned sectoral and industry strategies in the public and private sectors at national and local levels.

The NTS also envisions policy alignments by taking bold decisions that reflect long-term national meets long- and short-term interests. The National Development Plan, NDP, included second transitional development plan that will bridge National Development Plan 11 and National Development Plan 12 between April 2023 and March 2025, act as vehicles for executing the NTS. Achieving of the overarching vision 2026 to which the NTS is a tributary is anchored on multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology, and financial resources. The NTS provides a framework for the fundamental changes needed in legislation, programs, policies, practices, institutions, and minds have changed to transform Botswana from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based economy, driven by competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.

You will be pleased to know that, just like we launched the Economic Transformation and Recovery Plan, ERTTP, to mitigate the effects of COVID 19 pandemic. Other limit national strategies were also taken on board in developing the NTS, such as the reset agenda, and smart box strategy, aimed at driving transformation across the economy. (inaudible), ladies and gentlemen, here is our value proposition: Botswana remains one of the leading economic models in Africa and the developing world. The country has a strong culture of peace, stable democracy, and relatively good baseline infrastructure. Botswana remains one of the strongest African economies with solid macroeconomic fundamentals. Botswana is a globally respected brand for having successfully utilized national resources for the social upliftment (phonetic) of citizens for which we have now been given the honor to host the Kimberley Process Secretariat. We have made significant strides in social performance, with improved poverty reduction and healthcare, which further strengthens environmental, social, and governance compliance. Relatively speaking, Botswana remains one of the least corrupt countries globally, an attractive proposition for investors and talent.

The attributes mentioned and the factors above position Botswana as one of the best placed countries to attract global talent, FDI, and (inaudible) through targeted investment with the establishment of an export-led economy that welcomes foreign skills and a transformative mindset. The country can achieve high income status by 2036 I am convinced. There remains a window of opportunity for Botswana to catapult and transform itself to high income status. Sectors with high potential growth include manufacturing, trade and services, commodities, agriculture, totals of energy infrastructure, and sports (inaudible).

This is not a window of opportunity for ourselves only as citizens of Botswana, but it is also for those who see Botswana as a springboard to other markets, especially capitalizing on the Africa Continental Free Trade Area, the AFTCA (phonetic). That presents vast opportunities for improved exports to the rest of Africa, and that concludes, I found this excerpt from the annual report 2022 of the World Bank quite compelling in its description of stories similar to that of Botswana, and to paraphrase, our efforts are strengthened by a wide range of partnerships to other multilateral institutions,

UN Agencies, and governmental organizations, civil society, academia, and the private sector. Our partnerships have played a crucial role in combating the pandemic, including greater food insecurity (phonetic). To all friends of Botswana, including you gathered here, just make sure you don't miss the very next boat that takes you to Botswana as your destination. I'm not being facetious. I know Botswana is a land-locked country. Just to get you thinking (laughter). Thank you (applause).

MR. ORDU: I think this tepid round of applause. I think we need to do better. A big round of applause (applause). Thank you. Thank you very much, and thanks for those online tuned in to this event this morning. Here's what we're going to do. I'm going to have a couple of rounds of conversations with His Excellency Masisi, and then we'll open it up to some questions from the floor, and we'll also not forget those online who are tuned in. As their questions come in, we will pose them to His Excellency. His Excellency mentioned BIDPA, the Botswana Institute for Development and Policy Analysis. Your Excellency, at NGI at Brookings, one of the things we do very, very well is our partnerships across the Continent, and I'm delighted to let you know that BIDPA is now one of our strongest partners on the African Continent. And (applause) recently we worked very closely with BIDPA to convince Botswana youth to attend the Cultural (inaudible), so our relationship with BIDPA is really, really strong, and just one more point: the Finance Minister herself, our sister, Madame Serame, was here during the World Bank annual meeting, and her story was just at a time when the nation's capital was full of stories of what's happening in Africa, she sort of disabused us of the danger of the same old story by telling of the fantastic story about how Botswana coped with the ravaging pandemic, so thank you very much on your welcome to Brookings, so here, Your Excellency, you touched upon some of the priorities of the reset agenda that you mentioned. We wondered if you could elaborate a little bit more on the Economic Transformation and Recovery Plan of your country.

PRESIDENT MASISI: Yes, thank you very much, and thanks for your very kind words, and I'm pleased you said those kind words about my Minister. She's a good Minister (laughter). (inaudible). But just to respond to your question, you know, we really were faced with the horrors of COVID. We literally emptied our bank account, our government investment account, like we've never



done before to buy therapeutics, medicines, to deal with the pandemic, to deal with an ailing economy, unemployment, and people having to stay at home, and provide food support to families, and support businesses, just to be sustained, and we never knew how long this would take, so we emptied our pockets. But what was most glaring to us, we emptied our pockets to supplement the donation of medications that came to buy our own. We paid cash. The medicines didn't come on time. That was really so, and so it got us thinking. We never want to find ourselves in this space again. So what did we do? We trudged along, and we decided we're going to reset our priorities, and that's how the Reset Agenda came about, and so number one priority of the Reset Agenda was to do all we can to prevent the shocks we experienced, as we did with the COVID 19 pandemic and never allow people to die as they did, so save was on the population from COVID 19 and other pandemics.

So we marshaled our resources, including even investment in the potential for Botswana for the first time to produce human vaccines, and we were doubling up and, you know, springboarded from our wonderful experience from, you know, long, long-lasting partnerships. We had the United States Government, all their support, stellar support, and we're able to thank United States Government and the people, the support they gave to our fight against HIV and AIDS because we literally, as my former President said, on the brink of extinction as a people, and so with what we learned from that, we stepped up and we started developing our capacity to develop vaccines, and luckily we found a partner out of California, Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong, and we are on course to develop a vaccine. In fact, the first (inaudible) in Botswana for the first time has been produced, a vaccine (applause), and we're also going to be developing other vaccines that have been neglected, tropical disease vaccines have been neglected. So the ecosystem is there, including, you know, the pharmaceutical side, including all of the value chain aspects of it.

The second priority was to realign the whole governing machinery to this priority, set up an agenda, Reset Agenda, and so it is a confirmation of the thinking and the prioritization of what we need to focus on.

The third is to focus on digitalization. The digital economy provides low-hanging fruit for

Botswana to not just springboard, but to frog-leap literally, into the 22nd Century, so-to-speak, and so we're investing heavily on that to the extent that we're going be connecting, you know, by the end of the next financial year every one of our Reset-recognized villages in Botswana, so the schools are connected, the health facilities are connected, the quota -- this is a word you should learn about Botswana -- the quota, it's a public assembly point steeped deep in our culture of democratic traditions of engagement. But these are all connected, and then we're connecting businesses and homes right now, and 5G has also come on board and engrained in its use in Botswana.

The fourth priority is that of value chains development, and these are intended, particularly in a rural economy and agricultural space, to provide opportunity for massive job creation. When you combine industrialization and value chains development with very good in the production of beef and small stock meats, whether lamb or chabon. If you taste it, you'd never eat anything else. We also are good at growing unique crops, and so we want to grow our agricultural space so that we produce enough food for ourselves and even export. It's extremely important, but better than anything else, we also want to produce some good quality food. We're very strict about beef and meat production. We do not allow for the use of any hormones or growth stimulants, and we're very strict in our crop production too. So you know, nutrition is good food.

The fifth priority is that of mindset change. We recognize that the whole population needs to shift dramatically in the way it sees issues and problems. But you know, all put together, we want to be the place to go to to find solutions to global problems.

MR. ORDU: Mr. President, thank you very, very much. I think the lessons, there are many, many lessons from the five priorities. The particular one that I wanted to single out is your approach, your whole of government approach to the way you marshal these priorities. I wanted to also touch on the role that leadership and accountability and democratic ethos play in your conceptualization experience of the process of national development in Botswana.

PRESIDENT MASISI: Shall I go?

MR. ORDU: Yes.

PRESIDENT MASISI: Well, you know, the compulsion to be accountable is second nature to us. It's steeped in our traditions, and that's where the quota comes in, where you even have, you know, the sayings in our language which loosely translated mean that a leader is a leader by virtue of respect of the people, or at the will of the, consent of the people, and others, such as, you know, every opinion is to be respected and given space, so we have grown up in a system where a democratic system was a part of our culture, and we voted. The majority of you held. The minority was always protected and respected. That's from the community, and so when the political parties formed, and we elected to have a multi-party system, it was an easy transition, and that's why we so easily held elections every five years. And you know, yes, we've had the ruling party in power since Independence, but it's had its ups and downs, you know. It had to reform itself, and the opposition keeps trying, and it sometimes gets nearly good, but they quite haven't made it. But it's a free, transparent, open democratic system, and we feel the need to do that. We have a parliamentary system where ministers and the Government goes to account, and I, as head of state, deliver what's called a mission state of nation address every year at the beginning of the parliamentary year, and become the machinery and the representatives are there to respond to whatever criticisms, and I engage in the Press frequently, and the Press operates completely independently and openly.

MR. ORDU: I think on the issue of democratic governors, not just African countries, I think some might even say that the United States has a lot to learn from Botswana at this time. (inaudible) the United States. Let me now turn to the U.S. African Leader Summit and to find out from you what two outcomes are you hoping for from this summit?

PRESIDENT MASISI: Well, I'll mention two, but one has already, you know, succeeded in manifesting itself in that we're delighted, as African leaders, that the U.S. has begun to look at us differently. We took a (inaudible) how we would perceived before. The outcome that one desires of this is to build long-lasting, strong partnerships because we come to the U.S. because you are a successful country. You've got successful institutions, you've got a very successful private sector, you're innovative, you're creative, you provide leading solutions to a lot of global problems, and so we'll pick, as we have

begun to and engage others, and with these partnership we want to, you know, catapult our economy and our development in ways that we think are best for us.

MR. ORDU: The audience has been very, very patient. Let's take one or two questions and then return to for His Excellency. I see Xavier over there from OSF, yes. Microphone, please. Just your name and make sure what you say has a question mark at the end.

QUESTIONER: Thank you very much. Good morning, Mr. President. I work for Robert Site Foundation (phonetic). My name is Xavier Moimoi. I also happen to be your neighbor from Zambia, so I'm very interested in Botswana's story. I think Botswana is an exemplary case in Africa and a rarity, unfortunately, as well. Not many countries have gone through that, so I'm taking you back to this week. What would you be telling your peers, our other African presidents, around two things: first of all, you want to know, in terms of providing leadership beyond Botswana, to the rest of the Continent because right now I think there's this, I think, a creeping leadership vacuum across the Continent, with its political, economic, peace, and security, and I think you could sort of provide a good example for that with other major leaders of the Continent.

Secondly, we've seen across the last few years, in terms of how Africa engages with the rest of the world, whether it's the U.S. or China or India, I think one of the key concerns is among ordinary citizens in Africa, is that we tend to be very reactive. Everybody else has a plan for Africa, except ourselves, so what can you say about how you envision your own leadership, and using Botswana as a success story to sort of provide a peer-to-peer kind of relationship to our other African presidents? That's (inaudible).

PRESIDENT MASISI: Well, thank you very much. First of all, my colleague presidents are my colleagues. I don't have ever pretend this relationship with them, I don't pretend to tell them anything. We work alongside each other quite well. But you know, as in life, you often look over at what your neighbor is doing and you ask, and then to ask made (phonetic), we've been very generous in sharing what we do and how we do it, and I'm glad to note that, particularly in the Southern Africa Region, we have a very good rapport with all our neighbors, and we engage quite frequently. We actually are

quite on friendly terms, right. We have our challenges, differ, and part of it is because of our different histories and backgrounds, and the way the world has also responded to each of us in different ways. When we take a look at the Zimbabwe story, where sanctions have been imposed, and if you look at the history of Zimbabwe you view it objectively, you would think, as I do, that those sanctions should not be there, right. There's a better way of engaging. A better productive, highly literate, educated, and useful Zimbabwe to make Zimbabwe prosper, and that is of Africa too, including neighbors, such as Botswana, so when one country does well, we all do well, right?

Secondly, is that yes, the world has not been extremely kind to Africa. You know, it's almost as if the carving out and colonization of Africa assumed a new form without the labels of colonization. But some measure of conquest, right, and we're trying to move away from that and engage so that they work with us and not work on us and through us, right? It's a very important (inaudible) distinction. But, you know, with the varying levels of vulnerability, some countries are not able to withstand the pressures as much as others, and some are serious. I mean, if military force threatens you, you do what's best to save your people. But increasingly, particularly with the Agenda 6363, particularly with the AFCTA, which is an aspect of Agenda 6363, I see Africa putting it together, and gosh, if you and I live to see our dreams come true, we're going to be a (inaudible) place. I look forward to that, and we have what it takes to do it.

MR. ORDU: Thank you. I believe we have one more hand here, and then we go to the lady over there, Liang.

QUESTIONER: Your Excellency, thank you very much. My name is Liang Wang. I'm the New Country Representative for the World Bank for Botswana. You told us not to miss the boat to go to Botswana. In my case, I'm jumping the boat in a few weeks with my family, so I look forward to my time in Botswana in the coming two years. Your Excellency, you nicely laid out the Transformation Agenda of Botswana. You end your speech with a note on partnership, so my question is about your vision of this partnership. How do you see the multilateral organizations like mine, but also others, to rally behind the old priorities, the old programs, so we can support the Transformation Agenda of Botswana

and to continue the success story of your country? Thank very much.

PRESIDENT MASISI: Well, good question, and I'm glad you're in Botswana, and you're not going to miss the boat. You know, multilateral partners are extremely important to us, but the way we relate to these multilateral partners needs to be much more symbiotic. You understand our position, where we come from, and we understand yourselves. Take rates of interest of borrowing money. Take the units of currency that we borrow money in. We need much fairer transition to move from where we are to where we need to be, and I think multilateral partners have a lot to learn, in terms of a) being patient, and 2) recognizes that even where they are from, it never took a short time to transition that they expect of us, and lastly, please focus on what really drives growth, and for too long multilateral partners have focused on our commodities, and the commoditization of Africa. That's blatantly wrong and unfair because what happens is everything is accelerized (phonetic), in terms of the controls, and when we miss the boat to pay you, you are mean. You are mean, and you set our people against us. That can't be for peace. That can't be for sustainable development goals. That can't be for what you even stand for, and so you need to really revamp your thinking of that. Good luck.

MR. ORDU: Thank you very much. The young lady there, and then Richard, we go to the audience, to those online.

QUESTIONER: Is this on? Yes, it is. Hi, I am Angela Pashayan, Dr. Angela Pashayan, teaching at American University. It is an honor to be here. I specialize in informal settlements, and I want to say that your mindset is so refreshing. It is so refreshing, and I am so grateful to be in your presence and to hear you speak about Botswana. I think about population, and I think about the population of people all across Africa, and I think about many countries that have more than 50 percent of their population living in extreme poverty, which means they're not being able to capitalize on those human resources to contribute to the economy, and so my question is how do you do it? How is Botswana able to keep extreme poverty rates so low? How are you able to keep people working and housed, because you are truly an example to other countries across the Continent.

MR. ORDU: Thank you very much. Perhaps we take one more, just next door, so

thanks.

QUESTIONER: Yeah, thank you, and thank you for a wonderful exposition. I'm Richard Newfarmer with the International Growth Centre. You mentioned as one of the strategic sectors that you would like to develop is trade and services. It seems to me that this is a sector that throughout Africa has kind of been ignored. There's a lot of talk about manufacturing and the need to develop manufacturing, and while that's important, trade and services actually is really important. I wondered what kinds of measures Botswana was going to be contemplating to promote further trade and services, and secondly, how that might fit into the Continental free trade area and what negotiations are going on in that area?

PRESIDENT MASISI: Thank you. Let me begin with the academics, Professor in American University. Sorry, I didn't quite get your name.

QUESTIONER: Angela Pashayan.

PRESIDENT MASISI: Pashayan. Your very difficult question. I don't think I will do justice to it in the short time that we have, but that's another reason why we should invite you to Botswana, right? You really need to come. There's context to it. We were largely ignored by the colonists, right. Botswana's colonization was a sheer accident, a real accident, and I bet you the Brits can't stop kicking themselves for not really doing what we thought would have been a decent job, because Cecil John Rhodes, who was then colonized Rhodesia, which means Zimbabwe, a brutal capitalist. He wanted a railroad from Cape to Cairo, and he needed land to transverse us through, and that's how Botswana was threatened by Cecil John Rhodes, and he set about setting about reserves and the establishment of white settlers in farms, and kicking the natives out, and so the local leaders, the chiefs, objected to this and mounted a campaign because they asked the Brits to protect them, and they refused. So to mount a campaign we went to Britain with some missionaries, and campaigned and got sympathy of the British public, and that's how we were declared a Protectorate. It was very reluctant. So we were sparsely populated, it's largely desert, and so nobody really, with these harsh conditions, and that's why we were among the 17 poorest countries in the world in 1966. We were just what you're saying, really poor. I mean, I remember poor, so you know, everybody who is in Botswana in this room

has had the education on the back of diamond mining, pure and simple. And those who have not been bound by colonizers know of the purchase of the company, which by the way, was founded by Cecil Rhodes, who founded DeBeers, which ended up being our partner, and right now we are at a stage, we were having our, renegotiating our agreement, and it's exciting, I tell you. Yeah. It's a pity I can't get give you all the details, but it's really exciting, yeah? And so there's a lot to understand from that, and obviously, we adopted policies that allowed for the distribution of these resources, invested a lot in infrastructure, and provided access to everybody who was able to, you know, schooling, health, roads, you name it, and that's how we were able to lift a lot of people out of poverty. But we're having challenges with job creation, which brings me to the next question of services, you know.

Business process, you know, organizations are one of the ways in which we wanted to go. We want to have people invest in our peace and stability dividend because that's how services really thrive, but we can't provide services profitable enough just to ourselves, a nation state. We'd want to be seen as a solution to provide services to enable it, and that's where the peace and stability, including financial stability because you know, you manage safety for the Botswanan, and I mean, really safe. It is illegal for the Government to come after your money. So we can't get your money, we only ask you to give us part of your profits, which is a tax, a very low rate of tax. I mean, embarrassingly low, right, so we want to be seen as a place to locate or headquarter your investments in the region, and then work out from there. So financial services are a major service that we could provide. We're not a tax haven, though, right?

Too, we want to also pay a bigger role in logistics supply management. Because of our strategic (inaudible) location and our relatively good infrastructure, and we just opened a magnificent bridge to cross over the (inaudible) Zambesi into Zambia, with Zambia we co-own it with Zambia because it was a bridge, and that has provided such easy access to the rest of Central Africa and the eastern Africa from the industrial hub of South Africa, so there are a multiplicity of services. We are also developing the ecosystem for developing health tourism, and therefore, those in the region and those who are from places that do not have such good health facilities can see with their own eyes a place to go to.



But you know what? More exciting is that, you know, in the fractured health systems of the developed world, we could be providing a solution. If for instance, you had the U.K. and you have to wait for ten months for an (inaudible) test, a hernia operation, and it costs X number of pounds, if you added the cost of the ticket, stay in Botswana, medical treatment, it would come to cheaper than what you'd pay in the U.K., and not wait. And guess what? After that, we not only soothe your soul and heart, we put you in an ambient environment of the best wildlife species in the world. How can you not get well? (Laughter, applause) So it's not just health tourism, you know, we also want to provide education solutions because if you had a place to stay and study, you'd want your young teenagers to be in a safe place, you know, good quality education. So we're trying to grow the ecosystem of that, and obviously, we're building on our security infrastructure. We're building, attracting the best teachers, et cetera. It's a journey, so welcome to Botswana.

MR. ORDU: Thank you. Thank you very much. On that note, let me just do just this to our friends online. There's a question from Eric. His question very briefly is: what are your hopes in the next ten years for the African Continent to free trade area and SADC (phonetic)?

PRESIDENT MASISI: I'm an eternal optimist. I believe so deeply in study our beautiful region and our neighbors. I believe in Africa because I'm an African, but I also believe in Africa because you are all Africans. You are African, you know that, don't you? That's where home is, real home. Not the ETO, this is real home, but you know, over and above that, there's a unique opportunity, unique almost to our time in history, where 54 countries have come together and said, we want to work together. We've got things to share among ourselves, but also to share with the world, and we also want to grow the inter-Africa trade, which is really low, and that is the fastest way to uplift our people. It's a model better than whatever else we see, so I'm hopeful that this is going to work, and we will get partners who will support us in realizing this and not disrupt us, whatever the geopolitics of the world.

MR. ORDU: Mr. President, thank you very, very much, and on behalf of the Brookings Institution, I would really like to thank you very much, and please, a round of applause for (applause).

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