**STATEMENT BY BOTSWANA DURING THE REVIEW OF THE REPUBLIC OF CONGO AT THE 45TH SESSION OF THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR) WORKING GROUP**

*(30th January 2024, Geneva)*

**Mr President,**

1. We welcome the delegation of the Republic of Congo to the fourth cycle of the UPR process and thank them for their national report.
2. We note with appreciation that Congo has taken steps to implement Botswana’s recommendations during their last review, namely on the strengthening of institutional capacities to detect, investigate and prosecute corruption effectively; and on the protection of vulnerable children from discrimination.
3. Implementation of the above is demonstrated by the establishment of the High Authority to Combat Corruption in 2019; and the alignment of the National Development Plan 2022–2026 that serves as a framework for operationalizing all national policies and strategies related to childhood.
4. While Botswana commends the strides made towards the protection of children in vulnerable situations, we note that there could be improvement in investment in the promotion of gender equality, and that there are significant disparities between girls and boys in access to education. In that regard, Botswana recommends that Congo:
	1. Increases efforts to ensure the enrolment and retention of girls in schools; and,
	2. Improves school infrastructure, particularly in rural and remote areas to ensure access for girls to high-quality education.
5. We wish the Republic of Congo a successful UPR outcome.

**I thank you, Mr President**