**STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT MISSION OF SINGAPORE AT THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR) OF BOTSWANA AT THE 29TH UPR WORKING GROUP, 17 JANUARY 2018**

Mr President,

 Singapore warmly welcomes the delegation of Botswana to the 29th UPR Working Group.

We welcome Botswana’s progress in promoting gender equality through initiatives such as the National Policy on Gender and Development in 2015. In particular, we applaud Botswana’s efforts to empower women in the labour market by increasing the budget of the Women Economic Empowerment Programme by 63.6% for 2017 and 2018.

We **recommend** that the National Gender Commission established in 2016 to monitor implementation of the National Policy be adequately resourced to perform its functions effectively.

We welcome Botswana’s efforts to give all children a good start in life by scaling up early childhood development initiatives under its National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children. We also commend Botswana’s roll out of Pre-Primary classes in its primary schools as part of its efforts to introduce Early Childhood Learning as an integral part of the formal education system.

We **recommend** that dedicated funding be allocated to the National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) for more effective implementation (from the current practice of being funded under the orphan care programme with sectoral partners contributing through their line ministries).

We recognise and commend Botswana’s remarkable transition from one of the poorest countries at independence to an upper middle-income country over the past 50 years, and wish Botswana every success in implementing its Eleventh National Development Plan to achieve its Vision 2036.

Thank you Mr President.

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