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REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Letter dated 24 September 1991 from the Permanent
Representative of Botswana to the United Nations
addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward the comments of my Government (see annex) concerning chapter V of the report of the Committee for Development Planning (E/1991/32).

I would be grateful if you would arrange to have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under item 12 of the agenda of the forty-sixth session.

(Signed) Legwaila J. M. J. LEGWAILA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Criteria for identifying least developed countries: report
of the Committee for Development Planning

1. At its second regular session, which took place in Geneva from 3 to 26 July 1991, the Economic and Social Council decided, inter alia, that chapter V of the report of the Committee for Development Planning should be considered during the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly and that Member States should submit their comments to the Secretary-General before consideration of that chapter. In compliance with that request, we hereby submit our comments:

(a) The new criteria need a lot of statistics, which are not only difficult to compile but are also difficult to compare across countries. Due to the dearth of reliable data in the least developed countries, the application of the new criteria will undoubtedly involve a lot of subjectivity;

(b) There is no detailed explanation in the Committee report as to how the new cut-off points were arrived at;

(c) The graduation rule as proposed by the Committee for Development Planning does not explicitly provide for a transitional period for prospective "graduates" from the group of least developed countries. We are convinced that this should be included to enable the countries concerned to adjust their development plans accordingly and avoid disruptions to their development programmes that might result from a sudden reclassification. We would like to emphasize that prospective graduates should be those countries which have reached a level of economic development which is self-sustaining in the long term;

(d) The new criteria emphasize GDP per capita, which in our case is not a good indicator of economic performance because most of our output is not production but the sale of assets, mainly diamonds. A more appropriate indicator would have been net domestic product per capita, which takes into account depreciation and depletion of natural resources. In addition, we believe that in our case more emphasis should be given to the economic diversification criterion because of the monocultural nature of our economy;

(e) We note that we are on the borderline with respect to our Augmented Physical Quality of Life Index (APQLI), which is 52. This is exactly 5 points above the cut-off point of 47 as provided for in paragraph 245 of the Committee report. The recommendation to graduate Botswana from the group of least developed countries is silent on this point. Nor is there reference to the fact that Botswana is a drought-prone country. These factors should be seriously considered by the Committee for Development Planning;

(f) We would like to be furnished with the data, and the sources of that data, which were used to arrive at the conclusion that Botswana should graduate from the group of least developed countries.

2. It should be noted that we are not opposed in principle to the concept of graduation. However, we believe that countries should be graduated only when they have reached a level of long-term sustainable development.

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