

INTERVIEW WITH:

# Dr James Mokgadi



## Enhancing CBRN Security in Botswana through Strategic Collaboration and Capacity Building

Dr Janes Mokgadi, currently serving as the Deputy Director of the Chemical, Biological, Nuclear, and Radiological Weapon Management Authority of Botswana, brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the role. With a PhD in Chemistry and a background that spans forensic science, academia, and research within the energy sector, Dr Mokgadi was listed amongst 50 Women Making the World Safe from Biological and Toxin Weapons in 2022. Dr Mokgadi joined the Authority in 2021, contributing to its mission of preventing the proliferation of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) weapons and materials and overseeing Botswana submitting its very first confidence-building measures to the Biological Weapons Convention in 2022.

In this comprehensive interview, Dr Mokgadi emphasizes the importance of international collaboration to enhance Botswana's capabilities in managing CBRN threats, detailing the implementation of strategies aligned with United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (UNSCR 1540). One pertinent example of international collaboration is the Workshop on Strengthening Export and Border Controls that was recently held in Botswana and organized by the Stimson Center and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA). Dr Mokgadi outlines the workshop's objectives, which included enhancing the understanding of dual-use item regulations, introducing national export control systems, and developing a roadmap for implementing strengthened border and export controls. The collaborative efforts during the workshop, involving stakeholders from the 1540 Group of Experts, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Implementation Support Unit of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC-ISU), the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC), the Secretariat of the South African Council for the Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, the German Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control (BAFA), and the EU Partner-2-Partner Export Control Programme, marked a crucial step in addressing Botswana's challenges, such as the absence of national control lists for dual-use materials.

Looking ahead, Dr Mokgadi identifies key priorities for Botswana, including the development of national control lists, conducting simulation exercises for response and emergency preparedness, and strengthening the legal framework and training programmes. Her insights provide valuable guidance for policymakers and practitioners dedicated to safeguarding against the threats posed by CBRN weapons.

**DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE CBNR WEAPON MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY OF BOTSWANA**

**To begin with, could you provide our readers with a brief summary of your role as the Deputy Director of the Chemical, Biological, Nuclear and Radiological Weapon Management Authority of Botswana?**

My duties and responsibilities are as follows: policy development, which means developing policies, strategies and guidelines related to the prevention of the proliferation of CBRN weapons and materials. This includes ensuring that there is compliance with national and international regulations, such as the United Nations Security Council resolution 1540.

I'm also responsible for developing and coordinating a comprehensive plan and programmes to ensure CBRN weapons management and control measures, and this may involve collaborating with the relevant government agencies, international organizations and other stakeholders to implement effective prevention and response strategies. The Authority monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the control measures in place with regard to compliance with regulations and standards. We perform regular assessments, inspections and audits to identify areas of improvement. I also ensure that we conduct risk assessments and analyses to identify potential threats and vulnerabilities to CBRN weapons proliferation, so that we identify the gaps that may be present.

I oversee capacity building programmes to enhance the skills of personnel across the whole country who are handling CBRN materials. This includes providing training, technical assistance through international donors where we can, and resources to improve detection, response and recovery capabilities.

Finally, I'm responsible for engaging international cooperation and collaboration, and this may include participating in regional and international initiatives, sharing best practices and exchanging information with other countries and organizations, and most importantly, periodically providing regular reports and updates on CBRN weapons to senior officials, government officials and other relevant stakeholders.

**You have a lot of responsibilities that span a broad range of areas, including, as you just mentioned, international cooperation. In this regard, Botswana recently took part in a Workshop on Strengthening Export and Border Controls organized by the Stimson Center and UNODA. Can you tell us more about what the workshop entailed and its outcomes?**

In 2022, the Government of Botswana adopted a voluntary national action plan (NAP) on resolution 1540, covering the period from 2022 to 2024. This three-year plan aims to advance the implementation of the resolution, including strengthening export and border control through the development of national control lists and related information, measures and capabilities.

As part of the implementation of this NAP, we initiated a workshop for officials and personnel from regulatory and law enforcement authorities, with the following objectives: first of all, to enhance understanding of the resolution and the provisions relating to border and export control of dual-use items. This includes enhancing understanding of trade in dual-use items globally and regionally and of data sources to identify and quantify trade flows.

The other main objective was to introduce the principles and components of a national export control system and review practices and experiences of other States and regions. We wanted to discuss and determine the actions required to strengthen national border and export control measures, which include laws and regulations, national control lists, institutional mechanisms and enforcement capacity.

And last, but not least, we aimed to adopt a road map to implement identified actions and measures, covering the timelines, roles and responsibilities of the national institutions and our international partners.

The workshop was a well attended and highly successful. We invited the EU and other States, such as Germany and South Africa, who shared their best practices with us. The stakeholders were very satisfied, noting that although we have had other awareness-building workshops, this one was exceptionally high-level with professional and engaging contributions.

A significant issue to tackle during the workshop was Botswana's lack of national control lists for dual-use materials and items. So, we examined how other countries approached this and discussed how we could develop our own list. We wanted all relevant stakeholders to be present at this initial stage so that nobody is left behind. It was well received and we have now mapped a way forward with the next steps.

**The workshop was organized through the 1540 Committee's matchmaking mechanism. Can you tell our readers about the experience of requesting assistance through this mechanism: how does it work?**

**Botswana has a very comprehensive national action plan, thanks to the assistance that we received from the 1540 Committee.**

Yes, we used the matchmaking mechanism, but we first made our assistance request from the 1540 Committee in 2020. At that time, we had to specify the assistance that we required. This recent workshop is one of the items we requested, but the matchmaking process started earlier. We have our wish list, if I may call it that, of support that we have requested, and we are checking them off one by one.

So, we requested assistance from the 1540 Committee specifying our needs and challenges. We were not only focusing on resolution 1540, but also looking at other complementary instruments, such as the Biological Weapons Convention, and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The 1540 Committee engaged with us and came up with a lot of responses to our wish list, which included the drafting of the national control lists and of the national action plan. Botswana is one of the countries that has a very comprehensive national action plan, thanks to the assistance that we received from the 1540 Committee and other relevant international, national and regional stakeholders. We received overwhelming support from UNODA, from the BWC Implementation Support Unit, and also from Kenya and South Africa, who have been very instrumental in our 1540 implementation because they shared their best practices with us.

We have now started engaging in awareness and capacity building activities for resolution 1540 and other complementary instruments as well. We are very pleased to have received a tremendous level of support from the 1540 Committee.

**It sounds like Botswana's use of the matchmaking mechanism was very successful. Do you have any advice for other States using the mechanism on how to facilitate the process?**

I can advise that they should be specific. I think it is very important to clearly identify and articulate the specific areas where you need assistance, your challenges, and what you expect from the support. Secondly, engage early. You have to begin the process of requesting as soon as possible to allow sufficient time for the matchmaking process.

Thirdly, the most important thing is collaboration. We attend international meetings and we talk to other stakeholders. These are the opportunities

**It is crucial to demonstrate strong commitment and political will at the highest levels of the government for the implementation of resolution 1540.**

for us to network. So, if you collaborate with other potential partners, you can share your experiences.

And, finally, it is important to follow up. You should maintain regular communication with the assisting country or organization to monitor the process, and this will ensure successful implementation of the assistance provided.

**This issue of the 1540 Compass focuses on OP 3 (c) and (d) of UNSCR 1540, which relate to border and export control. What are the challenges associated with border and export control in Botswana?**

In Botswana, like in many other countries, we face challenges with regard to export and border control. One of the main challenges is resource constraints, including insufficient funding, human resources and technological resources to enhance border control and physical

security measures, such as surveillance systems, detection technologies, and secure storage facilities.

We also encounter challenges linked to capacity building, such as training programmes, as well as institutional capacities within relevant government agencies. Sometimes, institutions that are supposed to be at the forefront of the implementation of resolution 1540 face challenges in terms of human resources and expertise.

Another challenge is the legal framework. Although we have the laws in place, we still have gaps. One of the biggest gaps is the current absence of national control lists.

Finally, cooperation and coordination are also a challenge among relevant government agencies, such as law enforcement, border security agencies, customs and other regulatory authorities. We need to find a way to enhance information sharing and join efforts to prevent the illicit trafficking of CBRN materials.

**What about Botswana's significant milestones or successes in implementing resolution 1540: do you have any best practices or major achievements that you could share with our readers?**

The establishment of the Chemical, Biological, Nuclear and Radiological Weapon Management Authority is a significant milestone for Botswana. This national authority was established in 2018, just before COVID-19. It marked a crucial step forward. Prior to this, despite implementing international instruments, such as resolution 1540, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weap-

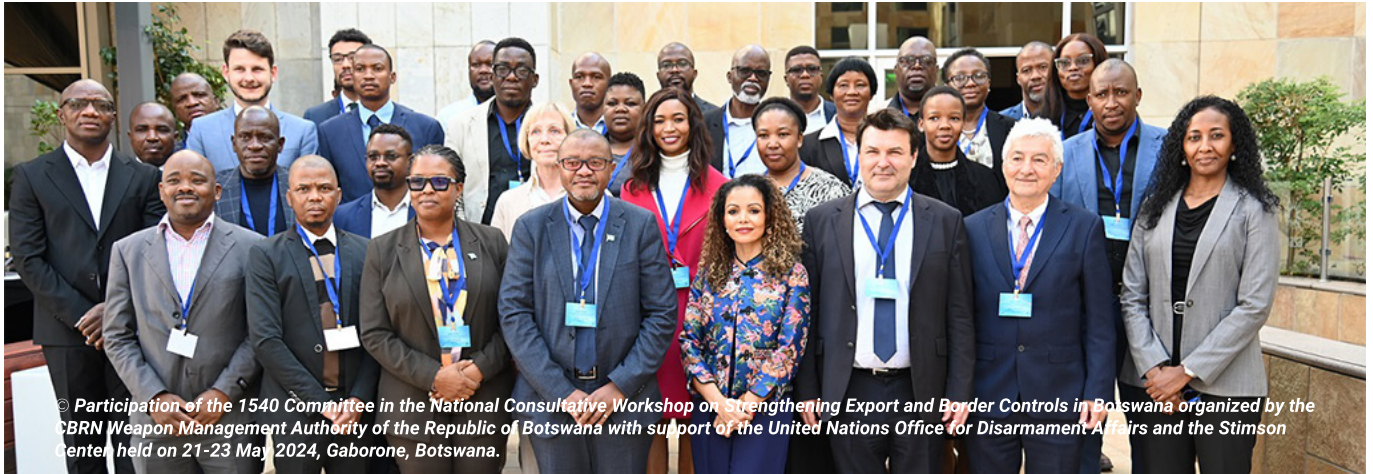
ons Convention and the Treaty on Nuclear Non-Proliferation, Botswana did not have a designated national authority responsible for overseeing these commitments. The creation of this authority, along with the establishment of focal points for all these international instruments, represents a major achievement for us.

Another notable milestone is the development and adoption of our National Action Plan (NAP). We took an inclusive approach, broadening its scope beyond resolution 1540 to encompass other complementary instruments. The NAP clearly outlined our priorities, needs, and the challenges we needed to address.

One of the priorities that emerged from the NAP was the submission of confidence building measures for the BWC, as, for more than 30 years, we didn't submit confidence building measures. Thanks to assistance from the BWC-ISU and the NAP, in 2022, we submitted our first confidence building measures and we have never looked back.

To start with, countries like South Africa and Kenya would present their best practices in the implementation of the BWC and the submission of confidence building measures to us. Their examples inspired us to successfully implement similar measures. Nowadays, we are proud to share our own lessons learned with other countries. We have been training countries, like Namibia, Rwanda and Zambia based on our experience. So, we are very proud to say this was very successful on our part.





© Participation of the 1540 Committee in the National Consultative Workshop on Strengthening Export and Border Controls in Botswana organized by the CBRN Weapon Management Authority of the Republic of Botswana with support of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Stimson Center, held on 21-23 May 2024, Gaborone, Botswana.

### What are some of Botswana’s priorities in the coming years with regard to UNSCR 1540 and non-proliferation more broadly?

Currently, our main priority is the development of the national control lists for dual-use materials and equipment. We have started discussions with other relevant stakeholders to determine the best approach for this task. Another significant priority is conducting a simulation exercise for response and emergency preparedness capabilities. We are currently discussing this as we believe it would be a great opportunity to test the effectiveness of our training programmes. Additionally, we are focused on strengthening our legal framework, expanding training programmes, and acquiring detection equipment to enhance our capabilities. These priorities are essential for ensuring robust measures against the proliferation of CBRN materials and improving our overall security and compliance with international standards.

### Finally, based on Botswana’s experience, what advice would you give to other States who are in the process of implementing UNSCR 1540?

This is a difficult question as there is no one-size-fits-all approach. However, some key strategies have proven effective for us. Firstly, it is crucial to demonstrate strong commitment and political will at the highest levels of the government for the implementation of resolution 1540. It is essential to ensure that the relevant government agencies are engaged and coordinated. When we started this process, we approached the senior managers and the permanent secretaries to secure high-level buy-in. Once you have support at the highest level, it is easy to cascade it down.

Secondly, I would highly recommend —because this is working for us— developing a national action plan. We have a comprehensive one, which is tailored to our needs and outlines specific measures, with timelines, responsible entities and the resources needed.

And last, but not least, you need to conduct regular risk assessments. Mapping exercises allow you to know what risks exist and what are the most important next steps. Understanding the landscape of potential threats allows for more targeted and effective measures. Implementing these strategies has significantly enhanced our ability to comply with resolution 1540 and address CBRN threats effectively.