

**STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY MR. FESTUS G. MOGAE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA, TO THE FIRST MEETING OF THE THIRD SESSION OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT "MATURITY AND CONSOLIDATION", MONDAY 13TH NOVEMBER, 2006**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. Mr. Speaker, it is once again my honour to address the opening of this Third Session of our Ninth Parliament. As the dust from our richly deserved independence celebrations begins to settle, let us count our blessings and take an honest inventory of the challenges we face as a nation.

2. At forty years of age, we are a mature nation and must consolidate the remarkable achievements we have made over the past four decades. The theme of my message to this Honourable House, and through it to the nation at large will therefore be, "Maturity and Consolidation."

3. Mr. Speaker, through the efforts and sacrifice of those who came before us, we have graduated our beloved country into the top leagues of nationhood. Our positive attributes as a nation have earned us a place amongst the respected members of the world community.

4. Since independence, our country has earned itself high international ratings on the quality of governance, media freedom, freedom of economic activity, peace and stability, gender equality in education, credit ratings and numerous other accolades. We need to jealously secure that well deserved place of honour and be driven by the passion to be counted amongst the best in the world. As a mature adult nation that has carved a place for itself, we will be judged by world standards on many fronts. It is therefore incumbent upon us to live up to the expectations of our age.

5. Let us be driven by the quest for world class service, visionary leadership, and a strong determination to build a dynamic nation that inspires its successive generations. Above all, let us re - dedicate ourselves to live by our national principles of Democracy, Development, Self -reliance, Unity and Botho.

6. Since we attained our independence forty years ago, successive members of this Honourable House have defended, nurtured, consolidated and sustained our values and democratic tradition. I therefore wish to pay tribute to all the past Members from both sides of this Honourable House, for their contribution to the development of our democratic tradition.

7. Our predecessors were men and women who had to endure all manner of discomfort as they improvised and traversed the dusty roads of our poverty stricken republic to build for us what we all enjoy today. May their example of sacrifice and patriotism continue to inspire us.

8. Mr. Speaker, as we strive to consolidate our achievements and enter the next phase of our development, we need to ensure that, every sector of our society, every institution and every individual citizen, set themselves the highest standards of performance and accountability. In this respect, I am pleased to note, that many institutions, amongst them the legal profession, are beginning to set themselves high standards of performance and ethical conduct.

## THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENT

9. Mr. Speaker, one of the fundamental principles of our constitutional order is the separation of powers between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. That principle, I am happy to observe, has enabled our Parliament to develop over the years, into an independent institution that scrutinizes Government action and holds the Executive accountable. I pledge as head of the Executive, to continue to defend that sacred principle that is the corner-stone of every truly democratic country.

10. I however wish to appeal to this Honourable House to remain mindful of the reality that, as an institution that oversees the performance of the Executive and the rest of society, its own performance will at all times, be under public scrutiny. Whilst I can not question the Honourable Members' Parliamentary privilege to speak for as long as they prefer to, my earnest appeal to you, is that we work in a business - like manner so that we can complete the legislative programme, hence delivery of services to the nation on time. The implementation of the National Development Plan is a responsibility for all, not just the Executive, not just the public service. We cannot, should not, hold the destiny of the nation to ransom in order to show displeasure with one another.

11. I am making this observation, Mr. Speaker, fully conscious of the fact that in a democracy such as ours, every institution in the land, including this Honourable House, has to be productive and fully accountable to the public. For example, while a Parliamentary sitting normally lasts four to six weeks, the last sitting took two months and five days. A number of statutory enactments, including the Prisons Amendment Bill, which was read for the first time, did not proceed. Other important government business that was tabled but not proceeded with, are the policies on Energy and ICT as well as the PAC Report. The Revised National Policy on Incomes, Employment, Prices and Profits, which was tabled in August 2005, was discussed and not concluded. Twelve private members motions were either not concluded or presented. We are currently being criticized that we are spending more time in Parliament than in our constituencies with the people we represent.

## **THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE**

12. Mr. Speaker, Government continues to pursue in earnest reform initiatives that we believe, once fully grounded, will improve service delivery in the public service. Several Public Sector reform initiatives, geared towards creating an effective and reputable public service have, therefore, been launched. These include the Work Improvement Teams, the Performance Management System, the Performance Based Reward System, the Balanced Scorecard and the Business Process Re-engineering.

12. The reforms I have just cited, demonstrate that the Public Service is increasingly becoming a strategy-focused organization, in its effort to provide quality service. The chief aim of this shift in paradigm is to ensure, that public servants become strategic in planning and eventually effective and efficient project/programme implementers. In this respect, we should be able to see increased productivity, better quality management and enhanced customer focus. Furthermore, the application of these strategic initiatives should enable us to optimize our resource use and hence become a more regionally and globally competitive public service.

14. Mr. Speaker, let me commend civil servants for enduring the difficult transformation journey in their quest to improve service delivery. In doing so they have attracted and continue to attract criticism from the people they serve whether justified or not. I want to submit that whilst it is a noble thing to criticize, we stand to gain from lessening undue and harsh criticism that may demoralize the men and women who made a choice to serve this country. We must therefore, not hesitate to note, commend and reinforce the efforts that the Public Officers are making towards transforming the public service into a highly efficient and effective entity.

## **OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS**

15. Mr. Speaker, since independence, our country has, under the BDP leadership, registered many achievements of which we can all be proud. Allow me therefore to outline some of them.

## **DEMOCRACY**

16. We can all proudly observe that our country holds one of the longest track records of stability in Africa because of our strong belief in democracy and good governance. There can be no doubt, that we have earned ourselves a prominent seat at the high table of the world's democratic nations.

17. The consistently high rankings we have been awarded by credible and internationally acclaimed institutions, such as Transparency International, World

Economic Forum, Heritage Foundation, The World Bank and many others, have confirmed our credentials as a democratic country.

Let us therefore challenge ourselves to constantly improve and consolidate our democratic tradition and consult openly where we fall short of the high standards we have set ourselves.

18. In that regard, my Government regards the right of women to fully participate in national affairs as one of its key policy objectives and principles. We will therefore continue to elevate women to leadership positions until we achieve full gender equality.

19. Similarly, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to consult directly with Batswana, as members of my administration and I have done through numerous Kgotla and other meetings, as part of our democratic tradition of *therisanyo* (consultation). I have no doubt that through consultation we can address and resolve all the grievances that might threaten our unity as a nation.

20. Mr. Speaker, I now wish to address some of the areas I believe are an integral part of a democratic state:

### **The Role of Non-Governmental Organisations**

21. In a developing country such as ours, overcoming the challenges of under-development requires the collective effort of both civil society and the Government. The value of this partnership between the Government on the one hand, civil society and the business community on the other, has been clearly demonstrated in our current battle against HIV/AIDS.

22. Many local and foreign Non- Governmental Organizations, including our own business community, have donated generously towards our struggle against the disease. On numerous occasions, I have had the honour and pleasure of receiving many donations towards our fight against HIV/AIDS on behalf of Masiela Trust and other charities.

23. I therefore take this opportunity to thank all the NGOs, members of the business community and individuals, who have joined hands with the Government in our struggle against HIV/AIDS. Let me assure them, that the positive difference they have made to the lives of many less fortunate members of our society will be their reward.

24. Non Governmental Organisations, whose role is to lobby for the rights of certain sectors of society and other interests, can play a positive role in enriching our democratic tradition. I commend in this respect, those organizations that have through their advocacy for the rights of women, sensitized our society to the need for gender equality.

25. Mr. Speaker if I readily welcome the partnerships I have just described, it is because members of the organizations concerned are decent men and women who are determined to make a positive contribution to our society and the country as a whole. The organizations I have described have very clearly distinguished themselves from those entities whose objectives and attitudes towards our country and its citizens are less than noble.

26. Some foreign organizations, Honourable Members, are, for example, campaigning against our country's sovereign right to provide education and improve health and other services to our remote based communities. Whilst those foreigners readily appreciate the value of educating their own children, they claim that by educating Basarwa children, we are violating Basarwa's rights and destroying their culture.

27. The campaigns by these organisations reveal their members' uncaring fascination with communities that have been forced by circumstance into the harsh and unsustainable life of hunting and gathering. We should never forget that it is the same organizations that are campaigning for the boycott of our tourism industry and diamonds, regardless of the negative impact that would have on our country, including the very people whose interests they claim to represent. We should also not forget that it is the same organizations that are campaigning to have our country carved up into exclusive apartheid style tribal entities regardless of the misery that such social engineering experiments have left in our region.

28. Mr. Speaker, whilst we are willing to accept constructive advice even from foreigners, we can not deny any of our citizens the right to enjoy the services we extend to their fellow citizens under the pretext of preserving their culture. I therefore wish to appeal to all those of our citizens who have been misled into associating themselves with the foreign entities and their hostile campaigns, to pause for a while and try to understand what really motivates those entities into meddling in our affairs.

29. What all of us as citizens, politicians or otherwise, need to know is that, if the campaigns by the foreigners I have described succeed, there will be no diamond revenue to fund our childrens' education, no money to buy anti-retroviral drugs for our HIV infected fellow citizens, no money for citizen empowerment, no money to care for orphans and a drastic reversal of the economic gains we have made since our independence.

30. These are the grim realities of which, the enemies of our success are fully conscious as they target their ill -founded campaigns against our country and against us. It is in this respect that I urge every patriotic citizen and every organization such as the media to avoid making any utterances that sustain the campaign against us, and our country.

## **The Role of the Media**

31. Mr. Speaker, no country can call itself a true democracy unless it guarantees freedom of expression. I therefore wish to note with satisfaction that Botswana has consistently been rated highly by internationally acclaimed organizations, as one of the countries that allow the media to operate freely. Let me reaffirm before this Honourable House, my Government's determination to maintain freedom of the media as a fundamental feature of our democracy.

32. I expect the media for its part to challenge itself, through self-regulation and observance of a strict code of conduct, to attain the highest standards of professionalism. By so doing, the media can contribute meaningfully towards the maturity and development of our young democracy and good governance and even more importantly, contribute to national unity and cohesion.

30. However, freedom of the media, like any other right, should be exercised responsibly, professionally and with due respect for the rights of others. The media should also avoid using demeaning and insulting language that is uncharacteristic of us as a people. Inaccurate, unbalanced and malicious reporting is not media freedom and should not be tolerated.

## **SOCIO - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **Economic Development, Growth and Capacity Building**

34. On the economic front, we have graduated our country from one of the twenty five (25) poorest countries at independence, to the middle income bracket. Real GDP growth rate averaged 9.8% between 1966 and 2004, largely on account of the discovery of minerals and prudent economic management.

35. Whilst in 1966 we had only nine secondary schools, only one of which was Government owned, we currently have 233 such schools, in place of the two teacher training colleges at independence, we have 6 today, 6 vocational training institutions from only one at independence. The tree shade classrooms that were a common feature of our Protectorate days have given way to modern class-rooms. Our literacy rate has gone up from about 10% at independence to almost 90%.

36. We can today proudly report that the six miles of tarred road we had at independence have now been increased to nearly 10,000 km. Those amongst us who are old enough can look back to the days when even the humble bicycle was a status symbol. We can vividly recall those days when our people had no choice but to enroll with the ominously titled Native Recruiting Corporation (NRC), for work in South African mines under conditions we prefer to forget. Many of our women too had no choice but to toil in South African kitchens.

37. On the social front, we have out-grown the days when in sport we were the whipping boys of the region. Today we are international competitors and on the sporting field, we can beat and be beaten by the best. In the boxing arena we can be punched and we can punch back. The talent that has emerged including in respect of our performing arts since our independence is something we can be proud of as a nation.

38. Our major challenge as a nation is to consolidate these remarkable achievements and let our national vision inspire us to even greater heights.

### **The Role of Diamonds**

39. Mr. Speaker, the outstanding economic achievements I have just outlined would not have been possible without the revenue from diamonds. There can be no doubt, that diamonds have played a major part in the transformation of our country's fortunes and the lives of our citizens.

40. The mining sector, of which diamonds are a large part, accounts for 75% of Botswana's export earnings, about 50% of Government revenue and 37.5% of Gross Domestic Product. Revenue from diamonds has enabled Government to fund virtually 100% of basic education, provide virtually free health care, build the infrastructure that has supported our economic activity, and to fund 80% of the anti-retroviral drugs that have given hope to our fellow citizens living with HIV/AIDS.

### **Citizen Empowerment**

41. Mr. Speaker, citizen empowerment is, no doubt, one of the least understood if not grossly abused terms, including in this Honourable House. I therefore wish to comment at length on this important subject.

42. In line with its policy of "Social Justice," Government has since independence ensured that Botswana benefited from the country's economic development. Although for some time the word citizen empowerment was not used, the programmes, policies and projects, that Government undertook empowered citizens. By definition, any programmes that enable a broad spectrum of citizens to participate meaningfully in any aspect of the economy pursuant to their aspirations, is empowerment.

43. Citizen empowerment, Mr. Speaker, is broader than we are currently defining it, as simply the transfer of financial resources to citizens by Government, reservation schemes and other narrowly focused objectives. The various opportunities for self - advancement that Government has and is still providing through numerous programmes, are intended to empower, and do empower citizens. There can be no doubt, for example, that universal access to free basic education and highly subsidized tertiary and technical education are a

sustainable empowerment tool. In any case there can be no better empowerment than education. As the American Negro College has said, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste." In the North East they say "zwidiyo butjilo" (education is life).

44. Mr. Speaker, many other Government policies such as good governance and prudent management of resources, provision of a stable political environment through democratic rule, the fight against corruption, and ensuring respect for the rule of law, place us amongst the most empowered citizens in the world.

45. Regarding citizen economic empowerment programmes, the following can be mentioned amongst numerous others that have been extended to citizens by Government:

- (a) Universal access to education
- (b) Virtually free medical attention
- (c) Localisation policy
- (d) Reservation Policy
- (e) Preferences on Public Procurement
- (f) Reservation and Price Preference Schemes for Citizen Consultants
- (g) Financial Incentive Schemes such as Financial Assistance Policy(FAP), Small Medium and Micro - Enterprises (SMME)
- (h) Privatisation Policy
- (i) Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA), Citizen Entrepreneur Mortgage Assistance Equity Fund (CEMAEF),
- (j) Agricultural Support Schemes such as ALDEP, SLOCA, NAMPAADD and many others.

46. Mr. Speaker, despite all efforts to economically empower citizens, the need for a more strategic and effective approach to citizen empowerment has become evident. Government has therefore decided to review citizen economic empowerment with a view to making it more effective and to ensure that it attains its objectives.

47. One of the most important elements of the review will be to encourage citizens to join hands with credible foreign investors in order to benefit from the latter's business skills and technology. Honourable Members will agree with me, that amongst other things, the current reservation schemes have ironically, tended to confine citizens to the fringes of economic activity. Joint ventures with competent foreign investors would ensure sustainable citizen empowerment coupled with efficient delivery of goods and services.

48. The need for a review of the citizen economic empowerment schemes has been dictated by lack of entrepreneurial culture amongst the citizens, inadequate



skills and the consequent inability to utilize the empowerment schemes effectively, mismanagement of project funds and many others.

49. Whilst citizen empowerment will continue to be the policy objective of this Government, it has to be stressed that we need to be careful that implementation of the policy does not conflict with other national objectives. It is a deeply disturbing irony, for example, that whilst we actively promote foreign investment and wish to entice credible foreign investors to set up in our country, on the one hand, we display near xenophobic tendencies in defence of our reservation policies on the other.

50. By closing off non - citizens from some aspects of our economic activity, we are denying ourselves the opportunity to benefit from foreign expertise and finance. Mr. Speaker, I see no conflict in us empowering ourselves through partnerships with appropriately resourced non - citizens. Of course, I mean partnership, not fronting.

51. Secondly, we need to accept that whilst the current economic empowerment programmes are in line with Government's policy of social justice, they should only be regarded as support to the citizens' own efforts to earn a living. In other words, the empowerment programmes must not conflict with our national principle of self -reliance, and create over -dependence on Government hand -outs as they seem to be doing at present.

52. Let me also caution my fellow leaders, that whilst it is tempting to use citizen empowerment as a political spring board, our duty as leaders is to encourage citizens to work hard must not be sacrificed for political expediency. I also wish to remind citizens, who have been awarded Government tenders on a preferential basis that they are under obligation to perform efficiently and to give Government value for the tax payers' money.

53. In order to improve their capacity to deliver on public sector and other projects, citizens need to adopt the practice of joining hands with fellow citizens. Our tendency of going it alone in the hope of reaping enormous profits by ourselves has not always paid off.

54. I wish to re-affirm Government's commitment to continue its commendable record of empowering Batswana. However, let us consult on various ways of maximizing the benefits of, as well as our capacity to use the various empowerment schemes.

## **HIV/AIDS**

55. Mr. Speaker, two decades after the first case of HIV/AIDS was identified in Botswana, the country is unfortunately still grappling with the deadly virus. A multi-sectoral approach involving the establishment of prevention, treatment,

care and support programmes has therefore been established. Successful implementation of such programmes has resulted in some modest achievements in preventing new infections, reducing morbidity and mortality related to HIV/AIDS and reducing the rate of increase in the number of orphans.

### **PMTCT Programme**

56. The 2005 Sentinel Survey shows a significant reduction in HIV prevalence among pregnant women in the 15 to 24 year bracket. Through the PMTCT (Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission) programme, virus transmission rates from mother to child have been reduced from an estimated 40 % to 6.7 %. This is very good news indeed.

### **National Anti- Retroviral Therapy (ARV) Programme**

57. Since its inception in 2002, the national ARV program has been rolled out to all districts such that all hospitals and 7 clinics are now offering ARV treatment. Currently there are about 70,000 patients on ARV treatment amongst them 6,000 children. Through the programme, many patients have been brought back to productive life, thus reducing disruption of the social fabric caused by deaths of young people, increased dependence on the elderly and other distressing social consequences.

### **Routine Testing**

58. Since routine testing was introduced in 2004, 300,000 people have been tested. Whilst I am aware of the controversy surrounding routine testing particularly in relation to the patients' rights, I can assure all concerned that the authorities will always respect the patient's right to decline the test.

### **National HIV/AIDS Prevalence Rate**

59. According to the national population survey (Botswana Aids Impact Survey II (BIAS II) of 2004 which covered people of all sexes aged 18 months and above, the national HIV prevalence rate is 17.1%. Chobe is the most affected district at 29.4% with Kweneng West at 10.8% being the lowest. More females (19.8%) are infected compared to males (13.9%).

60. Mr. Speaker, the infection rates I have just outlined confirm that our nation is yet to roll back the ravages of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. I therefore repeat my appeal to every citizen to consider himself or herself a key player in our battle for an Aids free society.

### **TB Problem**

61. The re-emergence of tuberculosis in epidemic proportions, has been one of the consequences of HIV/AIDS in Botswana and our sub-region. The quadrupling of TB infection rates annually over the past 15 years and the emergence of drug resistant strains of the disease, is a major problem. TB control is therefore one of the key components of our national response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, given the looming threat of multi-drug resistant tuberculosis.

### **Tribute to Health Workers**

62. Mr. Speaker, implementation of the national programmes against HIV/AIDS has over-stretched the capacity of our health system to almost breaking point, caused severe congestion at our health facilities and worse still, imposed severe emotional and physical stress on our health care workers.

63. I wish to take this opportunity to pay special tribute to all the health workers for their devoted and diligent service to the nation and to their fellow citizens who are suffering from the disease. The whole country has benefited enormously from their personal sacrifice and outstanding service. I assure all the health workers, in the name of the entire nation, that we do recognize the need to introduce effective support programmes for their benefit.

64. Once again I wish to take this opportunity to thank all the local and foreign non- governmental organizations, members of the business community, and many Batswana who have contributed in various commendable ways to our struggle against HIV/AIDS. Similarly, let me express our nation's gratitude to all our international partners, for the critical role they have played and continue to play in support of our efforts to rid ourselves of the HIV/AIDS scourge. We ask them to remain with us in our battle.

### **Appeal to the Nation**

65. Given our limited resources as a developing country, the affordability and sustainability of our response programmes remains one of the major long term challenges. We therefore need to reduce new HIV infections in order to have fewer patients to treat, fewer orphans, and therefore more resources to address other development challenges facing our nation.

66. We can not meet our Millenium Development and Vision 2016 goals unless there is a significant change in behaviour. In this respect, I appeal to every citizen to make a personal commitment to abandon risky behaviour that might lead to HIV infection.

### **YOUTH EMPOWERMENT**

67. Mr. Speaker, last year I drew attention to the national problem of youth unemployment and outlined the various initiatives that Government would

undertake to address the current plight of unemployed youth. Whilst there is no doubt that our small job market can not absorb all the unemployed youth, it is incumbent upon all of us to take measures that would help the youth to help themselves.

68. As I explained then, upgrading of the quality of brigades would help to provide youth with high level practical skills that are suitable for private sector jobs and self - employment. I am pleased that following extensive consultations with the relevant parties, Government will be taking over the Brigades and converting them into Technical Colleges.

69. In addition to up grading of Brigades, the resources available to the Youth Promotion Programme have been increased three fold from P3m to P30m for the current financial year. This will enable each participant to be given up to P50,000 to start a project. Although demand for assistance under the programme far exceeds the funds available, Government will continue to take measures that enhance the effectiveness of the programme.

70. In respect of the private sector, Government is considering measures that will give companies some tax incentives to employ our youth. In this regard, training regulations of the Incomes Tax Act are being revised in order to encourage the engagement of youth as interns. Implementation of these regulations will be effective January 2007. I wish to reiterate my appeal to the private sector to do everything they can to support Government's efforts in respect of youth unemployment.

## **MAJOR CHALLENGES AND DISTURBING SOCIAL TRENDS**

71. Mr. Speaker, as a nation that has registered remarkable achievements and attained world standards on many fronts, we need to secure our well deserved place. We can not do so unless we confront our challenges and shortcomings with honesty and frankness. Only then can we consolidate our remarkable success and avoid slipping towards regressive tendencies that blemish our nation's outstanding record.

72. Mr. Speaker, it gives me satisfaction that the challenges on which I am about to comment, are concerns that are expressed by citizens on a daily basis, and therefore not a lecture from me as the President of the country. I say satisfaction because, by identifying and openly talking about our shortcomings, we can collectively challenge ourselves to improve upon our performance.

## **The CHALLENGES**

### **Self - Reliance**

73. Mr. Speaker, in my address to this Honourable House last year, I reminded the nation that, by any standards, "we are still a developing society located within a marginalized continent." Whilst the discovery of mineral resources, coupled with their prudent use has propelled our nation out of extreme poverty, we need to challenge ourselves to arrest the ever growing over - dependence on Government. We need to take seriously the words from a certain Marcus Washling who reminded us that:

"Those at the top of the mountain did not fall there"

74. We cannot as a nation be taken to higher levels of development by Government programmes alone. We need to challenge ourselves as individual citizens, to climb to the top of the mountain.

75. Exhaustible resources such as minerals can not take the place of our own individual effort and enterprise. I therefore wish to appeal to Members of this Honourable House, all those in leadership positions and the nation at large, to revive the spirit of self-reliance that has seen our nation through the worst phases of its history.

### **Violence and Crime**

76. There can be no doubt that the growing tendency towards criminal acts such as the killing of women, rapes, armed robberies and other violent crimes, is a blemish that is uncharacteristic of us as a people. The growing lack of respect for the sanctity of human life is a deeply disturbing development that has to be arrested through the collective intervention of the nation as a whole.

77. The Government will, therefore, for its part, continue to equip and provide resources to enable our law enforcement agencies to deal with the growing scourge. I wish to appeal to the nation to support our police service and other agencies in their commendable effort to rid our society of those anti - social elements. We must all send to every criminal, the nation's clear message that crime will not pay them.

### **Alcohol Abuse**

78. Mr. Speaker, although there are numerous causes of crime and other negative social trends, one of the major contributory factors is the abuse of alcohol.

79. According to police reports, for example, 35 murders that were committed between January and August this year, were committed by people who had taken alcohol; 455 of the motor accidents that occurred in the same period were attributable to alcohol; 214 rapists who were arrested during the same period

had taken alcohol; 47 of the offenders who committed grievous harm offences had consumed alcohol;

352 people who caused malicious damage to property were under the influence of alcohol; and in the same period, 4,886 people who were charged with common nuisance offenses had taken alcohol.

80. Besides these obvious incidents, there are numerous cases of promising young people whose lives have been ruined by alcohol; families that have to endure the daily agony of poverty and abuse because they are headed by alcoholics; wives who have been abused and even killed by husbands whose only plea was that they were under the influence of alcohol; lives that have been lost through drunken driving; HIV infections that could not have occurred had the infected people's judgement not been impaired by alcohol - the distressing list goes on.

81. Mr. Speaker, during my tour of the country to consult on Ntlo Ya Dikgosi and other national issues, this painful evidence of our nation's self-destruction was emphasized by our concerned citizens. The clear message I was given by the people was that Members of this Honourable House were expected to take the lead in arresting our nation's disturbing abuse of alcohol. It is therefore my earnest appeal to you all, to heed the cries of the nation we represent.

82. Honourable Members, whilst we may differ over how to deal with the problem, let us resist the temptation to earn political mileage over our national problem of alcohol abuse, at the expense of our nation.

83. I therefore urge members of this Honourable House to support the Government's effort to introduce measures that will regulate the consumption of alcohol. For its part, the Government remains open to suggestions from both sides of this Honourable House and society as a whole, on how we can deal with this growing threat to our nation.

84. The disturbing abuse of alcohol is not a party political issue but a national challenge that requires our collective leadership. I therefore urge all Honourable Members, irrespective of their political affiliations, to rise to the challenge. The nation has spoken and unequivocally wants us to demonstrate leadership in order to arrest our nation's self-destruction.

## **Corruption**

85. Mr. Speaker, one of the major challenges we have to confront as we seek to consolidate our remarkable achievements is corruption. Whilst some allegations of corruption have turned out to be false stories spread by companies that have lost fairly awarded tenders, there are a few instances where corruption has been confirmed. There have been indications, for example, that the tender award system in District and Urban Councils needs to be reviewed.

86. In order to deal with the problem, Government has decided to extend the provisions of the Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Board Act to local authorities. Appropriate legislation will be laid before this Honourable House as soon as consultations on the draft bill have been completed.

87. Honourable Members, whilst enacting legislation and punishing offenders are crucial steps in our fight against the scourge of corruption, our ultimate defence is acceptance by all of us that corruption is a cancer against which we all stand to lose.

88. I therefore urge all citizens to report incidents of corruption to the relevant authorities. Above all, let us remember that our nation's Vision 2016 pledge to be a moral and tolerant nation, is a solemn promise to ourselves to be law abiding citizens with high ethical standards.

### **Low Productivity**

89. One of the most prominent issues that have been frequently raised by concerned citizens is whether we work hard enough for our up - keep. Whilst I must hasten to explain that many of our fellow citizens earn their living through hard work, our predominant attitude towards work is unfortunately negative.

90. According to information received from our National Productivity Centre, we rank amongst countries whose labour force has a very poor work ethic. Amongst the 14 factors that have been identified as "most problematic for doing business" our poor work ethic has been emphasized. We are for example, ranked well below many of our fellow SADC countries, such as South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Mauritius amongst others.

91. I wish to plead with every fellow citizen to work harder if we are to build a better future for ourselves and our future generations. As the American industrialist Mr. Henry Ford once said: "Chop your own wood and it will warm you twice."

### **Decline in Modesty and Values**

92. Mr. Speaker, in my address to this Honourable House last year, I drew the nation's attention to our tendency to live beyond our means. Whilst I readily admit that some of our citizens have worked their way into the high income bracket, a lot of us are simply borrowing excessively in pursuit of ostentatious lifestyles and to keep up false images. Instead of investing our income in fixed assets, our children's education and other income generating activities, a too many of us are borrowing simply to fund luxurious motor vehicles and extravagant lifestyles.

93. I am particularly concerned that even funds that are allocated to individuals under the Government's citizen empowerment schemes have at times been diverted towards the purchase of expensive motor vehicles. Similarly, a number of promising citizen owned business companies have failed simply because those companies' profits have been diverted towards funding their owners' unsustainable lifestyles.

94. Mr. Speaker, whilst I readily accept that it is the right of every citizen to reward himself or herself for their lifelong struggles, I feel the obligation, as one of the elder citizens, to plead that we should not abandon our traditional modesty. There is no doubt that some of the unfortunate incidents such as suicides and the disturbing crime rate are indicative of the rising social stress levels and loss of values resulting from the pursuit of ostentatious lifestyles.

95. I am also concerned, like other fellow citizens, that unless we arrest our current pursuit of consumerist lifestyles, we will distort our national value system and begin to judge people only by their meretricious sparkle and superficial looks rather than by the intrinsic value of the content of their character.

96. Honourable Members, I have chosen to outline both our achievements and shortcomings because of my deep conviction that our nation has the capacity to reach even greater heights. I have no doubt that we will all challenge ourselves to clear the blemishes that tarnish our otherwise outstanding performance as a nation.

## **OVERVIEW OF MAJOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES**

97. Mr. Speaker, I will now report on some of the major Government projects and programmes that will take our country to higher levels of development, create job opportunities, empower our citizens, save public funds and diversify our economy.

### **Privatisation**

#### **Air Botswana**

98. The privatisation of public enterprises is progressing, though slowly. The privatisation of Air Botswana is at the bidding stage. Bids have been received and are being evaluated to select a suitable strategic equity partner. The privatisation of Air Botswana will strengthen service provision in the air transport sector and address the growing demand for air transport, in particular by the tourism sector.

#### **Botswana Telecommunications Corporation (BTC)**



99. With respect to the telecommunications sector, the privatisation of Botswana Telecommunications Corporation (BTC) is being carried out concurrently with further liberalization of the telecommunications sector, that is intended to create a level playing field for operators in the sector. The Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology, is currently in the process of recruiting an advisor to assist with the privatisation of BTC.

100. The privatisation of BTC, involving the procurement of a strategic equity partner to provide required investments to improve BTC operations should be completed by mid 2007. In the meantime, the process of preparing legislation for incorporation of BTC under the Companies Act, to facilitate its privatisation is underway.

## **RATIONALISATION OF PARASTATAL ORGANISATIONS**

101. A preliminary review of parastatals was carried out recently. The review established, that many entities have overlapping, similar, related, or duplicative mandates thereby creating unnecessary inefficiencies in the delivery of public services and utilisation of resources. Further detailed studies will be undertaken on specific proposals in order for Government to take informed decisions.

## **OUTSOURCING**

102. Government continues to outsource some of its functions to the private sector in order to improve service delivery. To ensure consistency in the outsourcing of services, standard outsourcing documents such as contracts and service level agreements, have been developed, for outsourcing of key services like security, office cleaning, catering, gardening and landscaping and facilities management.

## **Public Private Partnership (PPP)**

103. Government has decided that Public Private Partnership (PPP) will be used as a form of procuring and financing infrastructural projects in the public sector. This option will ensure sustainable investment as well as attain development goals in partnership with the private sector. This is in line with the Government's strong belief in the role of the private sector as a development partner.

104. Currently, Government has decided to pilot two (2) PPP serviced office accommodation projects, namely, for the Ministries of Lands and Housing and Environment, Wildlife and Tourism as well as the Office of the Ombudsman and Land Tribunal. Tenders for the projects have been received and negotiations with bidders are ongoing.

105. Other projects that are being reviewed for PPP procurement are the CTO fleet operations and the proposed International University of Science and Technology. Government will continue to identify possible areas where the PPP option can be used to our country's benefit. If correctly used, the PPP method can save valuable public funds for other key development objectives.

### **Business and Economic Advisory Council**

106. Mr. Speaker, I informed the Honourable Members last year, that I had set up a Business and Economic Advisory Council to recommend an Action Plan and to identify key projects whose implementation would contribute towards economic diversification and other national priorities. The Council has now completed its consultations and submitted its recommendations which Government is studying.

### **Botswana Brand Initiative**

107 In May 2006 I launched the process to develop the country brand for Botswana as part of our strategy to promote investment, tourism, and our country's image. The development phase of Branding Botswana is ongoing and the brand will be launched when all consultations will have been concluded.

### **Energy**

#### **Morupule Power Station Expansion Project**

108. The Morupule Power Station is currently generating about 28% of the total energy requirements of the country, and the remaining 72% is imported. To address this electricity deficit it has been decided to expand the Morupule Power Station to 1,200 mega watt capacity. This will make us fully self-sufficient in electricity generation.

109. The Morupule power station expansion project is estimated to cost US\$ 1,200 million which is approximately P7.0 billion and its completion is expected in 2009/10.

#### **Mmamabula Export Power Station Generation Project**

110. Honourable Members and the nation will recall that when I paid a state visit to South Africa, I requested the South African government and Parliament to let us build an insitu thermal power station and sell electricity to them. I am now in a position to report that:

(a) Coal Investment Corporation (CIC) and a local company Meepong Resources, have joined forces to explore and develop the substantial Mmamabula coal resources which will be used to generate electricity.

(b) A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Governments of Botswana and South Africa on 17th August this year to facilitate the development of the power station and the sale of electricity to South Africa.

111. Mr. Speaker, the development of Mmamabula Export Power Station will not only facilitate the exploitation of our abundant coal reserves, but will also make our country a significant player in the regional power market. The estimated cost of the project is about P42 billion.

## **Mineral Sector**

112. The prevailing strong commodity prices, resulting from accelerated growth in China and India continue to drive interest in exploration. As a result of the strong prices, previously explored and known deposits such as Thakadu, Makala and the Dukwi copper deposits as well as those in North West Botswana are being re-examined. Work is on-going to complete a feasibility study on the Dukwe copper deposits and mining is expected to start by the end of 2007.

113. Diamonex Limited was issued with a licence to re-open the Lerale diamond pipes. These deposits were previously mined on a trial basis by Tswapong Mine Company in the 1990s. It is expected that Diamonex will commence production during 2007, and produce around 300,000 carats per annum over a 15 year period.

114. A feasibility study on the AK 6 deposit near Letlhakane is at an advanced stage with the study expected to be completed before the end of the year. The feasibility study will form the basis for a mining license application.

## **Diamond Cutting and Polishing**

115. Until December 2005, the diamond cutting and polishing industry was operating with only four factories. Eleven more factories have since been licensed, bringing the total to 15. Up to 2004, the then existing factories employed only 600 people.

116. However, in 2005, employment increased by 25% to 954 employees with the establishment of Eurostar Company. It is now expected that over 3,400 new jobs will be created once the 15 diamond cutting and polishing companies have set up their operations.

## **Major Water Projects**

### **Dams**

## **Ntimbale Dam**

117. The construction of Ntimbale dam is virtually complete. It is hoped that construction of the pipeline from the dam to the treatment works at Masingwaneng will be completed this financial year. By June 2007, the project will be ready to supply water.

118. Four other dams, namely, Dikgatlhong (Lower Shashe), Thune, Lotsane and Mosetse, will be completed by 2011. Progress on each is as follows:

(a) The Lower Shashe dam, located at Robelela is estimated to cost P860 m and is expected to be completed in 2011.

(b) The Thune dam, located between Molalatau and Mathathane villages in the Bobirwa Sub-district, was cost P620m. It is expected to be completed in 2010.

(c) The Lotsane dam, located at Maunatlala village is estimated to cost P395 m and will be completed around December 2010.

(d) Lastly Mosetse dam, which is to be built near Mosetse village will cost P185m and is expected to be completed in 2009.

## **Major Education Projects**

### **Botswana International University of Science and Technology**

119. Honourable Members will recall that Government has decided to establish the Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST) to increase access to tertiary education, reduce the cost of external placement of students and ensure relevance to the needs of the economy. The demand for science and technology based education is also increasing as Botswana's economy matures and private sector participation in economic activity increases.

120. A 1,700 hectare plot has already been secured in Palapye for the project. The revised target is that BIUST will enroll its first 2,500 students in 2009. The enrolment will increase to 10,000 students by year 2016.

121. In 2004, the cost of the university was estimated at P5.1 billion and a feasibility study to determine the current prices will be undertaken.

122. The Interim Council of the BIUST has been established. The Council will in turn recruit the Founding Vice Chancellor and other academic staff to lead the academic development of the new university.

123. The Project Team is currently working with PEEPA on the appointment of a Transaction Advisor who will guide the tender process and development of the Botswana International University of Science and Technology through Public Private Partnership (PPP).

### **The Medical School and Medical Education Development**

124. Government decided in 1998 to establish a medical school in Botswana in a phased manner. The first phase was to establish a pre- medical programme through a link arrangement between the University of Botswana and a consortium of medical schools abroad in order to increase the pool of potential medical school students. Since 2002, a total of 186 students have entered the four partner medical schools in South Africa and Australia. The first 15 graduates are expected to start doing internship in Botswana in January 2007.

125. The second phase of the project was to allow a fully - fledged medical school to evolve from the first phase. This phase has also begun. The construction of the Faculty of Health and Allied Sciences at the University of Botswana (UB), which will host a Faculty of Medicine, is at design stage. A Founding Head of Medical School, recruited through the assistance of Baylor College, joined UB in July 2006 on contract and is currently developing a medical curriculum.

126. The University of Botswana has donated a plot on their Gaborone Campus for construction of a Teaching Hospital. Start -up funds for the project have already been provided by the Ministry of Education.

### **Agricultural Sector Projects and Programmes**

127. Mr. Speaker, despite the decline of its contribution to the Gross Domestic Product, agriculture will for a long time remain a source of food, income and employment for many of our citizens. However, the need for the sector to become efficient and competitive can not be over - emphasized. Government therefore continues to work with the various stakeholders in the sector to transform it and to achieve the desired efficiency.

### **Agro - Commercial Project**

128. In addition to NAMPAAD, Government recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with a major potential investor for the development of an Integrated Agro - Commercial project. The aim is to improve food production and create employment. It is expected that the project will focus on the development of an intensive irrigated agricultural production.

### **DEVELOPMENT OF PROJECTS ON LAND AROUND WASTE WATER PONDS**

129. Government has recently decided that land around waste water ponds should be utilised for agricultural production and other purposes. We will, therefore, facilitate the provision of infrastructure to promote efficient utilization of effluent (waste water) in consultation with other stakeholders. This is also in line with Government's policy on food security, poverty alleviation and socio economic development.

### **Dibete Ostrich Multiplication Model Farm**

130. Since its establishment, the European Union accredited ostrich slaughter facility in Gaborone has been experiencing major challenges especially with the supply of slaughter birds. To address the problem and develop the industry, Government has decided to establish a model Ostrich Multiplication and Demonstration Farm at Dibete Quarantine Camp.

131. A total of over P13.0 million has been made available for this project for over three years and the first breeder birds at the model farm have been delivered. The development of additional farm infrastructure has commenced and the whole project will be completed in 3 years.

### **Agricultural Subsidy Schemes**

132. The agricultural sector subsidy schemes namely: Arable Land Development Program (ALDEP), Services to the Livestock Owners in Communal Areas (SLOCA) and Livestock Water Development have been reviewed and re-formulated. The review of the schemes confirmed that they have been well received and well appreciated. However, there is need to improve on their monitoring and targeting if they are to achieve their desired goals. It is expected that the revised programmes will be implemented with effect from the next financial year.

### **Road Projects**

133. Currently, Government is constructing a dual carriage road-over - Rail bridge along Nelson Mandela road in Gaborone. Dutlwe-Morwamosu and Middlepits-Bokspits roads are also under construction. Reconstruction of the Dibete-Mahalapye and Sekoma-Kokotsha roads is ongoing. Mahalapye-Kalamare road is currently at tendering stage.

134. Mr. Speaker, the massive projects and programmes I have just outlined are clear evidence of my Government's determination to develop the country, create additional job opportunities, introduce efficiency in the use of public funds and above all, empower Batswana. I urge all the implementing Ministries, the private sector and other agencies to remain conscious of the importance of these projects.

135. In the same vein, I urge Honourable Members of Parliament to please facilitate rather than obstruct progress through the protracted debate which characterized the last session of Parliament.

## **BOTSWANA AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

136. Mr. Speaker, the remarkable development strides we have registered since our independence, were to a large measure, the outcome of the commendable support our country received from the international community.

137. Many of our development partners, some of whom had no historical connection with our impoverished country, gave us grant aid and loans from their tax payers. I take this opportunity to thank all the countries and international organisations for their enormous contribution to our development effort since our independence.

138. Honourable Members, Botswana has since independence established itself as a respected member of the community of nations. As a member of the international community, it is imperative that we continue to participate actively in the shaping of events that affect our country.

139. The intensification of competition for investors dictates that we go out into the world to market our country as a credible investment and tourist destination. We need to take the advice from the big book and put Botswana's shining light, not under the table, but on top where it can be seen by the rest of the world.

140. Even as we thank the rest of the world community for its friendship and support, we can not take that friendship for granted. As a small developing country, we will continue to need our friends' support and can not afford to shut off the rest of the world; regardless of the modest development strides we have made since independence.

141. Mr. Speaker, the tragic and unexpected HIV/AIDS epidemic that our country has had to deal with, has taught us that we inhabit this planet with many good men and women who care about us. We must go out to all those who share our tragedy with us and say "thank you, we still need your life giving assistance."

142. Whilst our positive track record as a country has earned us the respect and friendship of many throughout the world, a few individuals have chosen to spread disinformation about our country. It is our duty to go out to the rest of the world especially our friends, to tell them the truth about our country.

143. Lastly, as members of various regional and international organizations such as SADC, the AU, and the U.N., it is our obligation to participate in

meetings of those organizations if we are to influence the adoption of decisions that serve our national interests.

144. Mr. Speaker, it was in pursuit of the objectives I have just outlined, that I made a number of external trips in the course of this year, as well as in the previous years. The objective of my visits to Namibia, Zimbabwe and another fellow SADC country Madagascar was to consolidate our much valued friendship with those countries.

145. Mr. Speaker, another country I visited was Norway which has also been one of our closest partners and friends for many years. Besides training our medical students, Norway has since independence extended very valuable development assistance to us. I, therefore, used the opportunity of my visit to thank that country for its assistance, met with our medical trainees and addressed an influential institute on our policies and challenges.

146. I also paid a visit to Japan, a country which has since our independence supported our development effort by amongst others, financing our infrastructure. My visit was also in support of Botswana Week promotion event, which was intended to market Botswana in that country. I can not over - emphasize the importance of Japan as a source of investors and tourists, let alone as a deeply valued friend of Botswana. All the external visits I undertake are ultimately aimed at economic diversification and the attainment of other key national objectives.

147. It is for the same reasons that I paid a visit to Sweden not only to consolidate our long established friendship and partnership, but also to thank that country for the commendable assistance they have extended to us over the years. As some of our development partners begin to ask themselves whether we still need their assistance, given our middle income status, we need to plead with them to continue supporting our efforts. Mr. Speaker, Sweden is also a major target of an NGO that is currently spreading disinformation about our country. I therefore addressed a Parliamentary Committee and another group in that country to set the record straight and to protect our country's honour, dignity and interests.

148. This year, we were also honoured with the visit to Botswana by the President of Brazil, HE Mr. Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. I subsequently visited Brazil at the invitation of HE the President. These exchanges of visits were followed by the decision by Brazil to open a resident diplomatic mission in Gaborone. This is a highly commendable decision considering that Brazil is an important player in international affairs. We stand to benefit significantly from the friendship we have established with that relatively developed fellow developing country.



149. Mr. Speaker, we were also privileged during the course of the year to host the Presidents of the Federal Republic of Germany, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania and the President of Sierra Leone.

150. Honourable Members will recall that I also visited the United States of America to attend an international meeting on HIV/AIDS. The visit gave me an opportunity to meet our various friends and to plead our case for continued assistance in our struggle against the disease. As the President of this country, I consider it my patriotic duty to knock on as many doors as I can, to save the lives of my fellow Batswana.

151. Let me once again emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that our country needs to actively interact with the rest of the world, if we are to achieve our national objectives of job creation, economic diversification and sustainable development. Our country is too small to do without the rest of the world.

152. Mr. Speaker, Botswana currently enjoys diplomatic relations with 104 (one hundred and four) countries and our goal is to increase the number this coming year.

153. In order to promote our interests abroad, Government has decided to open two new diplomatic Missions in India and Nigeria in 2006 and 2007 respectively. The two Missions will no doubt consolidate the friendship we enjoy with the two countries and provide us with further prospects for the enhancement of our interests. I urge the business community in particular to take advantage of the opportunities Government has provided and actively pursue new avenues for business partnerships.

## **CONCLUSION**

154. Mr. Speaker, the achievements of our nation over its forty years of independence are now a brand with which we have come to be associated, in both our continent and the world at large. Let us remember where we come from as a nation and jealously guard against any tendencies that might tarnish our remarkable track record as a successful nation.

155. If we let those who do not wish us well to sow seeds of discord amongst us, our very freedom as a nation will be compromised. Let us therefore not become our own enemies by failing to stand firm against those who seek to impoverish our country through their ill-founded campaigns.

156. The substantial projects and programmes I have outlined clearly demonstrate, Government's determination to empower the nation, reform our delivery system where we fail to obtain acceptable results, and maintain our country's record as a land of opportunity and a shining light.

157. Even as we thank The Almighty God for granting us the mineral resources that the BDP government has prudently managed and enabled us to transform our fortunes, let us remember that self-reliance, a strong work ethic, unity and all the deeply cherished principles our ancestors bequeathed to us will remain valid, whatever our circumstances.

158. If we are to survive international competition for the investors and tourists, amongst others, we will need to constructively re-examine our current mindset as a nation, and be prepared to accept that we have at times fallen short of international standards. Even as we maintain our track record on the many achievements of which we are proud, let us be prepared to reform, consolidate our gains, and actively seek whatever international expertise there is, to empower ourselves.

159. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, with those words I conclude my humble remarks and wish all of you good health, productive deliberations, and above all God's blessings.