



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS

BY

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PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

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“Delivering People Centred Development”

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GABORONE

Introduction

Madam Speaker, before I begin I would request that we observe a moment of silence for our late colleague Rre Gaolathe and other Batswana who have departed during the past year

Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to recognise that there are sitting amongst us in the gallery this afternoon men and women, including many former Members of Parliament, who have played key roles in laying the foundation of our democratic development as a nation. In this respect, I am informed and wish to especially acknowledge the presence of four members of our Republic's very first National Assembly – Obed Chilume, Gaerolwe Kwerepe, Goareng Mosinyi and Kenneth Nkhwa.

1. Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to brief this assembly about our nation's progress. My remarks today will focus on Government's delivery of its public commitments. You may recall that last year I spoke of the pressing need for us to ensure the effective delivery of targeted outcomes. A year later Batswana need to know what has been accomplished and what still needs to be done.

2. In our delivery efforts we realise that time is not on our side. The global economic downturn, from which we are emerging, has put additional stress on our finances. We have thus reached a stage where it is necessary to replace over dependence on finite state resources with sustainable private sector wealth creation, through citizen empowering entrepreneurship. To achieve this we must combine global competitiveness with local self-reliance.

3. Our overarching development goal remains the transformation of Botswana into a high income economy that ensures the well-being of all Batswana. The obstacles we face in the delivery of this outcome are formidable, but not insurmountable.

4. Prominent among our challenges is the persistence of poverty that, besides its debilitating impact on the lives of the impoverished, robs society as a whole of its productive potential. In response, Government has shifted its strategic focus beyond alleviation measures and

achieving the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty, to a renewed moral commitment to eradicate absolute poverty, with an emphasis on people centred development through local enterprise.

5. Our determination to end poverty is thus tied with an undertaking to create additional opportunities for employment and income generation, more especially among the youth and rural poor. We do not want a situation in this country whereby the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. We must rather strive as a nation try to move up the ladder of opportunity together, not leaving others behind. This calls for sacrifice, selflessness and consideration for others less fortunate.

6. If we are to achieve our goal of becoming a more productive and prosperous nation, while meeting the Millennium Development Goals, we must further accept the responsibility of self-empowerment by setting and achieving globally competitive standards of excellence for ourselves.

The People's Mandate

7. Madam Speaker, in its delivery Government continues to be guided by the principles of democracy, development, dignity and discipline. As a democratic state, disciplined by public accountability, we are entrusted to develop our nation in a manner that enhances our collective dignity.

8. In this house we must forever respect the will of the people. Let us accept our common responsibility. We may oppose each other when we believe we must; work with each other when we can, while at all times appreciating the expectations of the nation that has brought us here together.

9. The will of the people was demonstrated once more in the Tonota North by-election, an event sadly necessitated by the death of our dear colleague Baledzi Gaolathe. In his passing we lost a gentleman who excelled in the private and public sectors alike. In the boardroom as in Cabinet, on the world stage and in the Kgotla, he was a gifted statesman whose contributions shall be remembered as he is missed.

10. Madam Speaker, the people of Tonota North have chosen as their new representative the Honourable Fidelis Molao. It therefore gives me great pleasure to welcome him here amongst us.

11. Of course democracy is about much more than elections, or the deliberations within this chamber. As a government of, by and for the people, we must in our delivery at all times be engaged with the people. As has been the case since time immemorial, the Kgotla remains our bedrock for dialogue. It is for this reason that members of Cabinet, and I, have made Kgotla attendance, in communities large and small, a routine part of our work schedules.

12. At the same time we appreciate that, nowadays, Government must consult widely through various mediums. We have thus convened Dipitso in which government and non-government stakeholders confer on specific areas of common concern. Two weeks ago, for example, we held a special Pitso to formulate an integrated action plan for poverty eradication through economic empowerment. We also, for the first time, held a Pitso on the preparation of the Government budget.

13. In their deliberations, Dipitso complement other fora, such as the High Level Consultative Council, whose quarterly sector meetings and biannual reviews constitute our primary platform for proactive partnership with the private sector.

14. We have also sought to enhance consultation between central Government and the Local Authorities. This is why, in addition to regular briefings by individual Ministers, we have taken the initiative to bring Cabinet to the Councils around the country. It is unfortunate that some partisan naysayers have gone out of their way to cast aspersions on this otherwise well received outreach.

15. In this age of new information technologies, Government is evolving other means to dialogue with our fellow citizens. Most Ministries either have or are in the process of establishing call centres with toll free numbers. Some Ministries have also begun to use text messaging when communicating information. Where appropriate, this is a much cheaper as well as faster means of communicating than manual processes.

16. Government's undertaking to harness the potential of interactive communication technologies is best reflected in our commitment to automate administrative processes through the e-Government programme. The Government website is evolving as an e-portal for online services, as well as a nexus for information. Motivating this effort is a determination to replace segmented administration and antiquated office procedures with a commitment to seamlessly integrated, as well as digitally automated, interactive governance. E-Government is thus a key instrument to deliver more effective and efficient services, while achieving cost savings.

The Constitution

17. Madam Speaker, democracy cannot exist in the absence of the rule of law. In this country we are fortunate to have as our supreme law a Constitution that for nearly half a century has upheld both our human rights and responsibilities to one another. We should, therefore, exercise caution in heeding calls to alter the founding document that has been the guarantor of our enviable record of political stability and socio-economic progress.

18. According to the international monitoring group Freedom House, over two thirds of the countries listed as being "free", including Botswana, have constitutions similar to ours, in which the executive derives its mandate from Parliamentary election. About a third in the same category of nations practice first past the post constituency voting, with others employing a wide variety of alternatives. This is not to say that our fundamental laws can never be changed, if a clear domestic consensus for such change emerges. But, let us not be misled by empty or self-serving claims that any particular electoral system enjoys global recognition as being superior.

Law and Order

19. Madam Speaker, strict adherence to the rule of law places a great burden on the Judiciary, whose challenge is to meet the demands of an increasingly litigious society, as well as cope with rising criminal case loads. Here we can acknowledge the proactive efforts by the Administration of Justice, Industrial Court and Attorney General's Chambers, in accelerating their case disposal through new case

management systems, though we are well aware that backlogs still remain.

20. In a further effort to improve delivery, the Judiciary has introduced special courts for Small Claims and Stock Theft, whose open procedures allow people to seek redress without incurring heavy legal expenses. Small Claims Courts were started on a pilot basis in Gaborone and Francistown, while four Stock Theft Courts have so far been established. The public's positive response to these Courts is reflected in the large number of cases that have been registered before them. They shall thus be extended elsewhere.

21. Effective delivery by the Justice system also recognises access to legal assistance for all. To this end, the office of the Attorney General is working on the modalities of providing legal aid to those who may need it. A pilot legal aid project will be implemented at two centres during the first quarter of 2011.

22. Madam Speaker, we remain very proud of our Judiciary and its good reputation. We respect the independence of the Judiciary and recognise that it is human nature that people will comment one way or the other on decisions made by the courts. The rule of law requires that decisions be fair and legally sound, in order to enhance public confidence in our judicial system. It is important, therefore, that our Judiciary continue to strive for excellence in this manner and further strengthen public confidence, through displaying conduct that is consistent with the ethics and highest standards of the legal profession.

23. Besides the Judiciary, our time tested reputation for institutional accountability and the rule of law is reinforced by the diligence of additional oversight institutions such as the Office of the Ombudsman, Independent Electoral Commission, Auditor General and the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime (DCEC).

24. While we appreciate the fact that respected organisations, such as Transparency International and the World Economic Forum, continue to commend Botswana as being among the world's least corrupt countries, as well as a benchmark for Africa, we know that fighting corruption and fraud is a never ending struggle.

25. To strengthen our efforts the DCEC has enlisted outside expertise, while strengthening its partnerships with domestic anti-corruption stakeholders. Among such stakeholders is the much maligned Directorate of Intelligence Service. The fact that they are also at the forefront of exposing organised abuse may explain some of the criticism they receive.

26. Our anti-corruption efforts have succeeded in uncovering malpractices, which we are dealing with in various divisions of the public service. Of particular concern has been the deliberate mismanagement of projects resulting in serious cost overruns including the issuance of permits, licenses and identification cards. The perpetrators of such malpractices should know that Government is serious in its commitment to zero tolerance of corruption in all its forms. When infractions are exposed action shall be taken. I want to warn those currently involved in such acts that it is only a matter of time before you are caught. This warning applies to those in the private sector as well as public officers. More anti corruption measures are to be put in place at ministerial level in the coming months.

27. As part of our efforts to combat corruption, while improving our timely delivery, in March 2010 we began issuing machine readable electronic or e-passports that comply with global security standards. Although the old passport is no longer being issued, those in circulation will remain valid until December 2011. By the end of this year we will have fully installed at outstations, ports of entry and Botswana Missions abroad automated Passport, Border Control and Immigration and Citizenship Systems that will facilitate the issuance of e-passports and visas. In the coming financial year Government will further introduce an integrated Electronic Identity Management System, or e-ID, as part of our overall commitment to e-Government, as well as enhanced security.

28. Despite our strengthened border controls, illegal immigration remains a serious challenge. We have therefore intensified our daily sweeps and continue to repatriate those we apprehend – who numbered just over 40,000 (40,101) between January and September 2010.

29. Madam Speaker, crime in all its forms is like a disease that can threaten the very life of a nation. It is, therefore, pleasing to report that

the Police Service has as a result of new strategies, recorded a significant decrease in the levels of crime, which in the recent past have threatened to spiral upwards. Criminal activity had increased by 21% between 2007 and 2008, and levelled off in 2009. It has so far shown a decline of 12% since the beginning of this year.

30. It is also pleasing to report that the road safety situation in Botswana has also improved, with the number of traffic offences having declined by 9%. I am, however, worried about continued cases in which alcohol was found to be a contributory factor. For example, 21%, 11% and 27% of murder, rape and unlawful wounding cases respectively between November 2009 and October 2010, were attributable to alcohol consumption.

31. Our improved crime and road safety statistics can be attributed to the adoption of holistic law enforcement strategies, such as cluster and neighbourhood policing, sophisticated under-cover operations, public education on road safety and the enhanced deterrence of revised traffic penalties. The merging of central and local police and partnership with other security agencies has further strengthened overall enforcement capacity.

32. Notwithstanding the progress made, the number of fatalities on our roads remains worrisome. Equally worrisome is the high incidence of violent crime, including domestic violence against women and children which continue to plague our communities. Policing alone is not the answer. At the family and community level, we need to confront the enablers of crime such as social marginalisation and alcohol and substance abuse.

33. The partnership of the Botswana Defence Force with the Botswana Police Service in combating crime continues to produce good and commendable results. Equally commendable is the cooperation of the Botswana Defence Force with other government agencies, notably the Ministry of Agriculture, in the control of animal diseases, and the Ministry of Environment Wildlife and Tourism, in anti-poaching operations and veldt fire fighting campaigns, as well as with other aid to civil authority in times of natural disasters.

34. By the same token, the efforts of the DIS continue to unearth and expose organised crime syndicates threatening our national interests, such as groups and syndicates involved in a wide array of illegal activities like terrorism, money laundering, fraud, drug trafficking and distribution, human smuggling and trafficking, white collar crime and official corruption. It is little wonder then that those who have an inclination to commit such offences are quick to criticise and discredit the organisation.

35. In as much as democracy cannot thrive in the absence of collective discipline, it is a delusion to believe that discipline can be maintained outside of the law. We recognise that reinvigorating community norms is consistent with a desire for moral renewal that can assist us in overcoming social ills. But, this must not become an excuse for acts of vigilantism carried out in the false belief that local cultural practices take precedence over the Constitution and laws of Botswana. While we can remain united in our diversity, we cannot become divided in our common loyalties and legal responsibilities. As citizens and as patriots, our loyalty to the law of the land should be above ties of ethnicity, tribe or locality.

36. Let us also remember that while individual rights are understood to go hand in hand with civic responsibilities, by the same token consideration for the rights of others protects those of the individual. In this respect our laws, beginning with the Constitution, are premised on the need for us to strike a balance between our individual and collective aspirations. They are thus consistent with our human values, our respect for the dignity of others, and our patriotism in wishing to see what is best for our country prevail.

37. The fact that freedom of expression is precious does not mean that it should be misused to mislead or abuse others. There is a line between holding individuals and institutions publicly accountable and spreading rumours and untruths. This type of conduct whether done by politicians, academics or the media adds no value whatsoever towards nation building. To those who are sometimes targeted for such abuse I advise them to simply ignore such regressive tendencies in our society. In fact we should be guided by the Bible in dealing with such people where in Romans Chapter 12 Verses 19 to 21 it states and I quote:

“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written. Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord. Therefore: if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Post-Recession Challenges

38. Madam Speaker, our economy is slowly emerging from recession. Even so Government revenues will remain under severe stress for the foreseeable future as we cope with the downturn’s aftershocks. We therefore have to do more with less as we move forward.

39. The economy contracted by 3.7% in 2009 mostly due to a sharp decline in diamond demand. This reversal would have been far greater without the introduction of stimulus measures, which allowed already budgeted for infrastructure to proceed and funded additional interventions such as the Ipelegeng and ISPAAD programmes. We also extended emergency support to some businesses. Beneficiaries included thirty-five textile companies employing over 2600 citizens, who received workers’ subsidies and CEDA loan guarantees for capital costs and plant upgrading.

40. The positive outcome of our interventions is reflected in the fact that during 2009 the non-mining sector achieved 6.2% growth, largely due to agriculture, construction and services. We also achieved a 3% expansion in formal sector employment, while banking rebounded with a surge of loans from the second half of 2009. But, such promising micro-economic performance had little impact on our overall balance of payments. During 2009 the value of our total exports decreased by 26.4%, while the cost of imports declined by only 5.8%.

41. As was anticipated, the relative success of our stimulus measures had an impact on our budgetary outlook. A deficit of P13.4 billion was projected for the last financial year, with the preliminary actual figure showing about P 9.3 billion. For the current financial year it is projected that the deficit will be P 12.12 billion as government coffers continue to be adversely affected by a decline in SACU as well as diamond revenues. While we are in a position to finance these deficits with our own resources and borrowing, there is a need for continued spending

restraint moving forward. It is our goal to restore a balanced budget by the 2012/13 financial year, while thereafter achieving surpluses for the remainder of NDP 10. This will allow us to rebuild our reserves, while keeping within the spending guidelines already approved by Parliament.

42. We will also have to keep an eye on inflation, which decreased from 15.1% in August 2008 to 5.8% in December 2009. At the beginning of this year it rose above 7%, largely due to VAT and utility costs, before falling back again to 7% in September. The Bank rate which was 15% at the end 2008 was reduced to 10% in December 2009 in the context of the improved inflation outlook.

43. Now that we are slowly coming out of recession the opportunities for reducing our economy's dependence on diamonds, and the corresponding risk if we fail to do so, have never been higher. In this respect we can at least build on modest progress. Whereas mining accounted for over 55% of Government revenues a decade ago; the current figure is about 40%.

Economic Strategy

44. To build a more equitable as well as diversified economy our drive for citizen empowerment must become synonymous with a shift towards increased wealth creation by the private sector, rather than carrying on with the unsustainable distribution of trickle down state benefits. This imperative is at the heart of the Botswana Excellence Strategy, which is our enabling framework for diversified growth. To ensure delivery, the Strategy incorporates a range of actions and instruments to promote effective education and skills development, address bureaucratic inefficiencies, and improve work ethic, while reinforcing society's commitment to zero tolerance of corruption.

45. Recognising that our domestic economy is too small to thrive on its own, the Strategy is predicated on the link between citizen self-empowerment and the ability of Botswana to embrace emerging opportunities to compete at home and abroad. We must stay the course in building an open society with an open economy, in which all who can make a positive contribution are encouraged to do so. As I have previously observed, local businesses will not prosper as big fish

swimming in little protected ponds. They must rather seek the ocean of opportunities available in the global market.

46. To facilitate business development, Government has committed itself to addressing bottlenecks to private sector growth, such as obtaining land, licenses and permits, including residence permits, that frustrate value added job creation and skills transfer. The global easing of credit has opened the door to renewed opportunities to attract outside investment. The best evidence of this has been a P425 million increase in the value of new investments during the first quarter of this financial year.

47. The merging of the IFSC with BEDIA to achieve greater synergies in investment promotion should be finalised by December 2010. This will go a long way towards establishing a “one-stop-shop” investment promotion authority.

48. Notwithstanding its focus on the private sector’s role, the Strategy confirms Government’s continuing responsibility to promote new economic activities by, among other measures, at times kick-starting job creation as an investor. A key component of the Strategy has thus been its identification of specific growth areas where Botswana has a comparative economic advantage. This has included the clustering of a number of major developments into economic “Hubs”.

NDP 10

49. Accelerated economic diversification through private sector growth also lies at the centre of our current National Development Plan (NDP 10), which emphasises the provision and maintenance of productive infrastructure and quality public services, along with continued investment in marketable skills. The Plan’s objectives are also consistent with our commitment to achieve our Millennium Development Goals.

50. To mobilise NDP 10 budgetary support Government has secured loans from the African Development Bank amounting to just under P12 billion. Even then this considerable figure is insufficient to fully finance the Plan and may be supplemented. While we are in a better position to attract finance than many as a result of our record of fiscal prudence and relatively low external debt, increased borrowing will obviously raise our

liabilities. To avoid being caught in a debt trap we have set a borrowing ceiling of 40% of GDP, to be evenly split between domestic and foreign finance. In this respect we are in the process of introducing a Public Finance Management Reform Programme to strengthen and support fiscal discipline, as well as the strategic allocation of resources.

Diversification Drive

51. Madam Speaker, let me reiterate that citizen centred private wealth creation will require us to combine external openness with internal self-reliance. It is in this spirit that Government has introduced the Economic Diversification Drive (EDD) to ensure the production and consumption of locally manufactured goods and services as part of our broader growth strategy. The implementation of the EDD has so far focused on the procurement of local goods and services by public institutions. Cumulative public purchases recorded since April of this year amounted to about 400 million, of which 75% were channelled to Botswana based businesses.

52. To further encourage domestic procurement, a databank of local companies, incorporating their products and production capacities, is accessible online. This register is being continuously updated for the benefit of local and foreign businesses, as well as public procurers. An Enterprise Technology Audit to identify skills and technology gaps is also underway.

53. But, these interventions can only be sustained in the short term. For the medium to long term, Government is developing a strategy that will build productive capacity and develop competitiveness to enable us to succeed in the global market on the basis of the quality of our goods and services, productivity of our labour force and technological innovation, as well as linkages between small, medium and large enterprises.

54. In our efforts to diversify the economy and to promote consumption of locally manufactured goods, we must not compromise on Government revenue and expenditure. We have seen a worrying trend where locally manufactured goods are priced up to three times more than their worth by unscrupulous businesses because they fall within the local preference bracket. This cannot be accepted as it not only stifles our

efforts to promote the local industry, but also costs Government dearly. Such businesses will in future be excluded from the program.

55. Government remains committed to the Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA), whose loan, equity and credit guarantee schemes have so far assisted 4326 projects valued at P 2.2 billion, creating employment for over 28 thousand people. The Local Enterprise Authority (LEA) also continues to provide entrepreneurial skills training and advisory services to citizen entrepreneurs in small, medium and micro-enterprises. LEA is currently assisting over 2600 individuals, while between April and July of this year it facilitated the establishment of 154 companies.

56. It is pleasing to note that the National Development Bank (NDB) has, despite the global recession, recorded growth in profits. The Bank's net profit increased by 13.9 % from P50.7m in March 2009 to P57.8m for the financial year ending 31 March 2010. As a result the bank has been able to pay a dividend of P14m to government. The bank continues to embark on several initiatives focusing on improving customer service, notably turnaround times and introduction of new products.

57. In the context of the Excellence Strategy and EDD the drive towards job creation will be realised through such sectors as mining, tourism, agriculture, transport and the arts and innovation, as well as through facilitators such as CEDA, LEA, Young Farmers Fund and Youth Development Fund.

58. Other initiatives, such as the exclusive sale of boarded vehicles to citizens and citizen owned companies are also working. A cumulative total of 3,633 vehicles have been auctioned as of June 2010, earning P118 million.

People with Disabilities

59. Our commitment to citizen based empowerment is further evidenced by additional programmes and initiatives, including the vocational placement for people with disabilities. The establishment of the Office of the Coordinator for People living with Disabilities provides a crucial forum to address issues and challenges facing people living with disabilities. Currently the office is working on the design of a system to create a data base of opportunities for people with disabilities. The

National Policy on People with Disabilities will be reviewed to provide enhanced strategies to address issues of training, employment and education. As a result I hope in the short term to come up with improved opportunities for our fellow citizens living with disabilities.

Gender

60. With specific reference to the empowerment of women, Government remains committed to the elimination of discrimination as well as the achievement of gender equity and equality. Our overall progress continues to be reflected in the high numbers of women serving in senior positions in virtually all public and private institutions, with the notable exception of Parliament and Councils. We also acknowledge the growing participation of women in small and medium enterprises.

Youth Empowerment

61. Madam Speaker, as youth make up almost 60% of our population, they form a crucial part of our overall citizen empowerment efforts. The National Youth Policy and initiatives such as the Youth Development Fund, Youth Exchange Programmes, Youth Expositions and various training programmes, as well as sector specific interventions, are all being vigorously implemented in recognition of this fundamental fact.

62. A total of 510 youths have further benefitted from the Youth Exchange and Youth Exposition Programmes, while 111 young people have received Botswana National Youth Awards through the Botswana National Youth Service Awards Scheme. Last month 400 young people participated in the first ever Youth Pitso whose objective was to provide a platform for the Youth of this country to voice their issues and challenges as well as to dialogue with government on strategies for moving forward the Youth Development agenda. I can confidently state, judging by the level of participation and enthusiasm during my interaction with the delegates, that the objective was achieved.

63. Over the past year Government has been able to double its contribution to the Youth Development Fund from P30 million to P60 million thanks to money from the Alcohol Levy. I wish to announce that an additional P60 million has recently been allocated to this Fund.

Overall the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture has now received P 160 million from the Levy, which was distributed to youth empowerment programmes across the country. As of September 2010, 500 youth business projects have been approved at a cost of P 46.7 million, while 76 youth businesses have been awarded Government tenders. So far 632 beneficiaries of the Youth Development Fund have also been provided with mentoring and business skills training. Meanwhile the Young Farmers Fund continues to promote youth participation in agriculture. To date, 367 youths have benefited from the Fund, which has disbursed over P 142 million.

64. With further support from the Levy, additional funds have been spent in support of emerging youth industries. To facilitate this programme, the Ministry of Lands and Housing has during this financial year allocated 5,133 plots to the youth under the auspices of the Youth Development Fund. In an effort to provide operational space unused buildings have been identified around the country for use by youth industries. In addition, some communities have provided boreholes and land for use by young farmers.

Internship Programme

65. Since August 2008 a total of 3533 unemployed tertiary education graduates have been offered internships in both public and private institutions, including NGOs, through the National Internship Programme. Currently, about 2 thousand interns are at work, with Government accounting for the bulk of the placements. The initial period of internship was 12 months. We have since decided to extend the period to up to 24 months to further enhance skills development, while increasing the graduates' opportunities.

Public Service & Labour

66. Madam Speaker, our capacity to deliver quality services to Botswana is dependent on constant improvement in the productivity of our workforce in both the public and private sectors. To address competency gaps in the public service, the Public Service College was launched at the end of last year, while public institutions have been restructured, and in some cases merged, to achieve greater operational synergies.

67. I wish here to commend the public service for improved service delivery across the public sector. This should however not be misinterpreted to mean that we have done enough, for there is still room for improvement and a lot still has to be done to offer the public the first class service they deserve.

68. The Public Service Act of 2008, which establishes a unified public service with common expectations, has now commenced. The Employment (Amendment) Act has also been enacted this year to, amongst other things, improve the general welfare of workers. In particular relating to the severance benefit, it will ensure that employees in general whose contracts are terminated before serving a period of 60 months are paid severance benefits proportionate to the length of time they have served.

69. Through the Labour Department and other mechanisms we shall continue to uphold workers' rights irrespective of the work place. In this respect, foreign as well as local employers must appreciate our commitment to enforce our laws and associated norms of behaviour. In these and other ways we shall remain supportive of labour. We will not tolerate abuse or ignorance of labour laws and we will promote the necessity for fair treatment for the work force.

70. To further improve industrial relations, Government recognises a continuing need to work alongside the trade unions. But, for such partnership to succeed, it must be on the basis of institutional accountability and mutual interest and respect. Unfortunately, some trade unions are failing to submit annual returns, as provided for in the Trade Unions and Employers Organisations Act. More broadly we should all remain focused on the common interests of workers by avoiding extraneous and divisive agendas, including partisan politics. Unions must leave politics to politicians and concentrate on workers welfare.

71. We ought to also elevate the long-term national interest ahead of narrow and short term desires that are not sustainable. This requires us to find win-win solutions that will result in improving conditions for workers, whilst achieving improved productivity for employers. For us to succeed as a nation we all have to be prepared to go the extra mile and

do more than what we are paid to do. The attitude of the teachers who refused to invigilate examinations because such work does not fall within their job description was unfortunate. Trying to demand to do less whilst negotiating to be paid more is not acceptable. For this nation to grow and prosper in unity, we must at all times be driven by the desire to serve national interests before individual interests. Let us adopt a culture of “WE” against that of “I”.

Mining

72. Madam Speaker, I shall now report on progress towards delivering people centred development in various sectors, beginning with mining. Over the past 12 months the minerals sector has registered significant growth, with the number of employees increasing from 15,359 in June 2009 to 18,748 as of June 2010.

73. The three largest diamond mines at Jwaneng, Orapa and Letlhakane are all operational, while production at Damtshaa is expected to be restored in 2011 leaving Lerala closed. In addition production at BK11 mine has started, while the AK06 site is scheduled to become operational in 2012. The Jwaneng Cut 8 project, which will increase the mine’s life to 2025, is progressing.

74. This year Debswana has been exceeding its sales targets, while base metal sales have also recovered, with the average copper and nickel prices having reached pre-downturn levels as of the end of September 2010.

75. The Diamond Hub is also once more making good progress. All 16 licensed diamond cutting factories are operational, with a combined workforce of just over 3000, representing an 18% increase over last year. As of September 2010 the factories had cut and polished diamonds worth over P 2 billion, a value already well above last year’s total. One of the companies will also soon be starting up jewellery manufacturing.

76. To support local diamond trading all diamond mining licenses now require the local marketing of production, which should attract additional beneficiation. Also as part of the Hub’s progress, the Secure Transfer

Facility at the Gaborone airport is now operational, while land has been secured for the construction of the Botswana Diamond Exchange.

77. Botswana continues to offer a highly competitive climate for mining investment. The latest survey of mining companies conducted by the respected Fraser Institute ranked us eighth in the world, with global firsts in categories for administrative certainty, regulatory enforcement, environmental regulations, and conducive tax regime; findings which have been echoed by other business monitors.

78. Global recovery in the demand for minerals has also led to a renewed surge in local exploration. In the past year alone the issuance of various categories of prospecting licences has shown a 22% jump for metals, 38% for radioactive minerals, 7% for precious stones and 20% for industrial minerals, most notably coal.

79. The rehabilitation of abandoned mine workings is progressing well. As of July 60% of the known sites have been successfully rehabilitated. This process, as well as ongoing prospecting, has turned up new, potentially exploitable, deposits such as copper/silver, copper/nickel, uranium, lead/zinc, diamonds, coal and methane gas.

Energy

80. Madam Speaker, the provision of reliable and affordable energy is critical for the delivery of economic opportunities as well as social comfort. Thus energy self sufficiency and power utility expansion remain key priorities. We shall thus continue to invest in infrastructure such village electrification. With the commissioning of 100 Villages Electrification programme last month we have now exceeded our overall mid-term goal by electrifying 350 or 76% of the villages countrywide, at a cost of over P 1.3 billion.

81. As of July, 59% of all households were connected to the national grid. One of the barriers to connection over the years has been inability of customers to afford the cost of connection. To address this, Government introduced the Rural Electrification Collective Scheme, which allows villagers to pay their connection costs over a period of up to 180 months. To date this scheme has benefited 135 thousand households. Wiring costs for low income households are also being

addressed through low-cost installations, such as the ready-box that allows customers to connect basic electrical appliances.

82. To further mitigate the high costs associated with electricity connections, last month we began the phased introduction of a basic P 5 thousand National Electricity Standard Connection fee, which is scheduled to reach all areas by October 2011. In the first phase, which began on the 1st of October 2010, a total of 337 villages are targeted for this fee, which has already attracted over 1000 customers.

83. To ensure the sustainability of this initiative, a levy on electricity consumption of 5 thebe per kilowatt-hour was introduced with effect from April 2010 to finance a National Electrification Fund that will bridge the gap between what the Botswana Power Corporation (BPC) will charge and the actual market cost of connections. As of September 2010 the fund had already accumulated P76 million, against a set target of P75 million.

84. In the context of concern over global warming arising from green house gas emissions, as well as the need to cater for low income customers, we shall be developing affordable, low carbon emitting energy systems using clean coal and other earth friendly technologies, with the assistance of cooperating partners. The World Bank and African Development Bank have provided P56 million in grants and loans toward this development.

85. Japan has also granted P 84 million for the development of a 1 MW Photovoltaic (Solar) Power Plant, which is targeted for commissioning by the end of 2011. It is anticipated that this project will provide a model for the relatively low cost provision of power to more remote areas.

86. Solar power and low energy solutions are also being piloted by the BPC's Lesedi subsidiary. Products offered include solar home systems, efficient wood stoves and rechargeable lanterns and small batteries. A franchise business model that allows for the participation of SMMEs has been developed for marketing the products more widely.

87. To reduce the impact of the current energy deficit, the BPC this year instituted various measures to foster efficient electrical usage.

Block electricity tariffs were introduced for domestic and small business consumers, where electricity becomes more expensive for usage above 200 kilo Watt-hour and 500 kilo Watt-hour respectively. Similar pricing incentives were also introduced for larger businesses. A project to exchange a million incandescent electricity bulbs with the higher efficiency CFL bulbs in communities throughout the country was completed in September, using citizen contractors, to realise a 30 MW reduction in peak power demand.

88. Turning to the national power supply, Botswana's present maximum demand for electricity is around 550 MW. This represents a demand growth of 10% since last year. In the face of insufficient domestic and regional generation capacity a number of additional interventions are being made to increase supplies, including the installation of two diesel based emergency generation facilities.

89. One of these, a 70 MW plant near Matsiloje successfully commenced operations in January. The other 90 MW power project at Orapa is scheduled for commissioning by the end of the year. Its turbines have been specially designed for both diesel and coal bed methane gas in anticipation of the further development of the latter resource in the country. An additional 180 MW power station, which will also operate on coal bed methane gas, is to be developed at Mmashoro.

90. The various emergency energy supply interventions will cost Government more than P3 billion over the next three years. This considerable outlay is justified by the fact that doing nothing would cost our economy much more.

91. Progress on the construction of the 600 MW Morupule B Power Station, together with the associated infrastructure development, is on target for the end of 2012. The first unit of 150 MW is scheduled for January 2012, with the other three units to be delivered at three month intervals. Stockpiling of coal for the units has already started. Production at the Morupule Colliery is thus being expanded from just below 1 million tons to 3.2 million tons per annum to meet the station's fuel requirements.

92. Unfortunately, the development of a 1,200 MW power station at Mmamabula by CIC Energy has been put on hold pending regulatory

clarification of South Africa's Integrated Resource Plan. Meanwhile, the sponsors have submitted a commercial offer for developing a 300 MW power plant at Mookane, which is under consideration.

93. To maximize investment in the energy sector Government is in the process of considering setting up an independent Energy and Water Regulator. Government is also developing a tariff structure that will enable us to better formulate policies to achieve sustainable and affordable electricity. Let us also continue to promote research in the promotion of other energy alternatives such as solar as we have so much abundance of sunlight in this country. We must tap on the natural resources that other countries have not been so fortunate to have.

94. To secure and increase the national strategic Petroleum stock to at least 60 days a new Petroleum Storage depot is being built at Tshele, near Pilane. This project is to be completed by 2012 at a cost of about P 800 million. The government is also planning to establish a National Oil Company that will manage the storage reserves and strategic stocks to ensure fuel security.

Water

95. Madam Speaker, in line with the Millennium Development Goals it is pleasing to confirm that Government has over the past decade been able to provide potable water to more than 95% of our population, while more than 80% of our people now have access to improved sanitation facilities.

96. As I reported last year, to rationalise the provision of water it was decided that the Water Utilities Corporation (WUC) shall assume responsibility for water supply and sewerage services throughout the country, while the Department of Water Affairs will remain responsible for water resources management. To date a total of 155 villages have been absorbed by WUC, which will also take over wastewater services once necessary legislation is approved by Parliament.

97. To secure the future, Government continues to increase the nation's water retention and carrying capacity. The Dikgatlhong and Lotsane dams should be completed in 2011/12, while Thune is scheduled for 2012/13. Together they will make available 532 million

cubic metres of water. Construction of Phase 2 of the North-South Carrier (NSC II) project is expected to commence in the second half of 2011. When complete, a total of 45 million cubic metres of water will be annually conveyed through the pipeline to augment supplies in eastern Botswana. The Serowe connection to the existing NSC pipeline will be commissioning by the end of December 2010, while construction of the Kanye/Molepolole connection will commence in 2011.

98. To further ensure sustainable water supplies, WUC has been pursuing additional projects. These include the Francistown Water Master Plan, which has resulted in a doubling of water supply capacity from 24 million to 48 million cubic metres a day. A project to improve water supplies to the Selebi-Phikwe area has also been completed.

99. Government is also developing additional underground water. In this respect, the Botlhapatlou Groundwater Resources Project to augment supplies in eastern Kweneng should be completed in 2011, at a cost of P 50 million. Negotiations with neighbouring states to draw up to 495 Million cubic metres of water per annum from the Chobe/Zambezi River system were successfully completed in May 2010.

100. Increasing community water supplies generates additional need for adequate sewerage reticulation. In Francistown and Selebi-Phikwe reticulation projects have been completed, whilst the Gaborone project is progressing well. The programme entails the connection of SHHA estates to eliminate pit latrines in the city, is progressing. Phase I of upgrading the Gaborone Treatment Plant at Glen Valley is complete.

Agriculture

101. Madam Speaker, significant progress has been made in boosting the Agriculture sector for increased commercial production and improved food security.

Livestock Production

102. Livestock production is steadily shifting to weaner production, which now accounts for about 45% of the throughput at the Botswana Meat Commission (BMC) abattoirs. This change has resulted in appreciation of the value of the national herd by an estimated P 2.5 billion. Efforts to further commercialize the livestock sector over the past

twelve months were, however, hampered by the outbreak of animal diseases.

103. Controlling Malaria in the Kgalagadi and parts of Kweneng, Southern and Ghanzi Districts, Rift Valley Fever in the South East and parts of Kgatleng and Southern Districts as well as Foot and Mouth Disease at Lesoma and in the Ngamiland area and combating the risk of spread from neighbouring countries with disease have each put a strain on our veterinary capacity. On a positive note, we have not experienced any new Foot and Mouth Disease cases in Ngamiland, leading to the re-opening of the Maun BMC abattoir in September.

104. The Livestock Management and Infrastructure Development (LIMID) scheme promotes, amongst other things, small-stock and poultry farming among the resource poor. Since its inception 5,274 farmers, mostly female, have benefited from the programme, at a cost of P 36 million. At the end of 2009 LIMID was suspended to allow for a review, which has since confirmed the scheme's success in increasing small-stock holdings among otherwise resource poor farmers. The programme has been restarted. Government also continues to provide water for livestock in hard hit areas such as the Kgalagadi region.

Arable Production

105. Madam Speaker, the Integrated Support Programme for Arable Agriculture Development (ISPAAD) has continued to enjoy success. In the last cropping season, 335 thousand hectares of land were planted, a 12% increase over last year and nearly triple the amount of hectares that were under cultivation in 2007. The number of farmers participating in ISPAAD this year stands at just under 106 thousand, representing an 11% increase over last year. This is notwithstanding the fact that we are denying continued assistance to those, so far few, farmers who fail to take proper care of their fields.

106. We have included support for horticulture production under the ISPAADD programme to anchor our farmers in horticultural production as the country continues to be in deficit of both fruit and vegetables. Out of national natural demand of horticulture produce of about seventy five thousand metric tons, we are only able to produce about thirty thousand tons. We hope to improve this situation with the horticultural support

and also contribute to poverty eradication and our Economic Diversification Drive.

107. Production for major cereals is currently estimated at around 83 thousand mega-tons, which represents 40% of the national demand; while horticulture production is around 31 thousand metric tonnes, also representing about 40% of our requirements. During the 2010/11 financial year the target for domestic honey production is 20 tonnes, or 50% of national demand, while production during the first quarter stood at 4.6 tonnes. Domestic production of raw milk during 2009/10 was 6.8 million litres or about 25% of total demand. To further encourage local production, we encourage purchase of local produce that is domestically abundant.

108. Government continues to drive the commercialization of agriculture in dairy and arable farming through the National Master Plan for Arable Agriculture and Dairy Development (NAMPAADD). The number of farmers receiving support through its technical programme is expected to rise to 215, while those who have benefited so far have recorded improved yields, with the output of cereals had thus increased from 1.0 tonnes/ha to 2.5 tonnes/ha, tomatoes from 40 tonnes/ha to 70 tonnes/ha and cabbages from 40 tonnes/ha to 60 tons/ha.

109. At Pandamatenga an additional 18 thousand hectares will be made available for commercial farming, while the area will further benefit from the construction of internal roads and drainage systems. In the Southern District, commercial farms are being demarcated to promote commercial arable production clusters. Such areas are being identified in other districts.

110. Over the past two years BAMB has been contracting farmers to grow targeted crops such as sorghum, cowpeas and various types of beans. Farmers have responded positively, with the quantities contracted and delivered rising from 8 thousand metric tons in 2008 to 38 thousand in 2010. BAMB is also currently crushing local sunflower seed for oil. This has resulted in the production 1.45 million litres of sunflower oil for the school feeding programme, with a further 200 thousand litres released for the market. While this process has,

heretofore, relied on external facilities, an oil pressing plant will be set up at Pandamatenga next year.

111. The Ministry of Local Government has been especially proactive in its support of local farmers. During the 2009/10 financial year, it spent over P153 million purchasing food from local producers and traders to supply its primary schools and clinics, with a further P 69 million worth of purchases from April to July of this year. In addition, nearly P 3 million was directly spent on water melons for the primary schools. A total of 2,283 local farmers countrywide have benefited through this initiative.

Tourism

112. Madam Speaker, tourism plays an increasing role in our economy. Latest estimates place international arrivals at 2.1 million this year with tourist expenditure at over P 3 billion. Efforts to ensure greater citizen participation in the industry are also being realised, with the number of citizen licenses rising from 141 in 2001 to 326 in 2010. Under the new Tourism Act certain licences are, furthermore, now reserved for citizens and wholly citizen owned companies such as mobile safaris, tourist transfers, boating and camp sites and caravan sites.

113. Efforts to have adjacent communities meaningfully participate in the tourism sector through Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme are also making progress. For instance, community trusts such as at the Chobe Enclave, Khwai, Nata Sanctuary and Moremi Gorge, among others have entered into joint venture partnerships.

114. Government has embarked on a number of initiatives to diversify tourism. A hundred heritage sites across the country are being developed with funding from the Ipelegeng Programme to build access roads, trails, and erect signage. The “Adopt a Monument Campaign” is also progressing.

115. To better ensure their quality, standards have been developed for Mobile Safaris and Camping sites, to complement those already in place for hotels. A highlight of the past year was the awarding of the World Tourism Council’s prestigious Destination Stewardship Award to Botswana for our best practice environmentally sustainable

management of the Okavango Delta, which we are also working to have declared a World Heritage Site. This award has already been generating considerable worldwide publicity for our country as a top class tourist destination.

Wildlife & Parks

116. Conservation of wildlife is an essential aspect of our economic development and revenue generation initiatives. It is against this background that water is provided in Game Parks and Reserves for wildlife, which will assist in reducing human-wildlife conflict since fauna will be attracted to protected areas in most cases instead of looking for water in neighbouring communities.

117. In order to further ensure the sustainable utilisation of our natural resources, a 25 kilometre non-hunting buffer zone has been created around National Parks and Game Reserves. This is in addition to a 10 kilometre non-hunting buffer along international boundaries. These zones will assist communities living in prime wildlife areas through increased wildlife presence for tourism. Such communities are encouraged to shift from consumptive to non-consumptive tourism ventures such as photo safaris.

118. With regard to the development of Trans-frontier Conservation Areas, progress is as follows:

- An amendment to the bilateral agreement of the Kgalagadi Trans-frontier Park between Botswana and South Africa will be signed that confirms already existing governance structures for the Park's joint management.
- Internal consultations on the draft treaty for the Kavango Zambezi Trans-frontier Conservation Area are being finalised by its member states of Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

119. Community Consultations on the Draft Treaty of the Greater Mapungubwe Trans-frontier Conservation Area made up of Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe, were completed in June 2010.

120. Government, through a Task Force, consisting of relevant Ministers, has continued its consultations with communities in and around the CKGR in order to reach a final settlement to outstanding issues. The consultations process is reported to be cordial.

Environment

121. Madam Speaker, since 2009 Government has been cooperating with Australia to improve fire management in the country. A total of 673 fire fighters and fifteen instructors have so far been trained under this collaboration. To sustain this project the Australian Government has pledged about P 8 million over five years.

122. Government is concerned about the rate at which veldt fires are occurring, which has sadly resulted in a number of deaths as well as destruction to the environment. Many, if not most, of these fires are caused by humans. Where arson or criminal negligence is found in such cases the law will take its course. The Ministry of Environment Wildlife and Tourism is in the process of formulating a comprehensive wild land fire management strategy to fight the veldt fires that have now become an annual menace in our countryside.

123. Government continues to accelerate tree planting as a measure of reducing the impact of soil erosion and conserving indigenous trees. Nurseries across the country collectively produce approximately half a million tree seedlings per annum for planting around the country.

124. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Act is currently under review. In the meantime new EIA Regulations have been formulated to facilitate enforcement of the Act. Plans are also underway to establish the Environmental Assessment Practitioners Association as a regulatory body of registered practitioners.

125. The Department of Meteorological Services has been designated by SADC to be the Regional Implementation Centre for the African Monitoring of the Environment for Sustainable Development programme. The aim of the programme is to provide early warning information to improve planning.

126. Government has undertaken comprehensive impact assessments of climate change on various sectors. Further, greenhouse gas

inventories are complete and awareness activities on climate change are ongoing. Mitigation studies and a national adaptation plan are also underway.

Innovation & Technology

127. Madam Speaker, our country's expenditure on research and development remains relatively low. To help offset this deficit the Innovation Hub was established as a commercial nexus for knowledge creation and innovation. This past year the Hub was incorporated as a private company responsible for administering the Science and Technology Park. Our vision is for it to become a home to enterprises offering knowledge-based employment opportunities.

128. Government is currently merging BOTEC and RIPCO to rationalize their research capacity and better market their products.

129. Advanced telecommunications and associated new information technologies are another vital enabler of national competitiveness as well as individual convenience. In this respect, the Nteletsa project continues to provide rural communities with telecommunications and ICT services. So far 352 out of 446 earmarked villages have been serviced through the Nteletsa initiative, including 103 out of the 197 communities covered under the current Nteletsa II project.

130. Unfortunately, many of the villages initially covered under Nteletsa I have not been able to enjoy the full benefits of connectivity as a result of the stealing of solar panels and batteries that power the project's infrastructure. The Botswana Telecommunications Corporation (BTC) has been engaged in repairs, while further installing additional technologies to upgrade the network. Meanwhile law enforcement is redoubling its efforts against such theft.

131. Botswana needs to keep pace with the increasingly networked world by having access to affordable and efficient international connectivity. We have, therefore, undertaken joint venture investments with other countries in the development of undersea fibre optic cable systems and their associated terrestrial backhaul links. These projects include:

- The East Africa Submarine Cable System (EASSy), to which Botswana will be connected by the end of this year.
- The West Africa Cable System (WACS) undersea fibre cable, which should be ready for commercial service in 2011.

132. Madam Speaker, the process of privatising the BTC will commence with an Initial Public Offering (IPO) in which shares will be sold to citizens in stages on condition that the Government will have the first option at acquisition when citizen investors wish to dispose of their shares. This exercise is expected to be completed by April 2011. The merger of Botswana Post with Botswana Savings Bank is also on course for completion by the end of the current financial year.

Transport

133. Madam Speaker, we are working towards a more efficient, customer focused transport system through the establishment of an Integrated Transport Policy. This dovetails with ongoing progress of the Transport Hub, which was established to promote diversification by achieving synergies in the air, road, and rail sectors. Initiatives falling under the Hub include the Kazungula Bridge, Dry Port at Walvis Bay, various proposed Railway projects and the ongoing refurbishment of our major airports.

Railways

134. Completion of a feasibility study and detailed design of the Kazungula Bridge was initially planned for the end of last year, but was extended to October of this year to accommodate a rail component, which was not in the project's original scope. A pre-feasibility study for the Trans-Kalahari Railway line, which was undertaken with Namibia, was also finally completed in October. In July we signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Mozambique to facilitate construction of a heavy haul railway from Botswana to a deep sea port in Mozambique. The railway will transport coal and other minerals, as well as general cargo, while the port will be designed to cater for bigger vessels.

135. Botswana Railways is working to maintain and increase its haulage capacity. The overhaul of 200 wagons and 63 petrol tankers is

expected to be completed in 2011. The high cost and long turnaround of such repairs has had a negative impact on the railways' operations, which should be mitigated by the upgrading of its own maintenance workshops.

Roads

136. Madam Speaker, currently there are 385,720 registered motor vehicles on our roads, of which 23,121 were licensed during the last financial year alone. To meet this burgeoning demand, Government continues to devote considerable resources to the construction and maintenance of roads. In this respect 7 major road projects have been completed since 2008 at cost in excess of P 1.3 billion (1,319,857,832), while 6 additional major projects at a budgeted cost in excess of 2.6 billion (2,611,806,931) by the end of NDP 10.

137. The Roads Department is implementing schemes aimed at providing economic opportunities for citizens by identifying projects that can be executed through Labour Based Methods, as well as setting aside certain road projects for citizen contractors. There are thus 62 labour based projects planned for 2010/11 financial year, along with 8 ongoing access road projects.

138. To reduce congestion, vehicle licence renewals can now be done at many Post Offices around the country. An additional 27 counters at various locations have been established, with 23 more scheduled by March 2011. Government is also considering the extension of the validity period of driving licences so that under normal circumstances they remain valid until one is 40, when a renewal period will be introduced of every ten years until one turns 60 when it would become every 5 years.

Aviation

139. Madam Speaker, we have made progress in the upgrading of our airports. The new Sir Seretse Khama terminal building along with runway and taxiway extensions and a cargo apron were completed, while additional improvements to the complex will be finished in April 2011 at a total cost of P 291.2 million. The construction of a new terminal and runway in Francistown is also on target for completion by

the end of this year, while the ongoing upgrading of the Kasane and Maun airports are scheduled for completion in 2012.

140. Airport expansion has been carried out in anticipation of a significant rise in air traffic in the coming years, which should be a particular boost to our tourist industry. In this respect Government has been aggressively pursuing Bilateral Air Services Agreements to facilitate domestic stopovers by international airlines. Currently we have such arrangements with 16 countries. In addition, Air Botswana is engaged in negotiations with a number of international airlines to operate direct flights to destinations in the SADC sub-region and beyond. In this respect the airline has already applied for slots at Heathrow and Gatwick airports in the UK.

141. We are working on a turn-around strategy for Air Botswana that should be implemented in the coming months to make it more competitive.

Construction

142. Madam Speaker, for a long time our construction industry lacked professionalism and effective regulation. This has led to a litany of problems including incomplete and sub-standard products, as well as instances of corruption. To bring about industrial discipline, we have implemented the Engineers' and Architects' Registration Acts, which together promote self-regulation in the construction industry by ensuring that only professionals duly registered with the appropriate Council are allowed to practice.

143. We also intend to introduce Quantity Surveyors' Registration Bill before Parliament and are establishing a Contractor Registration Board as an additional oversight body. We have further discontinued the practice of giving contractors the exclusive right to appoint sub-contractors. Consortia bidding have also been done away with. These practices had a tendency of breeding cartels and similar malpractices. We remain very concerned by some foreign as well as local construction contractors' poor workmanship and lack of adherence to standards. Such companies run the risk of being blacklisted.

144. Ministerial Technical Units have so far been established in 12 out of 16 Government Ministries to improve performance in project management. They handle all building infrastructure projects valued up to P75 million, while facilitating maintenance activities. We are currently undertaking a structural review of DBES, the results of which are expected to improve the performance of its maintenance depots. As part of the review, professionals are being posted to man outstations. There is to be close collaboration between project designers and the outstations to ensure that maintenance requirements are factored into the project implementation process.

145. Government is also empowering youth through the establishment of databases of youth owned construction companies. This initiative is progressing well, with over P27.7 million worth of maintenance tenders already awarded to youth contractors from the databases since April 2009.

Lands & Housing

146. Madam Speaker, during 2009/10, just over 57 thousand plots were allocated on both tribal and state land throughout the country, while it is anticipated that another 60 thousand plots will be allocated during the current financial year. Of these, over 10 thousand plots are to be allocated in the urban centres, following the completion of land servicing projects.

147. Despite these achievements, the waiting time for plot delivery remains long. Shortage of land for expansion of urban areas and some major villages continues to delay timely land delivery, while where land has been made available plots are often not developed on time. Government has revised compensation rates for acquisition of tribal land, which should encourage more plot holders to release their land. We are also developing a framework to allow the private sector to play a greater role in servicing land. Minimal services provision in the form of access roads and water reticulation is also being introduced to facilitate land development in subserviced areas.

148. In 2009/10 Government adopted a system of reserving land for Ministries and organisations to accelerate land delivery. Farms have also been reserved for agricultural purposes. As part of an estates

management policy a consolidated asset register for all Government owned buildings is being drawn up, while the payment of rented office space will be decentralised to occupying Ministries.

149. Madam Speaker, Government has approved the establishment of the Botswana Housing Corporation (BHC) as a Single Housing Authority through which all public housing delivery initiatives will be coordinated. The Corporation will raise P2 billion from the private market through a bond issue to build 10,200 houses over the next 3 years.

150. Government places special emphasis on the provision of low income housing programmes. Since August 2008 the Turnkey project has disbursed P69.3 million for 1156 low income units. Of these, 250 projects have been completed, while 567 are ongoing and 399 are not yet started. During the 2009/2010 financial year a total of P28.2 million was disbursed for the Self Help Housing Agency (SHHA) Loans, while an additional P30 million is budgeted for the current financial year.

151. The Integrated Poverty Alleviation & Housing Scheme provides housing opportunity for people who do not qualify for SHHA and Turnkey projects. To date, this programme has produced 100 housing units. In an effort to achieve greater coverage and more equitable benefit of the SHAA programme, government has decided that with effect from the next financial year the disbursement of SHAA funds will be done by constituency.

152. In further recognition that shelter is a basic human need without which an individual cannot live in dignity, I have set up the "President's Housing Appeal for the Needy". This initiative is meant to augment Government's efforts by drawing on the goodwill that exists in our society. So far individuals and companies have pledged to build 281 houses under this initiative, 35 of which will be completed by the end of this year, that is in time for the Christmas season. I wish to take this opportunity to thank them while calling upon others to show similar compassion. Government is also playing its part with a planned 635 houses to be built during NDP 10, the first 200 of which will be completed by the middle of this month.

Local Government

153. Madam Speaker, to bring Government closer to the people, four new Administrative Authorities -Maun, Molepolole, Kanye and Serowe - and one Sub District – Mogoditshane - have been established. Additional Sub Districts will be established where it is appropriate and cost effective to do so. This is intended to promote local governance and take services closer to the people. This process began with the establishment of service centres around the country, some of which will graduate to Sub-District Headquarters in the future. This process will be guided by the Decentralisation Policy, which is being developed.

154. During the current financial year, the Ministry of Local Government has been allocated up to P 1.6 billion for the development of rural infrastructure projects, P 745 million or 45% of which had already been spent by the end of August. Projects included ongoing work on primary schools, recreational facilities, rural administration centres, water supplies and sewerage, roads and labour intensive works.

Social Protection

155. Government continues to provide social protection in the form of cash and food through the Old Age Pension Scheme, World War Veterans' Scheme, Destitute Persons and Orphan Care programmes. To improve delivery it has been decided to engage Botswana Post to administer the payment of cash allowances under these programmes.

156. For the 2010/11 financial year, Government has allocated a total of P298 million for cash allowances for pensioners, veterans and the destitute. The monthly allowance given to just over 90 thousand (90,579) citizens 65 years and older allows them to purchase basic necessities. Another 2800 Second World War Veterans or their spouses or children below the age of 21 years are also given a monthly allowance.

157. The Destitute Persons Cash Allowance allows beneficiaries to purchase additional necessities that are not provided for in the food basket. As of June 2010 just over 36 thousand benefited from the programme, which is a 6% reduction from last year mostly due to de-registration of able-bodied persons who were found to be not eligible for the assistance.

158. To ensure basic nutritional support, over 44 thousand (44695) orphans, destitute persons and Community Home Based Care patients also benefit from food baskets on a monthly basis. A coupon system has been introduced for the provision of the food basket to beneficiaries. To date, a total of 808 Point of Sale devices have been installed nationwide.

159. Government has adopted a Local Economic Development approach to promote income generation and employment creation at the local level. A Taskforce was appointed to carry out an impact assessment of the Remote Area Dweller Programme (RADP) on the livelihoods of targeted communities. Its recommendations were approved by Cabinet and implementation of the same will be expedited through relevant Ministries. Responsibility for the implementation of RADP requires coordinated efforts across Government to ensure people centred development at community level.

160. The Ipelegeng initiative is continuing to provide temporary employment opportunities for up to 40000 people every month. In the next financial year the Ipelegeng programme will be increased to accommodate an additional 10000 people, increasing the total to 50000. In addition the wages will also be increased. Consistent with the Economic Diversification Drive, Local Authorities have been giving preference to local procurement of such items as fresh bread, school uniforms and agricultural products for their school feeding programme in their districts.

161. As part of Government's overall commitment to youth empowerment at end of June 2010, a total of 3,144 youth in the Districts were engaged as Green scorpions, 15,264 in Ipelegeng programme, 273 were engaged as handymen and 628 as VDC members. In addition, deliberate efforts have been made by Local Authorities to present business opportunities to the youth either as individuals or as syndicates.

162. Madam Speaker, I am concerned that community participation in development is waning. The spirit of self-help which laid a solid foundation for nation building should be revived. To help address this matter, the Ministry of Local Government recently launched a framework for Community Development in Botswana. This roadmap will assist in

providing direction for the strengthening of community development activities.

Education

163. Madam Speaker, Government continues to devote significant resources to provide Botswana with education and training opportunities. The sector is challenged to ensure that there is access to learning opportunities for all, while enabling Botswana to prosper among the world's knowledge based economies.

164. Access to pre-school education, which has hitherto been left to the private sector, remains a challenge, although the percentage of total enrolments rose from 11% to 17% over the last three years. To facilitate the provision of quality pre-school education Government has joined hands with stakeholders in developing a Pre-Primary Curriculum, which has been piloted in 31 preschools this year.

165. Government remains committed to providing all Botswana with at least 10 years of basic education. Our country's Net Enrolment Ratio at primary school currently stands at 87.4%. At secondary school level, the transition rate to junior secondary is about 95%. These figures indicate that there remain pockets of school age children who are not in class. Many of these have special needs, including those with disabilities and learning difficulties. An Inclusive Education Policy has been developed to enable schools to better serve all children. We are also adapting the curriculum for inclusive multi-grade education to make it compliant with the principles of multi-grade teaching.

166. Madam Speaker, our media have recently been inundated with reports on the impasse between teacher organisations and the Botswana Examinations Council (BEC), regarding the conduct of this year's examinations. In this context it is worth noting that the Primary school, PSLE, exam was conducted successfully, while the Form Five, BGCSE, exams have started and are running well with the assistance of willing teachers, retired teachers, unemployed graduates and some qualified officers as per the BEC Act.

167. I therefore wish to sincerely thank all those who have ensured the success of the exams so far and appeal to all qualified personnel to

assist with the remaining examinations. We should all be concerned about reports that some teachers have gone out of their way to interfere with the examinations, including intimidation of their colleagues doing invigilation. I, therefore, take this opportunity to remind those obstructing the 2010 examination process that there are laws against their actions and we shall not hesitate to bring order where we must.

168. Government is supporting the rollout of ICT in primary schools by providing refurbished computers - as of August 173 institutions throughout the country have benefited from this initiative. An ICT curriculum for primary schools has also been developed and is now being piloted in 50 schools. I also wish to recognise the support that the private sector and international community have provided through their donations.

169. I must regrettably report that there has been a noticeable reversal in the transition from junior to senior secondary school, largely due to declining performance in the Junior Certificate Examination. Reversing this decline is an urgent priority. The Ministry is currently engaged in a process of developing standards and indicators of quality education. Once this has been accomplished we should be able to effectively deliver and monitor the quality of the education that we offer. At the same time we are increasing our vocational training opportunities as an alternative for JC leavers.

170. Construction of four new Senior Secondary Schools at Mmadinare, Mogoditshane, Nata and Shakawe is ongoing. It is anticipated that three of these schools (the exception being Shakawe), will be operational by February 2011 in time for the Form-Four intake. The additional capacity that will be provided by these schools will allow us to do away with double shift arrangement at the Senior Secondary School level.

171. The revised Junior Secondary School curriculum was introduced this year to better address such areas as entrepreneurial skills, civic education and environmental and anti corruption issues to mention a few. ICT has also been deliberately integrated into the new curriculum. Government is in the process of revising the Senior Secondary School (BGCSE) curriculum to ensure that it too better instils needed skills.

172. Open and Distance Learning (ODL) has become an integral part of our strategy to increase access and equity to education and training opportunities. A dedicated ODL centre has just been constructed at Maun for BOCODOL to widen education opportunities for people of the North West. Further expansion of ODL can enable us to respond expeditiously to human capital needs without having to invest in educational infrastructure associated with conventional education and training.

173. I am pleased to report that the SADC Secretariat has selected BOCODOL from among other regional institutions to offer long term training in open and distance learning at certificate level under the SADC ODL capacity building project which is supported by the African Development Bank. This development enables BOCODOL to spread its programmes beyond the five SADC countries that it currently caters for. Outside of the SADC region, BOCODOL is currently collaborating with several reputable universities in the delivery of undergraduate and graduate programmes. All these developments demonstrate how ODL can quickly enable Botswana to move closer to becoming an Education Hub.

174. The Education Hub is also continuing its efforts to attract reputable external institutions to establish in Botswana in partnership with existing institutions or on their own. Government also continues to monitor quality in private schools to ensure that professional standards are adhered to. To further promote academic excellence, a Top Achievers Scholarship was introduced this year, with Top Achievers identified for studies in areas of demand for economic diversification.

175. Madam Speaker, Government remains committed to ensuring an adequate supply of competent graduates with relevant and diversified skills. In this regard we have embarked upon the rationalisation of technical and vocational programmes. The rationalisation process should enable us to put in place an effective and efficient technical and vocational education and training programme.

176. Expansion of the University of Botswana (UB) and Botswana Agricultural and Accountancy Colleges infrastructure is ongoing. This will result in increased access to quality tertiary training and improved

research and development capacity. Notable among the projects is the construction of a 450 bed Teaching Hospital for the UB medical school, which commenced in July 2010 and is scheduled for completion in 2013. The project is valued at P 1.3 billion and when complete the facility will contribute to the objective of making Botswana a centre of excellence in health care provision.

177. Development of the Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST) Founding Campus is in progress though delays and cost escalations in the project are likely to affect Government's initial plan for the university to open in March 2011. Due to the difficult financial situation arising from the recent recession and changes in the tertiary education landscape, the Ministry of Education and Skills Development is in the process of reviewing the BIUST project to determine the appropriate scope and focus in the context of what we can currently afford.

Health

178. Madam Speaker, Government continues to devote significant resources to the health sector, which has allowed us to bring medical care centres to within 5 kilometres of 84% of our population. But continued investment in facilities will achieve little in the absence of adequate staffing. We, therefore, continue to prioritise training, while seeking to retain the services of those already trained. The efforts have resulted in a 31% improvement in the number of doctors (1:2620 from 1:3813) and an 11% improvement in the number nurses (1:285 from 1:318) between 2007 and 2009.

179. To make medical services more effective and efficient primary health care has now been relocated to the Ministry of Health, in the context of a new National Health Service Plan. Medical Centres of Excellence are also being established to improve healthcare, while achieving long-term cost savings, through the provision of specialist services. Notable achievements include:

- Establishment of cardio-thoracic surgery centre at Princess Marina Hospital in partnership with the Government of Mauritius, which has begun doing open heart surgery in our country for the first time. So far with 8 successful operations have been carried out as of September 2010.

- Princess Marina also serves as a National Centre of Excellence for a variety of sub-specialist services such as joint replacement, dialysis and treatment of spinal cord injuries.
- Eye care services have also been established at Sekgoma and Deborah Retief Memorial Hospitals. Together these services have delivered 640 cataract extractions and 213 additional eye operations as of August 2010.
- In the last year 716 patients have also benefited from hearing aids.

180. The introduction of these and other services has meant a 50% or greater reduction in unit costs for various medical procedures. This is due largely to cost savings that are realised when services are delivered from within our own hospitals. It is also worthy to note that the Ministry of Health has and continues to undertake process re-engineering programmes with the aim of improving its overall delivery. This has resulted in improvements such as the reduction of waiting periods for specialist care from twelve to six weeks. The average waiting time at emergency departments of the referral hospitals has also been reduced from 60 minutes to 30 minutes, with major emergencies such as road accidents experiencing no waiting time at all.

Accreditation of Hospitals

181. In an effort to improve standards of service delivery in our hospitals, we have enrolled two hospitals in a pilot programme for international accreditation by the Council for Health Services Accreditation of Southern Africa. Compared to baseline surveys, all the six health facilities have shown a steady improvement towards achieving the inspection scores necessary for formal accreditation. These achievements have indeed come with improved service delivery in all the concerned facilities. In an expansion of this initiative, the three referral hospitals (Nyangabgwe, Princess Marina, S'Brana), and the remaining two district hospitals (Letsholathebe, Sekgoma Memorial) have now been enrolled for accreditation.

182. A new routine immunisation schedule and improved management of children with diarrhoea has been introduced, while over 1.2 million Batswana or 71% of the population were recently vaccinated against the H1N1 virus. Routine immunisation in children continues to be above 90%. We have also increased the number of childhood illnesses we are vaccinating against.

183. In addition, we have implemented the Accelerated Child Survival and Development Strategic Plan of 2009, which identifies further high impact interventions to reduce childhood illness. These include Oral Rehydration Treatment, complementary feeding, vitamin A supplementation, exclusive breastfeeding; immunisations; and the prompt and appropriate treatment of pneumonias. Taken together these interventions are expected to result in a marked reduction in under-5 morbidity and mortality.

184. Notable achievements have been made towards the elimination of malaria by 2015, also in line with MDG 6. As Government we have up-scaled our malaria program. We continue to distribute anti-malaria nets. We have also intensified Indoor Residual Spraying in the malaria districts. These interventions have led to a marked reduction in malaria morbidity and mortality. Since 2000 we have seen an 89% decline in confirmed cases of malaria, which has been accompanied by and 87% decline in morbidity from 55 to 8 deaths last year.

185. Government is further committed to TB prevention and control by ensuring the supply of anti-TB drugs, intensifying support of district health management teams and mobilising communities to improve participation through community TB care strategy.

HIV/AIDS

186. Madam Speaker, much has been achieved with respect Combating HIV and AIDS, which remains one of our nation's greatest challenges, as well as a key Millennium Development Goal. Government remains committed to providing HIV testing, counselling, and anti-retroviral therapy (ART) services. As of September 2010 799, 225 clients tested for HIV out of the targeted 824,394. Currently 152,598 patients are on antiretroviral therapy. This represents 92.5% of all those projected to be in need of treatment.

187. As of September 2006 treatment services were provided in all the 26 hospitals as well as 181 clinics. This is compared to 2003 when only 4 health facilities country wide offered anti-retroviral therapy. The ART programme has no doubt contributed to improvements in life expectancy. The Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission programme is also being intensified to further reduce the transmission rate below its current 4%.

188. In these and other efforts we continue to work with cooperating partners in the implementation of our 2nd National Strategic Framework,

which prioritises prevention. We have just completed the development of a five year partnership with the US government. Similarly, we have entered into a second phase of the African Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Partnerships (ACHAP), our public-private partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates and Merck Foundations.

189. Finally, while our progress in providing various therapies has been considerable, they have not stopped the spread of the virus. Here, as elsewhere, there is a clear need for greater self-discipline.

Transformation of Central Medical Stores (CMS)

190. The transformation process at Central Medical Stores (CMS) has now been on course for fourteen months. We are beginning to see results. During August, September, and October 2010, CMS has shipped more than P 35 million a month in commodities to health facilities countrywide. This is compared with P 18 million at the beginning of the financial year. CMS has also supported the Districts in their efforts to directly purchase any shortfalls in vital and essential commodities. This has resulted in the stabilisation of drug availability across our facilities.

Alcohol Abuse

191. Madam Speaker, around the world alcoholism is recognised as a major public health challenge. In this context, and consistent with World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines, coordinating responsibility for the Campaign Against Abuse of Alcohol Consumption has been transferred from the Ministry of Trade and Industry to the Ministry of Health. The Campaign will, however, continue to require a multi-sectoral approach within Government, while engaging non-government stakeholders, such as the Botswana Substance Abuse Support Network, BOCONGO and Women Against Rape, to name but a few.

192. A National Alcohol Policy currently awaits Parliament's approval. Meanwhile our anti-abuse campaign is taking hold through a range of community interventions, with an emphasis on reaching out to the youth.

193. From the time of its inception to the end of August 2010 the alcohol levy, which is going up, has raised P 420 million, which is being channelled to finance social projects including the awareness campaign. As noted earlier, the largest share has gone to the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture.

194. I once more plead to those who insist on indulging, to do so responsibly or better still not at all. Over indulgence causes those who do so to be a menace in our society by behaving in a disorderly manner, causing death and destruction on our roads, breaking up families, being unproductive at work, contributing to HIV/AIDS and a whole lot of other anti social behaviours.

Sport & Recreation

195. Madam Speaker, Government recognises the value of sport as a contributor to economic diversification as well as social and personal development. Participation in physical activities at all ages promotes public health in mind and body. We have, therefore, increased the budget allocation for sport from P25 million to P64 million in recent years.

196. Issues of governance are critical to further the development of sport. The Botswana National Sports Council Act is currently under review with a view to improve sports administration. While Government will continue to play a leading role in terms of public policy, private sector and civil society participation is crucial if we are to ensure that sport makes a greater contribution in our society.

197. A major challenge has been the availability and accessibility of dedicated facilities and the provision of supportive human capital. To address this challenge, Government has embarked on the development of Integrated Sports Facilities at various centres throughout the country.

198. The constituency sports tournaments, which are currently on its seventh cycle, were initiated to promote the positive use of leisure time by youth in particular. They thus provide an alternative to alcohol and substance abuse and other forms of self-destructive behaviour. In Cycle 6, a total of 44,180 players (33195 football, 6071 netball, 4914 volleyball) and 2851 teams (1945 football, 515 netball, 355 volleyball) participated in the tournament, while Cycle 7 started in August.

199. Traditional games also continue to form an integral part of the District Sport Festival celebrations. Last year 8,200 people in 12 districts participated in these events. Next year prize money will be given to the top three teams in each category instead of the present two and the prize money will be increased.

200. To also keep young people positively engaged, another P 24.6 million has been allocated for youth recreation facilities, while P 5.2 million was granted to the Gaborone City Council for the development of open spaces, with funds in each case also coming from the Alcohol Levy. In addition, construction of the Multi-purpose Youth Centre in Gaborone is ongoing and expected to be completed in 2011, with assistance of a soft loan from China.

201. This past year has seen more Botswana athletes qualifying for international competitions as is evidenced by the recent medals won by local athletes at the IAAF Continental Cup, Africa Games, Africa Youth Championships and Commonwealth Games, as well as the performance of various national teams. The Zebras are currently ranked 79 in the world up 26 places from a few months ago, while the men's and women's softball teams are ranked 13 and 16 in the world respectively.

202. Our national teams and individual athletes deserve our congratulations and support for taking Botswana to greater heights in the global arena. We particularly wish to congratulate our first ever Commonwealth Games Gold medallist, Amantle Montsho, along with her team-mates who earned bronze medals at the competition. Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate another young citizen who excelled in the world stage by becoming the First Princess at the 2010 Miss World Pageant, our very own Miss Botswana - Emma Wareus. In recognition of such world-class accomplishments Government will in future provide sponsorships to such exceptional individuals for their extraordinary achievements.

203. To further improve our competitiveness in international sports Government will establish Centres of Sport Excellence in some junior and senior secondary schools by January 2011. This development will afford students the opportunity to combine the pursuit of academic with sport excellence. Meanwhile P 22.3 million is being spent on the development of sports and recreation facilities in primary schools across the country and the Ikago Centre in Molepolole.

204. In March 2010, 150 participants representing sport organisations, academia and private sector as well as government attended the first Sport *Pitso*. The summit came up with a total of 31 resolutions covering areas of sport governance, capacity building, resource mobilisation and funding, games and competitions, and infrastructure development, whose implementation is to be reported on at the next Sport *Pitso*.

Culture

205. Madam Speaker, Government is committed to the preservation and promotion of Botswana's diverse cultural heritage. In as much as the culture can be defined as the sum of who we are and where we have been as a society, its ultimate value to our collective wellbeing is immeasurable. What is more tangible is the significant role various forms of cultural expression can play as a driver of economic growth in such areas as tourism, entertainment and adaption of indigenous technologies. This year, Botswana acceded to 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which will guide us to further safeguard the full value of our common heritage.

206. Constituency Art Competitions commenced in January 2010. Since then they have enjoyed impressive growth in the number of participants. Whereas the first, January-April, cycle registered nearly 7 thousand participants just over 16 thousand artists participated in the second, May-August, cycle. A new category of traditional instruments was introduced in the ongoing third competition cycle. The President's Day Competitions and Awards have also grown. Participants in the Performing Arts Category increased by over 20% from 5700 in 2009 to 7000 in 2010. In the National Art, Basket and Crafts Categories the number of participants rose from 297 in 2009 to 1245 this year.

207. We are encouraging arts and entertainment practitioners to set up cultural industries around the country. To this end, Government will be establishing Regional Arts and Crafts Purchasing Centres around the country starting with a pilot project in Kgalagadi South. In July 2010 Arts and Culture activists met for the first ever *Pitso ya Ngwao*. The gathering came up with a framework for advocacy, capacity-building and funding for the sector. In the process it has become apparent that a Culture Hub should be established as a nexus for further progress.

208. The National Library Service continues to reach out to a larger clientele through its 29 public libraries and 67 Village Reading Rooms, which now also serve as cultural and online information centres catering to the needs of the different generational groups. In this respect Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation continues to fund the provision of computers with internet access to libraries and reading rooms, while the Robert and Sara Rothschild Family Foundation has established 5 Libraries since 2007, with 1 more planned for the coming year.

209. Since last year the National Archives and Records Services has increased its public collection by 13% to over 21 thousand documents, which includes contributions from private collections as well as the continuous release of Government records. The number of archives users has also increased by 11% during the year to over 4000. A new regional Records Centre in Kanye will be completed this year, being the second regional centre after Francistown.

International Affairs

210. Botswana's foreign policy continues to be underpinned by a strong commitment to promoting and deepening mutual understanding with the international community. Our global interconnectedness and interdependence makes it imperative that we work with other nations to find collective solutions to critical and complex problems confronting humanity today.

211. We maintain that political tolerance, democracy, good governance, respect for human rights, and the rule of law are necessary for the attainment of peace, safety and stability. These are the tenets of our foreign policy, which continue to guide us in our interaction with the international community. The position we have taken recently on some of the political situations in Africa, especially on Zimbabwe, Sudan and Madagascar should therefore be understood within this context.

212. It is for this reason that we fully respect the jurisdiction and mandate of the International Criminal Court. We believe in the importance of international law and institutions in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Botswana continues to advocate for the implementation of progressive global programmes and international cooperation towards the eradication of poverty, youth development and empowerment, gender equality, support for small businesses and agricultural development.

213. Maintaining friendly relations within the international community is the cornerstone of our foreign policy. It is for this reason that we are pursuing a long-term strategy to consolidate and expand the friendly ties that exist between Botswana and other countries, aimed at building strategic partnerships for mutual benefit. Just recently I undertook very successful visits to South Africa and Japan, where I had very fruitful interactions with my counterparts and other high ranking dignitaries, including the business community; as was the case with other countries

where I have been invited since I took office and also with those I have invited to Botswana

214. One of the key highlights of my visit to South Africa was the establishment of the Bi-National Commission, which will have a positive impact on our ability to address issues of mutual interest. The Commission will be co-chaired at the level of Heads of State and will meet annually.

215. During my visit to South Africa, President Zuma and I reiterated the current regional position taken at the SADC Summits, held in Pretoria and Windhoek in 2009 and 2010 respectively, that sanctions on Zimbabwe should be lifted. Contrary to the recent misleading media reports that we have changed our position on the imposition of sanctions on Zimbabwe, the position of Botswana has been consistent with the earlier decisions of SADC mentioned above, which we are party to. Our own reasons for wanting the sanctions lifted are firstly for all parties internal and external to help provide a conducive climate for the GPA to succeed and secondly because ZANU-PF chooses to use the sanctions issue as an excuse for them not to fully deliver within the process they are a part of. This lame excuse should be put to the test.

216. For reconciliation in Zimbabwe to have any chance of being successful, leading to the holding of credible elections, will require effective monitoring of the process every step of the way. As it is, we are becoming concerned about ongoing developments that can easily lead to a further deterioration of the situation within Zimbabwe, resulting in the collapse of the GPA.

217. Also whilst in South Africa, I had the occasion to visit Former President Nelson Mandela, who requested me to convey his warm greetings to all Batswana.

218. Madam Speaker, my recent visit to Japan was successful in strengthening the bilateral ties and deepening the strategic partnership in ways that will serve the fundamental interests of both countries. To this end, the two countries have set up a Joint Economic Committee at Ministerial level that sets forth the goals and tasks for intensifying our cooperation.

219. We also continue to appreciate the fact that our progress has been facilitated by the generous outside assistance we have received over the years. I, therefore, wish to take this opportunity to once more acknowledge and thank all of the countries and international

organisations, including private institutions and individuals, who have supported us.

220. While our resources are limited, as residents of the global village we nonetheless also recognise our own responsibility to provide assistance, however modest, where we can. Over the past year Government has joined hands with others in the international community in extending assistance to victims of natural disasters in neighbouring states and further afield in keeping with our shared ideals of showing compassion for those most in need, most recently to victims in Haiti, Pakistan and Niger.

Conclusion

221. Madam Speaker, let me conclude by once more observing that our development goal is to ultimately ensure the dignity of all citizens through mutual respect and empowerment through productive excellence. This administration thus has as its ultimate vision a nation that is secure in its individual and collective accomplishments, while showing respect for others at home and abroad.

222. If we pull together we can eradicate absolute poverty by achieving greater prosperity through self-empowering enterprise. As a practical manifestation of our common commitment Government workers this month introduced a Community Service Day into their activities. Through this initiative politicians and civil servants will devote at least one day of each month to voluntary projects assisting those most in need.

223. Finally, as we face the challenges ahead, let us also seek the blessings and guidance of the Lord in all of our endeavours.