



Republic of Botswana

MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND HOME AFFAIRS

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND HOME
AFFAIRS**

HONOURABLE EDWIN J. BATSHU, MP

AT THE

THE PITSO ON IRREGULAR MIGRATION 2014

29 JULY, 2014 – GABORONE



Ministry of
**Labour &
Home Affairs**

Director of Ceremony

Chairperson of Ntlo ya Dikgosi

Dikgosi

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs, and your deputies

Chief Executive Officers

District Commissioner

Other Senior Officials

Executive Secretary of the NGO Council and other

Representatives of the Non Governmental Organisations

Resource Persons

Distinguished Guests

Ladies & Gentlemen

I am grateful that you have been able to honour our invitation to participate in this **Pitso on Irregular Migration**. That this Pitso has attracted a significant number of key stakeholders and migration practitioners from different background is a source of inspiration for me.

Director of Ceremony, I believe you will agree with me that irregular migration is currently a topical issue. It is a dynamic and complex process which has been a feature of human development for many centuries. The causes of migration are numerous, and globalisation has been very influential in migration trends.

Management of irregular migration therefore requires an integrated approach based on cooperation and dialogue among stakeholders.

It is for that reason that we have come up with this Pitso on the management of irregular migration, the objectives of which are as follows:

- To raise awareness on the effects of irregular migration
- To review current strategies aimed at combating irregular migration
- To create a dialogue and come up with recommendations that will inform a strategy for the management of irregular migration

In Botswana, migration is credited for bridging the gap created by shortage of some skills in the economy. As a result of migration, industries have been able to acquire the skills which are critical for their competitiveness and survival. While this is the case, our major source of concern as a country has been the increase in irregular migration.

Director of Ceremony, between 2011 and 2013, 126 333 irregular migrants were repatriated. This means that during this period, an average of 42 111 irregular migrants were repatriated annually. The financial implications of undertaking this exercise are even more serious. The cost of repatriating irregular migrants during that three year period was P2 950 491.54.

There are challenges that need to be addressed. Some employers have a tendency to employ irregular migrants. It is this practice that tends to attract more of such migrants into the country. A substantial number of irregular migrants are found in construction and related occupations, domestic as well as farm work.

These unscrupulous employers sometimes prefer to hire irregular migrants because they provide cheap labour and therefore constitute a convenient source of profit maximization. To some employers the employment of irregular migrants minimises the risk of conflict with trade unions. It is also apparent that irregular migrants in a majority of cases chose to forfeit their employment benefits in lieu of their liberty and continued stay in the country.

Director of Ceremony, in addition to the foregoing, over-supply in the labour market created by irregular migrants who are willing to work for low wages and sub-standard working conditions distort the labour market. There have been cases where irregular migrants were subjected to exploitation because their status makes it possible. They choose to suffer in silence mainly because they see this condition as a better option than having to take repatriation and its possible certainty of returning to squalor conditions in their mother countries.

Criminal activities in the country and some practices that are not in compliance with the laws have also been attributed to irregular migration. Some criminal acts such as human trafficking, arms smuggling, terrorism and other forms of organized crime are commonly associated with irregular migration. This is because people involved in such activities want to remain faceless to avoid detection. Some even use fraudulent or counterfeit travel documents. An increasing number of irregular migrants are involved in prostitution. This poses a health risk as it has the potential to increase the spread of HIV & AIDS. Vision 2016 requires us to contribute to the creation of a Safe and Secure Nation, a Compassionate Just and Caring Nation, and a Prosperous, Productive and Innovative Nation by 2016. As part of National Development Plan 10, Government has undertaken to develop a strategy for the management of irregular migration.

Director of Ceremony, in an endeavour to address the challenges pertaining to migration, my Ministry has commenced the process of formulating a national migration policy that will provide guidance in the management of irregular migration. The policy may not necessarily eradicate irregular migration but will assist in managing the challenges associated with it. This PITSO is therefore not only a forum for engagement, but a catalyst for action. Recommendations

arising from the PITSO will go a long way to shape the envisaged national migration policy.

Our efforts to manage migration will undoubtedly serve to strengthen the already existing immigration controls. In 2010, the Immigration Act was reviewed in an effort to strengthen immigration controls. In particular, the penalties for irregular stay and hiring of irregular migrants were reviewed. The penalty for overstaying was increased from **P10.00** to **P100.00** per day. This has not reduced irregular migration and overstaying, thus challenging us to look for even better and effective ways of managing this challenge. There exists in the public domain a raging debate on the effective management of irregular migrants and overstaying. There are diverse views, driven by diverse interests. The PITSO accords us the opportunity to place all the views on the table for dialogue.

Director of Ceremony, the theme of this Pitso which reads; **“Ensuring safer migration towards socio-economic growth and national security”** presupposes our readiness to engage and to find a lasting solution for this issue. Our current policy of trace, arrest and repatriate, has worked to a certain degree. Going forward we need to review the policy. Legally, irregular migrants

ought to be prosecuted before being repatriated to their countries of origin, but due to the magnitude of their numbers, such action could clog the criminal justice system. If we are convinced there is a better way of managing the influx, then the PITSO will have attained its objectives. In trying to come up with a lasting solution, it is important to acknowledge some of the push and pull factors contributing to irregular migration. The policies we attempt to put in place may be meaningless unless we take the realities in some of our neighbouring countries into consideration. Even most important, the success of our efforts as a country to manage migration is premised on the efforts made by our neighbours towards management of migration.

We have a genuine fear as a small economy with small population that left unmanaged irregular migration causes a serious social and security problem. The population of Botswana is less than that of some known cities in some of our neighbouring countries. If it was to happen that a single of such cities empties its population on us, we will feel very insecure and overwhelmed as the resources would become overstretched, to the disadvantage of the citizens. In the management of irregular migration we are challenged to proceed with caution lest our action be misunderstood and breed xenophobia. We should remain resolute and assure our people that they are safe and that their country

is not due for taking. It is possible some irregular migrants have a genuine reason to be here. The current position of the law is that each moment an irregular migrant remains in Botswana, they are committing an offence and hence liable for arrest and repatriation. The reality we have to contend with is the cost of managing this global phenomenon. Some are genuinely looking for economic opportunities, however, running with this is organised transitional crime including trafficking of women, girls and children and terrorism.

Director of Ceremony, Ladies and gentlemen, it is therefore my sincere hope that this gathering will provide us with a way forward in dealing with this ever escalating challenge of irregular migration. It has been said that two heads are better than one. Let me encourage a lively debate which will guide the country into the future of efficient and effective migration management. With those few remarks, I want to thank you for listening.

PULA!!!!