

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT
LIEUTENANT GENERAL DR. SERETSE KHAMA IAN
KHAMA AT THE 2017 BDP YOUTH WING CONGRESS
HELD AT TSABONG**

10TH FEBRUARY 2017

Your Honour The Vice President and Chairman of the BDP;
Secretary General;
Kgosi Toto of Tsabong
MCC for Western Region
Members of Central Committee
Chairperson of Youth Wing and Members of your Committee
Members of the Women's Wing
Members of the Party Electoral Board
Members of Sub – Committees of Central Committee
Honourable Members of Parliament
Fraternal Guests
Distinguished Guests
Fellow Democrats

A very good afternoon to you all.

1. It is indeed a pleasure for me to be here this afternoon to give the keynote address at this 2017 BDP Youth Wing Congress which is aptly themed, "***Our Structure – Our Strength; Another 50 years in Government***" consistent with the theme of last year's National Council held in the lead up to our country's independence, which was basically underscoring the achievements of the BDP and highlighting our way forward.
2. The congress comes at an opportune time, just after our 50 years of independence celebrations, which actually marked a milestone in the history of the Party and country. We also launched on Independence Day, a new long term ***Vision 2036*** for our country, themed "***Achieving prosperity for All.***" In view of these aforementioned momentous achievements, I wish to reiterate a fact that the history of the country and that of the BDP are so intertwined that you cannot mention one without the other. Clearly illustrating that we are the best placed Party for Batswana that can take Botswana forward.
3. I wish to, from the outset, take this opportunity to kindly thank the people of Tsabong for having agreed to host this meeting and for their wonderful hospitality. Tsabong

is a gateway to the Kalahari, and for some of us who frequent this side, can easily attest that it is quite scenic, and has many places of interest. You have the Camel Park, the dunes, as well as the Cultural Centre where the annual Polka Festival is held. I am therefore, hopeful that subsequent to your meeting, some of you will take a moment to visit some of these places so that you can know them first hand.

4. This meeting is the first on what is going to be a hectic year for us in the BDP pertaining to major activities. It precedes the BDP 55th Anniversary celebrations; Women's Wing Congress; National Council; as well as the Congress later in the year. Furthermore, some primary elections are going to be held this year.
5. The BDP youth, of course, always play a significant role in our political processes and the outcomes of your meetings should therefore be able to meaningfully contribute to the upcoming gatherings at national level. Your ideas should be able to enrich the broader BDP spectrum. It goes without saying that we in the BDP believe that the future lies with the youth, therefore they should be part of the building blocks of the foundation that builds this Party, so that they are able to identify with the outcomes of the

broader meetings and drive implementation of resolutions reached thereat. Our country has a significant population that is youth, thus our performance at the elections is also linked to how we interact with them, how we address their issues.

6. We have consistently appointed young people to positions of political responsibility at both local and national level. This, in more recent times, was evidenced by the appointment of a specially elected Member of Parliament.
7. Additional to the above, I would wish to highlight that to demonstrate our resolve to assist young people, the Government reconfigured Ministries and renamed the Ministry mandated to address Youth matters, the ***Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sport and Culture Development***. This was deliberate, so as to underscore the component of Empowerment as well as culture development. The success of every country or economy is incumbent upon the entrepreneurial acumen of its youth and how they are able to compete both locally and at a global level. To this end, for us to succeed, our youth should be receptive of what has been crafted or initiated for them, as well as comprehend it for them to take advantage of measures introduced in this respect.

8. Consequently, the Ministry has programmes that have been modified over time as per the feedback we have been getting from primary beneficiaries such as the Youth Development Fund(YDF). YDF, which is basically support for youth industries by financing start-ups, has an annual budget allocation of P120 million, During the 2016/17 financial year, a total of 1, 032 projects were funded to the tune of P107 million, creating 1, 613 jobs. Furthermore a deliberate policy change was adopted to facilitate sustainability of youth businesses, timeously. Quick wins were also introduced as affirmative action aimed at incentivising youth businesses.
9. It should be noted that there are other programs such as National Service and Internship that complement the likes of Youth Development Fund (YDF). With regard to National Service, in 2015, the average monthly enrolment for the programme was 10,500, comparatively to the substantial increase in June 2016 when the numbers were now 13,474. With regard to National Internship, enrolment is currently around 3,425.
10. Entrepreneurship development is one of the efforts that the Ministry has vigorously embarked upon. During the period between April and September 2016, I am told that

1,270 youth were trained on subjects such as Basic Business Management; Entrepreneurship Development; Financial Management; Farm Records Management; Small Stock Management, as well as Beef Production. I believe that this will prove crucial to these young people and benefit them immensely as they enter the business world.

11. It is quite encouraging to note that the numbers for the uptake of Government programmes aimed at empowering youth in the current financial year have been increasing steadily. The Ministry of Lands, Water and Sanitation Services indicated the number of plots given to youth. The Ministry of Agriculture has reported LIMID beneficiaries, and those who benefitted from fencing of their Agriculture projects. Under the Ministry of Investment Trade and Industry, young people have benefited from CEDA.
12. The other Ministries that deal with people centred development being the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, the Poverty Eradication Programme; Alternative packages (Services, Manufacturing- Leather works, Bakery). The Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Tourism on the other hand has assisted youth through the Community Based Natural Resources

Management (CBNRM). The total number of youths assisted in all that I have mentioned is **26,098**. It should be noted that programmes are not limited to employment only, we have the arts or creative industry, that has grown in the last couple of years.

13. It is, therefore, crucial to note that the uptake of these programmes has been quite encouraging, because if you look at the figure of YDF for instance, cumulatively from inception in the 2009/10 financial year, it has funded **7,476** projects, creating **10,900** jobs. The uptake of other programmes combined, National Internship, National Service and the Graduate Volunteer Scheme have since 2014/15 had **16,315** young people and at 2016/17 stood at **18,511**.
14. Let me now, also use this opportunity to commend you for your efforts aimed towards achieving better results and galvanising the Party, we witnessed the inaugural youth Council in Mosu last year, as well as the first ever National Youth Rally, held in Palapye.
15. I wish to take this moment to note that this is an elective congress. I would like to urge you to engage in civil and respectful campaigns, as well as elections, knowing that at the end of the day, in a democracy only one candidate

would fill the vacant position. I urge those who do not make it to support those who would have emerged victorious and support them to achieve set objectives as per their campaign. I would also like to urge those who would have emerged victorious to remember that they represent all the BDP youth, and not only the segment that elected them into office and should therefore embrace all.

16. To those of you who will emerge as the new youth leadership, I wish to reiterate that, it goes without saying that the future of any organization lies in its ability to invest in its young people. Help us in this resolve. Our ability to strengthen ourselves as a Party, especially in this era of advanced technology, to stay relevant in the present period and future, is through ensuring that we play a critical role of continuous and consistent engagement of the youth in a significant and meaningful way.
17. I am pleased to recognise that our efforts at recruiting young people are progressing well. We have, in recent times, received into our Party, a significant number of young people, especially from the opposition. Politics is based on the number of people you are able to convince

on the policies you have and how they can benefit from them, thus the need for this continuous recruitment exercise remains crucial in this regard.

18. Let me perhaps also take a moment to talk about Team work and the Team building exercises that we have been undertaking with the Regions as the leadership throughout the country. So far we have gone to the Regions twice since the elections in the 2014, to hear first-hand what the challenges are. I have in this regard recently started a third round of these meetings and the responses have been encouraging. Let us work together towards building our Party and making it stronger, for together we can do more.

19. Kindly note that we have consistently stayed at the top in terms of rankings at both world and continental levels. For instance, regarding the Democracy Index, by the Economist Intelligent Unit, we are number 27 in the world out of 167 countries surveyed. Transparency International has consistently rated us at the top, as the least corrupt country on the continent at number 35 out of 176 countries surveyed in the world. We should, as Democrats and Batswana strive towards continuously improving these

ratings and making our country more secure and attractive to genuine investors.

20. Before I conclude, I always make it a point that at this gathering, to speak about the issue of '*Maitseo and Botho*'. We are Batswana, we have morals and values that reflect who we are as a society. Engaging in politics is not an excuse to forget or disrespect others in that demeaning manner that makes you lose your morals. This is also applicable to those who engage through social media. Social media was not meant to be anarchy, it can be used more positively to promote the Party and its candidates, as well as Government programmes. We can use it to show Batswana that the BDP is still the best placed Party to represent them and that we are the only Party that can take Botswana forward.

21. In conclusion, in view of the fact that this is the first of many upcoming major meetings for the Party this year, let us stay united and focussed, work in unison and harmony as we underscore to our people and the world that our beautiful Botswana is indeed an attractive investment and tourism hub.

22. Finally, my message to all of you Dear Democrats from all walks of life, let us continue to serve this Party diligently and tirelessly. Let us familiarise ourselves with the Party Manifesto and cascade it to all Batswana. We should continue to show them the successes we have had as a Party or country and also inform them of the many opportunities that lie ahead of us as a Party and country. Do show them that, yes indeed we are still the only Party that can represent their ideals for the advancement of this great Republic.

I thank you all for your attention.

Tsholetsa Domkrag!!!