

**KEY NOTE ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, THE PRESIDENT OF THE
BOTSWANA DEMOCRATIC PARTY, LIEUTENANT GENERAL
SERETSE KHAMA IAN KHAMA DELIVERED AT THE 51ST BDP
NATIONAL COUNCIL HELD AT MAHARAJA CONFERENCE CENTRE,
GABORONE – 15 MARCH 2013**

Your Honour, the Vice President

The Party Chairman

Members of the Central Committee

Fellow Democrats

Ladies and gentlemen

- 1 It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the 51st National Council of the Botswana Democratic Party. We are holding this National Council at a time when planning for the election period for our 2014 General Elections is gathering momentum.
- 2 We are therefore being called upon to put into perspective, at this stage, our own state of readiness to go back to Batswana to seek another mandate at the polls.
- 3 The 2014 General Elections will be the eleventh (11th) successive general election without fail in forty eight (48) years of this Republic, brought about by good governance, solid political leadership provided by the Botswana Democratic Party, yet another milestone on the continent of Africa and indeed the world at large, demonstrating the virtues of this country's long-standing democracy.

- 4 Whilst this National Council will offer many moments of reflection and introspection, I stand here with a sense of tremendous pride and joy, that we, as the BDP, have been able to offer and secure for our fellow citizens the kind of political stability, socio-economic progress, tangible improvement and real upliftment of their individual and collective lives, which has eluded so many other political regimes in the sub-saharan region.
- 5 The DNA of our success is anchored on the ideals and values of democracy which are founded on, among other things, regular free and fair elections, the principles of accountability, responsive and transparent government, the rule of law, an independent judiciary and legislature, political tolerance and freedom of speech and association.
- 6 Whenever our credibility is unfairly judged, only out of envy and political prejudice, by the opposition and some in the media that is simply because the political landscape has seen such a lengthy dominance by a single political party - the BDP. Such delusions or fallacies are far off the mark, and we resoundly reject them. Under the BDP it is not by chance or mishap that Botswana stands today as the oldest and most stable democracy on the continent and has often been described not only as 'an island of stability in a volatile region', but we have consistently been internationally applauded as an African best practice example.
- 7 As a political party, we have never and we must never take our electoral victories since independence for granted. All of them have been hard-earned, and more significantly, such track-record at the polls

at each and every general election we have held, confers legitimacy and the level of trust that most Batswana have in us.

- 8 Today, I am pleased to re-affirm our strong and resolute commitment to continue to deliver on the pledges we made in our 2009 – 2014 Election Manifesto and the road-map to a better Botswana contained in the 10th National Development Plan, both of which are supported by a number of flagship programmes for sustainable economic diversification, poverty eradication and citizen empowerment, including the youth.

- 9 My fellow democrats, as I have stated before, all of us cannot help but notice that Batswana have become accustomed to progress under the BDP's leadership, and that in a true democracy such as ours, past delivery will inevitably fuel future expectations of greater accomplishment. However, these expectations must be tempered with realism due to the prevailing economic circumstances brought about by the global recession and the continuing ailing world economies, particularly in the developed world since the worldwide financial crisis erupted in September 2008. We are not out of the woods yet and the world economic outlook remains uncertain, and therefore posing serious challenges.

- 10 This is the root of our economic predicament which remains a threat. We are aware by now that since 2008, Botswana, along with the rest of the world, was severely impacted by the global economic downturn. Our economy did contract due to a sharp decline in mineral demand. This setback, along with a corresponding fall in customs revenue, inevitably led to a decline in state revenues. The magnitude of the

turbulence and wreckage that was left in the wake of the financial meltdown meant that most economies around the world simply fell and in some cases collapsed. Botswana is not an island, my Government, like the rest of the world, has been continually faced with the daunting task to rebuild the economy.

- 11 This job is not over and will certainly continue throughout this year and going into 2014 and beyond, requiring that we forever maintain care, vigilance and prudent management of financial resources, and how we spend government revenues. This means we must also curb short-term consumption and give special priorities to those we have identified as vulnerable, such as investing wisely in electricity, water, health, education, infrastructure, mining, human capital, job creation and the provision of social safety nets for the most vulnerable members of our communities.

- 12 It is against the backdrop of these realities that you may recall that in the State of the Nation address, I delivered to Parliament on 5 November 2012, I did place it on record that *“while the development of any democracy is an evolutionary process, today I am pleased to re-affirm that our own progress is on track, being marked by realistic milestones towards realizable goals. Yet, in measuring our path, we are aware that even though we have come far we still have farther to go.....”*.

- 13 I hope that with this in mind, we will therefore approach our preparations for the general elections due in 2014 with a balanced picture of the strides which we have so far made, and of those challenges lying ahead. Putting together another electioneering

implementation plan and manifesto, and before that, the process of undertaking our own Party Primary Elections to identify candidates for the 2014 General Elections, are in themselves monumental and daunting tasks, financially, administratively and otherwise.

- 14 Madomi, I reiterate my strong belief that the strength of our Party, Domkrag, has always been our party unity and team-work. I wish to remind you again that through successive National Council resolutions in the last three years, we have all made a commitment to making party unity the centre of our universe. I must take this opportunity to applaud the vast majority of you for playing your part in making this possible, particularly during the period after the Mahalapye 2011 National Congress. The harvest of your endeavours have virtually guaranteed an extended period of peace, tranquility and stability within the BDP, with great promise for the future.
- 15 The Party is much stronger than before within an environment of respect for one another, mutual tolerance, consensus building, compromise and give-and-take, all of which have been created by you. We have also learnt that it is worth our while to invest time and effort in managing our relationships amongst ourselves as democrats. The evidence is there that we have, and are making good progress in building the foundations of a sustainable strong and robust political party, where unity as our strength and core value, will reign supreme.
- 16 As I have said before, every democrat needs to bear in mind that we will always have differences of opinion on many issues. This is the reality in any democracy. However, what is intolerable is when such otherwise normal differences and preferences, are allowed to

undermine the collective good of the Party. This will not be tolerated by me and all others who are genuinely committed to growing this Party, and protecting it.

- 17 As we march towards the 2014 General Elections, we must stand up for our Party; we must stand up for the truth, and we must stand up for one another as fellow democrats. We must walk the talk and demonstrate to the electorates that we mean business as a party because our destiny is shared, and our political values and aspirations are the same. In the biblical sense in St Peter's letter to the Romans, *"be under obligation to one another"; "support and have compassion for your fellow democrat as you would love yourself"; and "you should decide never to do anything that would make your fellow democrat stumble or fail"*.
- 18 This must hold true in everything we do, especially in the aftermath of the various elective process of the Party this year. As is widely known, we will very shortly be going into the National Congress at which new members of the Central Committee will be elected, and we are about to start our 2014 Primary Elections. This time around, I do not expect these to degenerate into acrimonious, divisive and conflict-ridden farce or exercises, as we have too often, witnessed in the past, to the detriment of the long-term health, prospects and stability of the Party.
- 19 If there is a lesson from the factional wars and self-inflicted crisis of the past which brought us misery in the 2009 General Elections, is that we are at our weakest if we as democrats break ranks, and fail to stand behind each other. There is no doubt that we are much stronger and formidable as a team. Political parties, like in most sports, do not win

elections or championships as individuals, but their greatness lies in what they are able to achieve together as a collective and as a team. Fellow democrats, it is in fact almost impossible to do anything of significance on your own.

- 20 When I reflect on the value of community, unity, and togetherness as a party, many thoughts come to mind, for example that, our own success as individuals can be achieved only with others; our lessons can be learnt only from others; our weaknesses can be strengthened only by others; my influence can be compounded only through others; my best can be given only to others, and finally, my legacy can be left only to others.
- 21 It is in this light that I seek to remind you of some of the things I said to this very gathering last year. I stated that the electoral success of any party candidate in any of our parliamentary or local government constituency cannot be a matter for individual toil or struggle of the candidate, or their solo effort. These are, when all is said and done, approved candidates of this party who are entitled to the maximum and willing assistance of all our members and the maximum draw down of all party resources and structures in those areas.
- 22 Secondly, I also said that, all too often one hears, from both successful and unsuccessful candidates, how they could have fared better with greater assistance and support. What, I suspect, contributes to this problem is the misconception among some of you that it is only those candidates who were your preferred candidates in the primary elections that are entitled to your support, with the result that when someone other than your preferred candidate emerges the winner, you

withhold your assistance and sit back. Once a candidate has been elected, and regardless of our subjective feelings about the individual, all of us are enjoined to assist that individual as best as we can for the advancement of that candidate's, and indeed our party's success. Equally, however, candidates for their part must understand that whilst they are the standard-bearers for our party in designated constituencies, such constituencies are not their personal property whereby it is only themselves who can direct and control party activities, including campaigning in those areas.

23 Our long term teething problems with the party structures, which only come to life during the period leading to the National Congress and the Primary Elections process, remains a major cause for concern. We therefore still need to re-invent ourselves to find remedies, programmes and action-plans which will keep the heart and soul of the Party at the cell, ward, branch and regional levels fully functional, to ensure that these party structures remain relevant at all times to service the Party, as opposed to being there only at a time when they are being used or abused by people jostling for positions of power or to protect their own personal interests at the expense of the long-term benefit of the Party.

24 Bagaetsho, it is true that there is no alternative to the famous black, red and white colours of the Botswana Democratic Party. What is critical is that we must strengthen both the Party and the government to ensure that there is overall effective delivery on our mandate and election pledges to ensure that we achieve a dignified life for all Batswana through the delivery of sustainable economic development, driven by a culture of democratic accountability and rooted in a renewed sense of

social discipline. These I have espoused as paramount in the recent State of the Nation Address, which I have alluded to earlier, in that, we recognise that sustainable development is not only measured in the delivery of physical infrastructure. More fundamentally, it is about ensuring that our human resources, that is our people, have the skills and opportunities to achieve a dignified life. It is for this reason that poverty eradication and youth development and empowerment are a special priority.

- 25 We have had to cut down and slow down our development projects and limit our expenditure to our recurrent and contractual obligations as well as projects and activities with the capability to create more sustainable economic development in order to live within our means and the limits of our income in the light of various competing needs. I also know that in a time of crisis, we cannot afford to govern out of anger or panic, or yield to the politics of the moment or politics of expediency for the sake of gaining cheap popularity. It is for this reason that I must mention as government a few matters of national concern.

POWER OUTAGES AND WATER SHORTAGES

- 26 We have had serious setbacks in the commissioning and handing over of the Morupule B Power Station, which if the construction and commissioning programme had been on schedule, we would be in a situation, where the country and the economy as a whole, would be able to meet our target on self sufficiency in power-generation and security of supply. However, I would like to believe that the problems being experienced with Morupule B are not insurmountable, and the Minister responsible for energy and his team within the Ministry and BPC are working 24/7 to have these problems resolved as soon and as

best as possible. In the meantime, we therefore continue to rely on our neighbours who also have to supply their own domestic demands.

27 In recent times, we have experienced severe water shortages. Currently, the demand surpasses supply in the Greater Gaborone area. This is as a result of several factors including power supply interruptions, planned and unplanned maintenance of infrastructure including the North South Carrier scheme (NSC). Storage capacities of tanks and reservoirs have also been affected by a series of power interruptions which the country has been experiencing intermittently since the beginning of February 2013, affecting the Water Utilities Corporation's ability to recover storage levels thus affecting water supply especially in areas such as Mmopane, Gabane, Broadhurst, Tlokweng, Ramotswa and Lobatse. To exacerbate the problem, the Water Utilities Corporation (WUC) also experienced mechanical failures on the NSC pipeline which supplies 40% of the Greater Gaborone's daily demand. The pipeline subsequently failed on the 4th of March 2013, plunging the Greater Gaborone area into a water shortage crisis.

28 In mitigation of these water shortages, WUC has been managing supply through the isolation of some areas to enable it to build up the storages. This situation has resulted in a public outcry over water shortage in the area. To mitigate the above situation the Ministry has come up with interventions that the Minister will brief you on.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- 29 The second challenge we must address is the urgent need to deliver quality education and fulfill the promise of education for all in Botswana. In a global economy where the most valuable life support is skills development and knowledge, education is a basic right and no longer a must have opportunity.
- 30 In order to respond to the decline in the pass rate of students at all levels in public schools I have taken personal interest and interventions in ensuring proactive and timely of all developments within the Ministry of Education and Skills Development. The one thing that remains clear in my mind is that we cannot expect to see the pass rate improve if we do not work as a team made up of communities, parents, teachers, government and the pupils themselves. Government has been working on issues that teachers have complained about; in addition to 500 houses bought during 2012/13 another P997m has been allocated to the ministry to build and buy houses as well as upgrade school premises. This is not enough but it is what the economy can afford in these difficult times. It is my wish to see the discussion on levels of operation resolved soon.
- 31 But as government takes these steps to improve the working conditions of teachers it is our expectation that teaching will improve and that all teachers will deliver to the best of their ability. We should not forget parents in this equation. They too have a major responsibility in contributing to guiding their children and helping them to learn. In the end, there is no programme or policy that can substitute for a mother or father in supporting children's education at home, whether it is with home work or the PTA. I must place emphasis that the responsibility for our children's education must begin at home.

32 Students too have a responsibility to study but this can only happen if all adults around the student make the environment conducive to learning. My government and I will continue to do our best but we will need you on board to succeed. The Minister will give more information should you require it during this Council.

LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT IN NGAMILAND AND BOBIRWA

33 I must take this opportunity to explain other developments that you may have heard about. Let me start with the cattle issue in the Ngamiland District. For many years we have not been able to fully exploit the farming wealth on cattle in that area because of the foot and mouth disease out breaks. The drought last year made the situation worse. I am concerned about the welfare of people in that part of the country and that is why I have given instructions to the Minister of Agriculture to continue to search for alternate markets to sell our beef and to find markets that will buy cattle and beef from Ngamiland.

34 Because Bobirwa region is similarly affected, I have stated that it be included in the solutions we seek. The government continues to seek markets for the cattle in the foot and mouth disease prone areas of Bobirwa/Mmadinare (Zone 7) and Ngamiland (Zone 2).

35 An Agreement has been concluded with the Republic of South Africa to accept deboned beef from the Bobirwa/Mmadinare area. The Botswana Meat Commission (BMC) will therefore be accepting and slaughtering cattle from Zone 7 at intervals on a regular basis.

- 36 Negotiations have also been finalised with the Cold Storage Company (CSC) of Zimbabwe and the Republic of Zimbabwe Veterinary Authorities for export of live cattle for slaughter in Zimbabwe from Zones 7 and 2. The first consignment of live cattle from Ngamiland (Zone 2) to Zimbabwe was expected to start on the 13 March 2013. The arrangement is to export eight hundred cattle per week initially and increase on the numbers as the business continues.
- 37 The government will continue to seek other markets for cattle within these foot and mouth disease prone areas as well as for our beef and cattle from other areas to ensure a secure market to keep the livestock sector vibrant as it supports many of our people particularly those in rural areas. The Minister of Agriculture is also available to give more information to the Council.

INTEGRATED FARMING

- 38 Government has approved an integrated farming strategy. Integrated Farming entails practicing the various agricultural enterprises (arable, small stock, beef, etc), which are compatible and support each other in an enclosed parcel of land.
- 39 The obvious advantages of integrated farming are that it allows the landholder to concentrate production efforts on a single piece of land, thus saving the farmer labour and costs in developing more than one piece of land. It also creates opportunity to improve overall land productivity and to use waste material of one component to improve other components at the least cost. It facilitates production of a variety

of food and sources of nutrition for the households while at the same time providing flow of income to the farmer round the year.

LAND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

- 40 The Land Administration, Procedures, Capacity and Systems (LAPCAS) project has been ongoing since 2009 with several proposals for improvement in our land management activities. These improvements include harmonisation and simplification of some key processes across Land Boards in order that services they provide are enhanced.
- 41 A major component of the LAPCAS project entails the systematic registration of all plots in the country, especially in tribal land. The systematic registration of plots and the related sorting of records will greatly improve land management. This is a mammoth task that will radically transform response times and service delivery at Land Boards.
- 42 All these physical planning, land development and management issues require the formulation of policies and development of legislative framework that can facilitate delivery of services. It is for this reason that the Land Policy has been developed. The Town and County Planning Act has also been reviewed with a view to decentralize planning functions to the Local Authorities in order to bring efficiency and effectiveness to the planning process and facilitate ease of doing business.

CORRUPTION AND COMMISSIONS OF ENQUIRY

- 43 Toward the end of last year, you will have heard about alleged corruption in several areas. Allegations were made about both the Botswana Development Corporation and the Botswana Meat Commission. Therefore the necessary processes were put in place to investigate the allegations.
- 44 The manner in which we combat corruption remains noticeable to the world outside. The placing of the Commonwealth Centre on Corruption in Botswana is no accident. It comes as the result of stringent comparison with other countries and their anti-corruption programmes with Botswana out-classing most.

CONCLUSION

- 45 Fellow democrats, by working harder and smarter together, while maintaining our common sense of purpose, we as Botswana can and shall continue to advance towards our goal of a more prosperous Botswana that leaves no citizen behind. In meeting our challenges let us be mindful that our greatest source of strength is our unity and resourcefulness as a people. Our journey so far demonstrates that we are a nation capable of exceeding common expectations when we join together as patriots to embrace collective responsibilities.