



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY LT. GEN. SERETSE KHAMA IAN KHAMA

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

TO THE SECOND SESSION

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GABORONE

Final

INTRODUCTION

1. Madam Speaker, may I request that we observe a minute of silence for those who have departed during the past year. I thank you.

2. Madam Speaker, it is once again my pleasure to report on Government's perspective of where we are and where we intend to go along our path towards an even better Botswana. In this journey Government's goals have been constant.

- We continue to seek a Botswana where sustained development is achieved through inclusive, diversified economic growth that further advances us to high income status;
- As democrats, we remain committed to ensuring that our citizens are politically and socially, as well as economically, empowered to live dignified lives;
- We are steadfast in our commitment that the custodians of our future, our talented youth, possess the moral and intellectual discipline, as well as material means, to take full advantage of emerging opportunities, while overcoming any challenges they may face, in this ever changing globalised world;
- We thus envision a society in which all shall share in the resources of our homeland through common values, as well as rights and responsibilities.

3. As our resources are finite, we must focus on our national priorities; which include accelerated job creation, the eradication of abject poverty and the provision of quality education. We will also have to continue to commit considerable resources to improving health care, including the war on HIV/AIDS. Given current circumstance, we further recognise an urgent need to improve the capacity and management of our water supply, while at the same time moving beyond the outages we have hereto experienced as we become an energy surplus nation.

4. As we begin the countdown to the 50th Anniversary of our Republic, let us accept that we have reached a stage where a major choice must be made. We can either become more productive by working together to reach our goals; or we can allow individual desires and potentially debilitating divisions to rob us of further progress.

5. As a nation we can only achieve our full potential if our individual interests remain subordinate to the national interest. Our greatest strength over the past five decades has been our capacity to find common ground in our planning. This administration has in this respect consistently sought consensus by reaching out to all sections of the public, through our various, well known forms of consultation. This has given us a clear roadmap to guide us to our destination.

6. Madam Speaker, it is in the nature of any journey to be confronted with emerging challenges beyond one's control, such as the onset of drought or current global economic trends, which have been characterised by greater market volatility; as was reflected in the abrupt fall in the price of most mineral commodities including diamonds earlier this year. It is in this context that Government further recognised the need to take bold, proactive measures to stimulate the local economy while quickening the pace of public sector delivery.

7. The Economic Stimulus Programme (ESP) that I unveiled last month is a holistic action plan for achieving the goals of stimulating economic growth, accelerated employment creation and the promotion of economic diversification. The following have been identified as key sectors that will drive the programme: Infrastructure, Agriculture, Tourism and Manufacturing and Services, enabled by the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and the Economic Diversification Drive (EDD). In addition to stimulating inclusive economic growth a key ESP objective is to re-boot Government to ensure the urgent delivery of existing national priorities. The programme thus targets key areas where there is a backlog of public projects as well as labour intensive opportunities to promote local enterprise. ESP implementation will thus further focus on:

- Accelerated land servicing
- Boosting local manufacturing and services with increased citizen participation;
- Road construction;
- Achieving food security and job creation through improved agricultural production;
- Kick-starting economic activities in rural areas;
- Improved education and healthcare through the upgrading of facilities; and
- Leveraging ICT for the creation of an e-society through expanded e-services.

8. To further ensure its delivery, ESP is being coordinated by His Honour the Vice President who is being assisted by a Cabinet Sub-Committee supported by a Technical Committee and District Development Committees. To strengthen the overall coordination of local delivery, District Commissioners will report on progress directly to the Ministry of State President. In addition, the delivery of ESP will be facilitated by a high level Project Implementation Unit.

Economic Outlook

9. Madam Speaker, the introduction of ESP is consistent with the need for us to constantly adjust to changing economic circumstances. Unfortunately, we still find ourselves in a post-2008 global economy that is characterised by slower growth and greater uncertainty. Having weathered the initial storms of the downturn we had hoped for a more robust and stable global market than currently prevails for our exports and services. In this regard, the latest indicators suggest a decline in the demand for our diamonds during the second half of the current financial year that will be greater than what we experienced in 2008-09.

10. The latest estimates from Statistics Botswana indicate that in real terms, the domestic economy expanded by 4.4% in 2014 compared to 9.3% in 2013, due to decreased growth in both mining and non-mining sectors. Growth in the mining sector was 4.5% in 2014, down from the

exceptional 23.9% registered in 2013, resulting from a general decline of commodity prices including weakened demand for diamonds. The non-mining sector also registered a lower growth, at 4.4% in 2014 as compared to 6.8% in 2013, with the challenges of the Water and Electricity sectors being especially difficult.

11. According to the latest IMF World Economic Outlook report a modest growth rate of 3.1% is projected for the world economy in 2015. Due to the steeper than originally projected slowdown in mineral revenue, our expected domestic economic growth has also been adjusted downwards to 2.6% this year.

12. Madam Speaker, I am, however, pleased to note that in 2015 our domestic inflation rate continued to fall within the Bank of Botswana's target of 3–6%, with monthly inflation ranging from 2.8% and 3.6% during the first half of the year. This trend is expected to continue in the coming months, due in part to lower fuel prices. For its part, the Bank of Botswana has pursued an accommodative monetary policy, lowering its Bank Rate to 6% thus reducing the cost of borrowing. In January 2015, the weights of the currencies in the Pula basket were revised to 50% South African rand and 50% SDR currencies, based on inflation differentials, while a zero annual rate of crawl of the Pula exchange rate was implemented for the year.

13. The exchange rate between the pula and the SDR currencies has had a positive impact on our Foreign Exchange Reserves, which as of August 2015 were estimated at P87.8 billion, a 16.3% increase from P75.5 billion in August 2014. Of the total amount in August 2015, the Government investment Account, which is Government's savings, was P 39.6 billion. A combination of these savings and borrowing, especially domestic borrowing, can provide additional funds to stimulate our economy. Any use of savings and borrowings will be done prudently to ensure the continued sustainability of our fiscal situation.

Budget & Planning

14. Madam Speaker, insofar as Government's budget remains an important factor in our country's development, continued financial prudence remains crucial. For the 2014/15 financial year, the total expenditure and net lending was P50.56 billion, which was 95% of the revised budget estimate of P53.22 billion. Out of this, recurrent expenditure amounted to P37.58 billion, while development expenditure was P13.07 billion. This was a significant increase in development expenditure compared to the P8.91 billion spent in 2013/14. The overall fiscal balance for the 2014/15 financial year was a budget surplus of P5.34 billion, compared to a surplus of P7.22 billion in 2013/14.

15. Subsequent to the extension of the duration of National Development Plan (NDP) 10 to March 2017, the preparation of NDP 11 has progressed alongside the formulation of the new vision to take us beyond 2016. A consultation framework for the next vision was drafted in April 2015, allowing the preparation for NDP 11 to now also move forward. A task force has meanwhile been appointed to engage the public on the framework.

16. Government also remains committed to the global partnership programme with the World Bank on Wealth Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystems (WAVES). Through this programme, we are developing natural capital accounts for water, minerals, energy and tourism. The information obtained from this accounts will guide policy decisions during the implementation phases of NDP 11. The results from the water accounts are already guiding our planning. More broadly developing natural capital accounts gives us a truer picture of the economic contribution of natural resources. As such, the programme should foster sustainable development strategies, while providing a complement to GDP as a measure of economic growth.

Doing Business and Competitiveness

17. Madam Speaker, as our improved but still middling performance in the latest World Economic Forum Competitiveness report attests, we can and must do more to enhance our country's business environment for both

local and foreign investors. As a step in this direction in April 2015 a Doing Business Reforms Roadmap and Action Plan was approved. In this context we are undertaking additional reforms to address impediments to doing business within the existing legal and regulatory framework and institutional and governance structures, including better turnaround times for visas and work and resident permits. Here I wish to emphasize that effective implementation of the reforms will require active collaboration between Government and Private Sector in monitoring and evaluation.

18. Government is also in the process of reviewing the Building Control Act and its Regulations, as well as finalizing the Regulatory Impact Assessment Strategy. This latter initiative is meant to ensure that all the new laws that will be enacted in future do not become a bottleneck to the ease of doing business initiatives.

Job Creation

19. Madam Speaker, Government has no greater priority than the urgent need to reduce unemployment and underemployment, including among our youth. In this respect EDD, now supported by ESP, remains a key instrument for growing jobs as well as the economy.

20. Since its inception in 2010, EDD has been facilitating employment generating business opportunities by leveraging public procurement in support of domestic industries with additional support for youth entrepreneurs. This has resulted in the purchase of a total of P 17.98 billion worth of goods and services, including P 1.1 billion for the first two quarters of 2015/16 financial year. The number of EDD registered enterprises now stands at 1,425, which collectively contribute to the employment of 40,333 Batswana.

21. To further facilitate local production and consumption, all of Government, including Local Authorities and Parastatals have been directed to purchase locally produced products from locally based manufacturers, service providers and agricultural producers. Procuring entities can only procure products from other sources locally and/or from outside the

country, where there is a need and only in exceptional circumstances where justification is given.

22. To further stimulate job creation Government has adopted an accelerated programme for job creation focused on key areas that have a high potential for labour intensive economic growth. In addition to EDD and the ESP targeted areas of Agriculture, Tourism and Infrastructure our efforts to stimulate the economy will be given additional impetus through the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) as geographically defined economic areas providing investor friendly business environments.

23. Having passed the enabling legislation we are now establishing a Special Economic Zone Authority. The Authority will oversee the SEZs, which in turn will facilitate private sector growth through the creation of value added economic opportunities generated by local business synergies. Industries expected to evolve in these areas include:

- Light Manufacturing;
- Applied ICT;
- Energy and mineral beneficiation
- Pharmaceuticals;
- Financial services; and
- Agro business and food processing.

24. A special economic zone for Kasane-Kazangula will, for example, cater for the expanded tourism, construction, transport services and market access for local agriculture that will result from the construction of the road and Rail Bridge at Kazangula and the water pipeline to Pandamatenga, along with associated infrastructure. Additional SEZs will enhance already ongoing developments, such as Selebi-Phikwe's transformation as a metallurgical hub, the expansion of financial and innovative technology services in Gaborone, Francistown's projected growth as a nexus for trade and transport and the establishment of the leather park at Lobatse among others.

25. Madam Speaker, job creation is inevitably linked to investment. In this respect the Botswana International Trade Centre (BITC) continues to promote our country as a competitive location for investment. During the 2014/15 financial year, BITC helped realise a total combined investment capital of just over P3.2 billion, which contributed to the creation of 3,316 jobs.

26. Our job creation efforts are also being driven by The Rural Development Council (RDC), which continues to promote various community based projects, such as the Mogobane Irrigation Scheme. Other projects include construction of a Multi-Species Abattoir in Tsabong; an agro-processing plant in Selibe Phikwe and the Phuduhudu Cultural Village in the Kgalagadi District.

27. Business start-ups will also continue to receive critical support from the Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA), which since 2008 has funded 2,288 enterprises with a total value of nearly P2.1 billion, in the process creating over 11 thousand jobs. During the 2014/15 financial year, CEDA assisted 329 new enterprises with a total monetary value of P328 million, collectively generating 1,971 new jobs.

28. The Local Enterprise Authority (LEA) is also playing its role in nurturing a culture of entrepreneurship through its training workshops and outreach mentoring. In 2014-15, 24,426 clients were trained, while a further 472 benefitted from additional outreach.

Land Management

29. Madam Speaker, the equitable and efficient distribution of land is a critical factor for realising economic opportunities and social wellbeing. But, unfortunately, the shortage of serviced land has in recent years all too often proved to be a bottle neck rather than an enabler of development. As part of our Economic Stimulus Programme we now intend to fast track the servicing of 37,000 commercial, industrial, residential and other plots, beginning in the current financial year. In these efforts we will be

facilitated by the establishment of a land information centre resulting from the Land Administration Processes, Capacity Building and Systems (LAPCAS) Project.

Tourism

30. Madam Speaker, Government is committed to ensuring that tourism's contribution to local job creation and citizen empowerment, as well to GDP, continues to increase. Besides being the highest economic revenue earner after minerals, the tourist sector already accounts for over 35,000 jobs. To create further employment as part of ESP we are focusing on the Kasane–Kazungula Redevelopment Project, which will upgrade Kasane as a premier tourist centre, while establishing Kazungula as a key centre for transport and logistics. Additional tourist projects and infrastructure across the country to be boosted by ESP include: Dams, cultural and eco-tourism, conferences and events along with the hospitality sector, which will together bring a facelift to our country.

31. I am pleased to report that citizen ownership as well as management participation in the tourism and hospitality sector is still growing. Consistent with our Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Policy, the operations of Community Based Organizations are being commercialized to increase the benefits for participating communities and individuals. During 2014/15 financial year, a total of P14 million was generated by Wildlife Community Based Organizations, creating 425 new jobs.

32. There has also been diversification of the CBNRM product with some communities engaging in projects that utilise monuments and heritage sites. New tourism sites are currently being accessed with local communities for development in such areas as the Central Kgalagadi and Khutse Game Reserves, while a South Sowa trail in Makgadikgadi has been developed through partnership with Botswana Ash and Debswana Diamond Mine. Additional projects will be accelerated through ESP funding and the provision of additional rural infrastructure.

33. We are further enhancing awareness about our country's different tourism products through strategic marketing and promotion initiatives and partnerships, including daily outreach through our BWgovernment social media. The Botswana Tourism Organisation has further partnered with National Geographic for the World Legacy Award 2016 and the International Travel Bourse Berlin as a partner country for 2017. In addition, Lonely Planet has listed Botswana as its number one "Must See Country for 2016." These partnerships and positive developments will further enhance the growth of our tourism sector.

34. Government also continues to facilitate sports and adventure as well as culture based events across the country. All the events recorded significant growth in terms of spectator numbers and associated economic spin offs.

Agriculture

35. Turning to agriculture, ESP is expected to stimulate local production through integrated farming by, among other things:

- Providing strategic incentives, including guaranteed market access for local producers, both commercial and small scale;
- Mandating that public institutions procure from local food producers;
- Facilitate market access through the formation of production clusters and marketing cooperatives; and

36. The horticultural component of ESP will further include projects such as grey water reuse in Serowe, the National Agro-Processing plant in Selibe-Phikwe, rehabilitation of Glen Vally infrastructure and electrification of Shashe Farms. Additional rainfed projects for implementation will include electrification of Mosisedi Farms and cluster clearing in Magoriapitse and Tshwaragano in Tonota.

37. To further improve our arable sector as a revenue earner and source of employment, Government is conducting research in areas such as crop breeding, soil and water management, farm mechanisation in the context of different farming systems and agro-ecological conditions. A project co-

funded with International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) further includes training in conservation and the use of low cost mechanization options, combined with improved crop agronomy. In addition we are piloting a scheme to develop and demonstrate a viable model for small scale irrigation using treated waste water.

38. Madam Speaker, the 2014/15 cropping season experienced drought conditions, which resulted in complete crop failure in many areas. The total area planted during the 2014/15 ploughing season thus decreased by 28%, while the total number of farmers who took part in arable farming also decreased by 37%. The national estimated cereals production for 2014/15 is estimated to stand at 68,000 metric tonnes (Mt.), which is only 22.7% of the national cereal requirement of 300,000 Mt. The whole country was, therefore, declared drought stricken following the 2014/2015 Drought and Household Food Security assessment. To this end, Government has adopted relief measures for a period from July 2015 through to June 2016 to assist affected Batswana.

39. Despite the poor rains, there were a number of farmers who improved their productivity through the adoption of methods such as the use of fertilizers, use of hybrid seeds and row planting.

40. The special ISPAADD programme targeting Kgalagadi, Gantsi and parts of the Kweneng and Southern Districts is being implemented. With respect to the Livestock Management and Infrastructure Development (LIMID) project as of June 2015, a cumulative total of 15,335 applicants had benefited, including 7,754 youth. Poultry and small stock abattoirs construction is progressing with SEPHA abattoir in Palapye at 80% completion, while a tender for works has been awarded for the Tsabong multi-species abattoir.

41. Botswana's beef industry continues to grow as a mainstay of our agriculture. Turnover at Botswana Meat Commission (BMC) for 2014 year reached P1.16 billion (from slaughter of 144,083 cattle) which is an increase of P80 million over the 2013 revenue. In order to meet the demands of local and regional market, the BMC abattoir in Maun was

upgraded and automated to increase production. This will assist in marketing of cattle from Ngamiland.

42. The Dairy Development Strategy adopted last year is beginning to bear fruits as Sunnyside farm near Lobatse has been leased to a dairy company. Further investment into dairy sub-sector is being processed for Milk Afric and Semitwe Dairy.

43. Madam Speaker, the National Master Plan for Arable Agriculture and Dairy Development (NAMPAADD) continues to support the farming community through provision of technical assistance and guidance. In this regard, NAMPAADD is providing mentoring through demonstrations of technologies.

44. The transformation of the Botswana College of Agriculture into the University of Agriculture and Natural Resources is on track. The University will focus on the practical applications of science and agro related research.

45. The National Agricultural Research and Development Institute (NARDI) was launched in June 2015 following the decision to merge the Department of Agricultural Research with the National Veterinary Laboratory and the National Food Technology Research Centre (NFTRC). This establishment will focus in areas of promoting research, innovation and training.

Minerals

46. Madam Speaker, as I earlier alluded to, while the minerals sector remains a principal source of revenue and primary sector for economic growth and diversification, it is currently challenged by depressed markets. As of the end of August 2015 the benchmark global price of 1-carat and 0.30-carat diamonds had declined by 12.9% and 29% respectively over the past 12 months, due largely to weakened Asian demand. While demand is projected to recover the latest downturn underscores the fact that the era when we could almost always rely on steady demand and rising prices for

our gems has given way to greater uncertainty. The anticipated reopening of Lerala and BK11 mines, which have been under care and maintenance since 2012, has thus been delayed. Ghaghoo Mine, however, started operation during the last quarter of 2014, while Karowe mine continues to enjoy success.

47. The recent closures of two factories in Botswana, albeit offset by the opening of two others, as well as bankruptcies in some major diamond trading centres, further point to the fragile and fluid nature of the industry.

48. Despite the challenges, the sale of rough diamonds through regular sights, tenders and auctions have been taking place in Botswana as scheduled up to the end of September 2015. In addition to DTC and Okavango Diamonds, Gem Diamond have also started local sales.

49. The Diamond Cutting and Precious and Semi-Precious Stones Amendment Bills, aimed at adapting to current downstream industry developments for improving business conditions and enabling growth, is being finalised. The amendment is expected to facilitate the policy on further beneficiation and citizen empowerment among other key issues. The drafting of the, which is intended to reinforce beneficiation efforts, is also in process.

50. We have further decided to establish Minerals Development Company Botswana to manage Government investments in mining and diamond valuation services.

Energy

51. Madam Speaker, transitioning Botswana from an energy dependent to energy surplus nation is a priority. Morupule B Power Station continues to undergo remedial works. Our energy supply is, therefore, supplemented by the Orapa and Matshelagabedi Diesel Peaking Plants. To ensure long term security of power supply, the Government is in the process of procuring Independent Power Producers for the development of an additional 300 MW by extending Morupule B with unit 5 & 6 (each of 150

MW) as well as a further 300MW plant at a coalfield to be determined. We are also refurbishing Morupule A, while introducing solar power plants.

52. In light of our recent frustration with the poor delivery of the Morupule B and other projects, Government is in the process of establishing a Project Management Office (PMO) to oversee the implementation of major energy and water projects. This will be done through appropriate project management methodologies.

53. It is worth noting that our increased demand for energy has in part been due to the success of our National Electricity Access programme. As of May 2015, the Programme has enabled 49,897 additional households to connect to the national grid. The total number of electrified households now stands at 302,436, while the total number of gazetted villages that have been electrified now stands at 77%.

54. With respect to the petroleum sub-sector, a quality monitoring program of petroleum products to protect consumers and the environment is in place. Government will ultimately increase its strategic stock of petroleum products once the construction of 149 million litres facility at Tshele Hill is completed. Once completed, it will give Government additional 40 days' worth of stocks as part of extending the security of supply for the country.

55. The National Energy Policy has been submitted for Cabinet approval and tentatively for forward submission to Parliament. This policy document will guide the energy sector going forward.

Water

56. Madam Speaker, securing our domestic water needs through better management and increased conservation as well as expanded supply will continue to challenge us for some time. Government has availed a budget for emergency projects, network extensions, groundwater investigations and the expansion/installation of water treatment plant capacity. Altogether, more than P1 billion worth of projects are at various stages of implementation. With the completion of the Dikgathong, Lotsane and

Thune dams our efforts have shifted to associated infrastructure. The Dikgatlong pipeline was commissioned in October 2014, while Lotsane infrastructure is complete and supplies water to 22 villages.

57. The extension of the North South Carrier from Moralane Break Pressure Tank to Palapye is ongoing and is now scheduled for completion in June 2016. An additional pump station is to be constructed near Serorome Valley to improve delivery and efficiency of the NSC 1 downstream of Mahalapye to Gaborone.

58. The Mmamashia–Kanye NSC Connection project commenced in August 2014 and will be completed in February 2017. This project will supply the villages of Thamaga, Moshupa and Kanye with water from Mmamashia Water Treatment Works. Additional Government initiatives to improve water supply and sanitation include projects such as Maun Water Supply and Sanitation Phase II, Kanye and Molepolole Sanitation, Seronga/Gudigwa water supply, Shakawe Water Treatment Plant, Mogodi Hill – Pitsane Pipeline and Boteti Northern Cluster Water Project.

59. Going forward, a comprehensive assessment of all water challenges is also being finalised to assist with the prioritisation and implementation of water projects. A task team formed to carry out an assessment of the water and wastewater situation in Botswana has recommended a number of projects meant to increase water supply across the country.

60. Government has completed the Masama East Phase 1 boreholes injection into the NSC1 pipeline, at a cost of more than P300 million, as a means of supplementing the water supply to the Greater Gaborone region. Plans are also underway to extend a similar project at Masama West (Phase 2) at an estimated cost of some P450 million. Both the Palapye and the Mmamashia Water Treatment Plants will be expanded by the Water Utilities Corporation to increase the capacity to 40 million cubic litres a day from the current 16 million cubic litres day due to the increased water demand for the Palapye/Serowe Areas, and increase the capacity of Mmamashia to 180 million cubic litres day so as to be able to receive the additional amount of water coming through the NSC 2 pipeline and subsequently meet demands of the Gaborone water supply system. The

commissioning of the expanded plants is scheduled for Mid-2018. Government has further begun a project to treat the Ramotswa well field borehole water for potable use, which will augment water supply to our South-East District villages. This project is expected to be completed before the end of the current financial year.

61. Madam Speaker, tapping into shared watercourses will be critical to securing our nation's long-term water needs. We therefore continue to prioritise trans-boundary cooperation under the auspices of the SADC Protocol on shared watercourses. The Chobe - Zambezi Water Transfer Scheme is ongoing, while the Lesotho Highlands Feasibility Study has also been completed and its findings are under evaluation.

62. In addition, the Limpopo Watercourse Commission (LIMCOM) has been launched. This river basin is in fact the home to all our dams that we currently rely on for water supply.

Public Infrastructure

63. Madam Speaker, our delivery of additional quality public infrastructure through ESP will be facilitated through the implementation of recent legislation governing the construction industry, which has set professional standards for improved performance and self-regulation to protect public interest.

64. A pilot project for private sector participation in maintenance of Government facilities in Otse Police College and International Law Enforcement Academy started in September 2015. Parallel to the pilot project, a condition survey for 15 prisons facilities have been completed and the works for maintenance of 4 prisons facilities have been started in July 2015. These condition surveys have been extended to 5 Senior Secondary Schools and 11 Magistrate Courts; the next phase will cover 5 old hospitals and other government facilities to enable prioritisation of Facilities Management activities.

65. Under the 15% maintenance reservation programme we have continued to create opportunities for youth owned construction companies

and individual youth with vocational skills in the construction industry. Since the programme started in 2009 to-date, maintenance tenders worth P 167,531,666 have been awarded country wide to 250 youth owned contractors and 196 individuals with vocational skills in the construction industry. The private sector is also engaging youth owned companies listed in the Government database on works to the value of P 36,640,122.

Transport

66. Madam Speaker, Government continues to maintain and rehabilitate 18,000 km of road network, comprising 6,400km tarred roads, 7,600 gravel roads and 4,000 earth/track roads. As part of ESP we will increase funding in the coming year for projects to decongest the A1 road, while building bypasses in Francistown, Molepolole and Lobatse. We will further prioritise the construction of access roads across the country to help stimulate local economic activity.

67. The Road Levy Collection Fund is being used to implement labour intensive road related maintenance projects such as bush clearing, grass cutting, cleaning of drainage structures, pothole patching and road sign repair. Major road works that are at various stages of implementation include the widening of the 30 km Tonota – Francistown road; and civil works contracts covering a total of 335km in the Southern Region. Bridges under implementation include Platjan, Ramotswa, Kazungula and Mohembo.

68. Madam Speaker, Botswana Railways is reintroducing the Passenger Train Service to run between Lobatse and Francistown. The plan is to run a daily scheduled night services from each end, with additional services during holidays. The service is expected to commence in March 2016. To further improve business performance and service delivery, BR is undertaking a project to procure eight locomotives, while rehabilitating its train station facilities.

69. With respect to aviation, the construction of the Kasane Terminal Building, which commenced on 3rd November 2014, is scheduled for completion in August 2016, while the construction of a new air traffic

control tower and technical block at Maun commenced in January 2015, with completion scheduled for January 2016. Works at the Sir Seretse Khama International Airport (SSKIA) Terminal Building have been completed.

70. Air Botswana has improved its on-time departures, with an average of 86% on-time performance rating for the reporting period, while beginning on the 30th of June 2015, Ethiopian Airlines commenced flights into Gaborone.

Information and Communication Technology

71. Madam Speaker, Government continues to leverage Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to improve the quality of life for Batswana, while positioning the country as a regional ICT hub. To promote local job creation and citizen empowerment in ICT, as part of our ESP initiative we have decided to increase the number of ICT areas reserved for citizen owned and operated ICT companies. Some of these areas include Government computer maintenance and procurement, including 2nd level support operations and maintenance. We also intend to provide incentives for local assembly. This decision dovetails with our commitment to accelerate the upgrading of ICT systems across Government for the effective delivery of critical e-Services in such areas as health, education, doing business facilitation and immigration. We further intend to draw from the Universal Access Fund to fast track the extension of broadband connectivity to all villages of less than 5,000 in the Gantsi, Kgalagadi, Kweneng and North West Districts. This project includes rollout broadband connectivity to 175 schools in the same districts, as well as another 523 schools in other parts of the country.

72. Madam Speaker, BOCRA continues to monitor the performance of the telecommunications networks and the concerns raised by the general public relating to the unsatisfactory quality of service of some of the networks. Operators have, however, put in place mitigation strategies to address the noted challenges. Overall operators have committed over P150 million this year to improve infrastructure in order to accommodate new technology leading to improvements in quality of service. For its part,

BOCRA is procuring a fixed and mobile quality of service monitoring tool in order to independently assess the quality of service of the telecommunications networks.

Education and Training

73. Madam Speaker, as a matter of urgency Government has also initiated an extensive programme of construction and maintenance works in schools country wide. As part of ESP this includes the construction of 5,885 additional houses for both primary and secondary school teachers, along with 1,153 new classrooms in the primary and secondary schools, as well as an additional 175 science labs and 1,280 upgraded ablution facilities. We will also convert two junior secondary schools into unified schools.

74. The development of the Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan (ETSSP) was completed in November 2014 and approved by Cabinet in May 2015. The Plan is a reform strategy for improving the quality of the education sector's performance. At its core, ETSSP is focused on improving governance through enhanced educational administration to deliver better coordination and resource allocation, as well as strategic planning. ETSSP also provides for standards setting and more robust monitoring and evaluation to reduce the implementation gaps that have resulted in the recent trend of declining school performance.

75. Consistent with the ETSSP objective of closing the existing skills mismatch between too many school leavers and actual labour market demands, as well as our ESP commitment of accelerated job creation, Government has set up the "Target 20,000 Initiative" for the rapid up-skilling and retooling of unemployed youth to meet current industry demands. This will be done in phases starting with an intake of 5,000 students during the 2015/16 financial year. The training will focus on industry areas identified as being in high demand, including finance and business services, tourism, creative industries, mining, energy and water resources, agriculture, construction and transport. Moving forward the mix of training needs will be as guided by the Human Resource Development Council. This new initiative was introduced to cater for the still considerable

number of youth who have not already benefitted from some form of skills training.

76. A draft Policy Framework for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is also at an advanced stage of development, and is scheduled for completion by December 2015. Government has also introduced sponsorship for diploma students at TVET public institutions.

77. Government also continues to expand the one-year Reception Programme, which is currently catering for 9,146 learners in 226 public primary schools. As of January 2016 these numbers will rise to an estimated 12,660 learners in 422 schools.

78. Continued progress is also being made in upgrading Primary Teacher Certificate holders to Diploma in Primary Education. A total of 2,274 teachers have been trained since 2010, with another 823 currently undergoing training. The intention of the programme is to eventually upgrade all teachers to a minimum of diploma level.

79. Another key priority area is the utilisation of ICT as a means to improve teaching and learning, which calls for infrastructure and connectivity, as well as curriculum integration and the development and use of relevant content and software. Efforts made towards improving access to ICT include installation of Wi-Fi technology in 80 Secondary schools and upgrading computer laboratories in 62 of the 239 Secondary schools country wide. Government is committed to further improve classroom access to ICT by providing computers to over 100 secondary schools during the 2015/16 financial year.

80. Madam Speaker, in an endeavour to promote Government modernization within the education sector an open source system from UNESCO – OpenEMIS, has been adopted. It is a royalty free system with a free source code and no license and maintenance fees. The system will be used to automate processes across the ten ministries with education processes in order to track progress in the implementation of our education

related Development Goals and other measures. As Botswana is the first African country to embrace this system, UNESCO is providing technical support for its effective implementation as a potential example to other countries in the region.

81. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to report that the construction phase of the Academic Hospital under the University of Botswana was completed in December 2014. The equipping of the academic side of the hospital is in progress and the institution is expected to open in 2016.

Research and Innovation

82. Madam Speaker, in today's fast changing world sustained development is reliant on innovation arising from scientific and technological research. To accelerate the implementation of our 2011 Policy on Research, Science, Technology and Innovation Government is drafting a Bill to establish the structures to coordinate and fund future science and technology related research. In an endeavour to maintain up-to-date information on Research and Innovation, an online Research Information Management System (RIMS) is also being developed.

83. Government is further enhancing an enabling environment for the uptake of science and innovation through various international collaborative initiatives. In 2014, the Botswana Institute for Technology, Research and Innovation (BITRI) identified solar powered lighting as an area with wide ranging applications including street lighting, car parks, and mining zones. The street light has since been piloted in the villages of Diphuduhudu, Bere, Dukwe and Ngwatle with further expansion now earmarked for other areas across the country in the coming year.

84. The Mineral Beneficiation programme of BITRI is also underway with the setup of a laboratory and pilot plant for Coal to Liquid (CTL) technology to facilitate research efforts that could lead to coal product beneficiation.

85. Construction of the Botswana Innovation Hub Headquarters at the Science and Technology Park is still ongoing with the expectation that the Park will be officially opened in 2016.

Governance, Safety and Security

86. Madam Speaker, it is pleasing to once more note that over the past year various reputable international indices, [such as last month's Ibrahim Index of African Governance, the Global Peace Index and the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index, as well as various private risk and perception polling surveys, including those by AON, Verisk Maplecroft, Transparency International, Afrobarometer and the Economist Intelligence Unit], all underscore our countries continued high international as well as regional ratings when it come to issues of good governance, respect for the rule of law, safety and security, adherence to democratic norms and commitment to fighting corruption.

87. Notwithstanding such accolades we cannot afford to be complacent, but must rather recognise the need for further improvement as well as constant vigilance to uphold our status as a global benchmark of good governance. To this effect, the Governance, Safety and Security Thematic Working Group held a series of meetings to deliberate on NDP 11 national priorities. Among the critical priorities they identified was the need to deal with emerging world trends on terrorism, human trafficking and cybercrime. Additionally, money laundering, border security, internal and transnational organized crime, fraud, aviation security and diamond security were some of the additional emerging security threats.

88. To address these and other challenges Government has decided to develop a new National Security Strategy as a critical NDP 11 milestone. Here it may be noted that in a globalised world the potential threats to any nation's security are as much economic and social as political and defence related. As such national security must be addressed holistically as it is a critical factor for ensuring domestic peace and prosperity. This underscores the need to ensure up to date human resources as well as infrastructure are in place to dealing with emerging security threats.

89. With regards to the rule of law, we remain committed to modernizing our courts capacity to dispense timely as well as fair justice by

leveraging on ICT, while further simplifying the rules of courts and reducing cost of litigation as well as the distance between litigants and courts service centres.

90. The development of a new sentencing policy encompassing alternatives to imprisonment is near completion and should also soon be brought to Parliament.

91. The Legal Aid Project, which commenced in April 2011, currently operates from the Attorney General Chambers in Gaborone and Francistown. Plans are underway for the further delivery of services in Maun, Tsabong and Kasane. Legal aid services are available to citizens in respect of a wide variety of civil law issues. The demand for these services has steadily increased. As at the end of May 2015, almost 12,000 applications for legal aid had been received in Gaborone and Francistown.

92. Both the Legal Aid Act No. 18 of 2013 and its regulations have been brought into operation. The board of Legal Aid Botswana has been appointed and Legal Aid Botswana is transitioning to an independent statutory body separate from Attorney General's Chambers. Subject to the availability of funds, Legal Aid Botswana will offer services in Gantsi and Palapye before the end of the 2016/2017 financial year.

93. Madam Speaker, our Courts, through the various judicial reforms have managed to reduce the waiting period for completion of cases. In this respect the period under review has seen the introduction of a new Magistrates' Court in Bobonong, with three additional courts coming up this financial year in Nata, Shakawe and Kang. In Kanye the construction of a new court house will commence this year, while the Broadhurst Magistrates' Court is being expanded.

94. The Judiciary has also continued in its effort to bring justice closer to the people through the introduction of initiatives such as the mobile traffic courts. The Special Courts for Stock Theft, Maintenance, Small Claims and Traffic have proved effective. Resources permitting, it is our intention to roll out these courts to all districts.

95. The Directorate of Public Prosecutions (DPP) continues to discharge its mandate of prosecuting criminal cases in all common law courts of Botswana on behalf of the people of Botswana. In the year 2014-2015, the Directorate achieved eighty-six percent (86%) success rate for all the cases that had been tried in court. This high mark has been achieved despite such challenges as a shortage of skilled manpower.

96. Madam Speaker, Government continues to resource the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) to enable it to be in a state of readiness for any defence related contemporary threats that may threaten the territorial integrity, sovereignty and our national interests. With respect to online or cyber threats the BDF is working jointly with other government departments to address issues of cyber security. With respect to the protection of our flora and fauna the BDF will continue to collaborate with other Government and non-government stakeholders to minimise incidents of poaching.

97. Madam Speaker, the Botswana Police Service continues its fight against crime. To this end, there is a continuous review and revision of legal frameworks, policing policies and procedures, resourcing and competencies to make them relevant to the changing public safety and protection challenges.

98. As a result of such reviews a number of laws were enacted including the Counter-Terrorism Act, Proceeds and Instruments of Crime Act, Forensic Procedures Act and the Anti-Human Trafficking Act.

99. The crime fighting efforts of the Police Service rely heavily on tried and tested policing methods that include integration of visible policing, intelligence gathering as well as a strong public engagement programme to mobilize support for crime prevention initiatives. To this end, there has been a significant improvement over time in the incidence of violent and serious crimes.

100. Rapid technological development has had a serious impact in policing the world over. Crimes involving digital computers, digital networks and/or material stored in digital form continue to pose the greatest challenge to

modern policing. The modernisation of the Botswana Police Service has therefore become a priority for my government, to that end; the Botswana Police Service is in a drive to inculcate the use of technology in its business processes in order to improve effectiveness and efficiency of its service delivery.

101. The Police Service is at an advanced stage in the process of introducing a Safer City programme in order to build capabilities for policing the city of Gaborone by means of closed circuit television technology. Such a programme will address the efficiency of the response processes as well as speed-up the investigation and detection of crime and it will be cascaded to other areas of need over time.

102. Botswana has experienced a tremendous increase in the number of internet users. To this end a cybercrime and computer forensics function is being established within the Police Service and it is going to be fully capacitated in terms of laboratories, storage and security facilities including a highly skilled workforce. Government is therefore embarking on a large cyber investigation, cyber intelligence and cyber forensics capacitating process for the Police Service. This will be supported by the enhanced Cybercrime and Computer Related Acts which the Ministry is in the process of reviewing to bring it in line with developments in the cyber sphere.

103. Guaranteeing safety in public spaces and reducing the fear of crime has been one of the prioritised performance outcomes of the Police Service. Consequently, initiatives such as the Police Volunteer Scheme, Special Constabulary and Cluster Policing remain relevant in the provision of visible policing. These cadres will continue to constitute a significant feature of policing in Botswana.

104. The effectiveness of crime prevention however, can not only come from having police officers on the streets, it is also a consequence of meaningful collaborations between citizens and law enforcement. Members of the public have been able to mobilise themselves through their neighbourhood self-policing initiatives with the realisation that their security and that of their property starts with them.

105. Madam Speaker, too many lives continue to be lost on the road especially of young and productive members of society, largely due to human error, over speeding and drunken driving. The number of casualties dropped from 24 per 100,000 in 2011 to 18 in 2014. Stringent measures have been put in place through, among others, the amendment of the Road Traffic Act.

106. The Police Service has a bold law enforcement approach to road traffic law offending which is anchored on enforcement and education. There, however, still remains room for improvement for a mind-set shift towards understanding road safety not solely as a police issue, but also as a social issue demanding the interventions by all. To that end we shall continue capacitating the Botswana Police Service to deliver on the statutory obligations to road safety.

107. As a further initiative children continue to receive education on road safety at a Children Traffic School in Gaborone. A Mobile Traffic School truck has also been acquired to serve schools that are normally unable to visit the Children Traffic School facility in Gaborone.

108. Madam Speaker, the Department of Prisons and Rehabilitation remains committed to providing effective rehabilitation of offenders and improving security of prison installations. While overcrowding continues to be a problem in some of our maximum security prisons, it is pleasing to report that the majority of our prisons are now operating below their holding capacity. In June 2015, the average number of prisoners held in our prisons was 4108 against the authorized holding capacity of 4337 inmates.

Immigration

109. Madam Speaker, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship facilitates the movement of people in and out of the country. Given the importance of this function we are working towards improving the Department's operational efficiency. In this regard, Government is developing comprehensive systems which will in future be integrated with other systems for consistency, efficiency and data integrity to facilitate on-

line services especially for critical functions such as VISA, residence and work permits applications.

110. Government has further introduced strategies to reduce passport fraud and promote integrity of travel documents. This amongst others includes contributing to the Public Key Directory, a software that has been developed by International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to enhance security of travel documents and promote global interoperability. This will go a long way to help us fight fraud and forgery of passports together with cooperating countries.

Civil and National Registration

111. Government remains committed to maintaining an up-to-date National Register in accordance with the law. Currently, the National Register for Omang stands at 1,559,187 for citizens who are 16 years and above and 604,628 for those under the age of 16 years as per the National Birth Register bringing the total registered population to 2,163,815. This represents good progress and compares well with the Statistics Botswana population projections of 2,195,134 for 2015. Efforts are continuing to register the few citizens who remain unregistered. On this note, my Government continues to embark on an intensified outreach programme particularly targeting the remote areas in an effort to improve uptake of registration services. In this endeavour, the Government is collaborating with the United Nations Agencies, the African Development Bank, USAID, Masiela Trust Fund and other local NGO Community to intensify registration.

Labour

112. Madam Speaker, Government continues to provide labour administration services to the nation with a view to promote industrial harmony. These services include Labour Inspections, Trade Dispute Resolution, Industrial Relations, Workers Compensation, Employment Services as well as processing of Work and Residence Permits.

113. In order to improve management of labour relations and dispute resolution, the Trade Disputes Bill has been published and will be tabled before this Honourable House. The Trade Union and Employers Organisations Act is also being reviewed.

114. The Botswana Decent Work Country Programme continues to be implemented in an effort to promote rights at work; productivity; decent employment opportunities; social protection and dialogue. Implementation of the Programme has on review been extended from December 2015 to December 2017. The Programme will also facilitate the strengthening of Social Dialogue Structures and Processes in the country that are necessary for negotiations, consultations and exchange of information among representatives of government, employers and workers on issues of common interest.

Gender

115. This year marks twenty years after the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as well as the close of the Millennium Development Goals. It is my delight to inform you that in the 20 years, Botswana has made significant progress on Gender and Development. Gender mainstreaming has been adopted as a key strategy for the achievement of gender equality. This approach recognises that both men and women must be involved in the development process in order to effectively address the root cause of gender inequality for sustainable development.

116. In recognition of the above, Parliament adopted the National Policy on Gender and Development on 7th August 2015. The Policy aims to reduce inequalities in opportunities and outcomes of social, economic, political, cultural and legal development for both women and men. The Policy further aims to establish a framework for implementing and institutionalising gender equality initiatives with strong mechanisms for coordination, monitoring and evaluation.

117. In order to accelerate participation of women in the mainstream economy, the Women's Economic Empowerment Programme has been reviewed to include individual women, women groups, community projects

and cooperatives. Funding ceilings have also been revised to P100 000.00 for individuals and P500 000.00 for community projects and cooperatives. Efforts to support women in accessing markets will also continue.

118. Regarding the elimination and prevention of Gender Based Violence, Government has developed a National Gender Based Violence Strategy (2014-2020) which outlines the multi-sectoral and multi-pronged approach.

Construction Industry Trust Fund (CITF)

119. In line with the CITF Strategic Plan, the centre has expanded the level of skills training during the financial year 2014/15 by introducing new skills training programmes such as coded welding, rigging, roof grass thatching and dry walling partitioning in order to reduce dependency on external recruitment of semi-skilled artisans. The Kazungula Mobile Training Unit (MTU) in the Chobe District is fully operational and is targeting mega projects and emerging related projects in the Chobe District by providing trained semi-skilled and skilled artisans.

Poverty Eradication

120. Government's commitment to the eradication of abject poverty is reflected in its annual budget allocation of P160 million since 2012. The Poverty Eradication Strategy is now in place to better guide the programmes progress, while Government has committed itself to removing the current project backlog by the end of this year.

121. Progress has been made in the development of the Kgalagadi Sand Building Block (KSBB); with the first depot that will make the bricks being established in Tsabong. Government has designated four additional locations for the establishment of fully-fledged KSBB Depots under the Poverty Eradication Programme. Batswana are therefore encouraged to seize the business opportunities associated with the KSBB Technology.

122. Government has identified land in Gantsi, parts of Central District, Francistown and other areas where boreholes will be drilled and equipped for beneficiaries to engage in horticultural production either as groups or

Cooperatives. We are also embarking on grey (sewage) water harvesting to address the issue of shortage of water for horticulture and fish farming.

123. Let me reiterate that, poverty eradication is an ethical, social, and economic imperative of our Government. We need every citizen, and our development partners to join us in this war against poverty. The nation is assured that the rollout of the program is being fast tracked to meet the set targets.

Social Welfare

124. Government is committed to continue provision of social protection services to different categories of people in order to have dignified and improved standards of living. These people, who are mostly vulnerable to economic conditions, are supported through our well known programmes.

125. During the 2015/2016 financial year, financial resources in the sum of P1,267,952,390 have been approved to finance these programmes. As at June 2015, the Government was supporting 32,860 destitute persons, 102,492 Old Age Pensioners, 1,986 World War II Veterans, 1,229 Community Home Based Care patients, 32,803 Orphans and vulnerable Children. From April 2015, cash allowances were increased.

126. Madam Speaker, we have introduced a Disability Allowance during the current financial year. In this regard payments started in August 2015, with those who have so far been identified as qualifying for the allowance, which is paid to people with severe disabilities to cushion the effects of disability. The identification of additional qualified recipients is ongoing.

127. We have also concluded the consultations on the review of the Revised National Policy on Disabilities, which is to be presented to this session of Parliament. The policy will guide the implementation of disability services including, access to education, development of sport and sporting facilities, affirmative action and the employment and general economic empowerment of People with Disabilities.

128. Since the approval of the Affirmative Action Framework for Remote Area Communities together with its 10 year implementation plan in July 2014, the number of people employed in the formal sector in RACs has increased.

129. Madam Speaker, the budget for the Ipelegeng Programme was increased from P580,590,000 in 2014/2015 financial year to P635,590,000 in this financial year, partially due to the increase in the wage rate of beneficiaries. Funds allocated for this programme also support various initiatives such as Crime Prevention volunteers and Special Constables under the Botswana Police Service; Wildlife Volunteers and 100 monuments projects. Additional Ipelegeng Projects include environmental cleanliness, minor construction and maintenance of infrastructure. The monthly targeted beneficiaries are 64,191 people.

Housing

131. Madam Speaker, Government continues to recognize access to adequate shelter as a basic need and a prerequisite for national socio-economic development. We shall therefore continue to ensure implementation of the National Housing Policy, as well as come up with new initiatives geared toward uplifting the status of housing for both public officers and the general public.

132. In recent years the provision of public housing has been outpaced by demand. To pick up the pace, as part of ESP, Government has decided to accelerate the construction of 4,481 residences, which will include:

- SHHA Turnkey Project
- Public Housing
- 500 Instalment Purchase Scheme Housing
- Youth Housing
- Home Improvement
- Public Officers Housing Initiative; and
- Third Party Housing

133. The Low-Income Housing Programme will continue to focus on three components of SHHA Home Improvement, Turnkey Development Scheme and Integrated Poverty Alleviation and Housing Scheme. Government has increased the maximum income threshold for the Low-Income Housing Programme to P52,000 for both the SHHA Home Improvement and Turnkey Development Scheme. Government has further increased individual household's maximum loans entitlement from P45,000 to P60,000 for the SHHA Home Improvement; and from P60,000 to P90,000 for Turnkey Development Scheme, effective the 1st of April 2015.

134. Government has funded a total of 4,017 projects for SHHA Home Improvement. Of these a total of 3,155 have been completed, while 862 projects are still at various stages of construction. Government has also funded 3151 projects under the Turnkey Development Scheme, of which a total of 2,291 have been completed. The Integrated Poverty Alleviation and Housing Scheme and Destitute Housing Programme are also assisting less privileged Batswana to break out of poverty.

135. It is pleasing to note that Government's efforts to provide shelter for low income and destitute people is being augmented by non-government institutions and individuals. In this context I am further pleased to report that over 500 residences have now been built through the Presidential Housing Appeal for the needy, bringing us close to our target of 600 houses by the end of the year. Here I must thank all of those who have generously devoted their time as well as financial resources to this initiative.

Health

137. Madam Speaker, Government continues to strive to ensure that high quality health services are accessible and affordable for all in a sustainable manner. In this context our health services are undergoing a transformation that focuses on the delivery of quality care that is financially sustainable; which incorporates a revitalisation of primary health care as well as increased private sector participation. As part of our ESP we thus intend to upgrade 92 health facilities while continuing to upgrade our

hospitals. In addition we intend to prioritise the construction of 534 additional staff houses.

138. Our commitment to health access for all is further reflected in expansion of operation hours in clinics from 8 to 24hrs. Since 2014, 9 more facilities have now expanded operation hours bringing the total number to 48.

139. In a further effort to improve health care delivery he have decentralised some decision making processes to the districts. For example, District Drug Emergency and Laboratory votes to procure medicines and supplies have been established. PPADB has also increased the limit of micro procurement of drugs by Health Management Teams from P30,000 to P150,000.

140. We continue to strengthen the monitoring of outsourced non-core services, such as cleaning, landscaping, laundry services and equipment is the 3 referral and 4 upgraded district hospitals, while exploring other possible areas to outsource. Two additional laboratories have been accredited this year, bringing the total number to 7. Moving forward the focus will be on strengthening the implementation of the National HealthCare Standards.

141. Over the past five years, the health sector has performed relatively well on the health related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through comprehensively funded programs and interventions. Botswana is on track to achieving the MDG 4 target of reducing infant and under-five mortality.

142. Government continues to introduce immunization campaigns such as the recent national roll-out of Human Papilloma Virus Vaccine (HPV) for girls to prevent cervical cancer. Plans are also underway to introduce Inactivated Polio vaccine which is safer and eliminates the risks from earlier vaccines. This will be followed by the introduction of Measles Rubella vaccine in 2016.

143. The child mortality rate has likewise been reduced from 76/1000 live births to 28/1000 live births in 2007 and 2011 respectively, and is projected to reach 21/1000 live births by the end of 2015. Whilst we will not be able to achieve the 81 per 100,000 live births maternal target set for 2015, the Quality Improvement Project, Emergency Obstetric Newborn Care and Comprehensive post abortion Care initiatives have yielded a significant reduction of maternal deaths.

144. As a country, we have made strides in the prevention and management of major communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and Tuberculosis (TB). Malaria incidence has, for example, been reduced from 13.52 cases per 1,000 population in 2006 to 0.11 cases per 1,000 population during 2015, whilst deaths declined from 42 to 5 in the same period. We are thus very close to reaching our target of eliminating malaria by 2018. The TB notification rate has also been reduced from 511 per 100,000 population in 2006 to 337 per 100,000 in 2013. One must, nonetheless, emphasise that TB remains a major health concern.

145. Non-communicable diseases are on the increase and account for about some two thirds of all global deaths. These include hypertension, diabetes, injuries, mental health and cancers. Risk factors that contribute to these diseases include physical inactivity, excessive intake of alcohol, tobacco smoking and poor eating habits. I therefore appeal to Batswana to reduce their risk by embracing healthy lifestyles.

146. Madam Speaker, given the challenges we face in Botswana as elsewhere in the world, by a rise in both communicable and non-communicable diseases, as well as increasing health security threats from out breaks such as Ebola to bio-terrorism it is important that we improve our capacity for early detection and response by continuing to strengthen our disease surveillance and outbreak response systems. In line with this we are working on a National Public Health Institute.

147. As at September 2015, a cumulative total of P1,867,586,562 has been collected from the alcohol levy. A 2012 evaluation of the impact of our alcohol reduction campaign interventions indicated that there was a reduction in alcohol consumption from 8 litres per capita to 7 litres.

HIV/AIDS

148. Madam Speaker, the mid-term review of the Botswana National Strategic Framework II (NSF II) has once more underscored the fact that behaviour change remains the key to stopping the spread of new HIV infections. As a strategy to help achieve this, Community Acting Together to Control HIV (CATCH) has been developed to galvanize community support in reaching the “zero infection” goal.

149. Currently more than 90% of HIV positive persons that are eligible for Antiretroviral Therapy (ARV) are on treatment. In line with the 2013 World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines, in April 2015 we extended lifelong ARV treatment to all HIV positive pregnant women regardless of CD4 count.

150. We are at an opportune time for achieving HIV/AIDS epidemic control by as early as 2020. Taking into consideration international best practice, discussions are ongoing on how to best achieve epidemic control in a sustainable manner. The “Test and Treat” concept implies that every person who tests for HIV shall be put on treatment irrespective of their CD4 count. In addition to providing viral suppression, this form of treatment will also reduce HIV transmission. At this juncture I would like to appeal to our partners for their continued support as we move forward.

151. In a further effort to achieve zero new HIV infections, discrimination and AIDS related deaths by 2016, Botswana became one of the three countries confirmed by the Guinness World Record in 2015 as having recently set the new record of the most people having tested for HIV in Multi-Venues in 8 hours. This is a positive move towards having 90% of all Botswana residents knowing their HIV status. With our current HIV testing prevalence of 63% there is still a lot more to be done.

152. Here let me once more note that while we are firm in our commitment to providing for HIV/AIDS testing and therapy, the ultimate answer to stopping the spread of this terrible virus lies in us exercising self-discipline in our behaviour.

Youth

153. Government has intensified support for youth businesses by putting in place reservations as part of affirmative action to improve their market participation by setting aside a certain percentage of tenders issued by government to youth companies. These exemptions have been communicated to all stakeholders to ensure smooth implementation. Youth empowerment is being further enhanced through capacity building in entrepreneurial skills and the funding of youth businesses.

154. Government remains steadfast in its commitment to promote positive mindsets and attitudes among young people to empower them to be responsible and self-reliant individuals with sound morals. We are thus collaborating with youth service organisations to help us further develop and deliver comprehensive Character Building Programmes targeting young people.

155. Restructuring of the Botswana National Youth Council (BNYC) is complete and a new BNYC Board has been appointed.

156. Madam Speaker, following its introduction in April, 2014 the Botswana National Service Programme programme has been doing well with an average monthly enrolment of 13,500. Enrolment in the National Internship Programme reached 6,196 as of July 2015, which was slightly above our target of 6,000. Out of these, 2,910 are working in the Public Sector, 1,123 are with Parastatals, 1,855 are with the Private Sector and 308 are with non-government organizations.

157. Art and culture programmes continue to grow in popularity. This year, a total of 14,125 performing artists and 3,337 visual artists were registered to participate in the President's Day Celebration events. In the 2014-15 financial year artworks and crafts valued at P1,796,000 were sold by artists compared to P980,450 for the previous year. An action plan commenced in February 2015 to promote further stakeholder engagement

in the production and marketing of crafts and artworks. Various national events such as Khawa Dune Challenge and Makgadikgadi Epic are in this context used as a platform to market Botswana arts and crafts internationally. Market days for Arts and Crafts have also been introduced in every district of the country.

Library and Information Services

158. Our public libraries continue to transform from conventional book collections to information centres through ICT. As a result their operational hours have been extended to cater for the popularity of their expanded services, which include ICT training as well as free internet access. The provision of free ICT services in libraries contributes towards bridging the technological divide in local communities. To date 64 public libraries provide free access to internet and 63,744 members of the public have been trained on Basic ICT to enable them to participate in the cyber space to improve their lives.

159. Through the assistance of the Robert and Sara Rothschild Family Foundation the 13th library is under construction in Werda and should be operational before the end of this financial year.

Sports

160. Botswana's performance in sport is improving every year with our athletes in various sport codes excelling at Continental and World level competitions. In this respect we continue to be inspired by the achievements of our internationally competitive athletes. Altogether since April 2015 Botswana athletes have won 141 medals (49 gold, 44 silver and 48 bronze) in international competitions; including two world champions at the Commonwealth Youth Games and three African champions, Nijel Amos, Isaac Makwala and Kabelo Kgosiemang. The success of local athletes has attracted worldwide attention, while instilling national pride and unity.

161. With the completion of the 26,000 seat Francistown Stadium we now have another venue capable of hosting major events. It will host the 4th

edition of Botswana Games in December this year where over 3,000 young athletes from all over the country will compete.

International Relations

162. Botswana continues to play an active and influential role in shaping the global agenda in line with our national priorities and international norms. In today's globalised world, where economies are increasingly intertwined, Botswana needs to work closely with the international community to ensure our survival and prosperity as a nation. We thus continue to add our voice, and support within our modest means where necessary, to the endeavours of all peace loving nations in defence and promotion of fundamental values of democracy, good governance, human rights, rule of law, sustainable development and international peace and security.

163. Madam Speaker, among the various multilateral organisations we belong to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) is of particular significance as our own wellbeing is ultimately intertwined with that of our neighbours. In August 2015 I began my one year term as the SADC Chairperson. My focus as SADC Chair is to give meaning to our commitments to industrialization and regional integration with a view to achieve sustainable development. In this respect I will be guided by the Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Plan (2015 – 2020), which was approved at the SADC Extra-ordinary Summit held in Harare on 29th April 2015.

164. Here it may be noted that notwithstanding some challenges in three countries, the political climate in our region is stable. We shall also continue to monitor developments in other parts of our continent, and make our modest contribution where we can. This is informed by our strongly held belief that for Africa to achieve economic development, it needs peace and security, as well as the consolidation of good governance.

165. Botswana also continues to make a modest contribution towards the consolidation of democracy in the region. In this regard, we have participated in SADC Elections Observer Missions. The recent adoption of

the Revised SADC Guidelines and Principles, Governing Democratic Elections in the region is a notable milestone.

166. Botswana will continue to play her part as a compassionate member of the international community. Accordingly, we will continue to contribute to various appeals for assistance for victims of natural disasters, and participate in global efforts such as ongoing efforts to stem the spread of the Ebola virus. Continuing incidents of terrorism on the African continent are also a source of deep concern for us.

167. Botswana further remains committed to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and international Criminal Justice system. We will continue to support the ICC and cooperate with its operations. The drafting of legislation for the domestication of the Rome Statutes is at an advanced stage and should soon be brought before Parliament.

168. Let me also take this opportunity to once more express my profound gratitude and appreciation to all Governments, International Organizations and individuals, for the valuable support and development assistance they continue to generously extend to our country.

Conclusion

169. Madam Speaker before I conclude let me once again pay tribute to those institutions and individuals throughout our country who are devoting their time and resources to assist others. In this respect I wish to once more pay special tribute to the public officers across Government who since 2010 have been leading by example through their monthly participation in Community Service Day activities that continue to benefit literally thousands of their fellow citizens. Examples of the over 200 projects undertaken this past year include the construction and refurbishment of homes and other buildings, the upgrading of recreational areas, donations to deserving organizations, and direct support to families in need.

170. I also wish to pay special tribute to dikgosi tsa rona, who remain the custodians of our customs and traditions. It is largely through them that we have maintained the inclusive culture of consultation in our development programmes and policy direction. They thus deserve our respect and gratitude for continuing to play a key role in our democracy.

171. In keeping with this spirit of common purpose, let me here conclude my remarks by renewing my appeal for each and every fellow citizen to become part of our common journey to an even better Botswana. Government interventions will only succeed if they are understood as national projects to be embraced by all Batswana. While Government has a responsibility to drive key programmes such as ESP, EDD, Poverty Eradication and Youth Empowerment, their objectives in each case is ultimately about empowering citizens in the private and parastatal sectors along with other non-government stakeholders, to grasp the resulting opportunities for job creation and inclusive economic diversification for sustained development to take our country forward.

172. To reiterate what I said at the beginning of this address as we prepare to enter our sixth decade we can either become more productive by working together to reach our goals; or we can allow individual interests and potentially debilitating divisions to rob us of further progress. Our nation can only achieve its full potential by working together. As I have said before we only have one country. Let us all try to be the solution to the problem rather than part of the problem.

173. Finally let me end by once more calling on the Lord who makes all things possible to bless us along our path of progress and grant us rain.