REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

Welcome Remarks

By the
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At the
National Stakeholder Sensitisation Workshop on the Vienna Programme of Action
Held at Botswana Bureau of Standards
27 October 2015
Director of Ceremonies

Distinguished Guests - from the United Nations Office of the High Representative of the Landlocked Countries, Least Developed Countries and Small Island States, other UN Agencies,

Development partners here present,

Representatives of Government and Parastatals;

Representatives of Private Sector organizations;

1. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the National workshop on the Vienna Programme of Action. I thank all of you for having found it imperative to leave your other equally important engagements to be here today.

2. Distinguished colleagues, we are meeting today and in the next two days for a National Stakeholder Sensitisation workshop on the Vienna Programme of Action. The main aim of this workshop is to sensitize stakeholder of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked countries.
particularly to ensure that stakeholders who have a stake in its implementation are made aware of the Programme.

3. Adopted in November 2014 in Vienna, the Vienna Programme of aims to address challenges faced by landlocked countries due to their lack of direct territorial access to the sea and remoteness from world markets. Landlocked countries such as Botswana are dependent on neighbouring transit countries for external trade and as such we incur relatively higher trade transaction costs. These high costs, coupled with inadequate infrastructure and bottlenecks associated with importation and exportation requirements are a major stumbling block to integration into the global economy and the inflow of foreign investment. Ladies and Gentlemen, these challenges are real. Cross Border trade remains a huge challenge for Botswana. Coupled with the relatively small
internal market, this situation negatively affect Botswana’s competitiveness and the attractiveness to FDI.

4. According to World Bank Doing Business Report, the cost of importing and exporting a container for Botswana is above the Sub-Saharan Africa average. The Cost of importing a container to Botswana is 3,740 USD and it takes 35 days to reach Botswana, while the cost of exporting a container from Botswana is 3,145USD and takes 27 days to reach its destination.

5. Given this undesirable situation, Botswana attaches great importance to the implementation of the VPoA and other international and regional initiatives like the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitations, SADC initiative such as the Comprehensive Trade Facilitation and the SACU Trade Facilitation Programme. The implementation of these initiative at national level, by our neighbours as well as
our trading partners will go a long way in enhancing Botswana’s competitiveness.

6. Director of ceremonies, it can be realised that initiatives aimed at addressing competitiveness challenges cut across several Ministries and so are the action items/priorities under the VPoA. It is in this regard that MTI found it critical to organise this workshop to ensure that all stakeholders are brought on board particularly at the initial stage to implementation of the VPoA. The aim is to ensure that, in the end we adopt a coordinated approach to implementation, reporting and monitoring of the VPoA.

7. Director of Ceremonies, This workshop also provides us with an opportunity as Botswana is in the process of drawing her national development plan and the long term vision, Vision 2036. From the outset, one can recognise that the objectives of the VPoA are in line with the national development objectives as indicated in the draft
Key Note Policy paper for NDP 11. It is therefore imperative that as we continue the process of developing both the Tenth National Development Plan and the National Vision, we ensure that VPoA is mainstreamed. Mainstreaming of the VPoA priorities into our national development plan as well as into other national policies and strategies will ensure a coherence and an integrated to economic growth and development. It is in this regards that the programme of the workshop has a dedicated section to take us through the mainstreaming of the VPoA into the National and sectoral plans.

8. Ladies and gentlemen, the Government of Botswana has and continues to undertake initiatives to transform Botswana from being landlocked to being landlinked. Botswana is centrally located in the southern part of Africa making her the perfect gateway for reaching the whole of the Southern African Development Community (SADC)
region and the intention is to take advantage of this strategic location.

9. It is in this regard that Botswana continues to undertake initiatives to transforming herself into a regional hub by undertaking various infrastructural development in Information, Communication Technology (ICT), energy, transport infrastructure, including roads, rail and air, as well border reforms.

10. It can be realised that putting in place the necessary infrastructure to realise the desired objective would require huge investment on the part of Government. Given the meagre Government resources, particularly as the economy shows signs of slowing down, the assistance by development partners cannot be overemphasised. It is encouraging that the VPoA recognises the necessary role of the development partners in contributing to the achievement of the intended objectives of the
Programme. We hope to see them coming on board as we implement the Programme.

11. In conclusion, allow me to express our gratitude to the Office of the High Representative of the Landlocked Countries, Least Developed Countries and Small Island States for their collaboration in organising this workshop. As the office coordinating the implementation of the Programme at the UN level, your input in “domesticating” the VPoA is valuable.

12. Once again, thank you all for having found it worthwhile to attend this workshop and wish you fruitful deliberations.

13. I thank you for your attention.