



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 FIFTH SESSION
OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT

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GABORONE

INTRODUCTION

1. Madam Speaker, Honourable Members, good afternoon; before we begin I ask that we first observe a moment of silence for those of our fellow countrymen and women who have departed during the past year, including the two Members of this Parliament. May their souls all rest in peace. I thank you.

2. Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure this afternoon to address this opening of the fifth and therefore last session of the tenth Parliament. By this time next year Batswana from across our country will have once more gone to the polls to exercise their Constitutional right to vote.

3. For nearly five full decades now it has been the power of this simple fact, the ability of citizens to freely exercise the wisdom of their democratic will, which has assured our nation's steady progress. We are all deeply indebted to the founders of our great Republic, who ignored the example of many by remaining true to their own conviction that Government governs best when it governs by and with, as well as for, the people.

4. It is this legacy that I proudly pledged to uphold during my own inauguration. Today I am pleased to affirm that, as we

prepare to once more seek the peoples' mandate, our democracy has never been stronger or more vibrant.

5. Our democracy has all along been about more than the regular holding of free and fair elections; being rooted in a shared commitment to people-driven governance for people centred development. It is for this reason that my administration is continuously engaged with citizens from all walks of life, in every part of the country, about their concerns. Given the diverse and increasingly complex nature of our society, rooted as it is in both timeless traditions and ever changing technologies, we have found it necessary to consult through various mediums:-

- From the convening of dikgotla and dipitso; to our outreach through electronic and social media, as well as the provision of toll free numbers;
- From private sector partnership within the High Level Consultative Council (HLCC) process; to simply meeting one on one with people;

We seek to connect with every citizen, every day, in every way and everywhere; thus ensuring that consultation remains at the very core of our good governance practice.

6. It is through our steadfast attention to the feedback we receive through such consultation that we shall meet this nation's challenges. At the same time we remain mindful of our ultimate goal of achieving a dignified life for all Batswana through the delivery of sustainable economic development, rooted in a renewed sense of social discipline, as well as driven by a culture of democratic accountability.

7. Madam Speaker, our delivery of good governance is further attested to by respected international surveys, as well as local perception polls.

8. Since 2008 our country's overall score in the Global Democracy Index has increased. In the latest survey of 2012 our nation was thus ranked 30 out of 148 nations in the world. In terms of the sub-category Electoral Process and Pluralism we were ranked 23rd in the world, alongside Japan and the U.S.A., while in terms of Civil Liberties we were ranked 15th besides such nations as The Netherlands and Switzerland. This latter ranking dovetails with our rating in the Legatum Personal Freedom Index, where we number among the 30 "high ranking" countries whose citizens are said to enjoy:

"High levels of personal freedom of expression, belief and organisation, as well as personal autonomy in a society welcoming of diversity."

9. It is perhaps worth noting that our weakest score in the Democracy Index was in the category of political participation, where we can and should do better next year. This is a special challenge not only for the Independent Electoral Commission (I.E.C.), but the rest of us. I therefore take this opportunity to urge everyone who is eligible to register and vote.

10. Madam Speaker, this administration's implementation efforts shall continue to be guided by steadfast adherence to the "5Ds", as our signposts on the path towards a better Botswana. Sustainable development cannot be simply measured in the delivery of physical infrastructure. It must rather be about the holistic transformation of society to meet competitive demands and changing needs. The 5Ds are thus about ensuring that all Batswana gain the skills and opportunities they need to achieve a dignified life. Poverty eradication and youth development are, therefore, leading priorities; in the context of our overall goal of achieving an equitable high income status for our country free from absolute poverty.

11. In addition to and consistent with the 5Ds, Government's strategic framework for a better Botswana is contained in the Long-term Vision and 10th National Development Plan, which are supported by flagship programmes for sustainable economic diversification. We cannot meet these aspirations through Government efforts alone. They rather require all of us, in the public and private sector alike, to become more innovative and productive in turning opportunities into achievements.

Economy

12. Madam Speaker, we continue to be faced with economically challenging times. Yet, despite such challenges, our ongoing progress should instil confidence within us as we forge ahead with strategic projects to drive the diversification of our economy to become among others a transport, energy and communications' hub, as well as global centre for mineral beneficiation, finance, tourism and innovation.

13. Notwithstanding the uncertainties that have afflicted international markets since 2008/09, our country has been recovering; having enjoyed positive growth rates since the 2010/11 financial year. This upturn is driven by expansion in non-mining sectors such as manufacturing, finance, transport,

construction, and tourism as well as other services. Taken together this is encouraging evidence of diversification.

14. However, the energy, agriculture and mining sectors continue to experience constraints and subdued growth. While the recent positive outlook in the global economy is expected to strengthen the mining sector, recurring droughts and animal disease remain a constraint to agriculture.

15. Our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) expanded by 3.6% during the twelve months through March 2013, reflecting a 5.2% increase in non-mining GDP but a contraction of 6.1% in the mining sector.

16. As global prospects improve, our own economy is expected to benefit from increased export demand. The world economy is currently projected by the IMF to grow by 2.9% and 3.6% in 2013 and 2014 respectively, with modest expansion in both advanced and developing economies. Turning to the domestic situation, our own economy is currently projected to grow by just over 4% in 2013 and 2014. However, continued Euro zone uncertainties, drought and animal disease outbreaks, as well as water shortage, pose significant threats.

17. I am also pleased to report that the average national inflation rate has been decreasing from 8.5% in 2011 to 7.5% in 2012. This year further steady progress has been recorded, with inflation dropping to 5.0% as of September 2013, which is within the Bank of Botswana's medium-term objective range of 3-6%.

18. Economic growth has been accompanied by a net expansion in job numbers; albeit not enough to absorb all those seeking employment. As of 2012 unemployment (18 and over) stood at 17.5%, down from 23.5% at the beginning of 2007. To further augment efforts to reduce unemployment, Government in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO) is currently formulating a National Employment Policy, to provide for better coordination of existing employment-intensive investments.

Budget & Planning

19. Madam Speaker, as this House will recall, due to the 2008/09 recession Government not only ran budget deficits, but also committed itself to a balanced budget from 2012/13 financial year onwards, to rebuild our reserves and pay off debts.

20. The NDP 10 Mid-Term Review (MTR) process ended in April 2013 with approval by Parliament. The Review was driven

by Thematic Working Groups (TWGs) constituted by Cabinet and chaired by Permanent Secretaries at technical level and Ministers at policy level. Among others, the TWGs identified national priority areas as well as policies and strategies for driving development initiatives during the remaining period of NDP 10.

21. Our NDP priorities, as well as lessons learnt from the current MDGs, are guiding our post-2015 MDG development agenda. Taking poverty eradication as an overarching commitment, additional priorities include the achievement of:

- Inclusive, broad-based economic growth for employment creation and food security;
- Improved education and skills development to better match vocational demands;
- Environmental sustainability for 'green growth';
- Improved child and maternal health;
- Empowerment of women and young people; and
- Strengthening support for vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, the elderly and orphans.

22. Botswana, furthermore, recently participated in global consultations to map a post-2015 MDG agenda.

Public Service

23. Madam Speaker, the best plans, policies and programmes will come to naught if poorly implemented. Given that our public sector is also the country's largest employer and provider of services it is clear that its performance is crucial for our wider economic and social wellbeing. It is for this reason that I, as well as other members of Cabinet, have made a point of meeting with public servants at the local level to gain better insight into their own concerns, as well as the challenges they face in delivering quality services. In the context of issues arising from these interactions a number of interventions are being implemented. In addition a consultancy was carried out to more broadly examine ways to improve their conditions of service, whose findings are now being actively considered.

24. All organs of Government have been instructed to put in place targeted interventions to address any deficiencies in the efficient delivery of quality service. In addition, the Directorate of Public Service Management has been restructured for improved policy direction and monitoring, while the Public Service College has broadened its leadership and training programmes.

25. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to report that members of Cabinet and public servants continue to bring dignity to the lives of the less fortunate in our country, by devoting a day out of each month to Community Service projects. These efforts range from building and rehabilitating shelters, to establishing community gardens, to donations of basic necessities to individuals and institutions, to clean up campaigns. Over the past twelve months over 250 such projects have been undertaken covering all districts.

Competitiveness

26. Madam Speaker, Government remains committed to enhancing an enabling environment for business. Progress in our efforts was most recently reflected in our improved ranking in the annual IFC/World Bank 'Doing Business Index', where we moved up 11 places since last year to 56 out of 189 nations in the world. In this regard, the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Doing Business and Global Competitiveness has been busy overseeing a number of initiatives. These include:

- Introduction of e-Government legislation, such as the e-Communication and Transactions Bill, the Data Protection Bill and the e-Evidence Bill;

- Establishment of a Regulatory Impact Assessment system ;
- Commencement of routine inspections by Local Authorities three months prior to expiry of trading licenses;
- Establishing an online system for name search and registration;
- Introduction of an integrated taxpayer management system;
- Introduction of e-filing and e-payment system;
- Implementation of the Point Based System to attract and retain skilled expatriates, while ensuring local skills transfer; and
- Amendment of the Town and Country Planning Act to facilitate the decentralisation of the Planning Board's functions to Councils so as to reduce delays in the approval of planning and building permits.

27. While the World Economic Forum's latest, 2013-14, Global Competitiveness report has moved us up five places in their global rankings since last year; they have nonetheless once again identified "poor work ethic in the national labour force" as the most problematic factor for doing business in our country. To address this deficiency, which is applicable to both our public and private sectors, the Botswana National Productivity Centre has

developed a strategy that combines training initiatives with public education that recognises that good work ethics are not alien to us.

28. Good work ethics cannot exist where employees and employers are at loggerheads. For its part, Government continues to promote conducive labour relations. The Trade Disputes Act is being reviewed in order to establish a more efficient dispute resolution system. Unfortunately, some trade unions are contravening the provisions of the Trade Unions and Employers' Organisations Act by failing to submit their annual returns. This matter is being closely monitored to ensure that workers' funds are not being misused.

Diversification

29. Madam Speaker, since its inception the Economic Diversification Drive (EDD) Initiative has promoted the production and consumption of local products through public procurement. To this end, in 2012/13 a total of goods and services worth P3.42 billion were recorded, out of which P1.84 billion were from local manufacturers and suppliers. Meanwhile, a total of 789 enterprises have so far been registered under the EDD

Programme out of which 635 (80%) are classified as small, 99 (13%) medium and 55 (7%) large scale.

30. The second component of the EDD Strategy, to further grow the economy by developing new enterprises, is progressing. Projects include a P225 million leather production facility in Lobatse, where land has been allocated for a "Leather Park". A bankable feasibility study for the project is being undertaken.

31. To enhance competitiveness, Government is also collaborating with external partners. Working with the World Bank, we have identified thirteen activities for implementation next year, covering the business environment, trade and industrial policies, infrastructure development, access to finance as well as skills development and innovation. With support from Anglo American (Co.), Government will further provide support on advisory services and mentoring to local SMEs through the Enterprise Development Programme. The European Union is helping to enhance the productive capacity of about 100 local enterprises with the Private Sector Development Programme, including women under the Women Entrepreneurship Development Programme.

Empowerment & Employment Creation

32. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to report that in a survey of 102 countries the 2013 Baseline Profitability Index ranked Botswana as the world's 2nd most attractive location for medium to long-term investment. This finding is consistent with our continued high rankings in various respected worldwide surveys of economic freedom and risk, such as those annually conducted by the Fraser Institute and the Wall Street Journal with the Heritage Foundation.

33. During the 2012/13 financial year, a total investment worth just over P1 billion was realized, generating 1,206 jobs. Meanwhile, Government continues to underwrite the Citizen Entrepreneurship Development Agency (CEDA) in funding citizen owned businesses. To date, CEDA has funded 5,197 enterprises with a total value of nearly P3.4 billion, in the process creating over 30 thousand jobs. During the 2012/13 financial year, CEDA assisted 438 new enterprises with a total monetary value of P453 million, collectively generating 1,572 new jobs.

34. In our promotion of citizen economic empowerment we are finding synergies from what have previously been disparate

initiatives. As part of its youth outreach, the Local Enterprise Authority (LEA) has introduced the Entrepreneurship Awareness Workshop Programme, which as of the 1st of August 2013 trained a total of 18,213 participants from Senior Secondary Schools, Brigades and Technical Colleges. During the 2012/13 financial year, LEA also carried out 1,384 additional training interventions, serving 1,003 clients.

Mineral Sector

35. Madam Speaker, let me now turn to the performance of specific economic sectors beginning with minerals, which remains a principal source of revenue and primary sector for growth and diversification. The sector, nonetheless, continues to be challenged by depressed markets.

36. Diamond markets have shown improvement but remain sluggish. At the end of September 2013, the average diamond price was 3% higher than for the same period in 2012. Carat sales and revenue for 2013 are forecast to be 20% and 17% above that of 2012. The Lerala and BK11 mines are still under care and maintenance, while the Ghaghoo Mine's start up has been delayed and is now expected mid-2014. More encouraging has been the ongoing success of the new Karowe mine.

37. Nickel and copper prices also declined during 2013. By the end of August 2013, the average sale price for nickel and copper were 13% and 8% lower than that of the whole of 2012. Gold price has also declined, in August 2013 being 14% below its 2012 average.

38. The relocation of Diamond Trading Company International (DTCI) from London to Gaborone is slightly ahead of schedule. The sight sale in Botswana is now scheduled for next week (11/11/13) 2013. Government continues to encourage the private sector to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the relocation exercise.

39. The Okavango Diamond Company conducted its first full scale sale in October 2013, in which 76 companies from all the world's major diamond centres participated. Over 220 thousand carats were sold for P 343 million (USD 40.3 million). In addition, Boteti Mining Company, through their dual tender sales, sold over P 900 million (USD 106 million) worth of diamonds as at the end of September 2013.

40. The diamond cutting and polishing sector has continued to grow, employing 3651 as of August 2013. Eleven additional

companies have been licensed, bringing the total number to 27. DTC Botswana sales to the local polishing industry grew to USD 618 million in 2012. The target for 2013 is USD 770 million.

Tourism

41. Madam Speaker, the CNN Travel Report ranks Botswana second as the favourite destination for safari tourists, while various international travel ratings list many of our resorts as among the World's very best.

42. Forest reserves are being opened up for tourism. To this end, guidelines for forest ecotourism have been drafted.

43. Sport tourism has grown with the accreditation of the Toyota Kalahari Botswana 1000km Desert Race to the Dakar Rally Challenge. Other popular annual events now also include the Subaru Kalahari, Tour de Tuli Bicycle and Khawa Dune Challenges.

44. Government has instituted initiatives aimed at improving the participation of Botswana in the tourism industry, which include reserving licenses for certain activities for citizens such as mobile operators, tourist guest houses, *mekoro*, and camps and caravan sites. As at end of April 2013, there were 847 licensed

tourism enterprises, out of which 473 are wholly owned by citizens, an increase of 67 from the previous year, while 144 are joint ventures and 220 are non-citizen owned. In addition, we have also been empowering local communities through the promotion of Community Based Natural Resource Management Projects, which now number 109 across the country.

Environment

45. Madam Speaker, beyond their role as magnets for tourism, our unique natural wonders, from the dunes of the southern Kgalagadi to the Okavango and Chobe wetlands, are a blessing of God that we must carefully steward not only for our own benefit, but as a legacy for those who will follow us. As Government we are thus committed to engaging both domestic and international stakeholders, in the private sector and civil society, to assist us in the conservation and sustainable development of our natural heritage. This is reflected in our championing of the "Gaborone Declaration", which calls for a worldwide recognition of the intrinsic value of ecosystems through natural capital accounting. Internally, we are thus exploring practical measures to ensure that the true value of our own natural capital is integrated into our future national development planning.

46. Government is also engaging the private sector in the formulation of strategies for the clean development of our urban and rural areas, while the national target for waste reclamation has been increased to 20% at all landfills to promote recycling.

Wildlife

47. Government has decided to introduce a ban on the hunting of wildlife in all controlled hunting areas in Botswana with effect from January 2014. The decision was necessitated by available scientific based information indicating that several wildlife species are in decline. The suspension of hunting will allow Government, working with all stakeholders, to focus on understanding the causes of these declines and, where possible, to put in place remedial measures to reverse the trends. Government is fully cognizant of the effect that the ban will have on community based organisations that have been benefitting from hunting in the past. Efforts are therefore underway to prepare the affected communities for sustainable non-consumptive utilisation of their resources, through the development of management plans. Communities and concessionaires are being capacitated to undertake resource monitoring in their areas to allow them to

track the impact of management interventions such as water provision, measures to reduce illegal off take and fire management.

Forestry

48. Botswana's landscape is prone to wildland fires. However, recently their frequency, intensity, multiplicity and area coverage have increased significantly thereby posing potential harm to our ecosystem. Government is continuing to mobilize resources to areas of high economic importance. Botswana is working closely with the Government of Australia in training officers and communities to equip them with wildland fire management strategies. To date 2,220 fire fighters have been trained and a Fire Management Strategy has been developed. In addition four rural fire brigades have been established in Chobe, Ngamiland, Central and Ghanzi districts which are working closely with existing urban fire brigades.

Agriculture

49. Madam Speaker, for the second year in a row the performance of our agriculture sector has been setback by inadequate rainfall, resulting in countrywide crop failure and poor

grazing. Consequently, we have declared another drought year. Moving forward, the revised National Policy on Agriculture Development is now being completed for implementation to accelerate diversification and commercialisation in the sector, while reaching out to disadvantaged groups.

Livestock

50. Madam Speaker, the livestock sector continues to be the economic mainstay of many Batswana. Unfortunately the sector is currently beset with challenges, notably drought, animal disease outbreaks and market access problems. We are therefore encouraging farmers to sell off some of their livestock, while using failed crops as fodder for livestock. The Livestock Advisory Centre is now selling some livestock feeds at a subsidised price.

51. Regarding animal diseases, the Foot and Mouth Disease situation in Bobirwa and the North East District has stabilized allowing restocking to be effected in the areas. Occasional isolated incidences still do occur in Ngamiland but the overall situation has improved. In the North East, the FMD situation was compounded by the discovery of the virus in goats, sheep and wild game.

52. The change over from the bolus to the ear-tag for the Livestock Identification and Traceback System (LITS) is progressing; starting in the South East and Kgatlang Districts where a total of 102,334 cattle have now been fitted with ear tags. Those cattle found to not have bolus will be fitted with double ear tags.

53. In addition to our traditional beef markets we are seeking to secure additional markets, with promising prospects in the Middle East and elsewhere. We have been exporting live cattle to Zimbabwe, with over 8,600 head having been exported so far from Ngamiland. In the context of the drought, farmers have also been granted a temporary dispensation to export live cattle older than 30 months. This dispensation will be reviewed at the end of the year. The European Union (EU), however, remains our most lucrative market. I am therefore glad to report that BMC exports from Lobatse to the EU have resumed. We are in the process of having the Francistown abattoir relisted for EU exports.

54. The Livestock Management and Infrastructure Development (LIMID) programme is contributing to self-employment, including the youth. As of August 2013, 9,060 applicants have benefitted

from the programme, of which 2,185 are youth who have been approved, while 3,648 are being processed. The price of small stock covered by the programme has been increased resulting in improved the uptake and delivery of the programme.

55. Our dairy industry has also been faced with challenges, resulting in a 50% reduction in local raw milk production. To address this problem an inclusive dairy development strategy has been approved, which will be implemented in the coming months.

Arable Farming

56. Madam Speaker, as a consequence of erratic rainfall and the early onset of cold weather, we are seeing lower yields per hectare. The total estimated crop yield for this year is thus estimated at 55,000 metric tons, as compared to 73,000 metric tons last year, increasing our dependency on imports. Despite this lower output, 2,208 local farmers were able to sell about P 4.9 million worth of produce to schools as of June 2013.

57. This year also saw the invasion of farm land by diseases and crop pests, such as quelea birds, army worm and fruit fly, whose impact was mitigated through control measures.

58. Following the review of the ISPAAD programme revised measures are being put into place for the coming ploughing season. Assistance will now be extended to herbicides provision to help farmers control weeds, while draught power will only be extended to those who practice row planting. Farmers have been further divided into subsistence, emerging and commercial categories for assistance, depending on their level of production. In addition, the fencing of fields for farmers can now be done for individual fields, as well as clusters of fields, at subsidised rates.

59. Horticulture farming has been significantly boosted by the inclusion of irrigated farming under ISPAAD, whereby farmers contribute 60% while Government contributes 40% towards the costs of installing equipment. Government is also in the process of using treated waste water from sewage ponds for irrigation.

60. The Zambezi Agro-commercial Project will also contribute significantly to irrigated agriculture. Preliminary design of the main water conveyance pipeline from Chobe/Zambezi to the project site was completed in October 2013. A tender for a feasibility study for the project's agricultural component is being processed.

Safety & Security

61. Madam Speaker, this nation's economic and social progress since 1966 has predicated on our ability to maintain "peace, order and good government", the words that concisely define this House's Constitutional mandate. While we can draw some encouragement from the fact that comparative studies such as the Global Peace and Positive Peace Indices, various private risk surveys and our police statistics all continue to characterise our country as one of the world's safest and most stable locations; we are also mindful that evidence of relative safety is of no comfort to the pain and trauma felt by the victims of crime. In fighting all forms of lawlessness, and not just corruption, our response must continue to be one of zero tolerance.

62. It is because issues of safety and security are of such paramount concern that they have been grouped together under their own thematic working group for better administrative and financial coordination. This is also in recognition of the fact that our law enforcement and security agencies, along with the judiciary, are evolving to cope with new criminal challenges.

63. Comparing the first half of 2013 with 2012 there was a cumulative 16% reduction in serious crime, violent and intrusive crime with reductions in all offences except stock theft and rape, which recorded increases of 5% and 2% respectively. Significant reductions were recorded in the following categories of offences during the same period: store break-ins decreased by 10%, house break-ins by 22%, burglaries by 25% and robberies by 28%.

64. The ever changing environment in the policing landscape presents new challenges such as the growing sophistication of violent, serious and intrusive, transnational, organised and cyber-crimes. Many Batswana are also falling prey to online as well as more conventional crimes. In response, our Police continue to pursue integrated strategies to partner with communities. They have been redirecting their own resources to crime prone areas, while enhancing their intelligence gathering, specialized operations and the adoption of seamless operational procedures. For their part, members of the business community have contributed to upgrading capacity by helping to set up satellite police posts.

65. The recent launch of anti-Stock Theft campaigns in Lechana settlement will soon be followed by a country-wide roll-out to combat stock theft. The primary objectives of this launch were among others, to sensitize the farmers and the community on the prevalence of stock theft and the strategies to combat this scourge, and to involve the farmers in the management and security of their livestock.

66. Madam Speaker, the employment of various road safety initiatives has had an impact, with the number of road accidents decreasing by 14.7% during the first half of 2013 compared to the same period in 2012. The number of fatal casualties declined by 6.3% for the same period, compared to an overall 16.4% decrease recorded for 2012. The behaviour of many drivers, nonetheless, continues to be of concern. During the first half of 2013, 93% of all road accidents were attributed to human error due to driver negligence, excessive speeding and/or influence of alcohol.

67. To curb the deadly combination of alcohol and driving, a dedicated law enforcement initiative has been put in place. Between January and July 2013 a total of 7,918 drivers were tested for blood alcohol content, 22% of whom were found to

have exceeded the legal limit, a pattern that is so far being replicated with this year's spot checks.

68. To reduce the carnage on our roads a National Road Safety Strategy is being implemented in line with the UN goal of reducing road traffic fatalities by 50% by 2020. In addition, a demerit point system is being introduced with the aim of curtailing the incidence of repeat traffic law violations. These will complement ongoing police law enforcement initiatives such as vehicle flagging, sobriety monitoring and saturation patrols targeting detection of red-light violations and speeding.

69. Since the inception of the vehicle flagging programme in April 2011, a total of 122,144 vehicles have been entered into Vehicle Registration and Licensing System, resulting in 67% of the cases being resolved as of July 2013. The clearance of cases has also benefited from SMS alerts calling on delinquent motorists to settle their fines.

70. Madam Speaker, last year I reported that in its efforts to rehabilitate offenders in the community, the Prisons Department has extended the extramural labour to include the repair of cordon fences. This initiative greatly assisted our animal disease

control efforts, while reducing overcrowding in prisons and providing practical skills to inmates. Government recognizes that it is not feasible to solely rely on imprisonment as the preferred sanction for offending behaviour. Alternative solutions to imprisonment are thus being explored. To this end, with Commonwealth support, we have undertaken a policy and legislative review, the results of which we expect to soon bring in the form of proposals before this House.

71. Madam Speaker, the importance of adequately resourcing our Defence Force as part of an integrated approach to issues of security cannot be overemphasised. This enables synergy and coordination of operations geared towards the fight against multi-dimensional threats ranging from terrorism to crimes against our fauna and flora. In moving forward the BDF will continue to improve its professionalism leveraging on new technologies as well as continuous human resource development. The Defence Force also remains actively engaged in bilateral and multilateral activities to enhance cooperation through joint operations and training with regional and international partners.

Disaster Management

72. Madam Speaker, Government is working to improve national preparedness to respond to potential disasters. A Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy, which incorporates the strengthening of our district level capacity for carrying out risk and vulnerability assessments, is now being implemented.

Immigration

73. Madam Speaker, we are continuing to face an influx of illegal immigrants. A total of 31,461 were repatriated between October 2012 and May 2013. Inspections will continue to be carried out to ensure that businesses comply with labour laws.

74. Following the introduction of the Point Based System to assess applicants for work and residence permits, the assessment criteria have now been standardised for all the Regional Immigrants Selection Boards. This has improved transparency as the applicants know the attributes that they will be assessed on. The system will be reviewed to ensure its efficiency and effectiveness. The automation of systems for the processing of visa and citizenship applications is complete.

75. Phase one of the roll out of the Border Control System is complete. Since the cascading of Passport and Border Control to Regional and District Offices the turnaround time for issuing passports has been reduced to three days.

76. All citizens must possess valid Omang cards to authenticate their identity. Moreover, only those with such cards will be eligible to register and vote in 2014. It is, therefore, of concern that, as of the end of September 2013, there were some 41,800 uncollected Omang cards across the country. According to the National Register nationally there are 181,000 identity cards that have already expired by end of September 2013. A total of 37 000 will expire in the period between October 2013 and December 2013, while 73,000 are to expire by 2014. I therefore appeal to all those with expired cards to ensure that they are renewed in time.

Fighting Corruption

77. Madam Speaker, our progress in fighting corruption has been reflected in improved annual ratings by Transparency International, as well as the fact that DCEC registered a conviction rate of 75%. We, however, recognise the need for further improvement.

78. To encourage the implementation of corruption prevention initiatives across Government, the DCEC is now part of the review team that assesses Ministries' performance. The Directorate has in this respect promoted the creation and functioning of Corruption Prevention Committees in each Ministry. Dedicated Anti-Corruption Units have also been established in seven Ministries, which are empowered to conduct preliminary investigations. The DCEC has further established additional sector-specific units to improve its investigations, while some officers have been seconded to the Directorate of Public Prosecution to build their capacity.

79. In recognition of our superior international rankings, the DCEC now hosts the Commonwealth Africa Anti-Corruption Centre, which will facilitate regional collaboration in combating corruption, while providing training, research and enhanced interface with non-African Commonwealth members. The Centre will also house an online learning academy.

Judiciary and Access to Justice

80. Madam Speaker, the peace and good government we enjoy continues to be underpinned by the rule of law as administered

by our Judiciary. In its quest to improve service delivery the Judiciary continues to reform its internal processes to accelerate case disposal. To that end, we have established specialized courts for stock theft, maintenance, small claims and traffic offences. Given the increasing number of stock theft cases, with 1,130 new cases between January and July 2013 alone, the number of stock theft courts has increased from three to seven. Plans are also in place to increase the existing three Traffic Courts to nine. Court-Annexed Mediation, which is a form of alternative dispute resolution, will also be introduced to accelerate the disposal of cases and reduce litigation costs.

81. Additional initiatives include real time court reporting, electronic filing and video conferencing. To improve access to information, public kiosks have been introduced at some courts.

82. Madam Speaker, I am pleased that in its last sitting this House passed the Legal Aid Bill and the consequential amendments to the Legal Practitioners Act. When commenced they will transform our Legal Aid Project into a permanent entity. The Project has been providing services to indigent citizens with respect to a wide variety of civil law issues. Demand for the service has steadily increased, with 3,597 applications for legal

aid having been received as of July 2013. It currently operates from the Attorney General Chambers in Gaborone and Francistown, with an office being established in Maun. Legal Aid services are also being delivered through NGOs, who often have direct access to those in need.

83. Government is committed to enhancing the capacity of traditional leadership structures, which play a pivotal role in local communities. In this respect the Customary Court (Amendment) Act was passed that increases the jurisdiction of Customary Courts, while being harmonised with the Bogosi Act.

84. Government appreciates the role played by *Bogosi* in the development of this country. In many areas *Dikgosi* have started implementing recommendations of the Social Values Committee, more especially through the promotion of cultural activities. For its part Government will continue to convene *Dipitso tsa Dikgosi* on social values in various districts to promote nation building.

Lands

85. Madam Speaker, turning to issues of land, in the last financial year a total of 26,671 plots were allocated on Tribal Land. Under State Land, offers were made for 6,786 residential

plots. In order to facilitate the Economic Diversification Drive, Government continues to reserve agricultural land and industrial plots for allocation to domestic and foreign investors.

86. Government has completed guidelines on Public Private Partnerships in support of the Land Servicing Policy. This is to leverage on the private sector resources to complement public resources and fast track the current Land Servicing programme. In the meantime, Government is in the process of servicing Palapye and Metsimothabe Block 4 where 5,177 serviced plots are expected to be delivered by end of 2014/15 financial year, while planning is ongoing for the servicing of another 5559 plots at Ramotswa, Kasane and Kgatleng. As of March 2013, a total of 3115 ha of land was being acquired for expansion within 11 different Land Board jurisdictions.

87. In order to have correct information on land rights and parcels, Government continues to implement a land management project called Land Administration, Procedures, Capacity Building and Systems (LAPCAS). The project entails the survey and registration of all land parcels in the country. In the case of the Land Boards, the opening of 769,905 individual plot files has been completed to facilitate lands records management. Surveying and

capturing of ownership details for plots have been completed for 106,342 plots in 80 villages across the country. It is expected that plot ownership and location details of 85% of plots in the country will be completed by 2016.

88. A project on the preservation of deeds is also ongoing. The intention is to create a centre where all information on land and its utilization will be stored and accessible to both Government and the general public. As of the beginning of October 2013 a total of 254,401 title deeds have been captured.

89. On a related matter, Government will present a Bill to set up the Land Tribunal through a new Land Tribunal Act, detaching it from the Tribal Land Act. The Bill seeks to widen the jurisdiction of the Land Tribunal to enable it to also hear all planning appeals.

Infrastructure

90. Madam Speaker, Government has continued to tackle the many ongoing challenges besetting the construction sector. The Quality Audit Teams we have put in place to scrutinise claims have had substantial positive effect. Audits carried out from December 2010 to March 2013 uncovered 62,717 minor and major defects, with an average of 532 defects per inspection. It is

estimated that the first year of inspections saved Government well over P100 million, covering time saved, material and personnel to make good these defects. We continue to achieve substantial savings through this exercise. Between April and September 2013 inspections have uncovered an additional 1,721 defects in 30 projects, demonstrating the need for continued monitoring as well as a general improvement in compliance.

91. To further root out corruption, while improving on the delivery of public infrastructure projects Government intends to create a new department to focus on project planning and coordination in addition to the already established Project Management Office. Following consultations with the private sector, as well as within Government, we are also looking to establish an autonomous agency to oversee project implementation.

92. Further interventions have included new and amended legislation for construction industry professions, such as Architects, Engineers and Quantity Surveyors to facilitate self-regulation and protect public interest.

93. Government continues to engage youth enterprises in maintenance and rehabilitation of facilities. Since 1st April 2013, 26 Youth owned construction companies, as well as 26 individuals were thus engaged in facility rehabilitation projects to the value of nearly P 22 million, out of the P51.4 million set aside representing 15% of the maintenance funds this financial year; while the private sector engaged 4 youth owned companies in projects worth just over P 7 million. This has generated employment for 417. The total spent on these programmes since 2009 amounts to P93.7 million.

Science and Technology

94. Madam Speaker, to compete in today's increasingly knowledge based global economy it is necessary for our society to increase its innovative capacity through locally generated research and development. For its part, Government continues to implement the Policy on Research, Science, Technology and Innovation through the establishment of relevant coordination and funding structures, including a national Research Fund.

95. Following the rationalisation of the Botswana Technology Centre and the Rural Industries Promotions Company - a new research institute; Botswana Institute for Technology Research

and Innovation (BITRI) became operational in July 2013. It is expected to conduct needs based research and development in focused areas of national interest. An example is the Kalahari Sand Building Blocks, which have been patented and used in the cost effective construction of houses for destitute families in Khawa village.

96. The Botswana Innovation Hub is now developing a 93 hectare dedicated Science and Technology Park that will create new scientific, technological, and indigenous knowledge based business opportunities. The construction of the central buildings has commenced with completion expected in March 2016. Simultaneously, BIH has engaged with private sector partners to invest and develop other sites within the Park that are aligned to the theme. So far 17 companies and organizations have registered to ultimately operate in the Park.

Transport

97. Madam Speaker, the number of registered motor vehicles on our roads has continued to increase, rising to about 465 thousand as of August 2013. This gives us a per capita motor vehicle ratio of 217 per 1000, which is double what it was in 2008 and one of the highest in the developing world.

98. As part of our efforts to cope with this increase Government continues to expand and rehabilitate the road network. To this end, 337 kilometres of major road works have now been completed. To address Gaborone congestion intersections are to be upgraded into multilevel junctions during NDP 10. We are also in the process of developing a centralised system for traffic management, including signal control, with the view of commencing civil works next year.

99. Construction of the Kazungula Bridge will commence early next year.

100. Madam Speaker, Botswana Railways is implementing a turnaround strategy which involves reviewing its costing and pricing models and tightening monitoring efforts to make the company competitive. Ongoing mineral projects, particularly with respect to coal, will result in increased rail traffic. Botswana Railways is therefore expanding its rolling stock, through the procurement of 562 wagons. To further create alternative routes for export and imports of goods to boost the national economy, Government through Botswana Railways is currently developing a

Dry Port at Walvis Bay which will become operational during 2014/15.

101. Madam Speaker, the airside works at Maun and Kasane Airports have been completed, while the further extension to the runway at Kasane Airport should be completed by March 2014. In keeping with our Open Skies Policy, we continue to negotiate Bilateral Air Service Agreements, with the prospect of attracting additional international carriers to our airports. In this context we have also been enhancing the safety, security and overall logistical capacity of our airports, as was confirmed in April 2013 when the International Civil Aviation Organisation conducted a Coordinated Validation Mission in our country. This exercise resulted in a new rating of 59.6%, virtually equal to the global average of 60%, and a marked improvement over our previous (2006) rating of 27.8%.

102. Government has also received, and is actively considering, Air Botswana's re-fleeting proposals, which will allow it to further expand its regional destinations.

Energy

103. Madam Speaker, with the Morupule B Power Station commissioned and taken over by Botswana Power Corporation (BPC) the power supply situation in the country has improved significantly. With the combination of power from the Morupule B Power Station, peaking plants at both Orapa and Matshelagabedi as well as imported power mainly from South Africa we are currently able to meet local power demand. Procurement for the construction of an additional 300 MW Brownfield site at Morupule (A) as well as 300MW from a Greenfield site by an Independent Power Producer(s) are underway to ensure the long term security of power supplies.

104. Our challenges in meeting local energy needs have been rooted in growing demand as well as past bottlenecks in supply. Since 2010 the National Electricity Standard Connection Cost scheme has enabled 32,842 households to connect to the national grid as of September 2013. Nationally household access to electricity now stands at 68%, up from 27% in 2003 and within range of our 2016 target of 80%. In the process an additional 28 villages have been electrified, along with further extension of infrastructure in already electrified villages at an estimated cost of

P93 million in the past year. The total number of electrified villages now stands at 364 out of an estimated total of 494 Villages.

105. Our national oil company, Botswana Oil Limited, is now operational with a mandate to ensure security of fuel supplies, promote citizen economic empowerment as well as manage strategic petroleum stocks.

Water

106. Madam Speaker, our nation's limited water resources need to be carefully managed to ensure optimal and equitable as well as sustainable use. The takeover of the last villages by Water Utilities Corporation (WUC) was completed in April 2013, with most of the villages having also been migrated to the WUC billing system.

107. Our efforts to maintain water supply security are, of course, challenged by recurring drought. To address this challenge WUC has introduced water restrictions and rationing in order to reduce water demand. Government has availed a budget of P470 million for drought mitigation projects, including the upgrading and refurbishment of boreholes and the expansion of treatment plant

capacity. So far P338 million worth of projects are at various stages of implementation.

108. Government also continues to optimise water through the construction of dams, with Dikgatlong and Lotsane receiving significant inflow last year, while the Thune dam was completed in July 2013. Associated infrastructure for supplying water from the three dams is being constructed. A 75 km water pipeline from Dikgatlong dam to Moralane will be completed in January 2014 at a cost of 1.3 billion. The North South Carrier 2 pipeline to Palapye is also under construction.

109. Madam Speaker, shared watercourses will in the future constitute the primary source of reliable water for our country. Government has therefore prioritised trans-boundary cooperation in the context of the SADC Protocol on Shared Watercourses. Our efforts in this respect have been bearing fruit. From March 2014 the Middlepits cluster villages will be supplied with water from South Africa. Negotiations for additional water from Lesotho Highlands are ongoing, with Lesotho, South Africa and ourselves having signed a tripartite agreement in March 2013 under the auspices of the Orange-Senqu River Commission. A study will be undertaken under this MOU to establish the feasibility of

Botswana getting water from the Lesotho Highlands. We are also continuing to develop plans to pipe water from our share of the the Zambezi basin off take.

Social Upliftment

110. To promote dignified livelihoods among the least fortunate, Government continues to extend social protection programmes and empowerment initiatives to the needy, as well as implement policies to protect vulnerable populations. A total of 195,607 people are thus currently registered for special needs assistance through social welfare programmes targeting Destitute Persons, Orphans and Vulnerable Children, Community Home-Based Care Patients, World War II Veterans, Old Age Pensioners and Remote Area Communities. Government has allocated P1.2 billion to meet the cost of these programmes during the current financial year. To ensure timely delivery of Destitute, Orphan Care and Community Home Based Care packages, a system of electronic coupon smartcards was introduced to allow beneficiaries to access their food baskets anywhere in the country. This innovation was internationally recognised this year as the recipient of the UN Award for Quality Public Service.

111. The monthly Old Age Pension allowances, which benefits just over 95 thousand individuals, was increased, while that for World War II veterans was also increased. Currently just over 30 thousand registered Destitute Persons benefit from monthly food baskets with an allowance, while 40,000 Orphans and over 1,000 Community Home Based Care patients are supported. A special dispensation for Orphans and Vulnerable Children to access tertiary education has been effected and to-date 1,482 children have benefited from the initiative. Government also provides supplementary feeding for 752 primary schools, 966 health facilities and identified vulnerable groups. In the financial year 2013/14, P362 million has been allocated for the supplementary feeding programme.

112. Madam Speaker, Government has further purchased a total of 30,500 blankets for destitute persons, which were distributed in June-July of this year. We are also in the process of procuring 9,918 radios for elderly people who live without care takers. Government will continue to do needs assessment of elderly persons and support them with blankets during winter seasons as and when the need arises.

113. To promote the protection and wellbeing of all children, the National Children's Council has been established to support and monitor implementation across Ministries of activities relating to childhood welfare. The Council further plays an advocacy role for child centred legislation, policies and programmes. To give children a voice in issues of special relevance, a Children's Consultative Forum chaired by children has been established. May I therefore appeal to families, communities and all stakeholders to ensure that children are protected from abuse, neglect and harm at all times; and that the 'best interest of the child' is core in all decisions concerning children.

114. Government has approved just over P580 million for the implementation of the Ipelegeng Programme during the 2013/14 financial year, which continues to provide temporary relief for the unemployed and vulnerable members of the society while contributing to infrastructure maintenance, environmental cleanliness and crime prevention. The monthly target has been increased from 58,544 to 61,670 beneficiaries. Government has also increased the wage rate and daily sustenance rate.

Poverty Eradication and Equity

115. Madam Speaker, to further ensure that all Batswana have the opportunity of a dignified life, Government remains steadfast in its goal of eradicating abject poverty. In this respect our current drive builds on past success. Between 2002/03 and 2009/10 the number of Batswana living below the global benchmark of 1 USD a day declined from 23.4% to 6.4%. During the same period average household disposable mean incomes across the nation increased by 119% from P2425 to P5304, while the average monthly household consumption expenditure increased by 60%. The "Gini coefficient" measuring domestic consumption, further shows a corresponding reduction in household inequality over the period. Such evidence of social upliftment is consistent with the 2013 Ibrahim Index of African Governance broader finding that since 2000 our country "has progressed the most in the category of human development."

116. Focusing on the destitute, the Cabinet Sub-Committee for Poverty Eradication has overseen the enrolment of approximately 15 thousand beneficiaries into the Poverty Eradication Program. This group consists of identified able-bodied destitute or potentially destitute persons, but excludes those who are unable

to embark on any productive business either because they are elderly, severely disabled or mentally disturbed; who continue to be assisted with food baskets and other forms of relief.

117. To address the needs of programme beneficiaries, Government has continued to rollout backyard garden and alternative packages, which have proven viable in graduating beneficiaries out of poverty when well managed. The total budget for the programme this financial year is P 180 million. About 2000 backyard gardens have so far been completed out of our adjusted target of 5000 for the current financial year. We reduced the number of gardens in recognition of ongoing water constraints. In addition we have also completed about 2000 alternative packages, out of our target of 7246 for the current financial year.

118. Efforts are underway to address existing bottlenecks in the roll out of the packages. Specialised training of extension staff is ongoing to improve their skills in mentoring and monitoring and evaluation. Qualitative barriers to market access for the beneficiaries' produce are also being addressed, with support from Barclays Bank. A partnership with Anglo American will further assist in the transformation of micro scale producers into small to medium scale enterprises.

Gender Equity

119. Madam Speaker, our country has emerged as a global leader in promoting gender equity, as reflected in independent surveys measuring the number of women in technical, professional and executive positions, as well as the relative parity that exists within our educational institutions. The 2012 Grant Thornton Survey, for example, reported that 39% of the senior management positions in our country were held by women, a percentage that ties us for second position in the world.

120. A Pitso was held in November 2012 under the theme “The Role of Bogosi in Mainstreaming Gender in the Customary Justice System”, during which dikgosi adopted resolutions to address gender inequalities and gender based violence. In our efforts to eliminate gender barriers, we shall remain committed to the continuous interrogation of governance structures and processes to promote gender equity.

121. Government is also developing the National Policy on Gender and Development. To further combat the scourge of gender based violence a multi-sectoral national response plan has been developed.

People Living with Disabilities

122. Madam Speaker, while unemployment remains a general challenge, Government recognizes the special obstacles facing most people with disabilities in seeking jobs. As a result the Directorate of Public Service Management has been instructed to apply affirmative action measures to facilitate employment access to people with disabilities in the public sector. Additionally, we continue to forge relations with the private sector in the deployment of people with disabilities for gainful economic empowerment in the form of employment.

123. Government has also targeted people with disabilities in its current poverty eradication efforts. We further intend to initiate a social safety net for people with disabilities, beginning of the next financial year 2014/2015.

Rural and Remote Area Development

124. Madam Speaker, as you are aware, Government transferred Rural Development Council (RDC) from the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning to the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development last year. The new Council's mandate was officially launched in January 2013 followed by RDC

pitso in May 2013, which adopted eighteen resolutions aimed at improving rural livelihoods. To this end, a number of efforts are already underway such as the resuscitation of the Zutshwa salt project, Mogobane irrigation scheme and the possibility of setting up of a small stock abattoir in the Kgalagadi region.

125. The revised Remote Area Development Programme promotes social inclusion and empowerment of people residing in remote areas. Government provides livestock, basic shelter, economic empowerment projects, which include bakery, leatherwork, horticulture, sewing; communal farms and cooperatives. As of September 2013 a total of 1055 remote area community dwellers had been mobilized to be enrolled in the poverty eradication projects. Out of this number, 510 beneficiaries have been given agriculture related projects and 42 are engaged in alternative packages, while 503 are still to be given projects.

126. As part of our implementation of the Remote Area Development Programme's Affirmative Action framework youth from these communities are assisted in accessing education and seeking employment. As a result a total of 1,211 Remote Area

youth have been enrolled in tertiary institutions, while 360 formal employment jobs were offered over the past year.

Housing

127. Madam Speaker, as part of Government's effort to provide shelter for the needy, Government has begun construction of 451 destitute houses during the financial year 2012/13. For this financial year 2013/14, we have further approved construction of 404 houses at a cost of P45 million. Out of these housing units, since the financial year 2012/13 to-date, 416 are for the needy in RADP areas. In addition, the Presidential Housing Appeal for the needy has so far constructed 316 houses through contributions by the private sector, individuals and public officers, while another 200 houses have been pledged. I wish to take this opportunity to thank all those generous and compassionate individuals and companies for their support.

128. Government has further approved construction of 481 houses for destitute persons who were victims of floods in various districts.

129. Since 2008 Local Authorities have initiated 2,606 SHHA home improvement projects, out of which 1,938 are completed,

502 are ongoing, with just over P19 Million disbursed to 472 beneficiaries last year. Government also continues to implement the Poverty Alleviation and Housing Programme, through which participants build their own homes through revenues and material they receive from brick moulding. Since its inception, this programme has resulted in the construction of 120 housing units.

130. During the 2012/13 financial year, Botswana Housing Cooperation (BHC) completed a total of 402 houses, while 259 units are at different stages of construction. Another 153 houses are being built by the BHC through the SHHA Turnkey project.

Health

131. Madam Speaker, Government is steadfast in its commitment to provide quality healthcare services for all Batswana. A number of initiatives have, therefore, been introduced to improve customer care. Public relations focal nurses attend to patients and their families at the point of service in all health facilities. District and referral hospitals now offer special access to those with special needs such as the elderly and those living with disability. We have further extended the operations in an extra four clinics from 8 to 24 hours. Other initiatives include the introduction of block booking and floor managers. Last year's

establishment of a call centre in Gaborone, where ambulances are dispatched from a central point, is also yielding good results. Similar centres have now been established in Mahalapye and Francistown.

132. As of August 2013, the average availability of vital, essential and necessary medicines at Government health facilities was 74%, while the availability of laboratory supplies at Central Medical Stores stood at 100%. Efforts to improve access to quality medicines include the decentralisation of dispensing of specialist medicines to clinics. We are also piloting the engagement of private pharmacies for the dispensing of chronic medications to Government sponsored patients, which to date has serviced more than 3,000 individuals.

133. Last year, I reported that health care services specialists were being placed in referrals and district hospitals. I am now pleased to be able to confirm that this has resulted in a significant reduction in the turnaround time to access specialist services. There has also been noticeable reduction in both external referrals due to this dispensation. The Programme is further strengthening the Centres of Excellence in the areas of cancer, kidney and heart disease, eye care and orthopaedics, thus

reducing the need for costly referrals to South Africa, while enhancing access to quality services.

134. Our delivery of quality services is further reflected in the enrolment for international accreditation of eleven facilities. To further improve efficiency in the health sector, non-core services such as cleaning, gardening, laundry, security and catering have been outsourced in the referral hospitals. Cleaning, security and laundry have also been outsourced in district hospitals, while we are also planning to outsource warehousing and distribution at Central Medical Stores and fleet management.

135. Our capacity to deliver quality health care, as well as training, will soon be enhanced by the completion of the 450 bed Academic (Medical) Teaching Hospital at the University of Botswana, which will be commissioned at the end of 2014.

136. Madam Speaker, Government is assessing ways of financing health services with financial and technical support from the World Health Organisation (WHO), PEPFAR and USAID. A study is underway to more accurately measure the total cost of providing health services, which will assist us in budgeting for an essential health service package.

137. To achieve our Millennium Development Goals of reducing maternal and child mortality Government has introduced a national Quality Improvement Project to ensure access to quality maternal health services. Further efforts to reduce child mortality through the uptake of high impact interventions at household level are underway. We are also exploring innovations in the delivery of health care to remote areas, such as the piloting of a basic cattle post package in two districts.

138. To address the high incidence of cervical cancer, Government has piloted the introductions of the HPV (Human Pappiloma Virus) vaccine in Molepolole. The success of this initiative convinced us to prioritise a national roll out.

139. Let me also take this opportunity to commend members of the private sector who have come forward to generously assist Government in the construction and upgrading of health posts and clinics. A.S. Dada Foundation has since 2010 contributed 5 clinics, while pledging 4 more, the Motovac Group has built one with two more pledged, while Choppies has built one with three more pledged. I am further pleased to report that their good example is being emulated by others outside of Government, who are coming forward with pledges of additional facilities.

140. Since 2008 Government, in partnership with industry, NGO and community stakeholders, has been taking proactive measures to combat the harmful effects of alcohol in society, in line with WHO guidelines. Interventions have included the Alcohol Levy, which as of July 2013 had collected a cumulative total of P 1.16 billion, public education and awareness, reduced hours of operation of alcohol outlets and amendment of the Road Traffic Act. I am pleased to be able to report that between 2008 and 2011 per capita pure alcohol consumption among adults has declined, although it remains above the regional average.

141. Yet, notwithstanding this general decrease, there is further evidence that up to a fifth of male and over a quarter of female alcohol consumers drink at hazardous levels, underscoring the continued need for outreach and interventions on the part of Government and other stakeholders.

142. Tobacco use is a risk factor for non-communicable diseases which are on the rise in Botswana. We have thus been implementing tobacco prevention and control initiatives. For example, we have introduced a 30% tobacco levy which will be used to address the growing burden of tobacco use. We are also

in the process of repealing the Tobacco Control of Smoking Act of 1992 which will be replaced by a more comprehensive legislation.

HIV/AIDS

143. Madam Speaker, until we reach our target of zero new infections, combating HIV/AIDS will remain a priority. In this respect while we shall continue to provide therapy to those in need we know that there is no substitute for behaviour change among those who still put themselves and others at risk through a lack of self-discipline.

144. Although the incidence of HIV in our country declined by 71% between 2001 and 2011, it is still far too high for comfort. While the need for greater discipline in defeating the scourge is a message for all generations we are especially concerned about our youth who constitute our hope for an AIDS free generation. We are thus concerned about some of the results of the 2012 Botswana Youth Risk Behavioural Surveillance Survey, which revealed an array of social ills including the finding that 19.1% had experienced sexual intercourse before the age of 13.

145. The one group who do not have a choice when it comes to HIV/AIDS infection are our unborn. Government thus remains

committed to the elimination of mother to child transmission of the virus, which is currently at or below 2%.

146. We also continue to have an ARV uptake of about 95%. To cater for this demand by the end of the year ARV services will be available at all health facilities. While this outreach is a clear reflection of our continued commitment and compassion, it also constitutes a serious financial burden, with overall annual allocation for HIV/AIDS now standing at some P1.2 billion.

147. The uptake of safe male circumcision remains low at just over 89 thousand as of August 2013, which represents 23% of the national target of 385 thousand men between 13 and 49 years.

Youth

148. Madam Speaker, as I have observed on many occasions, besides being relatively well educated, the youth of this country have an abundance of talent. What they need in the light of current levels of unemployment and underemployment is more opportunities, as well as additional skills to take advantage of existing ones. I am thus pleased to report that the success rate of ongoing youth funded projects stands at 87.7%, which should

encourage us to do more. Government has recently approved the Local Procurement Scheme which allows for preferential treatment to women, youth, and people with disability. This will improve the general performance and sustainability of Youth Projects.

149. The Youth Development Fund (YDF) continues to finance youth entrepreneurs in the form of 50% grant and 50% loan. A total of 2,908 projects have received funding of just over P274 million since the inception of the programme in 2009. Of these projects, 151 have so far been funded during the current financial year. Altogether, the projects have created a total of 4,837 jobs. To improve the programme effectiveness, project funding has been combined with pre and post-funding interventions to enhance recipients' business management skills, while marketing assistance is also being extended. Government is further developing a Youth ICT Empowerment and Employment Strategy.

150. Government, through the Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), has embarked upon an integrated approach to the creation of vocational opportunities for unemployed youth, while simultaneously contributing to the development of their communities. The scheme incorporates the inculcation of life

skills, start up capacity building and on the job training. Government has thus sponsored a CITF construction multi-skilling programme, which has benefited a total of 160 participants.

151. Over the past year, 5,002 young people attended youth empowerment festivals, business ability workshops and basic business management training, while 464 have also been assisted to attend different expositions to exhibit and market their products. These programmes are being implemented in partnership with private and parastatal stakeholders who have assisted by releasing their facilities and personnel.

152. To date 3,299 participants have attended YES Boot-camps, with 1,893 graduates having been attached to various Government departments and private entities. Moreover, a total of 229 young people with disabilities have attended YES Mini Camps for youth with disabilities, of whom 72 are already attached to various Government departments.

153. To promote good social values and influence good behaviour among the youth, role modelling, psycho-social support, peer education and HIV/AIDS testing and counselling continue to be promoted. In the year under review, 3,540 young

people were reached through AIDS SWAGGER activities, a communication campaign targeting behaviour change. Edutainment road shows were also held in various settlements to sensitise young people on livelihood issues.

154. The National Internship Programme also continues to be a platform for skills transfer and development. Intern enrolment as at end of September 2013 stood at 4,137. Since inception to date, 3,587 interns have graduated to permanent employment.

155. To provide additional opportunities, while stimulating the spirit of community service, discipline and self-help among youth, as well as empower them with additional competencies, Government will introduce a new National Service programme for all out of school youth between the ages of 20 and 30. Unlike the old Tirelo Sechaba it will be a voluntary programme. While acquiring skills, participants will assist in the delivery of public services for community and youth development, including such fields as agricultural extension, health education, poverty eradication, remote area development, cooperative marketing, infrastructure maintenance and various advocacy and empowerment initiatives. We intend to enrol up to 15,000 participants next year. The new service will be separate from the

Internship Programme, which will continue to exist for graduates. Both will be jointly administered by the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture, to ensure synergies.

156. Participants can serve up to the age of 30 but may exit the programme at anytime. While participation in the programme does not constitute full time employment, those enrolled will be given a monthly allowance with an additional monthly sum being paid into an interest bearing account, to be paid out to the participants following the completion of at least one year's service.

157. Madam Speaker, the Gaborone Multi-purpose Youth Centre has been handed over to the Botswana National Youth Council (BNYC). In addition, a number of youth centres are being refurbished in several localities. Funds permitting, attempts will be made to establish more facilities in other areas. We are also continuing to establish Youth Business Incubation Centres. Sechaba Youth Agricultural Enterprises was funded for the refurbishment of infrastructure and re-stocking.

158. Government has further established an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Youth Programming, a structure bringing together

Government Agencies, NGOs, the Private Sector and Development Partners to facilitate synergies and strengthen coordination. Evaluation of existing youth programmes will be undertaken with a view to further refine our interventions.

Education

159. Madam Speaker, Government has commenced the process of transforming the education sector to make it more responsive to current needs and emerging needs. A comprehensive Five Year Education and Training Strategic Sector Plan 2014-2018 is scheduled for completion in June 2014. The Plan will guide the prioritization, harmonization and resource allocation in the delivery of the education sector.

160. For the Financial Year 2013/14 critical flagships have been identified and are being implemented. These include introduction of one year reception classes in public schools, turnaround strategy for low performing schools at secondary level and the strengthening of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Sector. The one year Reception Classes, which were successfully piloted in the Kgalagadi region, will be rolled out to selected schools in all regions in 2014.

161. Quality education can never be attained without the active participation of parents, teachers and the wider community, as well as willing and disciplined students. Through PTAs, Government continues to accord parents a platform to support the education of their children. As part of their community outreach, schools have been drawing on the time and experience of professionals to support and mentor them in areas of management as well as learning. More than 400 mentors have been registered. Government also continues to use the "Excellence Award" initiative and "Top Achievers Scholarship" programme to motivate high achievement among students.

162. The Human Resource Development Council and the Botswana Qualification Authority are also now being established in accordance with their enabling legislation as approved during the last session of Parliament. This will enhance our ability to prioritize the delivery of needed skills, while providing a quality assurance framework.

163. Progress made with respect to access and equity in the provision of education includes increase in Primary School Net Enrolment Rate from 89.7% in 2012 to 93.1% in 2013; transition rate from Junior to Senior Secondary increased from 63.7% in

2012 to 67.7% in 2013 and Special Education learner enrolment increased from 1071 to 1,153 for the same period 2012 to 2013.

164. The Back-to-School Initiative has provided out-of-school and unemployed youth who dropped out of the school system with another opportunity to re-enter the education and training system. There has been an overwhelming response to the programme. 67,073 learners applied and to-date 33,044 re-entrants have been successfully reabsorbed into the education and training system at all levels from primary to Tertiary. These young people have an opportunity to gain a higher qualification and certification, new knowledge and skills, and enhanced career prospects for improved livelihoods. The remaining applicants will be placed over a range of programmes in the next two years.

165. Madam Speaker, in an effort to enhance progression within the Teaching Service, Cabinet approved Levels of Operation for the teaching cadre effective 1st July 2013. This provided for employees in the C Band to progress within the multi-tiered and graded positions up to the level of C1 for consistency with other cadres in the public service. Moreover, it allowed for the delinking of the grades of Deputy School Heads and Heads of Departments to demonstrate the different levels of responsibility

and accountability between the two posts. This was also extended to Technical Colleges and the Brigades. To this end, the Cabinet Directive has been implemented and 17970 employees within the Ministry of Education and Skills Development have benefitted.

166. The Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST), which began operations at Oodi in August 2012, will have fully relocated to its Palapye campus by June 2014. To further enhance the tertiary sector the Botswana College of Agriculture will be transformed into a fully fledged University beginning in the next financial year. This will bring the total number of public and private Universities in our country to five, three of which have been established in the last two years.

167. Madam Speaker, since 2008 our country's tertiary education sector has been transformed due to Government's decision to support the development of local tertiary institutions in the private as well as public sector; our expenditure on local tertiary institutions this year stands at P 1.6 billion. This has resulted in a 75% reduction in external placements since 2008 from 8630 to 2325, with corresponding savings, as well as a doubling in the number of students studying in local institutions from 22,027 to

over 44,000, including 41,898 placements. The growing status of our local tertiary institutions is further reflected in their enrolment of international students, which this year stands at 1,219, up from 275 in 2010.

168. Batswana students continue to excel on the international stage. Four local learners obtained worldwide first positions in the 2012 Cambridge IGCSE examinations for Mathematics (2), Development Studies and Physics. A total of 42 learners obtained 6 A* and better in their 2012 BGCSE/IGCSE examinations and have been placed in reputable universities world-wide. In sports, a learner obtained first position at the 400 race in the Schools Sport World Championships, held in June 2013 in the Czech Republic.

E-Government

169. Madam Speaker, since 2008 there has been an explosion in the use of ICT by Batswana, with domestic internet subscriptions, mostly on mobile devices, rising from just over 250 thousand at the end of 2011 to nearly 1 million by August 2013, meaning that at least half of our citizens are now active online. Given this transformation Government recognises the need to accelerate the rollout of e-Government through expanded online services.

170. Concern about long queues for some services provided through ICT systems such as Civil and National Registration as well as Transport Permits and Drivers licenses are being addressed, while Births and Deaths registration system has been stabilized, with the backlog of certificates being drastically reduced. As a way of ensuring that all births and deaths are registered at the earliest possible time, on-site Births and Deaths registration centres continue to be rolled out to cover all hospitals.

171. Further computerisation of critical functions of Civil and National Registration is at the development stage. The Project aims at automating the critical functions of Civil and National Registration and linking them to other systems. One of the objectives is to introduce a more secure electronic identity card (e-id) for authentication and facilitation of public e-services.

172. As part of our overarching commitment to rationalise parastatals, the Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority (BOCRA) was formed in April 2013 as a converged regulator overseeing telecommunications, Internet and associated online technologies, broadcasting, and postal services.

173. Further progress has been achieved in separation of assets and the privatisation of BTC. This exercise has so far resulted in the formation of two companies being the Botswana Fibre Networks (BoFiNet), responsible for managing wholesale services, and Botswana Telecommunications Limited, for retail services.

174. With the completion of the West African submarine cable system (WACS), at a cost of over P 300 million (USD 37.5 million), in addition to the East African cable (EASSy), wholesale internet tariffs have been reduced by up to 59%, with resulting retail price reductions, a trend which should continue. To further improve our global competitiveness, our licensing framework is being adjusted to introduce a new license category for wholesale operators to facilitate competition and innovation. We have further developed a National Broadband Strategy to facilitate universal access to high capacity communications infrastructure.

175. Efforts continue to be made to ensure that communities are provided with access to communications services. The Nteletsa-I resuscitation project was completed in March 2013. This initiative brought mobile voice, data and internet connectivity to some 177 villages. To further benefit from the existing Nteletsa

infrastructure we are retooling the Kitsong Centres by introducing more products to improve their utilisation.

176. To further connect the nation, free internet facilities are being provided at 39 public libraries and village reading rooms, while another 33 are to be connected through wireless technology. With the support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation some 45,000 members of the public have also been trained in basic computer skills through the Sesigo e-public libraries project. In addition, nine libraries have been completed through our partnership with the Robert and Sara Rothschild Family Foundation, while two more libraries are scheduled for completion at Gweta and Nata by April 2014.

177. To address the issue of long queues at its front offices, the Department of Road Transport and Safety has joined hands with Botswana Post to provide renewal of vehicle licenses at all the 122 post offices. Government is currently negotiating with Botswana Post to offer additional services such as the online renewal of vehicle licenses.

178. A decision has been made to decentralise the transport services provided by the Central Transport Organisation (CTO) by

devolving fleet management to Ministries. To further enhance efficiencies in Government transport, fuel management will be outsourced to the private sector. All the above will be managed and monitored by the Fleet Tracking Management and Maintenance System.

MEDIA

179. Perhaps the best evidence of the continued vibrancy of our democracy is that criticism of all sorts is expected and when constructive readily embraced. Can anyone look at the daily output of our diverse domestic media and honestly deny that freedom of expression has continued to flourish; even if in some cases it is abused. But even the most abusive output comes with a silver lining in that the barrage of criticism this Government receives from much of the press has contributed in no small measure to our country's superior global rankings in various surveys of democracy, tolerance and personal freedom.

180. For its part our public service media have made strides in reaching greater numbers of Batswana online, as well as through print and broadcast media, while maintaining their status as our country's most trusted sources of news and information. This has been achieved through expanded transmitter coverage, enhanced

satellite capacity and the growing popularity of our e-communications as well as wider Daily News distribution.

181. With respect to television, we have now begun the process of migrating from analogue to digital terrestrial broadcasting, having adopted the Integrated Systems Digital Broadcasting Terrestrial or "ISDB-T", developed in Japan, as our national standard. This decision was made after comparative testing confirmed ISDB-T superiority as a platform for mobile as well as a fixed free to air transmission, which opens the door for Batswana to receive television through their phones and other mobile devices. To this end Government has built the required terrestrial transmissions network. A Project Management Office is being set up to drive process by reaching out to industry stakeholders and the general public to ensure that the next generation of television positively enhances the lives of Batswana.

182. Our progress in interactive online communications is reflected in the rising traffic on the Government e-Portal and Facebook this past year, as well as the new Daily News and Kutlwano websites. Radio Botswana and RB2 are also now live streaming, meaning that they can be listened to online from anywhere in the world.

183. I am also pleased to note that aspirant artists continue to record in our studios as a public service. The Daily News also continues to engage young freelance reporters focusing on increasing its coverage of rural areas.

Culture

184. Madam Speaker, Government recognises that our cultural heritage, like our natural heritage is a unique asset that needs to be nurtured and developed. In this respect we have started the ratification process for the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which will enhance the contribution of culture to development. The Convention also promotes awareness and respect for the diversity of cultural expressions at local, national and international level.

185. Madam Speaker, the President's Day Competitions and Constituency Art Competitions have contributed to a reawakening of our cultural values and practices, while promoting artistic talent especially among the youth. The President's Day competitions have grown significantly both in terms of participation and expanded categories. Participation this year stood at 14,061,

whereas in 2012 it was 12,562. The Constituency Art Competitions held in July-August 2012 attracted 12,599 participants, while those of January-March 2013 attracted 18,640 participants.

186. Government has insisted on the purchasing of locally produced arts and crafts to expand their market and improve the livelihoods of our artists. In 2012/13, arts and crafts to the value of P336,242 were sold to Government Departments and Ministries, different organisations and individuals, including our foreign missions.

187. The archival documentation of our national heritage continues to grow through acquisition from both Government and private stakeholders. From 2012 archival collections increased by 46% enabling greater access to diverse information for research and reference purposes. During the 2012-13 the number of archives users grew by 4.3% while the number of documents used increased by 21.5%.

188. Madam Speaker, the count-down towards the celebrations of Botswana's 50th Anniversary of Independence in 2016 has started. Today marks 1061 days before the Golden Jubilee

Celebrations for our country. Our theme for the celebrations is "Botswana First – Botswana Pele". The 2016 Independence Celebrations will also coincide with the end of the Vision 2016 cycle and we must all work hard to ensure that the Vision becomes reality.

Sport and Recreation

189. Madam Speaker, we recognise that the development and promotion of sport contributes to economic growth and diversification. Over the past year we hosted a number of major sport events, which benefited the country through sport tourism. To place sports on a sounder footing, the Botswana National Sports Commission Bill 2013 has been drafted and is expected to be presented in Parliament during the next sitting. The Bill seeks to establish a Sports Commission to provide greater clarity in the execution of the sporting mandates.

190. The Constituency Sport Tournaments continue to be popular. Participation rates have grown from 28,476 at inception to 65,146 during Cycle 1 of 2013/2014, which ended in July 2013. To date the programme has contributed to the expansion of sporting codes and talent identification, with a number of players having graduated from constituency tournaments to mainstream

league teams since its inception. Some teams have also utilized prize money to sponsor players to study in different fields.

191. Botswana athletes continue to impress in regional, continental and international competitions. For example, Amantle Montsho has retained her Gold Medal title at the 2013 Samsung Diamond League, whilst Nijel Amos also became a Gold Medallist at the 2012 World University Games in the 800m event. Moreover, this year 6 Botswana football players joined the professional ranks, bringing the total number to 12. To build on such successes additional attention is paid to grassroots sports development, especially through the school system. In this connection, the Government has set aside prize money as a motivation for outstanding learner athletes.

192. Madam Speaker, Botswana will host the 2nd Africa Youth Games in May 2014. An Organizing Committee for the Games was appointed and is working to ensure that the Games are a success. The games committee has further appealed to the private sector and the civil society for support. In this respect, I wish to especially thank Choppies Group for their donation of P8.5 million towards the event. We hope other companies doing

business in Botswana will be motivated to engage in similar social responsibility gestures.

Global Cooperation

193. Madam Speaker, as a small nation in an increasingly complex and competitive globalised world, our foreign policy remains anchored in working through multilateral institutions. As such we continue to play an active role within the United Nations (UN) and the other international and regional organizations, notably the African Union (AU) and Southern African Development Community (SADC), to which we belong. Our international engagements are predicated on advancing our national interests, which include such trans-national priorities as promoting sustainable economic development, good governance and international peace and security. Guided by the principles and spirit of the United Nations Charter, we actively support positions on global issues that advance the interests of humankind.

194. Over the past twelve months, we had the privilege of welcoming dignitaries from various parts of the world, whose visits contributed to a deepening of our relations. We have also been privileged to host a number of high level meetings. These have included the Africa Regional Workshop on the Ratification of

the Kampala Amendments relating to the crime of Aggression, with respect to the International Criminal Court. The Workshop, which was attended by all African State Parties to the Rome Statute, raised awareness about the importance of these amendments, which Botswana was the first African country to ratify.

195. This year we hosted the fourth SACU Summit of Heads of State and Government. Additional international gatherings, among others, included the WHO Dialogue on the MDG post-2015 Agenda, the 4th China-Africa Health Roundtable and the Annual Meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Public Service. Our capital city, in particular, has also hosted a number of regional industrial and commercial gatherings, reflecting its growing status as an international conference venue.

196. Our international undertakings are shaped by humanitarian values and sense of global solidarity, as well as national interests. In keeping with our capacity we thus continue to provide modest relief contributions in response to external needs. As a country, we further honour our international commitments through material contributions and adherence to our treaty obligations.

197. Given our commitment to human rights and universal values, we have associated ourselves with the global consensus that the atrocities committed by the Assad regime against its own people, through the use of conventional as well as chemical weapons, are a clear threat to world peace and security, as well as the livelihoods of Syrians. We are thus disappointed by the inability of the Security Council to bring an end to this ongoing carnage, which has claimed the lives of over 100 thousand, while causing another 2 million to become refugees. Our firm conviction that robust action to hold the Assad regime accountable for its crimes is long overdue; this further convinces us of the need to reform the UN Security Council to enable it to respond to such behaviour.

198. Over the past year we have also been concerned with the tragic consequences of acts of terrorism that have occurred on our own continent and elsewhere, such as the recent instances of mass murder in Kenya, Nigeria and Pakistan. Our sympathies shall continue to go out to all the victims of such violence, whatever may be their nationality, politics or faith. For whenever and wherever terror attacks are perpetrated, humanity as a whole is robbed of something of its material and spiritual wellbeing.

199. With respect to Zimbabwe we have carried out our regional responsibilities as a good neighbour as well as a SADC member, in candidly expressing our concerns about the recent electoral process. This was in line with the findings not only of our own election observers but those of the other Observer Missions. At the same time we have assured the Zimbabwean Government of our continued commitment to enhanced bilateral cooperation for the mutual benefit of our peoples.

200. Madam Speaker, let me take this opportunity to once more express on behalf of the nation our appreciation for the generous external assistance we continue to receive from elsewhere in facilitating our progress. I therefore wish to express our gratitude to all of the countries and international organisations, including private institutions and individuals, who have assisted us.

Conclusion

201. Madam Speaker, by pulling together we can build a better country, one that is globally competitive, while remaining true to its unique identity and values. The path to a more prosperous and productive nation that leaves no citizen behind lies not so much in the bounty of natural resources with which the Lord has blessed

our land, as in our human resources, that is ourselves. Let us therefore be mindful that the evolution of any democracy requires patriotism and collective discipline, beginning with self-discipline. In this way we shall achieve the productivity necessary to compete in the world, while overcoming the social ills that threaten to pull us down.

202. It is true that we live in challenging times, but so too did the generations who came before us. Thanks to them we today share a nation whose socio-economic progress over the past five decades has been second to none. Where they achieved much with little we can achieve much more.

203. Finally, in meeting our challenges while reaching for our goals, let us remember to seek the blessings and guidance of the Lord in all of our endeavours; for in the end it is only through His grace, and our efforts, that all things are possible.

204.