

STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY LT. GEN. SERETSE KHAMA IAN
KHAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA, TO THE FIRST SESSION
OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT - "MOVING BOTSWANA FORWARD"

INTRODUCTION

1. Madam Speaker, before we begin may I request that we observe a moment of silence for those of our citizens who have departed from us during the past year. Thank you.

2. Honourable Members, it is my pleasure to once more present an updated assessment of how Government intends to move Botswana forward by seizing opportunities to secure our future.

3. As this is the first session of the 11th Parliament, let me preface my remarks by welcoming the newly elected members of this Assembly. Let me further congratulate you Madam Speaker on your own election.

4. Today's gathering is an outcome of our 11th consecutive general election. As is our tradition, the ballot was conducted in a peaceful, free and fair manner. For this we can once more thank Botswana in general, as well as the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and other individuals and organisations that helped to ensure the poll's success.

5. In any democracy elections are the means to the greater end of forming a Government capable of translating the popular will into public service delivery. We who have the honour of sitting in this House are accountable to the hundreds of thousands who entrusted us with their votes. Although divided in their choices, the voters were united by a shared desire for a better future. It is, therefore, our responsibility to ensure that together we deliver that future by at all times putting the national interest before our own.

6. Last month my party, the Botswana Democratic Party, was re-elected on the basis of a detailed manifesto that promised to secure our common future by building on our past achievements. Today, before this House I reaffirm our commitment to honour that pledge.

7. In as much as we recognise that a government of and by the people is not an event but a process; this administration shall continue to engage Botswana across the country about their concerns through various fora and media, from the venerable realm of dikgotla to the digital world of interactive online communication. It was as a result of wide-ranging consultation that our manifesto was predicated on what we understood to be our citizens' core aspirations. These include achieving:

- Job creation for sustainable livelihoods and income generation;
- Food security through continued agricultural renewal;
- Expanded access to land and housing ownership;
- Access to world-class quality education that caters to current and future needs;
- Citizen, including youth, economic empowerment;
- Dignity for all through the eradication of poverty;
- Zero tolerance for corruption in all of its manifestations;
- Elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV; and
- Government reform that leverages on the application of new technologies.

8. Each of these commitments is based on realistic analysis of where our country is and needs to go in order to meet the reasonable expectations of its people, while improving our global standing in an ever more competitive world. Taken together they are consistent with our broader vision of achieving inclusive sustainable development that upholds the dignity of all.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

9. Madam Speaker, owing to the prudent economic and financial management by my Government, the country was able to survive the 2008/09 global financial crisis and economic recession with minimum impact on the domestic economy. We were able to save jobs in both the public service and private sector, as well as continued to provide essential public services to our people.

10. Having successfully weathered the storm of the economic downturn, we can look forward to better days ahead, with economic growth buttressed by reduced inflation. These positive trends should allow us to revive some of our postponed projects, along with outstanding issues affecting the conditions of service among public employees. Our optimism is in part based on forecasts of continued, albeit still fragile, global economic recovery, with worldwide output projected to grow by 3.3% in 2014 and 3.8% in 2015.

11. Turning to the domestic economy, the gross domestic product (GDP) at current prices stood at P124 billion in 2013 and it is projected to expand to P136.5 billion in 2014. In real terms, the GDP grew by 5.8% in 2013, and is projected to grow by 5.2% in the current year, driven by both the mining and non-mining sectors. Within the non-mining sector, retail and hospitality industries, as well as agriculture are experiencing growth.

12. Average national inflation continued to decline from 8.5% in 2011 to 7.5% in 2012 to 5.9% in 2013 and further to 4.5% in September 2014, which is well within the Bank of Botswana objective range of 3 to 6%. This positive trend gives us confidence in our ability to maintain a low inflation environment, which is necessary for domestic enterprises to compete in the global market.

13. In terms of our fiscal management, Government succeeded in restoring a balanced budget during 2012/13 financial year, after four years of budget deficits. For the 2013/14 financial year we were able to collect P 48.9 billion, up from the P 41.7 billion received in 2012/13, while total expenditures and net lending for 2013/14 amounted to P 41.73 billion. This resulted in a budget surplus of P7.2 billion, largely due to the good performance of the mineral sector. For 2014/15 a budget surplus of P1.3 billion is currently projected. These savings will allow us to reduce our debt burden and rebuild our financial reserves.

14. To sustain a positive balance sheet will, however, require expanded revenues. Here I can report that we were able to collect P48.9 billion in the 2013-14 financial year, up from the P41.7 billion received in 2012-13. The 2013/14 outturn for expenditure and net lending was P41.7 billion.

EMPLOYMENT

15. Madam Speaker, to be meaningful to Botswana, economic growth has to be accompanied by expanded employment, which is why our manifesto listed job creation at the top of our aspirations. To reiterate what I said in my own message to the voters, of all our campaign promises tackling unemployment is the most important one. While there has been some progress in recent years, current estimates put unemployment among those 18 and above at just over 17%. Although this reflects a modest reduction since 2007, it has been insufficient to absorb all those seeking employment, especially among our talented youth. We can and shall do more.

16. Our Economic Diversification Drive (EDD) is a key instrument for job creation. Since its 2010 inception, EDD has been facilitating employment generating business opportunities by promoting the consumption of local products. While our immediate focus has been leveraging public procurement in support of domestic industries, as we move forward our emphasis will shift to developing greater internal capacity for export-led growth, while continuing to value local goods and services.

17. So far a total of P13.3 billion worth of goods and services were recorded since the inception of the initiative. Out of this figure, the value of local manufacturers and service providers (EDD purchases) amounted to P590.5 million for 2010/2011, P1.8 billion for 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 and

P2.3 billion for 2013/2014. Over one thousand enterprises have so far been registered under the EDD Programme, which has contributed to the employment of 28,000 Batswana.

18. We have already begun implementing our EDD Medium to Long Term Strategy, to develop sustainable sectors for economic growth and diversification. A leading example is the Leather Sub-sector Strategy, which is focused on the establishment of a Leather Park in Lobatse at a total cost of about P225 million. Government has agreed to finance the park's primary infrastructure, a Common Effluent Treatment Plant, estimated to cost P102 million, while other components of the project will be financed through private sector investment.

19. Government had also budgeted over P20 million to provide temporary assistance for over 12 months to support 34 textile companies, employing 2,912 workers.

20. While the nurturing of SMMEs, support for existing industries and value addition remain critical in our achievement of job creation, we further anticipate that over the next few years local formal sector employment will be generated with the emergence of new economic opportunities through the synergies generated by the development growth nodes or clusters across the country.

21. In the Chobe region, for example, we anticipate an expansion of opportunities in tourism, construction, transport services and agriculture resulting from the construction of the road and rail bridge at Kazangula and phase one of the water pipeline to Pandamatenga, along with associated infrastructure. It is estimated that when completed these two mega-projects will create over 9000 permanent jobs.

22. Additional emerging labour intensive opportunities are already being generated in our urban areas, as reflected in Selebi-Phikwe's development as a metallurgical hub, the continued growth of Gaborone as a global diamond as well as regional technical services centre, and Francistown's growth as a nexus for trade and transport. We further anticipate additional jobs through synergies generated by new mining activities, the continued expansion of commercial agriculture and the development of Trans-Kgalagadi road and potential rail corridor.

COMPETITIVENESS

23. A key to unlocking these job creation opportunities will be increasing our global competitiveness. To improve our competitiveness ranking in the area of goods market efficiency we have tightened our market monitoring for greater efficiency in the provision of goods and services, while the Competition Authority is reviewing mergers and potential cartel activity involving both local and foreign companies.

24. Madam Speaker, job creation is inevitably linked to investment. In this respect the latest FDI Intelligence report indicates that Global Greenfield FDI showed signs of recovery, increasing by an estimated 11% from 2012 to 2013. The increase in local investment has been even greater, with UNCTAD's 2014 World Investment report showing Botswana having grown by 27% in 2013.

25. The Botswana International Trade Centre (BITC) continues to promote our country as a competitive location for investment, making business contacts and generating leads. During the 2013-2014 financial year, BITC helped realise a total combined investment capital of just over 1 billion pula, of which P 642 million was from foreign direct investment (FDI) and P449 million came from new domestic investments. In 2012/13, BITC further recorded P1.9 billion worth of goods and services exported into the region and beyond, of which P738 million was attributable to financial and international business services by the financial services cluster.

26. Botswana was ranked number one in the 2014 Baseline Profitability Index, surpassing Hong Kong as a location for medium to long term returns on investment. In essence the Index suggests that investors can expect to do well here once they have established themselves in our market.

27. Government is, furthermore, working to limit the number of licenses and permits, while allowing mixed land use zoning, adopting risk based approach for Environmental Impact Assessments and Management Plans, and decentralising the management of electricity connections.

28. Government has also embarked on a National Work Ethic programme to promote productivity. So far, 254 facilitators have been assessed to implement the programme, which commenced in May 2014.

29. The drafting of a Bill which will provide the legal framework for the establishment of Special Economic Zones and the Special Economic Zone Authority is being finalized.

30. The Rural Development Council (RDC) has been upgraded as the national consultative body to promote and coordinate the implementation of rural development policies and programmes. As a result community based projects such as the Zutshwa Salt Project and the Mogobane Irrigation Scheme, to mention some, have been resuscitated.

CITIZEN EMPOWERMENT

31. Madam Speaker, it is pleasing to note that to date, CEDA has funded 5,462 enterprises with a total value of nearly P8.55 billion, in the process creating over 48,935 thousand jobs. During the 2013/14 financial year, CEDA assisted 151 new enterprises with a total monetary value of P152 million, collectively generating 1042 new jobs.

32. Since its inception, LEA has also facilitated the creation of 4995 new jobs, including 568 in the ongoing financial year. The Authority has further trained a total of 9,317 entrepreneurs. In an effort to inculcate an entrepreneurial culture, LEA embarked upon the Entrepreneurship Awareness Workshops among secondary school leavers, vocational trainees and prison inmates; over 26,000 of whom have been trained.

33. Madam Speaker, through the Botswana Bureau of Standards (BOBS), we have encouraged our small and medium enterprises to implement quality assurance activities within their businesses. Progress has been made in certification of goods especially in the building and construction industry. To further ensure that prescribed goods entering our borders comply with domestic standards, a BOBS office has been opened at the Tlokweng Border.

RULE OF LAW

34. Madam Speaker, adherence to the rule of law remains a cornerstone to our national development. It is thus encouraging that independent comparative surveys, as well as domestic polling, consistently place us among the best in the world as well as first in Africa in terms of our upholding the rule of law while ensuring the safety and security of all our citizens. These surveys include:

- 2014 Ibrahim Index of African Governance, where we ranked first in the category of safety and security;
- World Justice Project's 2014 Rule of Law Index, where we were ranked 25th in the world as well as first in Africa;
- 2014 Global Peace Index where we were at 36th place, ranking above half of European countries surveyed;
- 2014 Legatum Index for Governance and Rule of Law, where we were ranked 28th in the world; and
- 2013 Global Democracy Index, where besides ranking 35 out of 167 countries we achieved a near perfect score in the area of civil liberties.

35. In light of such reputable findings it is unfortunate to say the least that some individuals, working through foreign as well as domestic media, including rumour mongering on social media, have

attempted to instil the perception of Batswana living in fear. This is in an apparent effort to undermine this country's longstanding and shared record of peace, order and good Government.

36. While the mass circulation of false and malicious reports intended to incite undue alarm may be aimed at promoting the political agenda of some, it is at the collective cost of tarnishing the image of the country as a whole. It is also a threat to the economy we all must depend upon for our livelihoods. Such disinformation should therefore be rejected with contempt by all peace-loving Batswana. All citizens, residents and potential visitors to Botswana can be confident that this Government will continue to both abide and uphold the rule of law without fear or favour.

37. Let me, nonetheless, also observe that we have not, and shall not, allow past achievements or international accolades to breed complacency as we recognise that, here as elsewhere, criminal activity is constantly evolving and increasingly sophisticated. We therefore remain determined to pursue a zero tolerance approach to all forms of criminal activity, including corruption.

38. To counter emerging domestic and trans-national challenges the Police Service has deployed integrated law enforcement strategies to combat all forms of criminality and anti-social behaviour. This has involved an ongoing redirection of resources to deal with violent and intrusive, cross border and cyber based criminal activities.

39. Whilst total recorded crime excluding road traffic violations rose by 4.7% during the year 2013, significant reductions were, however, registered in respect of violent and intrusive crimes. Offences in this category, which included burglary, store breaking, robbery, house breaking, threats to kill, murder, rape, motor vehicle and stock theft, declined by 15.4%.

40. Road traffic management poses an additional policing challenge. Analysis of road accidents shows a youth bias, expressed in reckless driving, often aggravated by the influence of alcohol. As a result of the increase in the intensity of road policing initiatives, the number of detected road traffic offences rose by 32.4%, while there was a corresponding decrease in the number of fatal road accidents by 2.6%.

41. Madam Speaker, the Department of Prisons and Rehabilitation continues to improve security in the prisons and rehabilitation of offenders. While overcrowding has been a problem in some of the Prison institutions, there has been substantial reduction in congestion since 2008. In June 2014 there were 3824 offenders held in prisons, which was 13% below the authorised holding capacity.

42. Madam Speaker, the internal and external challenges of today's constantly changing security landscape, call for a structurally aligned, strategically focused and adequately resourced, as well as highly trained and motivated, defence force. The BDF will thus continue to evolve its structures and strategies to defend the nation, while continuing to provide assistance to other law enforcement agencies in combating crime, including poaching.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

43. Madam Speaker, as was most recently demonstrated in the Judgments of the High Court and the Court of Appeal upholding the constitutionality of the Standing Orders of this very House, our Judiciary continues to independently and effectively deliver on its constitutional mandate of settling disputes, both large and small, without fear or favour. This Government will, as always, respect decisions of the Courts and expects all citizens to do the same. Equally, we must all display tolerance and recognize everyone's right to approach the Courts for the resolution of any legal issue no matter how strongly we may disagree.

44. To improve everyday access to justice several special court projects like the stock theft, maintenance, traffic, small claims and most recently corruption court have been put in place so as to speed up and improve the case disposal rates, while promoting greater access to justice by simplifying

court rules and processes to make them more user friendly. In addition a Court Annexed Mediation will be in place by the end of the current financial year. This form of alternative dispute resolution will accelerate case disposal and reduce the cost of litigation once implemented.

45. During the current financial year the number of special traffic courts has also been increased from two to nine. Plans are also now advanced to purchase four mobile courts, which will be used for traffic cases and other case types to promote greater access to justice. Various technological initiatives are also improving access to justice, such as video conferencing, real time court reporting and e-filing.

46. Madam Speaker, since the Legal Aid Project commenced in April 2011, legal services have been available to citizens for a wide variety of civil law issues. The demand for these services has steadily increased, with over 6,000 applications for legal aid having been received as of May 2014. An independent legal aid entity - Legal Aid Botswana - will thus be brought into operation during the current financial year.

BOGOSI AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

47. Government recognizes the important role of Bogosi in nation building. As an institution Bogosi provides a solid foundation for community mobilization, development and national unity. In this regard, Government is committed to strengthening the institution, ensuring its continued role and relevance.

48. Government is further committed to promoting local governance, while taking services closer to the people. We have in this respect started to fully operationalise seven service centres, which were established last year.

49. Local Government is also piloting the Service Halls concept as part of the e-Government programme as a one stop shop for various public services. The first centre will soon open its doors in Molepolole. This effort will not only bring services closer to people, but will also bring government services under one roof for easy customer access.

CIVIL AND NATIONAL REGISTRATION

50. Madam Speaker, the on-site registration programme that was launched in 2012 is yielding positive results as evidenced by the increasing number of births and deaths registered at these centres amounting to 61,624 births and 15,720 deaths since the inception of the pilot project in 2011. Additional computerisation of critical functions of Civil and National Registration and linkage with other systems is on-going. The Project has as one of its deliverables an Electronic Identity Card or e-id.

51. Madam Speaker, Government very much appreciates the sterling contribution being made by the religious community in upholding social harmony through their prayers, preaching and good deeds. We are, however, concerned that a few hide behind religion to promote personal gain in ways that are ultimately disruptive to social harmony resulting in legal intervention.

IMMIGRATION

52. Madam Speaker, Government continues to improve the processing of work and residence permits. A project to automate the processing of the work permits has already commenced, which will better ensure the integrity of the documents and enhance processing time as well as data management.

53. As a Government it is our duty, in the first instance, to promote the economic interests of our own citizens when it comes to issues of employment. We, nonetheless, continue to recognise the value of opening our doors to citizens of other countries who add value to the economy and social welfare of

the nation as a whole. Illegal migration, however, remains a serious challenge. Over the past year we have had to deport over 36,000 illegal immigrants.

LAND

54. Madam Speaker, in our manifesto my party recognised that the equitable and efficient distribution of land remains an area of both great opportunity and challenge. To address the shortage of serviced land, Government shall continue to undertake land servicing projects to promote economic development. The construction of Palapye Extension 11 land servicing project is expected to yield 3300 plots upon completion. In addition we will continue with infrastructure design projects for another eight areas around the country.

55. Government is also implementing additional measures that promote optimal utilisation and better management of our land resources through physical planning; Land Administration Processes, Capacity Building and Systems (LAPCAS) Project, which has so far resulted in the surveying of 234,525 plots countrywide. A project outcome will be the establishment of a land information centre as a collection of all land data in the country. As of now a total of 890,814 individual land records have been opened and secured, while Deeds Registry has captured 431,667 title deeds. Information collected through this project will benefit individual landholders as well as the country as a whole, since registered land titles can, for example, be used as collateral for loans.

56. Madam Speaker, the Town and Country Planning Act of 2013 which further decentralized physical planning functions to the Councils became operational in April 2014, providing for oversight and policy direction on physical planning as well as regional planning functions.

57. Efforts are also ongoing to prepare new settlement development plans. To date a total of 25 such plans, out of a current target of 29, have been prepared. Government is further exploring alternatives to decentralize and decongest development away from Gaborone. We have thus commenced the preparation of three new master plans.

DIAMONDS

58. Madam Speaker, our GDP has been significantly boosted by renewed growth in the mining sector, which continues to drive our economy. Given that this expansion was primarily due to global diamond sales, we are further encouraged by the fact that these current trends are consistent with long term industry projections, based on growing demand among new consumers, as well as sustained recovery in our traditional markets.

59. Growing global demand for gem diamonds has further dovetailed with upward estimates of domestic production based on both the ongoing and anticipated opening of new mines and an extension in the life spans of existing mines through new recovery methods. Together, these developments should ensure that we will remain a leading global producer over the next three decades, until at least 2050. Let us recognise, however, that diamonds alone cannot carry us forward. We must therefore continue in our efforts to achieve greater economic diversification, which includes the promotion of further beneficiation within the minerals sector.

60. In the case of diamonds we are already realising our goal of becoming a global 'mines to market' hub with the successful migration of the De Beers Global Sight-holder Sales from London to Gaborone, which was completed ahead of schedule. The first round of local Diamond Trading Company (DTC) sales took place in November 2013. To date 10 sight-holder sales have been successfully held in Botswana. Included in the DTC turnover has been diamonds supplied to local industry. This has strengthened our diamond cutting and polishing industry, which as of July 2014 employed 3,781.

61. The Government owned Okavango Diamond Company has also successfully conducted eight tenders to date, which attracted over 400 customers from all over the world. In addition Boteti Mining Company (Karowe Mine) has also been conducting sales.

62. Notwithstanding continued volatility in the global trading of mineral commodities, we are encouraged by the emerging opportunities for beneficiation, as well as expanded mining of iron ore, copper, nickel and silver, coal and coal bed methane. In order to better manage these opportunities, we have now established a state owned Mineral Development Company.

63. At the same time we have worked to maintain Botswana's status as a welcoming environment for international investors. In the 2014 Fraser Institute Mining Policy Perception Index, which annually assesses the competitiveness of global mining jurisdictions, we were ranked first in Africa and 25th in the world, while for diamond industry investment we were rated first in the world.

64. In terms of further mineral beneficiation we are especially encouraged by the efforts of Bamangwato Concession Limited (BCL) through its Polaris II programme to establish Selebi-Phikwe as a regional metallurgical hub for the refinement of base metal concentrates. The initiative further provides for additional investments in downstream activities as was reflected in the ongoing construction of the Pula Steel plant.

65. Just this past month the Polaris II project took another giant step forward with BCL's acquisition of Norlisk Nickel's Southern Africa assets, which notably include its controlling stake in South African based Nkomati Nickel, as well as the local Tati Nickel Mine. Output from these mines is now expected to be serviced by the BCL smelter. All of these positive developments were made possible through Government's decision to empower BCL to expand its commercial activities, while releasing the company from its debt burden.

66. In the context of our 'Coal Roadmap' we are also finding opportunities through which our vast coal reserves can become an additional source of export revenues, while being further utilised to fuel local power plants. This has in turn served as a catalyst for the Trans-Kalahari and Ponto Techobanine railway projects, as well as further expansion in the energy sector. We have signed a bilateral agreement with Namibia on the Trans-Kalahari Railway Project, which paves the way for the construction of a heavy haul railway line stretching 1,500 kilometres from Mmamabula coal fields to Walvis Bay.

67. We are further engaged in a joint project with Zambia for the construction of the Kazungula Bridge across the Chobe and Zambezi Rivers, which includes a railroad component, one stop border facility and access roads. We have also signed an agreement on road and bridge infrastructure with South Africa, which has resulted in the already ongoing construction of bridges and infrastructure at Notwane and Platjaan.

AGRICULTURE

68. Madam Speaker, in terms of job creation, rural income generation and food security agriculture remains a priority economic sector with still untapped potential. The Integrated Support Programme for Arable Agriculture Development (ISPAAD), Livestock Management and Infrastructure Development Program (LIMID) and animal disease control measures are key interventions for driving the sector forward.

69. I am especially pleased to report that the prospects for the 2013/14 ploughing season are very good for rain fed agriculture, with over 127,000 farmers having cultivated nearly 417,000 hectares. This has resulted in what we anticipate will be a record 2014 cereal crop of about 200 thousand metric tonnes. This is over 500% above that of last year, when we were of course plagued by poor rainfall.

70. The higher estimated crop yield is a result of the use of inputs such as hybrid seeds, fertilizers and herbicides as well as improved technology and above average rainfall. Farmers, in this respect, benefited from increased financial support by the National Development Bank (NDB), CEDA and commercial lenders as well as other Government support such as ISPAAD.

71. ISPAAD has been the primary vehicle for channelling Government support for expanded arable farming; its five components being draught power and input subsidy, cluster fencing, individual fencing and horticultural assistance. The latter component assists farmers with development inputs of 40% of total cost.

72. In addition, this past year we introduced the Special ISPAAD programme aimed at assisting beneficiaries in areas where crop production is not suitable, such as Kgalagadi, Ghanzi, and parts of Kweneng and Southern Districts.

73. An additional constraint to horticulture production has been the marketing of produce. To address the challenge, the Horticulture Market has now been established as a wholesaler to provide a sure market at equitable prices, while the horticulture processing facility at Selebi Phikwe will soon provide another reliable outlet for horticulture produce.

74. We can further report that infrastructural development for the Zambezi Agro-Commercial project will soon commence, while arable production will continue to benefit through our cluster development strategy. Besides the Pandamatenga cluster, new clusters such as at Mosisedi are now operational.

75. Over the past year our livestock sector has enjoyed positive growth, particularly as a result of controlling foot and mouth disease. This has enabled the Botswana Meat Commission (BMC) to resume beef exports to the high value European Union and other international markets. This past year BMC's after tax profits were over P 25 million, with a turnover of just over P 1 billion. Seeking additional non-EU markets continues to be a major assignment for Government through the BMC.

76. The change over from the bolus to ear tags for the livestock identification and trace back system is finally on course. As at October 2014 a total of 1.4 million cattle had been tagged against the target of 2.2 million. With respect to dairy, we are still heavily dependent on import of milk and milk products. To turn this around a dairy strategy has been adopted.

77. Our current animal disease situation is satisfactory. The outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Mohembo East, which occurred in July 2014, has been brought under control by vaccination and movement control. Fortunately the outbreak did not affect cattle marketing in the rest of Ngamiland and therefore trade in livestock continued in the area.

78. There is also currently an outbreak of Newcastle disease among chickens, which fortunately has not affected commercial poultry and ostrich farms where appropriate control measures have proved effective. To counter the outbreak among small scale producers, Government has secured a vaccine that is being distributed at no cost to the farmers. Part of the vaccine was donated by the Botswana Veterinary Association.

79. Under LIMID beneficiaries continue to be assisted with small stock, poultry, animal husbandry and water provision. Since its inception in 2007, over 18 thousand have benefited from the programme at a cost of P224 million. Initially LIMID was allocated P20 million annually but this has now been increased to P50 million.

TOURISM

80. Madam Speaker, another driver of economic diversification has been the tourism and associated hospitality industries, which currently employs some 35,000. Our progress is reflected in the fact that

we have experienced a 45% increase in licensed enterprises over the past decade, with 135 newly licensed citizen owned enterprises in 2013-14 alone. As I have said before, but it deserves repeating, recent growth in the sector has been largely driven by citizen investment. As of May 2014, 61% were citizen owned, 23% were joint ventures, while only 16% were foreign owned.

81. To further fuel this positive trend we are continuing to find innovative ways to promote a broadening of the tourism product, in collaboration with the Botswana Tourism Organisation, private sector and civil society partners. Our progress is evidenced by the number of new attractions being opened up in less developed areas such as Kgalagadi, Tswapong and Bobirwa. With the approval of management plans we will soon also open up dams for tourism and recreation purposes. In addition, events such as Makgadikgadi Epic sky dive, the Khawa Dune Challenge and the Toyota Kalahari 1000 Desert Race are bringing in visitors while raising our country's profile. We anticipate additional high profile events in the coming year.

82. Another means through which we are diversifying our tourism is the development of historic and cultural, as well as natural heritage sites. Several heritage trails have been developed including the Makgadikgadi Heritage Trail, which is one of the 74 heritage places across the country where information boards and signage have been installed. In protecting and promoting our country's rich cultural heritage we are ratifying three UNESCO conventions to strengthen our care of cultural properties and heritage sites. Our conservation efforts were, of course, this year also acknowledged in the Okavango Delta's listing as the 1000th UNESCO World Heritage Site.

83. Following the decision to impose a moratorium on hunting on public land to conserve our wildlife heritage, Government has been working with community based organisations to re-align their management plans to facilitate their transition from hunting to photographic tourism. Communities and concessionaires are also 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.

NATURAL HERITAGE

84. Madam Speaker, with poaching on the rise globally we remain vigilant in securing our elephants, rhinos and other wildlife species. Government has taken additional measures to strengthen anti – poaching efforts by increasing posts in the Department of Wildlife and National Parks and deploying other law enforcement agencies like the Botswana Defence Force, Police and Prisons Services and the Directorate of Intelligence Services to augment initiatives to curb poaching.

85. Our country enjoys widespread international recognition and goodwill for our record of domestic conservation and sustainable tourism development coupled with our contributions to global efforts to suppress poaching and the global trafficking of illegal natural products. It is in the latter context that we shall early next year play host to the 2nd International Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade. This gathering will be a follow-up to the London Conference earlier this year, where there was for the first time broad agreement among nations involved in the supply, transit and consumption of illegal wildlife products, to join hands in combating the trade.

86. Government also remains committed to ensuring that the Gaborone Declaration for Sustainably in Africa bears fruit. To this end we are undertaking an exercise to value the contribution of different streams of natural capital to GDP. In addition to our water and minerals, we wish to assess the values of other resource based economic activities such as pastoral agriculture, tourism, and land management so as to ensure that our measure of the national wealth is inclusive. In this regard the findings of the Wealth Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services (WAVES) project will be used to reform our accounting systems.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

87. We have also initiated a process to streamline the Environmental Assessment process. Our main aim is to reduce the turnaround time for the assessment of projects as well as to reduce the number of projects subjected to detailed assessments without compromising the environment.

88. Wild land fires remain a concern as they risk land degradation. The total area burnt as at end of December 2013 was 8.6 million hectares, as compared to 11.3 million hectares same period during 2012, a 24% reduction. Government continues to mobilize resources to areas of high economic importance. Since 2009, 2,560 fire fighters have been trained. This has been achieved through our ongoing partnership with Australia. We also continue to distribute Personal Protective Equipment to seasonal fire fighting teams and community based volunteer fire-fighters, who have demonstrated dedication and willingness to volunteer for fire suppression.

89. Illegal mining, particularly of construction materials including sand and gravel, continues to be a source of concern, and cause of environmental degradation, especially of our rivers. This has resulted in increased law enforcement efforts.

90. Madam Speaker, the negative effects of climate change cannot be overlooked. Let me therefore encourage Batswana to inculcate the culture of tree planting. Government will continue to provide tree seedlings and also encourage backyard tree nurseries. We are aware that the main predicament to these initiatives has been shortage of water, but efforts such as recycling are underway.

91. Government continues to encourage utilization of waste as a resource. Following the piloting of waste separation at source in 4 schools in Gaborone, we are in the process of rolling out the initiative to all schools in the country during 2014. Moving forward Government has taken a decision to outsource waste management services to the private sector.

ENERGY

92. Madam Speaker, in my 2008 address before this House I stated that transforming our nation from an energy deficit to surplus nation had become a new development priority. We knew from the beginning that this was a mammoth task, which along the way was made all the more difficult by the setbacks we continue to suffer in bringing the Morupule B Power Station fully online. With Morupule B capable of producing up to 600MW when at full capacity, supplemented by plants at Orapa and Matshelegabedi to meet spikes in demand, we should be able to cater for our domestic energy needs.

93. To ensure long term security of power supply, Government is in the process of procuring Independent Power Producers for the construction of an additional 300MW from a Brownfield site at Morupule B site as well as 300MW from a Greenfield site. The construction of these additional power plants over the next few years will give us the capacity to ultimately become a net exporter rather than importer of electricity.

94. Catering for future as well as current domestic energy demand remains a priority given that access to electricity and thus overall consumption has been steadily increasing since the establishment of the National Electricity Standard Connection Cost Programme in 2010. As at April 2014, the Programme has enabled 58,470 new households to connect to the national grid, with household access to electricity now standing at about 70%. In terms of settlements 76% or 373 out of 492 gazetted villages have been electrified. During the current financial year this is being increased with the electrification of another 28 villages, while network grid extension is ongoing in 24 villages.

95. Turning to the petroleum sub-sector, construction of the 149 million litres strategic storage facility at Tshela Hills is ongoing. Government has also put in place a quality monitoring programme of petroleum products to protect consumers and the environment. Additionally, we continue to make efforts to 'green' the energy sector through various renewable energy initiatives. The 1.3 MW Solar power plant is producing green power as expected, avoiding significant carbon dioxide emissions.

WATER

96. Madam Speaker, water resources is an area where we continue to face significant challenges as well as opportunities. In this respect we are partially victims of our own success. While we remain on target towards achieving near universal access by 2016, we appreciate the fact that, being a semi-arid country, water shall continue to be a relatively scarce and therefore precious resource. There is thus an absolute need for us to carefully manage our limited water resources to ensure optimal, equitable and sustainable utilisation.

97. Our efforts to maintain water supply security are, of course, further challenged by recurring drought. To address this challenge the Water Utilities Corporation (WUC) has introduced water restrictions and rationing in order to reduce water demand. As Government we have further 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.

98. Government is also working on associated infrastructure for supplying water from the newly built Dikgatlhong, Lotsane and Thune dams. A 75 km water pipeline from Dikgatlhong dam to Moralane was completed earlier this year at a cost of P 1.3 billion, while the North South Carrier 2 pipeline to Palapye is still under construction.

99. Looking to the future, Government continues to prioritise trans-boundary cooperation under the auspices of the SADC Protocol on shared watercourses, where our efforts continue to bear fruit. The Middlepits cluster villages project for the transfer of potable water from South Africa has been completed. A feasibility study of the Lesotho Highlands project should be completed next year, which will potentially allow the three countries participating in the project – i.e. Botswana, Lesotho and South Africa – to take the project forward. The Limpopo Watercourse Commission (LIMCOM) was launched in July 2014, which is home to all our dams that we currently rely on for water supply. Having LIMCOM as a functional platform to discuss and agree on management and utilisation of the Limpopo basin is thus critical.

100. Government remains committed to ultimately drawing about 495 Million Cubic Metres of water per annum from the Chobe/Zambezi River system. This share of water will initially be used for the planned Zambezi Integrated Agro-Commercial Development Project at Pandamatenga. In the longer term this resource is expected to play a key role in meeting our post 2025 demand.

BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE

101. Government continues to address the many challenges facing the construction sector, by putting in place structures at policy level to improve the performance. These include interventions such as restructuring initiatives and the introduction of project management for improved execution of projects.

102. Government continues to deploy audit teams to ensure that all new construction projects and procurement of offices and staff house are defect free at completion stage or rental/purchase stage.

103. With regard to problematic projects, a contract for the completion contract of the Sir Seretse Khama International Airport has been awarded. Work commenced in July 2014 and is scheduled to be completed during the first half of 2015. The completion works for Francistown Stadium, will cost just over P 100 million and is being undertaken as two separate contracts. Major refurbishments of Serowe Sports Complex, which included installation of the artificial turf and cleaning and repair of sewage pipes, has been completed and are in use.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

104. Madam Speaker, implementation of the National Research, Science, Technology and Innovation policy or RSTI has started with the appointment of focal persons to provide linkages between the ministries and departments. In order to develop capacity for Botswana to continuously monitor and evaluate its status and progress of RSTI development, we have applied for enrolment in the African Science and Technology Innovation Indicators (ASTII) Initiative.

105. The Indigenous Knowledge Systems Policy, whose development has recently been finalised, will enable Botswana to benefit from Indigenous Knowledge and also to impact the country's economic diversification as it can also contribute to innovation, poverty alleviation, cultural preservation and sustainable management of natural resources.

106. The Botswana Institute for Technology Research and Innovation (BITRI) is now established with the task of adapting, developing and enhancing technologies for local use. BITRI has identified a state-of-the-art solar technology for street lights. In addition, the organization will facilitate the construction of houses using Kalahari Sand Building Blocks in Kgalagadi South to ensure maximum beneficiation from the readily available sand in the construction of affordable housing.

107. The implementation of the Botswana Innovation Hub (BIH) is continuing with construction of its central icon building. The Hub has since 2013 also put into operation three additional innovation support programmes.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

108. Madame Speaker, funds amounting to P581 million have been approved for the implementation of Ipelegeng Programme during the 2014/15 financial year. The programme continues to provide temporary relief for the unemployed and vulnerable members of the society. It further contributes to infrastructure maintenance, environmental cleanliness and crime prevention. The monthly target has been increased from 61,670 to 65,757 beneficiaries.

109. Government continues to provide social protection services for all deserving different categories of vulnerable people, such as, Destitute Persons, Orphans and Vulnerable Children, Community Home-Based Care Patients, World War II Veterans, Old Age Pensioners, the Disabled and Remote Area Communities. Government cushions the debilitating effects of poverty on these vulnerable groups through provision of cash transfers, food baskets, feeding schemes, shelter, livestock, packages and labour based public works programme. A total amount of P1.8 billion has been allocated under these various programmes to support these vulnerable groups. This is an endeavour to promote dignity and self-development to communities to enable them to achieve sustainable livelihoods.

110. The monthly allowance for the over 99 thousand Old Age Pensioners was increased effective April 2014, as well as the allowance for World War II Veterans (or their spouses/children below the age of 21 years). Elderly persons who live alone or without care givers have been supported with radios to enable them to have access to information. Furthermore, blankets were provided in January 2014 and have been distributed to the Districts for issuance to the beneficiaries.

111. Government currently supports registered Destitute Persons who are benefiting from food baskets and a monthly cash allowance. This enables them to buy items of their choice which are not provided for in the food basket. 35,236 Orphans and Vulnerable Children, 34,845 Destitute Persons and 1,161 Community Home Based Care patients receive monthly food baskets, which are aimed at ensuring their food security, basic daily nutritional support and general good health. All beneficiaries, irrespective of their geographical location, receive all food items stipulated in the basket. To further provide dignity to beneficiaries, Government has introduced the Poso Card to ensure that all beneficiaries get their allowances every month.

112. Supplementary feeding is also provided to 755 Primary Schools with a total enrolment of 349,485 pupils and 966 Health Facilities with a total of 316,446 beneficiaries. Due to the drought that

engulfed part of the country last year, Government permitted provision of a second meal to the primary schools and double ration supply for health facilities for seriously affected areas. Government has continued with purchase of agricultural produce for Primary Schools. As at June 2014, P5 million was spent on purchasing such produce, with 2,935 farmers benefitting.

POVERTY ERADICATION

113. To continue its effort of eradicating abject poverty, Government has identified 20,636 beneficiaries to be assisted with Alternative Packages across the country. To this end, a total of 1,815 projects are operational while 461 are excelling. In the process 3,364 beneficiaries have been equipped with different technical skills, while 13,097 beneficiaries have been trained on business management skills. Since its inception, P99.2 million has been disbursed to the districts for the purchase of equipment and materials, as well as training of beneficiaries undertaking Alternative Packages.

114. Market days are also held monthly in every District at designated areas to create market opportunities for small entrepreneurs and facilitate income generation through direct sales. As at June 2014, 158 market days were held countrywide in which 546 beneficiaries participated.

115. Madam Speaker, the review of the National Policy on Care of People with Disabilities is now at finalization stage. The policy is premised on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This policy will guide the implementation of disability services in Botswana including, access to education, development of sport and sporting facilities for the disabled, affirmative action, employment and general economic empowerment of People with Disabilities. In the meantime, People with Disabilities continue to benefit from different Government programmes.

GENDER EQUITY

116. Madam Speaker, the World Economic Forum's 2014 Global Gender Gap Report and Index confirms that our country has been making great strides in achieving gender equality. In the overall ranking we climbed 34 places to 51 out of 142 countries surveyed, while in terms of female participation in the economy we moved up 40 places to number 8 in the world. With respect to equality of educational attainment we ranked at the top of the table, sharing first place over the past five years with a number of other countries for having achieved an almost perfect gender balance at all levels.

117. Under the Women's Economic Empowerment and Poverty Eradication Programmes, 64 women's groups were funded at a total cost of P9.5 million in 2013/14, resulting in job creation for 320 beneficiaries. This brings the total of supported women's groups to 310 at a total cost of P34.3 million benefitting a total of 2,480 individuals.

118. Government is cognisant of the fact that Women's Economic Empowerment and Poverty Eradication beneficiaries continue to face challenges in accessing markets where they can sell their goods. Efforts therefore continue to be made to support them in accessing markets locally, regionally and internationally. The National Women's Exposition which was introduced in 1999 to give women entrepreneurs access to markets has grown from 70 to 350 exhibitors in 2014. In order to enrol more women in this venture, the Northern Exposition was introduced in 2013.

119. Following the 2012 Gender Based Violence (GBV) Indicator Study, which revealed 67% of women as victims and 44% of men as perpetrators, the Government is piloting the GBV Referral System in Maun and Mochudi in an effort to capacitate all service providers in handling GBV cases. We are currently developing the Monitoring and Evaluation System through which the referral progress will be monitored. A more in-depth study on GBV has already commenced.

REMOTE AREA DEVELOPMENT

120. Government continues to use the Remote Area Development Programme as a rural development strategy intended to uplift the livelihoods of people living in the remote areas. To economically empower these communities, Government provides livestock, basic shelter, economic empowerment projects, which include bakery, leatherwork, horticulture, sewing; communal farms and cooperatives. As at July 2014 a total of 1,052 projects had been rolled out to beneficiaries in remote areas.

121. The Affirmative Action Framework for Remote Area Communities (RACs) is being implemented over a period of ten years until 2025, and it will be reviewed after five years. Regarding education, Government is now sponsoring 822 students in institutions of higher learning locally. District Councils are also financing education expenses for 634 members of RACs in Brigades and Technical Colleges.

HOUSING

122. To increase access to housing and promote socio-economic development, Government has allocated 1,844 out of a target of 6,786 plots on state land and 26,069 plots for various uses in tribal land across the country. To further promote access to housing for the low income group, Government has funded a total of 3,553 SHHA Home Improvement projects for implementation by local authorities.

123. Government has also funded 2,151 SHHA Turnkey projects for implementation by District Councils. In 2012/13 the Turnkey Development Scheme was transferred to the Botswana Housing Corporation and 2,000 projects are now being funded under this arrangement. Progress has been hampered by the high cost of material. It was therefore recognised that the maximum, P60,000, loan was insufficient; causing us to review our loan ceilings.

124. The Integrated Poverty Alleviation and Housing Scheme continues to assist Botswana to earn allowances and build houses through project self-help.

125. Government also recognises the need for public officers' housing needs. The Botswana Housing Corporation (BHC) thus started construction of district housing units during the Financial Year 2013/14. BHC has further delivered 712 houses countrywide. Of these, 575 were for third party projects. Since June 2014 BHC has started identifying plots for an additional 540 houses to be built under the Public Officers Housing Initiative.

126. Government has developed a new National Housing Strategy that includes initiatives such as the Social Housing Programme targeting the less privileged and disadvantaged. Some of the main features of the programme include: Instalment Purchase Scheme and low cost Youth apartments.

127. In an effort to provide shelter for the needy, Government will construct a total of 463 houses in the 2014/2015 financial year. These houses will benefit people at the Remote Area Settlements as well as in villages where people have been assessed and approved as destitute persons. Districts have started the building of these houses. At the same time 420 houses have already been built through generous contributions to the Presidential Housing Appeal.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

128. Madam Speaker, Youth development and empowerment is one of the priority areas for Government in its drive to reduce youth unemployment and poverty. Key areas of focus include Information and Communication Technology, Life Skills Development, Mentorship, Behaviour Change and Character Building in collaboration with different stakeholders.

129. Our attention in the past year has been on the introduction of a new component under the Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) in the form of Tirelo Setshaba to engage youth in meaningful

community development programmes, while giving them the needed experience for the world of work. Botswana National Service Programme or new Tirelo Setshaba was launched in April 2014, and to date 11,200 young people have enrolled in the programme.

130. Government is also continuing with the National Internship Programme as a platform for skills transfer and development. As of April 2014, there were 4,228 Interns enrolled in the programme.

131. The Youth Development Fund is yet another component of YES aimed at supporting young entrepreneurs with financing for their business ideas. For the financial year 2013/14 1,111 projects were funded with an amount of P 99 million creating employment opportunities for youth.

132. Government continues to monitor progress on youth mainstreaming through officers seconded to different Ministries. Reports indicate that for the financial year 2013/14 592 young people have been funded to the value of P 6.9 million under the LIMID programme, 2,024 plots have been allocated to the youth and 9,794 youth freelancers were engaged.

133. Government also continues to engage Youth companies and individuals with vocational skills in construction maintenance and rehabilitation of facilities. These youth companies benefit under the 15% Maintenance Reservation Programme.

134. Since the programme started in 2009 to-date, maintenance tenders worth P 105 million have been awarded country wide to 171 youth owned contractors and 177 individuals with vocational skills in the construction industry. Since 2013 the private sector has also participated in engaging youth companies. The Department of Building and Engineering Services maintains an updated database of Youth Construction Companies, while efforts to encourage others to engage Youth owned companies are bearing fruit.

135. In recognition of the youth as a valuable resource for development, BITRI is in the process of setting up ICT centres to engage interns to equip them with various skills for self-employment.

EDUCATION

136. Madam Speaker, Government's commitment to move Botswana forward is perhaps best reflected in our enduring commitment to the education and training of our youth. This has resulted in education and vocational training consistently receiving the lion's share of the budget. We have, however, become increasingly concerned that our quantitative success in increasing access to education over the years has not been adequately matched by qualitative achievement, as evidenced by disappointing examination results as well as the apparent skills mismatch between many of our graduates and potential employers. This has led us to review our syllabi, while looking into additional ways to improve our schools and training institutions.

137. In recognizing the challenges faced by the education sector, Government is undertaking a system level transformation in the form of the development of a sector strategic plan; the Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan (ETSSP) 2014-19. The Plan is designed to comprehensively transform education from pre-primary to tertiary level, focusing on improving both the quality and management of education.

138. Progress made towards ETSSP includes the development and implementation of programmes for the whole system. These include the introduction of reception classes, which were piloted in January 2013. This programme was expanded to another 115 public primary schools in 2014. Additional initiatives aimed at improving performance of the sector include the introduction of the six weeks "Standard One Orientation" programme in 754 public primary schools and the "Leadership Turnaround Strategy" which was piloted in 6 senior secondary schools and 42 junior secondary schools in 2013.

139. In terms of the sector's legislative framework, progress has been made over the past year regarding the transformation of the Tertiary Education Council into the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) and the Botswana Training Authority (BOTA) into the Botswana Qualifications Authority (BQA). The mandate for the HRDC is to coordinate Human Resource development as well as manage Tertiary education funding, while BQA is mandated to develop and implement the National Credit and Qualifications Framework that will provide accreditation and monitoring for quality assurance.

140. The Botswana Examination Council (BEC) is being transformed into a National Assessment Authority with an expanded mandate to include assessment and moderation for Technical and Vocational skills, as well as indigenous skills.

141. Major projects aimed at improving educational access include the expansion of two junior schools into unified schools, construction of new schools as well as additional housing units for teachers in various schools nation-wide and the maintenance of schools.

142. Further progress has been made with respect to provision of access to education at tertiary level as reflected by the increase in Gross Enrolment Rate at Tertiary Education level from 47,889 (or 15.1%) in 2009/10 to 57,447 (or 20.2%) in 2013-14. The increase in tertiary enrolment was for the most part, supported by the introduction of the 'Study in Botswana' initiative which facilitated rapid growth in local placement of learners with the consequent building of local institutional capacity as well as provision of tertiary access to more learners.

143. Construction of the Academic Hospital under the University of Botswana is expected to be completed by the end of 2014, while the Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST) has relocated to its permanent campus in Palapye. These two institutions will facilitate a further increase in access, as well as improved quality and diversification of programmes at the tertiary level.

144. To upgrade primary schools across the country, District Councils have been engaged in construction of teachers' quarters, classrooms and toilet blocks. Currently some 77 classrooms, 456 toilet cubicles and 316 teachers' quarters are under construction and are expected to be completed during the 2015/2016 financial year.

145. The Construction Industry Trust Fund (CITF) and Madirelo Training and Testing Centre (MTTC) continue to make special efforts targeting un-employed and un-skilled youth, school leavers and disadvantaged groups to enable them to acquire practical competencies in building and construction trades. During the 2013/14 financial year, the CITF Gaborone Main Centre graduated 1408 trainees in various building and allied industry trades, with 879 graduates being employed in various building and construction projects in Gaborone and surrounding places. In line with the CITF Strategic Plan, the Centre has expanded the level and scope of skills training to reduce dependency on external recruitment of semi-skilled and skilled artisans in mining.

146. The Kazungula Mobile Training Unit in the Chobe District is fully operational, and is targeting emerging mega projects such as the Kazungula Bridge, in the region by providing trained semi-skilled and skilled artisans for such projects. It currently has an enrolment of 242 trainees in various building and construction related trades.

147. Since 2011 Educational Television has continued to broadcast programmes to supplement the curriculum, mainly focusing on secondary education. With the digital migration of terrestrial television signals scheduled for 2015 we intend to increase broadcasting time to allow for programming directed to younger learners and also out of school or non-formal learners.

HEALTH

148. Madam Speaker, Government continues to invest significantly in health services, which has been reflected in a reduction in childhood and mother mortalities and increase in life expectancy in the country.

149. We are continuing with extension of operation hours in clinics from 8 to 24 hours to provide continuous access to services to communities. The newly introduced emergency medical services have yielded good results and the initiative has now been introduced in four centres. Plans are underway to establish more centres in the 2014-15 financial year.

150. Availability of medicines and medical supplies continue to improve with average availability of vital, essential and necessary medicines at Government health facilities being at 88.3% at the end of June 2014, while the availability of laboratory supplies at Central Medical Stores has continued to be at 100%. In an effort to further improve access to medicines, decentralisation of specialist medicines to clinics has now been rolled out to include Gaborone and Francistown, and efforts are being made to include all the districts. The warehousing and distribution at Central Medical Stores was also outsourced in May 2014 and this has resulted in regular availability of transport from CMS to facilities.

151. I am pleased to note the placement over the past two years of resident specialists at most of our district hospitals, thereby reducing the turnaround times to access specialist services. Some district hospitals are also now offering sub-specialist services.

152. In a bid to strengthen the port health services, during the current 2014/15 financial year, we will roll out services to three more ports of entry bringing the total to twelve. This is in response to our obligations of the International Health Regulations which we have domesticated into the Public Health Act of 2013. We now intend to extend our services to more points of entry given the steady increase of international travellers coming into our country and the continued challenge of transnational outbreaks of communicable diseases such as Ebola.

153. Botswana has not been spared from the growing burden of Non Communicable diseases, such as cardiovascular conditions, cancers, diabetes and chronic respiratory disease. To get a better measure of the growing challenge that these and other conditions pose to public health a National Non Communicable Disease risk factor or 'STEPSwise' survey was carried out to facilitate the mapping and quantification of the burden of risk factors leading to non-communicable diseases. This will in turn inform both policy and response strategies to curb this burden.

154. The national Quality Improvement Project (QIP) has been successfully rolled out to ensure access to quality maternal health services, which has resulted in a reduction of maternal and neonatal mortality.

155. Government is determined to improve the quality of health care in our public health facilities. A Performance audit tool is being piloted at Princess Marina Hospital and will soon be rolled out to other health facilities to address attitudes of health professionals as well as improve patient outcomes.

156. The Alcohol Levy as one of interventions to combat harmful effects of alcohol has as of June 2014 collected a cumulative total of P1.441 billion. Government further developed a National Framework for Alcohol and Substance Abuse Treatment which will guide the delivery of rehabilitation services.

HIV AND AIDS

157. Madam Speaker, as a nation we remain resolute in our commitment to getting to Zero New HIV infections, Zero Discrimination and Zero AIDS related deaths by 2016. To that end, in April 2014 consultants were engaged to review the HIV/AIDS National Strategic Framework II.

158. Our latest survey results show that the number of people who have tested has increased from 56% in 2008 to 70% in 2013. The survey also shows that HIV prevalence rate has increased from 17.6% in 2008 to 18.5% in 2013 whilst HIV incidence rate has decreased from 1.45% in 2008 to 1.35% in 2013. Whilst the incidence results shows that we are moving in the right direction given that the number of new infections per annum is going down, it is worrisome that the absolute figure is still high, with approximately ten thousand new infections per annum. For us to truly achieve zero new infections our only option is to change our behaviour.

159. Since 2009 some 115,000 or 29.8% of men countrywide have been circumcised against a target of 385,000. While a higher percentage of those seeking circumcision comes from the school going boys, efforts are underway to reach to the out of school youth and older men through such interventions as mobile clinics.

CULTURE

160. Madam Speaker, Government continues to run art and cultural programmes to nurture talent and provide leisure and recreation for young people and Botswana as a whole. The President's Day competitions started on 11th May 2014 with visual art exhibitions. This year, a total of 18,262 performing artists and 3,337 visual artists had registered to participate in the events.

161. Additional efforts to preserve and develop our national cultural heritage are also bearing fruit. These include market days which are regularly held in 20 localities across the country, where 428 Visual artists are accorded the opportunity to market and sell their products to the general public.

162. The 50th Anniversary Celebrations were officially launched on the 5th July 2014. The celebrations are held under the theme "Botswana Pele". One of our ongoing initiatives has been the hoisting of the Botswana flag in all communication towers nationwide to instil a sense of ownership and pride in our national flag and country. I commend all of the tower owners who have partnered with BOT 50 in this project.

LIBRARY SERVICES

163. Madam Speaker, libraries offer diverse programmes aimed at transforming the lives of the communities they serve. These include life skills, educational, cultural and recreational programmes. Over 26 thousand people participated in these programmes during the last financial Year. Libraries also contribute to bridging the digital divide by providing computers and internet for free public access. A total of 62 public libraries have internet, and over 63,896 members of the public have been trained on Basic ICT to enable them to participate in the cyber space to improve their lives.

164. Since 2007 Government has partnered with the Robert & Sara Rothschild Family Foundation to construct a total of 20 libraries. To date twelve libraries have been completed and are operational, while the thirteenth library is under construction at Maunatlala and is scheduled to start operation by February 2015.

SPORT AND RECREATION

165. Madam Speaker, over the past year we have been delighted with the increased success of our athletes in various international completions, including the 2nd Africa Youth Games that were held here in Gaborone with nearly 2,000 athletes from 53 countries competing. Botswana was represented by 198 athletes from various sport codes, who together won a total 31 gold, silver and bronze medals. Their success was followed up with two more silver medals at the Nanjing Youth Olympics. Let me further say that we are equally proud and thankful to all the organisers and volunteers who made the Gaborone games such an overall success.

166. This past year we were further delighted by the performance of our senior athletes at the Commonwealth Games and African Senior Championships. At the latter event we emerged in fourth overall position, with 6 medals including 4 gold medals.

167. While this was truly a year that Nijel Amos and Isaac Makwala consolidated their status as global sport stars, there are many others also worthy of mention, as the number of Batswana who are successfully competing on the international stage has been steadily growing. Looking to the future we are working towards further growing these numbers by implementing different sport development initiatives.

168. The constituency sport tournaments continue to be popular. Participation rates have grown from over 28,000 at inception in late 2008 to over 67,000 as of June 2014. There is an encouraging trend of players graduating from the tournaments to the mainstream teams, as well as some teams rising to affiliate to formal football structures.

HUMAN RIGHTS

169. Madam Speaker, Government is committed to implementing its obligations under the international human rights instruments it is party to, and the promotion of the rights of its citizens. We have taken the decision to establish an institution that will address issues of human rights. In this connection legislation amending the Ombudsman Act and establishing a hybrid institution that will address issue of maladministration and human rights will in the near future be brought to the National Assembly.

170. We have decided to develop a Comprehensive Human Rights Strategy and National Action Plan to address the commitments Botswana has undertaken under the various human rights treaty bodies and the Universal Periodic Review mechanism of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

171. Madam Speaker, Botswana was re-elected to the Human Rights Council for the period 2015 – 2017. We will further serve as the Council's Vice Chair in 2015. In these developments we enjoyed the support of the African member states. We shall continue to use our membership to the Council to support initiatives aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of women, children, human rights defenders, civil and political rights as well as accountability for human rights violations in countries such as Syria, North Korea and Sudan, to mention some.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

172. Madam Speaker, Botswana continues to play an active and meaningful role within the United Nations, intergovernmental and regional organizations in shaping the global agenda. As a small and developing country, multilateral diplomacy remains the most effective vehicle through which we advance and protect our national interests in the complex global system. We partake in this international discourse as a responsible member of the international community, to contribute to a more peaceful, united and prosperous world.

173. Our foreign policy is premised on the need to improve human dignity through the promotion and protection of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, good governance, sustainable development and international peace and security. These noble principles are critical in advancing the cause of humanity in a fast changing, highly competitive, diverse and sometimes violent world.

174. Madam Speaker, Botswana's credentials and voice in promoting such cardinal values have earned her respect and goodwill around the world. This goodwill has translated into willingness by other countries to interact and collaborate with Botswana in various ways. In this context, over the past twelve months, we had the privilege and honour of welcoming dignitaries from friendly countries and development partners. We also hosted a number of high level meetings.

175. In our international relations we shall attempt to influence the adoption of democracy where there is a deficit in certain parts of the world, and give our support to those who are struggling to sustain theirs from being eroded. One thing is a fact, democracy will come to all those who are owed it. What is inevitable is that if democracy is not given, it will one day eventually be taken.

176. Botswana has played her part as a compassionate member of the international community by contributing to appeals for assistance for victims of natural disasters. The value of our international partnerships was also reflected by our participation in global efforts to stem the spread of the Ebola virus, to which we have contributed financially to the UN and AU appeals and also directly with equipment to the affected countries.

177. Over the past year incidents of terrorism have increased in countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan. The international community must remain resolute in addressing these cruel acts that continue to claim innocent lives. We will continue to express our solidarity with those affected countries and convey our heartfelt sympathies towards victims and their families.

178. Botswana attaches the greatest importance to the peace and progress of her neighbours in SADC and the wider Africa region. We have therefore remained an active participant in SADC and African Union efforts to advance peace and stability.

179. Madam Speaker, Botswana, as a developing country, needs the support of other countries to advance in an increasingly competitive and ever shrinking global market place. For this reason, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those governments, international organisations, NGOs and individuals who have contributed to the development of our country and its people.

CONCLUSION

180. Madam Speaker, let me conclude by once more affirming what shall be Government's core priorities for the next five years. Our foremost goal remains increasing job opportunities for all Batswana, especially for our youth. Our second priority is to bring dignity to the lives of all Batswana through the elimination of abject poverty among able bodied Batswana by 2016-17. Our third priority is to secure our citizens' future by ensuring that they have access to land, which is their birthright and shelter which should be the common right of all.

181. In addressing these priorities, while meeting our other challenges, we simply must further find it in ourselves to once and for all stem the spread of HIV.

182. Finally, Madam Speaker, in overcoming 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.