



STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY

LT. GEN. DR. SERETSE KHAMA IAN KHAMA

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

TO THE

FOURTH SESSION

OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT

6<sup>th</sup> November 2017

GABORONE



## INTRODUCTION

1. Madam Speaker, before beginning, I would kindly request that we observe a moment of silence in remembrance of all those who have departed during the last year.
2. Madam Speaker, Honourable Members, the opening of this Assembly is an annual opportunity for us to reaffirm our collective values and aspirations, as well as interrogate the ongoing performance of our public institutions, as we work to better the lives of Batswana.
3. Today we can take comfort in the fact that through our complementary efforts as the executive and legislative branches of Government we have over the past years been able to make substantial progress towards promoting the well being of Batswana. Notwithstanding challenges on the way, our nation has continued to move forward along the path of democratic development.
4. While a journey towards a more perfect society in an imperfect world can never be complete, our own progress continues to be marked by measurable milestones contained in our long-term Vision, National Development Plans and goals for sustainable human development.
5. Madam Speaker, the launch of Vision 2036 has provided us with a refined roadmap to meet our 21st century objectives. At its core, the Vision recognises that our country's outstanding economic, social, environmental and governance issues are interconnected, as defined by its four pillars. In this respect I am honoured that Cabinet appointed me to serve as the Vision Champion, a commitment I look forward to pursuing in the coming years.
6. It should be noted, however, that Vision 2036 has not been conceived as a Government agenda. It is rather a blueprint for national progress that requires participation and partnership from all individuals and sectors of society.

## Economic Outlook

7. Turning to our immediate economic outlook, in the aftermath of the 2015 recession, we have experienced a welcome recovery in domestic growth, which according to current medium term projections is expected to continue.
8. National Accounts data released by Statistics Botswana in April 2017, confirmed that our economy grew by 4.3% in 2016. As was anticipated in my previous address, this growth was driven by non-mining sectors such as Trade, Hotels & Restaurants and Transport & Communications industries, which registered an increase of 13.5% and 5.6% respectively. A key factor in boosting the hotel and hospitality sector in recent years has been the growth of downstream diamond industry activities following the relocation of the Diamond Trading Company from London to Gaborone in 2012.
9. Notwithstanding the negative effects of the BCL liquidation, contraction in the mining sector was also significantly reduced last year to 3.7%, as opposed to the 19.6% we suffered in 2015.
10. In line with these trends, domestic growth is currently projected to reach 4.7% in 2017 and 5.3% in 2018. This positive outlook, which builds on our average 3.9% growth during NDP 10, is expected to be sustained by further improvements in the Mining, Trade, Hotels & Restaurants, Transport & Communication, and Water & Electricity sectors. The projected expansion of the Water & Electricity sector, largely resulting from an additional unit at Morupule B power station and the restoration of Morupule A, is further expected to boost other sectors of the economy.
11. It is also anticipated that diamond production will increase, mainly due to a recovery in global demand, particularly in advanced economies.

12. According to the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) most recent World Economic Outlook report, released in October 2017, global economic growth is projected to increase from 3.2% in 2016 to 3.6% in 2017 and 3.7% in 2018. Despite this modestly positive outlook, medium term downside risks remain, including prolonged policy and political uncertainty in both advanced and emerging economies.
13. Advanced economies are now expected to grow at 2.2% in 2017 and 2.0% in 2018, improving on the 1.7% attained in 2016.

### **Inflation, Trade and Foreign Exchange Reserves**

14. Madam Speaker, it is heartening to note that the inflation rate has been, and is expected to remain at the lower end of the Bank of Botswana's medium-term objective range of 3 – 6%. Since the beginning of this year the rate hovered between 3.1% and 3.5%.
15. I am further pleased to report a positive trend in our balance of trade. According to Statistics Botswana, total imports for 2016 were valued at P66.9 billion, against P73.2 billion recorded in 2015, representing a fall of 8.6%. Total exports for the same period were valued at P80.3 billion, an increase of 26.5%, compared to P63.5 billion recorded in 2015. As a result, our trade balance was in surplus of P13.5 billion in 2016, resulting in a balance of payments surplus of P2.8 billion, in contrast to the deficit of P0.57 billion that was recorded for 2015.
16. As of the end August 2017, our foreign exchange reserves were valued at P76.6 billion, which is equivalent to 17 months of import cover. Of the total reserves, Government Investment Account amounted to P32.1 billion. Our exchange rate policy continues to support competitiveness of local industries in both domestic and international markets by maintaining the stability of the Pula against a basket of leading currencies.

## **2016/2017 Budget Outturn**

17. Turning to the budget, the overall fiscal balance for the 2016/17 financial year was in surplus of P1.12 billion, instead of the P1.10 billion deficit that had been projected. As Government we shall strive to always avoid deficit spending, which if unchecked will erode our foreign exchange reserves and impact negatively on our international sovereign credit ratings. In this respect, our prudence was last month rewarded by Standard & Poor's (S&P) who upgraded our outlook to "stable", while reaffirming our "A-/A2" credit rating with specific reference to our fiscal management as well as improved expectation for sustainable economic growth.
18. The budget outturn for 2016/17 indicates that total revenue and grants amounted to P57.40 billion, an increase of 2.6%, from P55.93 billion estimate in the revised budget. This comprised tax revenue of P35.56 billion and non-tax revenue of P21.68 billion.
19. Total expenditure and net lending during 2016/17 amounted to P56.27 billion. From this amount, recurrent expenditure amounted to P41.17 billion, against P39.66 billion in the revised budget, while development expenditure amounted to P15.16 billion.

## **Economic Diversification Drive (EDD)**

20. Madam Speaker, over the past six years, the short term component of the Economic Diversification Drive (EDD) has resulted in a substantial increase in Government procurement from local manufacturers and service providers, amounting to a cumulative total expenditure of P13.93 billion as of March 2017, which constitutes 52% of our total procurement for the period.
21. Implementation of the EDD medium to long term strategy for incubating local production has continued to focus on the leather, dairy and textiles sub-sector strategies. Almost all the components for the development of the leather industry in Lobatse are in place awaiting the final appointment of a technical partner, who is anticipated to be in place before end of the year.

22. Government's support for dairy production is evidenced by our allocation of land to farmers, which has been accompanied by increased milk production. As of March 2017, local production stood at 6 million litres or about 10% of annual national milk demand, meaning that there is further opportunity for local producers. To further develop local dairy, we have sought and obtained approval from the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) for an extension of the infant industry protection for Ultra High Temperature (UHT) milk, for an additional 8 years.
23. Government, in partnership with the European Union (EU), has implemented a Private Sector Development Programme to address enterprise capacity constraints. Since June 2017, one hundred enterprises had benefited from this initiative.
24. In line with our long term Vision, Government has embarked on Cluster Development Initiative to enhance economic diversification in five priority sectors, namely: beef, diamond beneficiation, financial services and mining and tourism. An action plan for capacity building is now being put into place for each of these clusters.

## **Investment Promotion**

25. Madam Speaker, since its inception in 2012, the Botswana Investment and Trade Centre (BITC) has attracted a total of P10 billion worth of foreign and domestic capital investment, resulting in the creation of 8,831 additional jobs. The total business expansion investment level stood at P618.6 million in 2016/17 compared to P377 million reported in 2015/16.
26. Capacity building interventions through the Botswana Export Development Programme are also beginning to bear fruit. Ten companies are currently being assisted in developing their export marketing, while another eight are undergoing quality management and productivity improvement training.

27. The Botswana Development Corporation (BDC) has, despite two periods of recession, also experienced growth, with its total investment assets increasing from P1.2 billion to P2 billion over the past decade. This growth has supported over 5,000 jobs across various sectors of the economy.
28. Through its transformational programme the BDC has re-positioned itself for further growth, with over 1000 new jobs having been created since 2015 from new investments.

## **Enabling Business**

29. Madam Speaker, in April 2017 Botswana was ranked number one in the Africa Investment Index by Quantum Global Holdings. But, the value of such accolades will be undermined if we fail to improve our associated Ease of Doing Business Rankings. Efforts are thus underway towards further enhancing the business environment through the implementation of a doing business reforms road map, with an accompanying Regulatory Impact Assessment Strategy. As part of this process, in August 2017, Government, in consultation with Business Botswana and other stakeholders, took the decision to lift a wide range of onerous tender compliance certification processes.
30. Government also continues to leverage ICT to improve the provision of services. To this end, a One Stop Service Center has been set up.
31. The Companies Act and the Registration of Business Names Act have been reviewed to enable online registration. These measures should improve turnaround times for company registration from days to hours.
32. Strengthening our intellectual property system will increase our ability to export locally produced goods and services. Government is, therefore, developing a National Intellectual Property Policy with technical assistance from the World Intellectual Property Organisation. We are also in the process of putting into place an Intellectual Property Office to streamline business processes related to intellectual property registration. This project is expected to be completed during 2018/19.



## **Special Economic Zones**

33. Madam Speaker, Government is continuing with the setting up of the Special Economic Zones Authority (SEZA). We have developed and are now implementing the Authority's structure, business development and marketing strategies. We have also commenced the domestic and international marketing of SEZA sites.
34. SEZA is presently giving priority to the development of the "Aerotropolis" Special Economic Zone attached to Sir Seretse Khama International Airport (SSKIA-SEZ), which will further incorporate land parcels held by the Civil Aviation Authority of Botswana (CAAB), Botswana Innovation and Diamond Hubs. A master plan and detailed designs for the combined site are being finalised. This will open the door for further development through Public-Private-Partnerships.
35. In other areas, implementation of Gaborone Fairgrounds Servicing Plan will commence in January 2018; with completion targeted for 2019. This will entail: (a) Zoning the Fairground site, (b) Upgrading the bandwidth, (c) Facilitating the setting up of call centres, (d) Developing the Master Plan and undertaking detailed designs, and (e) Provision of infrastructure.

## **Entrepreneurship Development**

36. Entrepreneurship promotion and Small, Medium and Micro-Enterprise (SMME) development remain critical components of our overall industrialisation programme. Besides generating jobs and income, SMMEs enhance production supply chains alongside larger firms. The Local Enterprise Authority (LEA) thus continues to develop and implement programs to promote SMME growth.
37. Over the last 3 years, LEA developed 1,834 business plans of which 245 worth P96 million have so far been approved. LEA has further capacitated 17,040 entrepreneurs, through business mentoring, coaching, technical and business training. In addition, a total of 25,529 aspirant entrepreneurs were trained, of whom 24,352 were youth.

38. LEA is also offering incubation programmes to provide emerging entrepreneurs with business operating space and training. In this regard, the existing incubators, namely the Leather Incubator in Gaborone, Light Industrial Incubator in Francistown and Pilane Multi-Purpose Incubator, were fully occupied by the end of March 2017.
39. The Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA) has been steadfast in carrying out its mandate to support citizen business start-ups. Since 2008, CEDA has funded 4,006 enterprises with a total value of P3.1 billion, generating 18,738 jobs. During the 2016/17 financial year, the Agency funded 717 new enterprises with a total value of P434 million, generating 3,071 jobs.
40. CEDA beneficiaries have notably included 1,188 youth entrepreneurs with total funding amounting to P585 million. During 2016/17 financial year, the Agency financed 189 youth owned businesses with loans amounting to P80 million.
41. The Agency has also been proactive in supporting women owned enterprises, which over the past 2 years have received P366 million that constitutes 44% of total CEDA funding. CEDA also continues to explore innovative avenues for financial inclusion, such as Mabogo Dinku, which since its inception in August 2016, has assisted 450 beneficiaries.
42. Government, through the Technical Devices Fund levy, has invested in the creative industries as an engine for job creation, poverty alleviation and economic diversification. Since May 2013, a total of 41 projects have been funded to the tune of P34.8 million. These projects cover different sectors of the creative industry including book publishing, film and video production, capacity building and training, theatre performances, music and software development.
43. Following the approval of the SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap in 2015, an action plan has been developed and approved by the Extra Ordinary SADC Summit of heads of State and Government in March 2017. The Plan, which is aligned to our Industrial

Development Policy, outlines areas of opportunities priority sectors; namely agro-processing, mineral beneficiation and pharmaceuticals. It is important to emphasise that implementation of this strategy calls for the participation of the private sector and Non-Governmental Organisations, as well as Government.

## **SPEDU Region**

44. Madam Speaker, Government came up with a Response Strategy that will guide the Strategic approach to revitalise the economy of the SPEDU Region. The Strategy calls for the establishment of the region as a Special Economic Zone catering for, among others, renewable energy generation, recycling and distribution of green technology components, manufacturing, agriculture and tourism. The latter will include an International Convention Centre that will position the town as a prime destination for events and conferences.
45. SPEDU has also promoted Selebi-Phikwe as a venue for public sector events and workshops. This has already seen the town hosting events such as the Africa Industrialisation Day, the International Day of Cooperative Societies and the 2017 World Accreditation Day Commemoration, along with softball and golf tournaments.
46. Implementation of the Selebi-Phikwe Revitalization Program has further resulted in 12 key projects in ICT, manufacturing and agricultural sectors, which have the potential to create 1,540 jobs once fully operational with a total investment of P277 million. In the process, SPEDU has experienced increased interest among additional potential investors.

## **Cooperative Development**

47. Botswana's 265 cooperatives have long supported economic and social development, especially in rural areas. In recent years, we have witnessed a shift from the traditional form of Co-operatives like consumers to emerging forms in such areas as estate development and crafts. Government continues to support the resuscitation

and revamping of Co-operatives in line with the Co-operative Transformation Strategy. The Botswana Co-operative Training Centre has been upgraded and accredited to ensure provision of relevant programmes to address issues of poor corporate governance.

## **Local Competitiveness**

48. The Competition Authority has empowered citizens and enhanced the competitiveness of local companies by overseeing merger applications involving foreign investors. The Authority further imposed conditions for merging enterprises to commit to local sourcing and in some cases, build the capacity of the suppliers to be able to meet the required standards to supply.
49. The Botswana Bureau of Standards (BOBS) has developed a total of 261 local standards, focusing largely on construction, chemical and agriculture and food sectors. Consistent with the World Trade Organization (WTO) requirements that member states notify each other on technical regulations and conformity assessment policies, we have, through our National Enquiry Point, continued to disseminate information on standards and technical regulations. We also continue to educate industries on the benefits derived from the use of standards.

## **Economic Stimulus Programme (ESP)**

50. The Economic Stimulus Programme (ESP) remains a Government priority with an allocated budget of P2.2 billion. ESP achievements during 2016/17 included the award of majority of projects to citizen contractors, the completion of projects and employment creation. Significant progress has been made in the overall execution of ESP projects as over 80% of the 2016/17 planned projects have been started and some completed, covering the maintenance and expansion of Senior and Junior Secondary Schools; as well as backlog eradication in provision of classrooms, teachers quarters and ablution blocks in 139 primary schools country wide. Other projects include the construction of 30 Customary Courts and minimal and peripheral land servicing just to mention a few.

51. There has been significant progress in the construction of houses for health care workers with 127 houses currently being constructed. This translates into a total of 41 contractors having been engaged; thus meeting Government's objective of employing as many small contractors as possible throughout the country. 27 clinics will be constructed across the country and are at design stage. We are also constructing 3 Agricultural Service Centres.
52. At the end of March 2017, the total number of citizens employed under ESP stood at 20,287, which was 99.2% of the overall total number of people employed under the programme. The implementation of ESP projects is also further boosting job creation through procurement of local products and services.
53. Notwithstanding the overall success of the ESP initiative, some projects experienced delays due to capacity constraints, non-compliance to EDD policy, delays in delivery of materials and poor performance by contractors. Lessons learned from such bottlenecks are now being used to improve ongoing delivery.
54. A National Local Economic Development Framework and Action Plan has been adopted to guide and coordinate the planning and implementation of the Local Economic Development (LED), which is expected to facilitate local economic growth and job creation.

## **Research, Science, Technology and Innovation**

55. Madam Speaker, in line with Vision 2036, investment in research, science, technology and innovation will be a key factor in our transformation into a knowledge based economy. Government's ongoing support for research and innovation has included the establishment of the Innovation Fund, capacity building for tertiary education institutions through the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) Research Grants.
56. Since its 2012 establishment, the Botswana Institute for Technology Research and Innovation (BITRI) has developed and adapted technology solutions. An example is Kgalagadi Sand Building Block

that enables the construction of buildings without the use of river sand. 5 building block depots have so far been established with the intention of rolling-out this technology to other locations.

57. BITRI has also developed Seding solar lights, which provide street lighting to remote villages. BITRI has further opened a Centre for Material Sciences, which utilizes nano-science technologies. The Centre will serve the region by providing testing services to the industry, while serving as a home for cutting edge research.
58. We have also ventured into advanced technologies such as radio–astronomy through our participation in the Square Kilometre Array project, which aims to develop the world’s largest radio telescope by 2024. High powered laboratory equipment has been installed at BIUST as part of this project, which will develop local capacity through training of post graduate students and staff.
59. The Botswana Innovation Hub has begun holding activities at Botswana’s first Science and Technology Park. In the meantime, the Hub’s technology entrepreneurship development programme has been assisting innovative start-ups to take their products and services to market. The programme has focused on development of local digital content, mobile applications and indigenous knowledge based nature products.

## **Public Infrastructure**

60. Government remains committed to transforming the local construction industry for greater competitiveness; as such 3 regulatory bodies within the sector were established, namely the Engineers Registration Board, Architects Registration Council and the Quantity Surveyors Registration Council to ensure professionalism in the sector. The Building Control Act is currently under review to align it with modern industry trends within the built environment. An Industry Authority Bill which will regulate all contractors that want to practice in the country is also currently being drafted.

61. The department that had previously been mandated to construct public building infrastructure and its related maintenance services is being reorganised to better align implementing structures with a defined area of the project cycle. To further improve service delivery, projects of up to P100 million threshold have been devolved to the line ministries. Facilities management have also been devolved to line ministries to improve on the upkeep of public infrastructure across ministries.
62. Some ongoing mega projects include the construction of Forensic Science Laboratory for the Botswana Police Service in Gaborone, the Moshupa and Shakawe Primary Hospitals and Police and staff housing at Mathubudukwane, Maitengwe and Semolale. All of these projects are scheduled for completion during 2019.
63. Government has deployed building infrastructure audit teams to ensure that newly constructed projects are defects free. During the current financial year, 17 audits and inspections were conducted resulting in remedial action before handover or rental of the buildings.
64. I am pleased to report that during the past year, the Bobonong and Letlhakeng internal roads and Palapye and Molepolole Bus Ranks were completed, while construction of the Tutume, Gabane and Kang internal roads have commenced and are scheduled to be completed within 36 months.

## **Minerals**

65. Madam Speaker, the minerals sector remains a principal source of revenue and primary sector for the growth and diversification of our economy. Government will therefore continue to promote mineral beneficiation to maximise value addition.
66. Copper and nickel prices continued to be unstable in 2016/17, creating uncertainty for potential investors. By the end of June 2017, the average price of nickel was 7% below the same period in 2016. More encouraging is the fact that copper prices have improved by 19% when compared to the same period in 2016.

67. The prolonged non-profitability of BCL Limited led to it being placed under final liquidation in June 2017. Tati Nickel Mining Company meanwhile remains under provisional liquidation. Boseto Mine which was acquired by Khoemacau Copper Mining also remains under care and maintenance. Mowana Mine has been acquired by new investors, who started operations in April 2017.
68. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to report that there are more positive developments in the energy minerals sub-sector. For instance, A-Cap Resources was granted a mining licence in September 2016 for uranium at Serule, while Sese Power Subsidiary, was granted a mining licence for coal at Sese in January 2017.
69. Although sales for rough diamonds improved during 2016 and 2017, demand remains both sluggish and volatile, resulting in the continued closure of marginal mines, such as Lerala and BK 11. The polished diamond market is also relatively depressed with negative repercussions on local diamond manufacturing.
70. We do, nonetheless, remain committed to creating an enabling environment that will catalyse and sustain our diamond beneficiation initiatives and are thus formulating a new diamond beneficiation strategy, which will be concluded by the end of February 2018.

## **Agriculture and Food Security**

71. Madam Speaker, Government promotes agriculture through programmes such as the Integrated Support Programme for Arable Agriculture Development (ISPAAD) and the Livestock Management and Infrastructure Development (LIMID).
72. This year, in spite of the negative effects of cyclone Dineo in some areas, the outlook of the agricultural sector remains positive largely due to above average rainfall and the increased adoption of technologies by farmers across all sectors. The drive to commercialise and diversify our agriculture, through programmes such as the National Master Plan for Arable Agriculture and Dairy Development (NAMPADD) has resulted in many farmers engaging in commercial agriculture.



73. We have also experienced positive developments in response to the effects of climate change, with farmers adopting technologies and conservation measures that include the planting of drought resistant crops.
74. With the return of relatively good rains, there has also been a significant increase in the uptake of the ISPAADD programme, with the number of participating farmers rising to 100,250 farmers in 2016/17, a 34% increase from the previous financial year. This was accompanied by a noticeable increase in the total area planted, to 384,250 HA, which is 32% above the previous cropping season.
75. Madam Speaker, there has been a corresponding improvement in the domestic food security. The harvest of major cereal crops (i.e. maize, millet and sorghum) was estimated at 175,000 metric tonnes in 2016/17, a notable improvement from 2015/16 harvest of 54,000 metric tonnes. The deficit in the sorghum supply is expected to decrease by around 80%, to 31,000 metric tonnes this year, while the shortfall in the domestic supply of maize is expected to decrease by 10% to 274,000 metric tonnes.
76. In the livestock subsector, the LIMID programme has been expanded to cover different packages including small stock, Tswana chickens, guinea fowl, fodder production, water reticulation and development of animal handling facilities such as loading ramps and kraals. Since its inception, the total number of beneficiaries for LIMID has increased, reaching 34,653 by July 2017. In terms of gender, 64% of LIMID beneficiaries are women.
77. For areas where rain fed agriculture has proven to be unfeasible, Government in 2014 introduced the special ISPAAD programme, whose total number of beneficiaries currently stands at 345.
78. One of the major threats to livestock sector over the years has been the sporadic outbreaks of the Foot and Mouth Disease. Incidences of the diseases within the green zone occurred in 2007 in Ngamiland, in 2011 in the North and Central districts and again in 2013 and 2017 in Ngamiland.

79. It is pleasing to note that after many decades of absence of the disease in zone 3b, which is in the Nata area, the World Organisation for Animal Health General Assembly in May 2017 approved Government's application for the recognition of the zone as FMD free without vaccination. In order to retain this status, Government is embarking on the rehabilitation of the area's disease control fences. In addition, we are in constant contact with our Zimbabwean counterparts to develop a joint disease prevention strategy. This will involve regular vaccinations of cattle within Zimbabwe.

## **Tourism Development**

80. In an attempt to increase citizen participation, Government has reviewed the Tourism Act of 1992 and the Tourism Regulations of 1996 to accommodate the reservation of some licence categories for citizens. Reserved activities include; guesthouses, bed and breakfast, mobile safaris, motorboats, tourist transfers, camp and caravan sites and *mekoro*. This has led to an increase in the number of citizen operators from 290 in 2007 to 1015 in 2017, with another 252 currently being joint ventures, while 245 operators are non-citizens. The number of licensed operators is envisaged to grow at a rate of 11% annually. Expansion and localisation is estimated to have generated some 60,000 jobs.
81. The Tourism Industry Training Fund was established to finance skills training for employees in the tourism sector. The levy was increased from P2 to P10 in 2012 to broaden the scope of training to include personnel from other entities, departments and organisations that provide support to the tourism sector. Going forward, utilisation of the Training Fund is to be expanded further to cover a broader scope which will include tourism research, marketing amongst others.
82. Tourism continues to show resilience, with the country experiencing an increase in tourist arrivals to around 2 million. This has been accompanied by increasing international recognition of Botswana as a premier tourist location as is reflected in such accolades and achievements as:

- Lonely Planet’s designation of Botswana as its number 1 “must see” country in 2016.
  - New York Times listing of Botswana among its Top 5 destinations
  - Gold Medal award for Best Innovative Marketing Campaign and Quality Standard for Race for Rhinos, by Best Initiative Directions
  - Our 1<sup>st</sup> Position in the Economist Mega-fauna Index; and
  - Positive response to Botswana Tourism’s increased sponsorship of premier events from 9 to 35 in the last five years.
83. Government has commenced implementation of the Land Bank initiative, to better manage and issue leases for land designated for tourism development. Since 2009, this has facilitated the signing of 27 concession leases, of which 6 concessions were new, creating 523 Jobs. Government is in the process of facilitating the signing of 16 additional leases, with an anticipated job creation of 380. The revision of the leases under the land bank is an opportunity to review and sub-divide underutilised concession areas.
84. To further unlock the potential of underutilised areas, Government is in the process of developing campsites in the Kgalagadi Wildlife Management Areas, specifically KD 1, 2, 12 and 15. This initiative will be rolled out to other parts of Botswana. To this end, 22 campsites have been privatised.
85. In 2008, Government adopted 5 community based tourism projects, namely: Lepokole Nature Reserve, Seboba Recreational Park in Kasane, Goo Moremi Resort, Tsabong Camel Park and Gcwihaba Caves. Each of these facilities is now operational creating employment for 57 Batswana. The provision of accommodation facilities at the Nata Bird Sanctuary and the Tsodilo Hills Heritage Site is also at an advanced stage.
86. Tenders for the development and operations of the former hunting concessions have been floated to facilitate non-consumptive tourism development.

87. The dams' tourism initiative is progressing with Strategic Environmental Assessments for the proposed developments for Thune, Letsibogo and Shashe Dams at the final approval stage. It is expected that 889 jobs will be created through this initiative.
88. Government continues to promote the country as a destination of excellence through enhanced marketing including increased representation at international tourism trade shows. In March 2017, Botswana became the first sub-Saharan African country to partner with ITB Berlin, the world's premiere and largest tourism trade show, whose opening ceremony performed by 35 local youth reached a global audience.
89. This coming month Botswana will be hosting the UN World Tourism Organisation Conference on Sustainable Development, to be followed by the Giants Club Summit in March 2018.
90. Government remains committed to the diversification of tourism through support for events such as Khawa Dune Challenge and Cultural festival, The Makgadikgadi Epic, Race for Rhinos, Gaborone International Air Show, the World's Strongest Man and the Toyota 1000 Kalahari Botswana Desert Race, among others. We also provide financial and operational assistance to 20 annual local events, which have steadily grown in terms of their turn out.
91. To further expand opportunities, Government is also developing community monuments and heritage sites. To this end, access has so far been developed into 100 heritage sites around the country. Work is also in progress to build site museums at Ntsweng in Molepolole and Old Palapye.

## **Wildlife Management**

92. Madam Speaker, human-wildlife conflict has escalated as a direct consequence of the good rains that were received over much of the country at the beginning of 2017.

93. While the elephant represents one of our conservation successes with over a third of the continental population found within the country, they have been expanding their range into areas where they have not been observed in many years. To help drive them from community and farming areas additional material resources, including aircraft and capture equipment, are being procured; in addition to measures such as the electrified Makgadikgadi fence. An additional 100 posts have also been secured to strengthen the Problem Animal Control Unit.
94. To further minimise the movement of elephants and other wildlife into communal areas, over the last decade, 36 boreholes have been drilled and/or rehabilitated into solar powered pumps in national parks and game reserves. Under ESP, a further twenty-two boreholes will be drilled and equipped.
95. Efforts to boost our rhino population have intensified in recent years with numbers increasing by over 100%. Concern has, however, been expressed regarding the decline of certain species of wildlife such as tsessebe, springbok, wildebeest and lechwe. A hunting moratorium was instituted in 2014 to allow us to better understand the causes of the decline and to take the necessary measures to reverse this trend.
96. Madam Speaker, international production houses such as Disney, National Geographic and BBC World are increasingly filming in our wilderness areas. A total of 148 filming permits were issued between the years 2012 and 2016. There are currently 56 environmental filming permits which are active across the country.
97. To increase benefits from wildlife and to further diversify the economy, Government is facilitating Community Trusts to take part in the game ranching industry, as well as tourism.

## Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

98. Madam Speaker, because of its high impact role as an enabler of development, Government will continue to invest in the ICT sector, while speeding up the delivery of e-services. ICT connectivity is therefore being continuously rolled out, with an additional 37 villages connected through broadband fibre since my last address. In the process, broadband telecommunications infrastructure has been extended into areas such as Kgalagadi, Okavango, Chobe and Bobirwa sub-districts. Since my last address, the Gaborone, Francistown, Lobatse, Mogoditshane, Palapye, Selebi Phikwe, Tshabong, Bobonong and Serowe connections have been completed and are in the process of connecting 1,276 commercial and Government premises. In addition, BOFINET is in the process of implementing rollout plans for Gaborone and Francistown with intention to cover all commercial and Government premises in the two cities with high speed broadband connectivity capable of delivering up to 2.5 G/bits to the customer.
99. BOFINET is also in the process of embarking on international connectivity expansion through upgrades of the West Africa Cable System (WACS) and the East African Submarine System (EASSy), which are expected to be completed in the coming year.
100. Being a landlocked country requires BOFINET to lease backhaul capacity to access the Submarine Cables. Unit costs thus remain high due to transit backhaul fees through RSA and Namibia. As mitigation, plans are underway for BOFINET to partner with other operators in the respective neighbouring countries.
101. Government also continues to partner with Botswana Post in various areas such as welfare payments through its branch network and the provision of online financial and registration services. We have built 2 new and refurbished 4 existing Post Offices.

102. Since 2010, Government has further closed security gaps through an enhanced Births and Deaths Registration System. In 2013, Government also undertook a baseline survey of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in order to establish and identify additional bottlenecks. This led to the development of a five year CRVS Strategic Plan (2016 – 2020) for accelerated improvement of Civil Registration and identity management.
103. We have further introduced District Assessment Committees as a way of fast tracking the assessment and registration of vulnerable and needy persons. To further improve service delivery, Government continues to strengthen its legal framework.
104. Regarding National Registration, the current registration stands at 1,995,887 people issued with Omang cards. To accelerate registration, the Ministry of Nationality, Immigration and Gender Affairs is developing an integrated system to enable safe data sharing amongst key service providers. The system will also produce an electronic identity card which will enhance identity integrity and improved service delivery.
105. In 2010, Government began issuing e-passports with enhanced security features. As of the beginning of this year, a total of 858,872 e-passports have been issued. The introduction of the e-passport coincided with the computerisation of border control functions. This system is linked with other security systems such as INTERPOL to alert officials when a wanted person tries to cross into the country.
106. The process of computerising ports of Entry/Exit is on-going. During the 2015/16 financial year, we began to computerise the border posts of Pont's Drift, Platjan, Pandamatenga, Bray and Middlepits. Automation of the remaining eight border posts will be done during the current plan period.
107. Other critical immigration functions have also been automated resulting in the issuance of electronic VISA and permits including those for permanent residence. This has improved the efficiency and integrity of documents, as well as customer satisfaction.

108. In 2011, the Immigration Act was reviewed to facilitate promotion of Foreign Direct Investment. The amendments included the extension of validity periods for Work and Residence Permits from 3 to 5 years and 5 to 10 years for employees and directors and/or investors respectively, while the qualification period for permanent residence was reduced from 10 to 5 years.
109. To improve ease of doing business, Government in April 2017 amended the Immigration Act. Section 11 empowers the Minister to establish, on an ad-hoc basis, Immigrants Sector-Specific Selection Boards with a view to improving efficiency and effectiveness particularly the turnaround time, whilst Section 28 allows the Minister to grant permanent residence status to investors who have stayed in the country for less than 5 years, provided they have established or intend to establish a significant business in Botswana.
110. The Department of Broadcasting Services is currently implementing Phase 2 of its Digital Migration Project to enable other ministries to disseminate information to the public through Botswana Television. 10 companies have been engaged by Btv to produce local content
111. The department will be upgrading television studios to High Definition to enhance its signal quality and programming. 3 more offices will be opened in Shakawe, Goodhope and Kang during the coming financial year. Btv Channel 2 is to be commissioned during 2018/19 as a Sport and Entertainment channel that will include performing arts, fashion design, TV reality shows etc. International companies have partnered with local companies for implementation of Upgrading of Television Studios, and Data Broadcasting for skills transfer to citizens.
112. BTV and Radio Botswana have also increased their online footprint, while Government continues to reach out to hundreds of thousands of Batswana and international followers through our expanded social media. In March 2017, BWgovernment was ranked as the world's 5<sup>th</sup> most active Government Facebook page based on its total number of independently monitored interactions.



## Transport

113. Madam Speaker, In 2016 Botswana Railways (BR) re-launched its passenger train Service “BR Express” between Lobatse and Francistown, while refurbishing its Lobatse, Gaborone and Francistown stations. This month BR will also be receiving eight new locomotives from the United States of America (U.S.A.) As part of BR’s commitment to gender equality the organisation has trained eight ladies as locomotive drivers, who are currently driving shunting locomotives.
114. Madam Speaker, road accidents continue to be an issue of concern. During 2016 there were a total of 450 deaths, while so far we have recorded 328 fatalities as of 30 September 2017. In response, Government through the Department of Road Transport and Safety (DRTS) and with the support of the National Road Safety Committee, continues to intensify collaboration with youth groups in the area of road safety awareness as they are the most vulnerable group.
115. Madam Speaker, Government will continue to undertake vehicle testing for roadworthiness. 3 Mobile Vehicle testing stations were recently procured for greater outreach.
116. There has been measureable progress with regards to the commencement and completion of Government transport projects. The Tonota-Francistown dual carriageway and Thapama Interchange junction have now been completed, while the Kazungula and Mohembo bridge projects have been progressing.
117. Government has also made progress in implementing ESP in the road sector, which incorporate plans to decongest areas of priority and stimulate local economic activity by constructing and upgrading identified roads. We also continue to undertake periodic maintenance in order to preserve the roads through reseal/overlay, while generating 352 jobs in the sector as of September 2017.

118. On Package 1, which consists of Mmankgodi Junction (Sengaparile) – Kanye (Sejelo Police) – Jwaneng road as well as some access roads, 57km of road construction were completed out of 176km total planned. Construction is ongoing on 32km of main road and on Moshupa, Kanye, Moshana and Selokolela access road. On Package 2, which consists of the Rakhuna Junction – Tlhareseleele – Pitsane – Phitshane Molopo – Mabule road and associated access roads, 39.6 km of road construction were completed out of 160km planned and construction is ongoing on about 17km. Construction is now expected to be completed by December 2017 against the initial planned date of July 2017.
119. Madam Speaker, a tender for the construction of 3 interchanges along the Western Bypass road has been advertised, while work on the Greater Gaborone Traffic Signals Improvement and Centralized Traffic Control project has commenced.
120. Preparation of the National Multi-Modal Transport Master Plan and Greater Gaborone Transport Master Plan is expected to be completed by August 2018. These plans will provide a framework for future integrated transport development both nationally and within Greater Gaborone.

## **Aviation Sector**

121. Madam Speaker, construction of the Kasane Terminal building was completed in June 2017, while refurbishment of the old building is scheduled for completion by the end of the year. The Maun Terminal building is still at tender stage and is expected to be completed by year 2021. Additional projects that have been completed in recent years would include:
- Air Traffic Control Radar Simulator at SSKIA;
  - Improvement of Radar coverage on the eastern sector of the Botswana airspace;
  - Replacement of the Aeronautical Fixed Telecommunications Network (AFTN) with the new Air Traffic Services Message Handling System (AMHS) to accommodate new ICAO Flight Plan;

- Survey of Terrain and Obstacles (over 100 meters) in the entire Botswana;
  - Improvement of Radio communication in the entire Botswana airspace;
  - Replacement of Navigational Aids at SSKIA, Francistown, Kang;
  - The replacement of Navigational Aids at Maun and Kasane is at Evaluation Stage and it's scheduled for completion on 11th August 2017.
  - Installation of new Air Traffic Control communications system at new Francistown Control Tower.
122. Following the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) validation mission and security audits in 2015/16 there has been increased international confidence in our aviation industry. Consequently, CAAB continues to receive applicants for entering the air transport market. We are scheduled for a further full audit under the ICAO Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme in May 2018.
123. Efforts are ongoing to enhance the operational efficiency of Air Botswana to improve its value, while maintaining its course towards privatisation.
124. Despite its fleet challenges, the national airline has continued to maintain its on-time performance on departures at a rate over the international standard of 80%. A total of 238,390 passengers were carried during 2016/17 financial year. This figure is 2.6% above the number of passengers carried during the corresponding period in 2015/16.

## Health and Wellness

125. Madam Speaker, with respect to health and wellness, Government continues to focus on its priority areas of organisational transformation, access to sustainable quality health care service and prevention with emphasis on primary health care. With regards to organisational transformation, a new functional structure has been introduced to create a leaner health care system in which headquarters focuses on policy and strategic initiatives with strengthened delivery at local level. District Health Management Teams (DHMTs) have been rationalised from 27 to 18 and will be empowered and resourced to drive comprehensive and integrated service delivery through revitalisation of primary health care, incorporating Community Health Workers. This approach will enable Botswana to take greater responsibility for their health and wellness.
126. Government is also strengthening the capacity of its health care work force. To address the problem of shortage of skilled health professionals, a five year training strategy and yearly training plans have been developed for the training and maintenance of professional skills. We continue to absorb output from our local training institutes such as the medical school and Institutes of Health Sciences.
127. In the past decade, Government has made strides in improving access to health services and notable achievements include the following:
- 84% of the population is accessing basic health services within 5km radius due to construction and upgrading of clinics and hospitals.
  - 31 clinics and health posts were constructed or upgraded, including 10 clinics that were donated by the private sector and Non-Government institutions.
128. Government continues to improve access to care by constructing clinics and hospitals through the Economic Stimulus Programme (ESP).

129. 5 basic specialist services (General Surgery, Internal Medicine, Paediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynaecology and Anaesthesiology) are currently offered in all district hospitals. Recent years have further witnessed the introduction of new speciality services such as cardiac surgery, spinal surgery, Arthroplasty, Organ transplant. We have also established managed care and specialist services unit.
130. With the establishment of an in-house technical team, infrastructure projects of less or equal to P100 million are now being implemented within the Ministry of Health and Wellness. Other areas of progress include the extension of hours of service with 49 clinics now offering 24 hours services, up from 12 in 2008.
131. The Sir Ketumile Masire Teaching Hospital is expected to open its doors at the beginning of next year. When fully operational, the facility will offer quaternary care and will be a centre of excellence in such areas as radiation oncology and organ transplant.
132. Government has further developed national health quality standards for medical facilities and services. These standards provide a yardstick by which facility performance can be measured to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Implementation of hospital and clinic standards has commenced at all 28 public and mission hospitals. In this respect, it is gratifying to note that 2 hospitals together with 4 clinics have attained full accreditation, while additional facilities are about to attain full accreditation. Preparation of a Health Quality Act to further enforce adherence to these health quality standards by private and public health facilities is now at an advanced stage.
133. Government is working to improve availability of medicines and medical supplies at both Central Medical Stores (CMS) and its facilities. At the end of August 2017, the average availability of vital drugs at our facilities stood at 86.4%. As an additional strategy to improve drug availability at facilities, Government has over the past 3 years been providing District Health Management Teams with funds for items out of stock at Central Medical Stores to procure from the private market through micro procurement.

134. The impact of road traffic accidents has led to the establishment of national Emergency Medical Services (EMS), with 8 centres established and functional since 2012. This has led to an increase in the number of patients that are being promptly seen, reducing mortalities.
135. Government remains committed to providing child survival programs to guarantee optimal child health through integrated management of childhood illnesses, expanded programme on immunizations and early child development programs. In line with the World Health Organization targets the immunisation programme has maintained coverage above 90% for over a decade for most of the antigens. Immunisation is one of the most cost effective public health interventions in saving children from vaccine preventable diseases. Since 2010, Government has introduced several new vaccines in response to the existing and emerging threats: Haemophilus Influenza Type B, Measles second dose, Pneumococcal, Rotavirus, Human Papillomavirus, Inactivated Poliovirus Vaccine and Measles Rubella.
136. Primary Health Care has been at the core through implementation of Community Support Strategy to promote community involvement in achieving vaccine coverage. These concerted efforts resulted in the following achievements:
- Reduction in Infant Mortality Rate from 76/1000 live birth to 17/1000 live births;
  - Reduction of Under-five Mortality Rate (U5MR) from 51/1000 live births to 28 per 1000 live births; and
  - Reaching the elimination phase for both Neonatal Tetanus and Measles.
137. Our country's last reported case of indigenous polio was in 1989 and imported polio in 2004, with no further cases reported since then. Since 2000, there has been a 99% reduction in cases of malaria from 17,555 to 716 cases in 2016, with a 94.6% decrease in deaths from 56 in 2000 to 3 in 2016.

138. Government also continues to implement various nutrition interventions. In 2015, Government developed a National Nutrition Strategy to prioritise efforts to reduce malnutrition and diet related conditions such as overweight and obesity. The Vulnerable Group Feeding Programme, Direct Feeding Initiative, Infant and Young Feeding as well as programmes to treat malnutrition, and establishment of centres for Child and Adolescent Nutrition in Gaborone and Francistown have all contributed immensely to combating childhood malnutrition.
139. Government monitors nutritional status of children under the age of 5 attending Child Welfare Clinics through a decentralised national nutrition surveillance System. To date, 230,000 Under-five children are enrolled in the system receiving monthly growth monitoring and promotion, infant young child feeding counselling and food ration. Since 2009, Government has also implemented an annual Vitamin A supplementation program for all children from 6 to 59 months.
140. Rehabilitation has always been the fourth pillar of Botswana's health care system. In this regard, Government has strengthened collaboration with external stakeholders in the areas of training of therapists in wheelchair service and donation of wheelchairs. In 2016, Government started development of a National Rehabilitation Policy and Rehabilitation Strategy to better guide rehabilitation interventions.
141. To better protect the rights of people with mental illness as well as improve access to mental health services, Government is reviewing the 1971 Mental Disorders Act.
142. Government has established Port Health Services at 12 points of entry for inspection of conveyances and goods of public health importance so as to keep them free of sources of infection or contamination and for screening of travellers to ensure that they are free from infectious and/or quarantinable diseases. This has enabled us to control public health threats, as was evident with the Ebola outbreak in 2014, where there were no cases reported in Botswana.

143. Government has initiated the Health-in-All-Policies approach which seeks to reduce health inequities. This approach requires sectors to be cognisant of their impact in the country's health outcomes by having health components in their sectoral policies.
144. In response to the increasing incidence of cervical cancer, Government in collaboration with the U.S.A. Centre for Disease Control (CDC) has introduced new screening and treatment method for pre-cancerous lesions of the cervix. This will be strengthened by the newly introduced Human Papilloma Virus Vaccine. There has been a reduction in Pap smear turnaround times from 6 months in 2012 to the current 6 weeks. This has contributed to the reduced number of complications of women with pre-cancerous lesions.
145. There was an improvement in Maternal Mortality ratio from 152/100,000 population in 2014 to 127/100,000 in 2015. This notwithstanding, Maternal Mortality continues to be a challenge. Government has therefore intensified implementation of a Road Map on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Morbidity and Mortality, Comprehensive Post Abortion Care and strengthened the use of contraceptives for post abortion clients.
146. In recent years, the impact of tuberculosis (TB) was worsened by the increase in HIV infection. With the introduction of TB/HIV co-infection treatment guidelines in 2010 and increased ARV coverage, TB notification reduced from 510 per 100,000 population in 2008 to 250 per 100,000 in 2015. With Treat All Strategy, the notification rate is anticipated to further reduce.
147. The burden of Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancers, and chronic respiratory diseases is significant and rising in Botswana. Deaths due to NCDs exceed those due to TB, malaria and HIV combined. These conditions not only kill, they are potentially debilitating.



148. According to a 2014 national survey to assess the burden of NCD risk factors in Botswana, 31% of Batswana are overweight, 18% smoke, and 20% do not engage in enough physical activity. Of the 44% of Batswana who consume alcohol, over half were further reported to drink heavily. Furthermore, many Batswana are unaware that they have NCDs. We found that 11% of Batswana had raised total cholesterol and many of them had not been diagnosed or managed at facilities. Furthermore, over 70% of cancers are diagnosed at advanced stage, which significantly lowers the chances for cure and long term survival.
149. Government has intensified the fight against NCDs and their risk factors. The 2017-2022 NCD Strategy that is under development emphasises a multi-sectoral approach to NCDs as these diseases are influenced by individual lifestyles. The role of the individual and communities cannot be overemphasized in the fight against NCDs, by choosing a healthy lifestyle to reduce risk factors of NCDs such as avoidance of tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol, other substances, unhealthy diet, and inadequate physical activity.
150. In addition, Government is reviewing the Control of Smoking Act of 1992, in order to strengthen its protection of citizens. Inter-sectoral implementation of the alcohol campaign involving Government Ministries in addition to the traditional NGO implementing partners has enhanced targeted interventions to address the issues of alcohol abuse among the youth, who are the most affected by substance abuse. In this respect Government has started training Chairpersons of Parent Teachers Associations at regional and national levels on issues of alcohol abuse in schools; student character building boot camps have been held with extensive alcohol and drug associated harm reduction contents. Youth Consultative forums have also been conducted with a national media campaign targeting the youth on alcohol and drug abuse; enforcement of traffic regulations has been strengthened and alcohol detection vehicle (the Booze Buses) are being increased to ensure safety on our roads.

151. An evaluation of the National Alcohol Campaign has also been completed which found that the share of expenditure on alcohol and tobacco has decreased at national level, albeit increased in rural areas. While 60% of Batswana have indicated reduced drinking, drinking levels nonetheless remain high with about 18% being binge drinkers. In terms of social impact the study further confirmed that alcohol abuse continues to have a negative health impact, as reflected, in part, in the high cost of treating associated injuries, which were estimated at P3,580,849 for the 2016/17 financial year. In addition, alcohol abuse is associated with increased domestic violence, theft, assaults, road traffic accidents, rapes and murder. Alcohol abuse further contributes to teenage pregnancies and STIs including HIV/AIDS, as well as the failure of some to adhere to their Anti Retroviral Treatment and TB treatment.
152. Given such findings, the study underscored that the Public Education Campaign on Alcohol Consumption should be continuous and more focused on the long-term health consequences of drinking. Additional findings included the need for a more comprehensive advertising ban on alcoholic beverages and the lowering of breath and blood alcohol content limits for drivers under the Road Traffic Act. There was also an indentified need for the National Alcohol Policy to incorporate implementation plans, M&E and functional institutional frameworks.
153. The findings further confirmed that the alcohol levy has coincided with decrease in the household expenditure on tobacco as well as alcohol at national level. Since its inception the levy has raised just over P2.6 billion.
154. Plans are also at an advanced stage to have an in-patient alcohol and substance rehabilitation centre in Serowe to attend to substance users and people with substance use disorders. Human resource capacity is also being increased to offer out-patient services throughout the country by training health professionals on the Universal Treatment Curricula for substance use.

155. Sustainable health financing remains key factor in achieving health targets and outcomes. Government has completed two rounds of the National Health Accounts which tracked the magnitude and flow of health sector expenditure for the periods 2007/08 to 2009/10 and 2013/14. The results reveal that Government dominates in the financing of health services at 65% of the Total Health Expenditure. During the same analysis period, donor funding declined from 12% to 7% of the total health expenditure, while private sector financing increased from 21% to 28%. The results also show that spending on preventive care has increased from 9% to 20%.
156. A study analyzing health expenditure by disease in 2013/14 showed that 33% of health care funds in Botswana were spent on infectious and parasitic diseases, 14% on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), 12% on reproductive health, 6% on injuries and 30% on other diseases and conditions.
157. Direct out of pocket health payments by households continues to be low at 4% which indicates that relative to most countries, Government provides strong financial protection for its population in line with our commitment to universal health coverage. To ensure that health care continues to be sustainable, accessible, and affordable and of high quality, Government has been working on the development of a Health Financing Strategy to provide guidance on possible alternative financing mechanisms. The strategy will also strengthen Public Private Partnerships both in financing and in provision of health services and address challenges such as declining donor revenues, increasing health costs in relation to morbidity and mortality due to NCDs as well as increasing costs of Anti Retroviral therapy.

## **HIV/AIDS**

158. Government commends all stakeholders who have contributed to the fight against HIV/AIDS. The treatment programme continues to be one of our success stories with the country having adopted Option B PLUS in 2015 in an effort to eliminate Mother to Child transmission of HIV, Treat All in 2016 whereby all HIV+ infected persons are put on treatment irrespective of a CD4 threshold. At the end of 2016, the mother to child transmission rate was 1.4%, while to date a total of 308,067 individuals have been placed on HIV treatment since the inception in 2002 of the National ARV programme.

159. The Botswana AIDS Impact Survey (BAIS V) is about to commence with a target for completion of mid 2018/19. Its aim is to update the existing HIV and AIDS data. This survey will be combined with a first ever TB prevalence survey for Botswana to inform the country on the current burden.
160. Botswana is committed to the UNAIDS targets of 90-90-90 and ending AIDS by 2030. In view of this, Government will continue to support HIV/AIDS interventions for the country to reach epidemic control. As a country and with support from development partners, we have invested a lot in the fight against HIV/AIDS and now is the time to explore and implement innovative interventions to stop the spread of new HIV infections. I have no doubt that as a country we can achieve that. It just needs a collective effort from us all.
161. I know I made this request last year and I am still putting the request to Botswana to test for HIV as this is the only gateway to managing the HIV/AIDS pandemic.
162. Botswana has been receiving support from Partners over the past years. I would like to express our gratitude to President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), Global Fund, European Union (EU), CDC, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United Nations (UN) Family, Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), Academia and other Partners for the support they continue to grant the country. We cannot do this alone without their support. With a fragile economy like ours, we still need the support of development partners both financially and technically, and I therefore urge development partners to continue working with Botswana.

## Housing

163. Government continues to recognise adequate and affordable housing as a basic need in the context of our implementation of the National Housing Policy's Low-Income Housing Programme. This programme contains 3 components – Self Help Housing Agency (SHHA) Home Improvement, Turnkey Development Scheme and Integrated Poverty Alleviation and Housing Scheme. In addition, Government continues to roll out housing schemes such as Public Officers Housing Initiative, Housing Scheme for Public Officers D4 and below, BHC housing and Third Party Projects, Instalment Purchase Scheme (IPS) and Youth Housing Scheme.
164. Between March 2008 and March 2017, a total of P190.8 million has been disbursed through the SHHA Home Improvement Loan Scheme to fund 4,947 beneficiaries. This financial year 2017/18, an additional P30 million will be loaned to an estimated 500 beneficiaries. With ESP support, the SHHA Turnkey Development Scheme has awarded contracts for the construction of 2,615 units. Of these, 1,838 have been completed and handed over and 777 are at various stages of construction.
165. Integrated Poverty Alleviation and Housing Scheme currently, has a total of 19 commercial brick moulding projects nationwide. 4 additional projects have since been designated in Lehututu, Mmathubudukwane, Gumare and Francistown.
166. The Public Officers Housing Initiative has awarded 465 units with 258 units already completed and 207 housing units are at various stages of construction. In addition, the Housing Scheme for Public Officers D4 and below programme commenced in August 2016. So far, 203 units have been started on site with 63 completed and handed over.
167. Government introduced the Instalment Purchase Scheme (IPS) to promote home ownership amongst citizens who are renting BHC houses. So far, 372 out of 750 IPS and Youth Housing units have been awarded to citizen contractors.

168. In terms of shelter provision for the disadvantaged members of the communities, Government aims to have provided decent shelter to all deserving beneficiaries by the end of 2019. A target has been set to deliver 1,000 housing units annually, for both RADP and Countrywide destitute housing. Out of this target, a total number of 302 housing units under RADP and 527 under the Countrywide destitute programme were achieved in the 2016/17 financial year, resulting in a total of completed 829 houses. For Financial year 2017/18 alone, a total allocation of P90 million has been planned to construct 1,025 houses which are at various stages of construction.
169. Resources have been committed to construct 3,938 destitute houses since the 2009/10 financial year. Government is also engaging other partners to complement its efforts in providing basic shelter to the disadvantaged members of our society. The President's Housing Appeal for the needy has received contributions from the private sector, individuals and public officers to support this initiative. This has greatly assisted in providing shelter and dignity to the needy. So far 781 homes have been completed, while 19 are under construction. Let me therefore take this moment to profoundly thank the individuals and institutions who have generously supported the Appeal.
170. Since April 2009, Government has further directed ministries to reserve 15% of the budget for minor maintenance of government facilities for youth companies and youth with vocational skills in construction. Since its inception, this reservation programme has awarded P229,316,770 maintenance works to youth construction companies. A database of youth contractors is being maintained and shared with stakeholders on a quarterly basis with a view to expose youth contractors to the opportunities. Currently the number of Youth contractors registered in the database is 462.

## **Remote Area Development Programme**

171. Government has achieved very good progress in the upliftment of the lives of our remote area communities under the Affirmative Action Framework for Remote Area Communities that was approved in July 2014 together with its 10 year implementation plan. Significant progress has been noted under the areas of provision of shelter, tertiary education and economic empowerment initiatives among others. Government is further committed to the development of RADP farms, including the fencing of the 10 existing ones.
  
172. Government is currently sponsoring a total of 1,659 RADP beneficiaries in different tertiary institutions. Another 21,058 have engaged in formal or temporary employment through our affirmative action measures. In other areas 2,949 RADP constituents have directly benefitted from the Poverty Eradication Programme, 2748 from ISPAAD and 1,361 from LIMID. This financial year an additional 352 housing units are under construction, on top of 20 units being completed from the previous year.

## **Ipelegeng**

173. Over the course of the last decade, the Ipelegeng programme has provided temporary relief to vulnerable groups amongst rural and urban communities through labour intensive public works providing short-term employment to over 60,000 people on a monthly basis. In the process, it has contributed to various construction and maintenance projects of essential public facilities. The programme has also supported the implementation of initiatives such as Crime Prevention and Special Constables by the Botswana Police Service, Wildlife Volunteers and development of Monuments initiatives as well as Immigration Volunteers.

## **Community Development**

174. During the current financial year, Government introduced the Constituency Community Development Programme with a total budget allocation of P570 million, translating into P10 million per constituency. This initiative was introduced to economically empower communities, create employment and provide services like basic infrastructure and small projects that could not ordinarily be accommodated in both the District Development Plans and National Development Plan. This initiative is further intended to promote community empowerment by strengthening the process by which citizens take the lead in initiating and proposing solutions to local challenges.

## **Social Protection**

175. Madam Speaker, Government has committed to the protection of vulnerable members of our society through the provision of social protection programmes. To this end, these programmes assist 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 and People with Disabilities. The beneficiaries continue to receive services that improve quality of their lives, food security and ensure dignified living.
176. The Supplementary Feeding Programmes are provided in 755 Primary Schools with an enrolment of 354,317 pupils and 575 health facilities with a total of 297,775 beneficiaries.
177. The pre and primary schools menu has been revised into a full school feeding programme. Provision of the new menu will commence in the upcoming financial year with local sourcing supporting our EDD objectives.



178. Government continues to purchase agricultural produce for Primary Schools. This provides a market for the improvement of the livelihoods of subsistence farmers. Funds are disbursed to Local Authorities to help facilitate procurement of fresh agricultural produce from local farmers. Since its inception to June 2017, the initiative has benefited 15,246 subsistence farmers at the cost of P26.9 million.

## **Poverty Eradication**

179. Government has put in place a number of strategies and initiatives to address the 6.4% of our total population facing abject poverty. Some of these newly introduced initiatives which among others include Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in the areas of eggs and poultry, fish farming and cluster gardens around identified water sources, have reached a significant number of the targeted beneficiaries. So far, 51,794 beneficiaries have qualified with 45 packages and small and medium scale machinery available to choose from.

## **People with Disability**

180. During National Development Plan 11, the Government will continue to implement the Disability Economic Empowerment Programme. The programme determines the extent to which people with disabilities are accessing economic empowerment programmes, as well as to develop strategies that promote the uptake.

## **Rural Development**

181. The Rural Development Council (RDC) continues to drive rural enterprise development through funding support and coordination of community projects. The objectives of the RDC projects are to catalyse development, local economic activity and job creation in rural areas.
182. Through the efforts of RDC, the following community trust projects are operational: Mogobane Irrigation Scheme, Zutshwa Salt Project, and Agro Processing Plant in Selebi-Phikwe. The RDC also continues to engage key stakeholders to provide technical assistance in capacity building, value chain development and marketing strategies for RDC projects. In addition, a multi sectoral technical team is currently developing a drought management strategy.

183. Development partners, such as World Food Programme have been working with the RDC Secretariat to link farmers to the market and produced a draft report on Early Warning Indicators for drought and vulnerability assessment.

## **Gender**

184. As we reflect on the progress we have made in attainment of gender equality and women empowerment, we have seen in the past 10 years increasing women participation in various spheres including trade, work, leadership and political voice. Botswana currently leads the SADC Region with 43% of women in Government Executive positions. In June of this year, The African Union conferred Botswana with an award for attaining gender parity in basic education.
185. Government also engaged Dikgosi on mainstreaming gender into the Customary Justice System. As a result, Dikgosi have developed the National Action Plan on Mainstreaming Gender and addressing Gender Based Violence (GBV) within their communities. Implementation of the Plan is on-going.
186. In 2015, Parliament approved the National Policy on Gender and Development. This was followed by establishment of the National Gender Commission which monitors implementation of the Policy. To date, the Commission has been capacitated on gender mainstreaming to equip them with skills to effectively deliver on their mandate.
187. The above was followed by commitment of resources to the National Gender Machinery which increased from an annual budget of P18 million to P48 million, the bulk being P30 million going to the Women Economic Empowerment Programme. This augmented the 10% Alcohol Levy dedicated to the Programme. To date, over 708 businesses comprising 1, 416 individuals have benefitted from this Programme at a total of P134.3 million.

188. Following review of the Programme in 2015 to address public concerns, the Programme received an overwhelming number of applications which could not all be accommodated in the 2017/18 budget. This resulted in suspension of receipt of applications in February this year. Resumption of funding will as such be based on availability of funds. Government continues to support women in business to access the market through National Women's Expositions.
189. Gender Based Violence remains a challenge in the Country. Following the 2012 Gender Based Violence Indicator Study, Government developed a referral system which was piloted in Maun/Shorobe and Mochudi/Artesia. The Pilot was concluded in July this year and results are that: about 2,700 community members were reached with GBV messaging in the pilot areas; over 200 service providers were trained and 20 institutions sensitized on GBV. In addition, 134 referrals were made being; 113 females and 21 males. To date, there is evidence of strong and cohesive network of service providers in both pilot areas.

## **Education**

190. Madam Speaker, our country has, indeed, made good progress in the realisation of the Millennium Development Goal of universal access to Primary Education, with 96% of children now entering Primary School. We now need to focus on quality basic education and lifelong learning. Government in partnership with the private sector has made big strides with the introduction of Pre-primary Education in an effort to ensure learner readiness at Standard 1. Our efforts have seen an increase in public primary schools offering reception classes from 382 in 2016 to 471 in 2017. There has also been an increase in enrolments from 16,536 to 20,361. As such approximately 38% of the standard 1 intake in 2018 will have benefited from pre-schooling.
191. The introduction of Pre-primary Education is part of a much larger education sector reform. Government is currently implementing the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP)(2015-2020) designed to transform the education sector. One of the major challenges is the provision of a learning environment that caters to students of varied

potentials, interests and career inclinations. To address this challenge, Government has embarked on several far reaching reforms in the curriculum which include a multiple pathways approach to secondary education and an outcome based approach to assessment. The resulting expanded curriculum will allow learners to choose between academic, professional and technical pathways. The first phase of the implementation of the Multiple Pathways Programme is scheduled for January 2019.

192. To better equip our children with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, Government in conjunction with stakeholders, has increased the use of ICT in schools. In 2016/17 Government, in partnership with Mascom, has provided an additional 60 Schools with ICT gadgets and also connected them to the internet. We have further commenced Phase II of the project which will see the supply of ICT gadgets to an additional 152 Primary Schools, 70 Junior Schools, and 10 Senior Secondary Schools by the end of 2018 with electrification support.
193. Mascom and BOFINET have also committed to connect an additional 210 schools to high speed broadband internet. The joint initiative has so far connected internet to 140 Junior and 25 Senior Secondary Schools. The Universal Access Service Fund has further provided connectivity to 74 schools.
194. We also continue to address welfare issues surrounding education, such as the provision of housing for staff. A total of 292 teacher's houses that were started in the 2016/17 financial year will be completed in 2018. For the entire 3 year period of ESP, Government planned to construct 401 classrooms and 486 teachers' quarters spread across 123 primary schools country wide. Construction of Primary School facilities continues in the current financial year 2017/18, with 161 teachers' quarters, 149 classrooms to be constructed in 55 primary schools at an estimated cost of just over P373 million.
195. The Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology was established in October 2016 with a responsibility to facilitate human resource development and coordinate research, science

technology and innovation with a view to transform Botswana into a knowledge-based economy. This will require improving quality and relevance of education and training, performance in research and innovation, as well as to promoting public safety and security in the use of nuclear technologies.

196. A National Human Resource Development Strategy has been developed. Since its approval in 2009, some elements of the strategy have already been implemented, including the establishment of the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) and Botswana Qualifications Authority (BQA).
197. The enactment of the Botswana Qualification Authority (BQA) Act and Regulations in 2014 was a critical milestone for the education and training system's quality assurance process. The new BQA regulations were gazetted in 2016 and their implementation started in January 2017. The regulations cater for registration and accreditation of all Education and Training Providers, learning programmes, assessors and moderators in order to improve quality for education and training. In accordance with these new BQA Regulations, the regulated entities will, with effect from 2017, assume only two statuses of either being accredited or not accredited.
198. There has been a significant increase in local tertiary education enrolment, which has risen from 31,129 in 2007/08 to 56,447 in 2016/17. This growth can be largely attributed to Government's decision to sponsor students in local private tertiary institutions, thus reducing the high cost associated with the external placements. This in turn has further resulted in a rapid expansion in the skills base of our graduates that should not only translate into improved service delivery, but also lead to a reduction in our expenditure on allowances such as overtime and scarce skills. The heretofore high levels of expenditure on these allowances should now be mitigated by absorbing these graduates, along with accelerated localisation.

199. During the past decade, Government has also implemented various projects that facilitate improvements in provision of access to tertiary education. These include the establishment of the Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST), which produced its first graduates in November 2016.
200. Government also facilitated the expansion of facilities at the University of Botswana which include among others, the Multi – Disciplinary Offices, Classrooms, and Lecture Theatre, Faculty of Health Sciences, Faculty of Engineering and Technology, and the Campus Indoor Sports and Recreation Facility.
201. The Botswana College of Open and Distance Learning was established with the mandate of making education accessible to out-of-school youth and adults through the provision of education by open and distance learning mode. In July 2017, the College was transformed into the Botswana Open University.
202. As I noted last year, Government is financially constrained to keep up with the exponential growth in demand for tertiary education sponsorship amid competing priorities. We have thus started to explore options for sustainable funding.
203. In 2015/16, Government initiated the Target 20,000 programme for rapid up-tooling and re-tooling of unemployed youth. A total of 9773 were enrolled in the programme, of which 3,217 have successfully completed while 4,981 are still progressing.

## **Skills Development**

204. Madam Speaker, as a way of assuring quality of graduates from the Brigades, Government has re-introduced the concept of Training-with-Production in the Brigades' system. Furthermore, Government would capacitate Brigades in order to train up to National Craft Certificate (NCC) level, thus doubling up the current enrolment capacity of apprentices.

205. Government is also reviewing the current vocational training curriculum in order to address the concerns and needs of the industry. In addition, the academic year for vocational training has been semesterised and commence in August 2017 in line with other tertiary education calendars.

### **Construction Industry Trust Fund (CITF)**

206. In line with its mandate of providing responsive skills training programmes at the level of semi-skilled and skilled artisan for the building industry and the emerging needs of the economy, the Construction Industry Trust Fund (CITF) continues to empower Batswana with requisite skills for the industry. The skills acquisition generally creates self-employment and employment opportunities for those who are enrolled in the training programmes and thereby reduce poverty level within the communities at large.
207. In line with the CITF Strategic Plan, the Centre has expanded the level of skills training to include Overhead Power Lines Installation, Solar Water Heating (Thermal), Photovoltaic (PV) and Roads Maintenance to reduce dependency on external recruitment of semi-skilled and skilled artisans. Additional new skills training programmes such as Mechatronics, Hydraulics and Pneumatics and Programmable Logic Control (PLC) are planned to start in May 2019.
208. As a way of strengthening institutional capacity to empower the youth with globally competitive vocational skills, Government has rationalised the functions of Madirelo Training and Testing Centre (MTTC) and Construction Industry Trust Fund (CITF) to form a Rapid Skills Development Centre (RSDC).

### **Youth Empowerment**

209. Madam Speaker, our youth currently face serious challenges including unemployment and involvement in irresponsible behaviour. To this end, Government continues to develop and empower the youth through various interventions to ensure they improve their livelihoods, while contributing to our national development.

210. Government annually allocates P120 million for the youth to set up businesses and create jobs for themselves and the nation at large. In the last financial year, 2,701 applications were received from young people and 1,032 were funded to the tune of P107.7 million. These projects created 2,290 jobs. For the second year running, a Youth Business Expo which attracted about 300 exhibitors was hosted to expose youth entrepreneurs to their potential market.
211. Youth Development Fund (YDF) implementation is being reformed to improve its delivery. Interventions include simplifying application forms, continuous appraisal and adjudication of proposals and SMS notification to clients on application processing among others.
212. Madam Speaker, the Government continues to engage young people to develop employment readiness skills and work ethics. The Botswana National Service programme's current enrolment is 100% against a target of 15,000. Enrolment levels in the Internship Programme as of the beginning of September 2017 stood at 3,287 against a target of 6,000.

## **Library and Archives Services**

213. Madam Speaker, our libraries are knowledge centres for citizen empowerment and community development. The number of people who visited libraries on average is 290,000 per year. Currently 74 out of 105 public libraries have internet connection, with a total of 612 computers and 70 tablets and kindles available for public access to electronic information. Over 69,000 people have benefited from basic ICT skills training at libraries.
214. The Robert and Sara Rothschild Family Foundation continues to generously support the construction of local community libraries for which we are grateful. The programme's 15<sup>th</sup> Library out of a targeted 20 is under construction at Hukunsi and should be operational by March 2018. Government's contribution in this programme is staffing and other resources.



215. Madam Speaker, archival materials serve as our institutional memory. Since April 2017, the Archives has received 4,011 users, who accessed 12,547 documents. The compliance of ministries to proper records management standards continues to be monitored to ensure accountability and good governance.

## **Water**

216. Madam Speaker, to achieve long term water security, Government is implementing the Botswana Emergency Water Security and Efficiency Project. The project will improve water availability and waste water management in 60 settlements.

217. We are also reviewing water sector policies and legislation. These include the revision of the 1968 Water Act and Borehole Act, the Development of the National Water Conservation and Demand Management Strategy and rolling out of the National Water Policy of 2016.

218. The construction of a pump station near Serorome Valley on the North South Carrier (NSC-1) Scheme is ongoing with completion expected in April 2018. This will increase the flow of water from Letsibogo and Dikgatlong Dams to Mmamashia Water Treatment Works from 66 million to 116 million litres per day, which will augment the supply of water throughout the South-East. The second phase of the North–South Carrier Pipeline from Palapye to Mmamashia is expected to commence in November 2017, with the entire project scheduled for completion in November 2020.

219. The groundwater component of Masama West Well field was completed in March 2017 with the associated infrastructure component, which has the capacity to inject up to 30 Mega Litres (30,000,000 cm<sup>3</sup>) of ground water from the boreholes into the North South Carrier a month.

220. The design for the upgrading of the Gaborone Water Master Plan was started in June 2017. This will be part of the design and implementation of the water transfer pipeline from Mmamashia Water

Treatment Works to Gaborone Water Treatment Works, which, upon expected completion in 2018, will be capable of transferring water in either direction when the need arises.

221. Along with Namibia and South Africa, we have undertaken an assessment of the Stampriet Trans-boundary Aquifer System, on the basis of which we are implementing the Matsheng Groundwater Development project that will develop sufficient potable groundwater to supply Kgalagadi North, as well as villages located in the Central, Southern and Ghanzi Districts.

## **Sanitation and Waste Management**

222. Government's commitment to the provision of proper sanitation services is reflected in the close to P2 billion that is being invested in the upgrading of sanitation capacity. This covers amongst others Francistown, Kanye and Molepolole. We are concerned, however, that the industry is not fully compliant with the Trade Effluent Agreement. It is for this reason that Government is in the process of reviewing the legislative framework.
223. A new National Waste Management Policy is being finalised which stipulates roles and responsibilities of different players in the waste sector, while promoting value addition through its use. To meet international norm for the management of hazardous chemicals, Botswana is party to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, Basel Convention on the Trans-boundary Movement of Hazardous Waste and Minamata Convention on mercury.

## **Conservation**

224. The Forest Policy of 2011 continues to guide us in the management of our forest and rangeland resources. In keeping with this policy, Government continues to plant trees to combat environmental degradation and contribute to the enhancement of forest carbon stock. Since NDP 10, we have planted over 2 million tree seedlings throughout the country. Looking forward, we plan to plant 3 million more trees by 2020 and 6 million trees by 2030.

225. There has been drastic improvement in how the fires are managed mainly due to the development and implementation of the fire management strategy in the collaboration with Australia through the New South Wales Rural Fire Services.
226. Botswana also continues to provide leadership in ensuring global uptake of natural capital accounting and sustainable management of natural resources through the Gaborone Declaration on Sustainability in Africa. We are currently undergoing accreditation to the Green Climate Fund working through the preparation of a Readiness program with delivery partners so as to enable access to the funding mechanism. Through the establishment of the National Designated Authority, the Green Climate Fund is expected to help Botswana respond to climate change by investing into low-emission and climate resilient development. We also hope to benefit from the Adaptation Fund of the Climate Change Convention.
227. An improvement in the accuracy of both weather forecasts and climate projections has been recorded mainly due to installation of 32 automatic weather stations countrywide. The forecasts are crucial in development planning, sectoral development of climate change adaptation and mitigation response strategies, and disaster reduction and preparedness.
228. As Party to the Montreal Protocol on substances that deplete the Ozone Layer, we are implementing projects that will help us comply with our current obligations.

## **Energy**

229. Madam Speaker, you will recall that in October 2016, Government created a reconstituted Ministry of Mineral Resources, Green Technology and Energy Security to give priority to green technology and energy security. The new ministry's mandate is to among other things: (a) coordinate mineral development and regulation of mining activities; (b) promote use of green technology which relates to amongst others, use of renewable energy to minimize environment pollution and (c) promote use of a mix of alternative energy sources that will ensure energy sustainability and security.

230. Self sufficiency in power supply and diversification of petroleum products are priorities for energy security. The need to increase renewable energy contributions to the energy mix is a consistent goal in an effort to develop a Low Carbon Energy Portfolio. The current maximum electricity demand for Botswana is estimated at 520 MW, which is expected to grow to 856 MW in 2025. Our installed generating capacity stands at 927 MW and comprises of the following:
- 132MW from Morupule A
  - 600MW from Morupule B
  - 90MW from Orapa Power Plant
  - 105MW from Matshelagabedi Alstom Power Rentals plant.
231. The refurbishment of Morupule A is ongoing and Unit 1 of the plant is currently undergoing commissioning. The refurbishment of all the remaining 3 Units will be completed by end of December 2017. Once Morupule A is up and running, the Matshelagabedi diesel power peaking plant will be discontinued in an effort to bring down the cost of power generation in the country.
232. Remediation of Morupule B is ongoing and the contractor (CNEEC) is carrying out remediation work which is scheduled to be completed at the end of the year. BPC will cover the power supply gap by running Morupule A and power imports from the Southern African Power Pool.
233. Work is also in progress to upgrade the existing national power supply infrastructure. This will ensure a stable supply and transmission of power whilst creating adequate transmission capacity to facilitate exports through the Southern African Power Pool network. Transmission projects that are planned for implementation during the 2017/18 financial year include the following:
- Development of the North West Transmission Grid
  - Construction of the Rakola Sub-Station
  - Isang-Morupule and Isang–Watershed Interconnector
  - Improvement of Transmission Backbone in Mochudi, Government Enclave and Gaborone Central.

234. The procurement of contractors for both phases of North West Transmission Grid project has been finalised. The procurement process for Isang-Morupule is complete and the implementation is expected to commence by end of this year. The Isang – Watershed Interconnector is at feasibility study stage, while the design stage for the Improvement of transmission backbone in Mochudi, Government Enclave and Gaborone Central has been completed. The next phase will be the implementation, which is expected to take 30 months to complete. Rakola Sub-Station is at 80% completion.

### **Rural Village Electrification Programme**

235. Madam Speaker, Government continues to implement the rural village electrification programme. So far, 387 villages have been electrified out of a total of 492 gazetted villages since inception of the programme. During the 2016/17 financial year, Government connected 10 new villages, while extending the network in 24 villages. During the current financial year, 15 new villages will be electrified while network extension will be done in 45 villages.

236. Madam Speaker, the National Electrification Standard Cost (NESC) continues to support and promote connection of households within 500metres from any low voltage transformer across the country. So far, 90,079 households have been connected from the 102,765 applications under the NESC programme as at February 2017. Government is currently reviewing the NESC programme in order to cater for connection of households beyond the current 500 metres limit.

### **Green Technology**

237. Madam Speaker, Government has embarked on the following initiatives geared towards increasing the contribution of renewable energy to the total energy mix:

- BPC will develop and operate a 100 MW Solar Power Plant in a Joint Venture.

- BPC will build Mini-Grids in six sites covering 20 villages powered by solar. To this end, an Expression of Interest closed in July 2017 for the formation of a Joint Venture (JV) between a private company and BPC to implement the programme.

238. BPC itself is currently being reorganized to improve its operational efficiency so as to reduce its reliance on tax payer funded subsidies.

## **Oil and Gas Sector**

239. Madam Speaker, Government remains committed to increasing our country's strategic fuel storage capacity from the current 18 days to at least 60 days of national consumption. To this end, construction of the Tshele Hills Bulk Strategic Fuel storage facility (186 million litres) and expansion of the existing Francistown Government Bulk Fuel storage depot by 60 million litres are in progress. The two projects are expected to be delivered by December 2019.

240. An assessment of the viability of the coal to liquid gas programme for Botswana is being carried out by Botswana Oil Limited.

241. The Department of Energy continues to go through organizational reform to align it with the new mandate for ensuring security of supply of energy and promotion of green technology. The Energy Policy has been tabled before the July 2017 session of Parliament. The Botswana Energy Regulatory Authority (BERA) was established in November 2016 and will be fully operational by the end of the year.

## **Radiation Protection**

242. Regulation of radiation sources and nuclear material continues to be a key focus area. Robust security measures have been implemented to ensure public safety. Imports/exports of radiation sources and nuclear material are strictly controlled through issuance of permits to protect against the illicit movement of the sources.

243. During 2018/19, Government will start to install fixed portal monitors at some ports of entry for quick detection of any radioactive material. Government has also attained capability for environmental radioactivity monitoring whereby radioactivity levels in foodstuffs, consumer items and on public areas can be swiftly detected. A custom built vehicle which can be deployed to detect and recover uncontrolled radiation sources in our surroundings was acquired during 2017/18.
244. NDP 11 provides for the construction of a national radioactive storage facility to ensure the proper management of abandoned, confiscated and used-up/spent radioactive materials.

## **Land Governance**

245. In our endeavor to comprehensively address issues of the country's sustainable settlement planning and development, I am pleased to report that work on the preparation of the first ever, National Spatial Plan 2036 (NSP 2036) is progressing well. The NSP 2036 is a spatial strategy meant to optimize land use and infrastructure investment by comprehensively defining land capacity and capabilities, sound environmental management and key development nodes throughout the country.
246. Through the NSP 2036, land and space will be made available throughout the country to drive all Government policies and strategies including the National Development Plans, Sustainable Development Goals and the Vision 2036. The plan will facilitate and motivate development and investment throughout the country. This is an integral part of our commitment to diversify the economy, make the country globally competitive, creates jobs, ensure food security, protect the environment and generally ramp up the economic performance of the country to become a high income economy. It is expected that this project will be completed by March 2018.

247. Last year, I briefed the house on the implementation of Land Administration, Procedures, Capacity and Systems (LAPCAS) programme. To-date a total of 826,642 plots in villages across the country have been surveyed and assigned unique plot numbers. This information will support infrastructure planning and development, and improve land management. A Land Title Document has been developed with enhanced security features to improve security of our land titles. The Tribal Land Act is accordingly being amended to enable registration of Customary Land Grant in order to make it possible for holders of customary land grants to access credits and improve their economic wellbeing.
248. Government continues to prioritize serviced land in order to facilitate economic development across the country through accelerated land servicing and ESP initiatives. Government has continued to implement minimal and peripheral land servicing to achieve accessibility and potable water supply countrywide. Twenty projects covering approximately 23,996 out of the targeted 37,000 plots have been completed.

## **Bogosi**

249. The institution of *Bogosi* fosters peace, law and order and our cultural traditions through its customary courts and coordination of community initiatives. In an endeavour to enhance the powers of Dikgosi, during 2017/18, Government elevated their positions to a higher status, which is commensurate with their responsibilities and relevance in the governance structure of the country. In this context, Government is committed to extending pay to 665 Headmen of Arbitration in the coming financial year.
250. Efforts continue to be made to improve and avail resources to the Department of Tribal Administration. There has been notable progress in completion of Customary Courts over the last decade. However, office accommodation shortages for Dikgosi still persists. In an effort to improve the working conditions of Dikgosi and other officials within the Department of Tribal Administration, a total of 30 Customary Court offices were constructed in 9 Districts across the country under ESP in the 2016/17 financial year. As at September 2017, 29 customary courts were completed, while the remaining 1 will be completed during the course of 2017/18.



## **Rule of Law**

251. Madam Speaker, according to various reputable comparative indices, such as the Mo Ibrahim Index, Botswana remains not only a regional but indeed international leader in upholding the rule of law. This quality further cascades in our high scores in various additional indices measuring such attributes as peace and security, investment climate, civil liberties, and accountable governance in which, notwithstanding the naysayers, we also have maintained our high rankings.
252. As you are aware, in August 2017 the newly appointed Attorney General and Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) were both sworn in. It is my expectation that they will jointly work on the speeding up of hearing of cases in collaboration with the Administration of Justice. In the same vein, both are expected to continue with the programme of decentralising their services to as many parts of the country as the budget can accommodate.
253. In terms of legislation drafting, the demand for drafting of regulations, statutory instruments, enactment and amendment of laws has been growing in the recent years. This was largely motivated by global developments and emerging security challenges. In this respect it may be noted that since 2008, I have assented to a total of 171 Acts.

## **Administration of Justice**

254. Both the development and recurrent budgets for the Administration of Justice have been growing over the years. This has allowed for the completion of a number of infrastructural developments including the Gaborone High Court and the Court of Appeal, as well as several magistrate courts.
255. Initiatives for quicker dispensation of justice have included special courts.
256. The Administration of Justice has also reviewed its delivery processes to expedite case disposal and turn-around times. The number of magistrates has increased from 51 in 2008/09 to 87 in 2017/18.

Among other initiatives, the Administration of Justice has established a dedicated Sheriff's office managed by a Senior Assistant Registrar to supervise deputy sheriffs.

257. The number of customers for Legal Aid Botswana increased to 3641 in 2016/17. To achieve wider spread of their services, Legal Aid has offices in Gaborone, Francistown, Maun, Tsabong and Kasane. They will be opening an additional office in Palapye during NDP 11.

## **Refugee Welfare**

258. Madam Speaker, our policy regarding refugee management is set within the framework of first country of asylum and encampment. We also believe that being a refugee should not be a permanent status for any individual and therefore status reviews are conducted periodically to among other things; facilitate return to one's country of origin in accordance with the 1951 United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees.
259. Madam Speaker, the refugee population in Botswana has decreased over the years, from 3500 in 2012 to the current figure of 2137. The reduction is attributed mostly to the voluntary repatriation of Angolan and some Namibian refugees, as well as resettlement of those positively assessed and given security clearance by third party countries.

## **Anti-Human Trafficking**

260. Madam Speaker, all stakeholders in the implementation of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act have been trained since the Act's commencement. In 2017 the focus was the training of judicial officers which was achieved in partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Association of Women Judges. To date, there are 15 human trafficking cases registered before the High Courts, while the total number of victims arising from all registered cases is 32.

## **Prisoners and Rehabilitation**

261. Madam Speaker, over the past 10 years the Department of Prisons and Rehabilitation has seen a reduction in the number of offenders incarcerated in Prisons. The daily average population is 5% below the authorised holding capacity.
262. In a bid to improve the condition of facilities, Government embarked on the refurbishment and maintenance of Prison facilities and staff houses.
263. The Prisons Act was also amended to align it to strategies relating to offender rehabilitation, early release programmes, paroles and which include among others extra mural labour.
264. Since 2008, I have granted pardons and remission of sentences to 3,395 prisoners, whilst 114 prisoners were released on parole. I am happy to note that of those pardoned or paroled very few breached the conditions of release. For example, only 3 of those given remissions had to be taken back to Prison to complete their sentences.

## **Crime Intervention**

265. Madam Speaker, the development budget of the Botswana Police Service has increased by 49% from P209 million in 2008/09 to P312 million in 2017/18. This has enabled the Service to improve its performance. According to the Global Competitiveness Report for 2016–2017, Botswana ranks high in terms of reliability of the police service. In terms of achievement by the Botswana Police in crime intervention, the areas of violent and intrusive crimes including violence against women and children shows a decline; having been reduced between 2008 and 2016 by 46%, from 26,150 incidents to 14,224. This includes a nearly two thirds reduction in burglary, thefts and robberies. With respect to what are classified as serious crimes, there has been a 57% reduction in threat to kill and a 32% reduction in motor vehicle theft. There is, however, a growing trend of drug abuse for which interventions will be made to better resource the Botswana Police capability in this area.

266. The advent of technology and increase in the use of cell phones and computers has had a negative impact in some areas whereby technology applications such as Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter have been used to abuse others, which necessitated the need to review legislation. In this regard we will be bringing to Parliament a new Cyber and Computer Related Crimes Bill with a view of among other things, enabling the victims of such crimes to seek redress. The Bill will also outline our legal provisions for dealing with growing global security challenges that use cyber space to commit crime or intrude into individual, commercial or industrial interests. In this connection, Government will invest in the capacitating of the Police Service in areas of cybercrime prevention, investigations, intelligence and forensics.
267. During the period from January 2017 to June 2017, the number of road accidents went down by 13.2% with the number of people who died also declining by 11.5%. It has been established that road accidents in Botswana are linked predominantly to driver carelessness, over-speeding, unlicensed drivers and impaired driving due to alcohol consumption.
268. A number of initiatives have been put in place to impact Botswana policing strategy. These include the establishment of specialised units within the Police Service such as the Crime and Intelligence Bureau, the Diamond and Mineral Protection Unit, the Narcotics, Fauna and Flora Investigations function, the Anti-Stock Theft function and the Airborne Law Enforcement Agency, along with Special Constables and Ipelegeng Police Volunteers and Community Policing.
269. The growth of infrastructural facilities has included the completion of Police Stations in Palapye and Mahalapye. Ongoing projects include the Forensic Laboratory, the Aircraft Hangar, Police Station and staff houses in Gaborone and Mmathubudukwane, as well as planned ones in Maitengwe, Semolale and Letlhakane. In addition, planned and existing Police posts across the country are being rationalised and capacitated with a view to bring policing services closer to communities.

## **Botswana Defence Force**

270. Madam Speaker, we are committed to maintaining the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) as a well trained and adequately resourced military, with a high state of readiness to defend the nation. In addressing national security concerns, the BDF has recognised that its most critical asset is its human resource capacity. The recruitment, training, development and retention of quality personnel are thus considered to be pivotal.
271. Alongside capacity building and human resource development, the BDF is pursuing programmes and projects centred on the Forces organisational development and strategic equipping. In this context, the BDF continuously seeks to achieve a sustainable balance between new procurement, refurbishment and upgrading of its equipment, driven by cost efficiency and affordability. Within these strategies the BDF will be able to acquire critical equipment. This will comprise military hardware, communication equipment, and mobility assets aimed at improving operational capability, efficiency and effectiveness.
272. During NDP 11, provision of additional staff houses will be the priority for BDF facilities.

## **Corruption Prevention**

273. Madam Speaker, Botswana continues to enjoy good ratings by different institutions such as Moody's ratings, MO Ibrahim, World Bank and Transparency International (TI). Notwithstanding these rankings, Botswana still faces challenges of corrupt activities in various sectors of the economy such as construction and land allocation. The current corruption trends reveal the following to be problematic areas:
- Collusion between private companies and public officers
  - Bribery
  - Procurement especially micro
  - Leakage of confidential bidding information for a benefit
  - Highly inflated prices of goods and services when procured for government

274. To reduce such abuses, the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime (DCEC), in collaboration with public institutions, continues to manage risks in key functional areas. An impact assessment study to ascertain the effectiveness of corruption prevention interventions in public institutions has been completed, whose recommendations as well as proposed monitoring and evaluation framework have been shared with the DCEC for implementation. Quality and Procedures Manuals have also been developed in order to better the corruption prevention services that the DCEC is providing to clients.
275. In 2016, the Directorate resuscitated the *Boammaruri* educational programme geared towards teaching primary school pupils on issues of honesty. This educational programme is aimed at catching the pupils at a tender age to mould them into responsible citizens. DCEC also developed a 13 Episode TV drama as a platform for anti-corruption education.

## **Elections**

276. With the coming into force of the Electoral Amendment Act, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) mounted an extensive sensitisation campaign of key stakeholders on the new law, including all registered political parties and all councils. Community leaders and the general public in all the fifty-seven constituencies were also addressed. During this exercise, some Batswana called for the inclusion of the Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) for the sake of transparency and integrity of the electoral process. Currently the Attorney General's Chambers is drafting the Electoral (Amendment) Bill for the inclusion of the VVPAT.
277. The Commission also reviewed the number and locations of polling stations following consultations with key stakeholders and local authorities. This resulted in a reduction of local and external polling stations.
278. The IEC is further working with Government on the development of an interface between the Election Management System and Land Information System in preparation for the voter registration exercise. The system will curb instances of illegal voter registration and trafficking.

## **Ombudsman**

279. Madam Speaker, during the 2016/17 financial year, the Ombudsman received and investigated 1564 complaints, while resolving 798. The Ombudsman's office has also focused on increasing its outreach in the context of the need for greater public awareness of its traditional role and expanded Human Rights mandate.

## **Civil Society**

280. Government recognises the role of civil society in development. To this end, the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Council was established in 2013 to advise Government on the NGO Policy implementation. Thus far, a Strategic Plan and Operational plan have been developed to guide implementation of the Policy.

281. Under the partnership framework between the Government of Botswana and the European Union, through the Empowerment of Non State Actors Programme, a total of P27 million has been awarded for an aggregate of 49 civil society grants since 2015. As at September, 41 projects, of the small and large grants schemes were successfully implemented at a total of P23.3 million, whilst 8 medium size projects are due for completion in December this year.

282. Key achievements of the grant scheme include amongst others; the refurbishment of the Nhabe Museum in Maun, construction of the orphanage care centre in Bobonong, capacity building to key stakeholders on rehabilitation of children with disabilities who cannot be absorbed into the mainstream education system and skills development for income generating activities targeting unemployed women in Kgagalagadi, Kweneng and Selebi Phikwe areas.

## **Labour**

283. Government continues to provide labour administration services to the nation with a view to promoting industrial harmony. These services include labour inspections, trade disputes resolution, promotion of

industrial relations, as well as processing of workers compensation and work and residence permits. The labour system supports the attainment of sustainable economic growth by putting in place favourable laws, policies and regulations in line with international labour standards.

284. Government continues to improve labour legislation in order to create a conducive labour relations climate. Pursuant to this objective, Parliament passed the Trade Disputes Bill, 2016. The Ministry of Employment, Labour Productivity and Skills Development is working with employers and workers representatives to identify gaps in the Employment Act and Trade Unions and Employers Act that may necessitate the amendment of the Acts to facilitate business, as well as to bring the laws into conformity with ILO conventions ratified by Botswana. Other labour laws that are being considered for amendment include the Workers Compensation Act, Cap 47:03 and Factories Act, Cap 44:01 with a view to aligning them with the latest developments and best practice. Furthermore, the development of National Policy on Wellness and Disease Management in the World of Work and National Occupational Health and Safety Policy is at advanced stage. The adoption of these policies would facilitate the management of wellness at the workplace, as well as the implementation of occupational health and safety programmes at the workplace respectively.
285. Botswana Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) will be coming to an end in December 2017. The objective of the programme is to promote employment creation, social protection, social dialogue and rights at work. The programme has provided expertise in the development of the drafts of the National Policy on Wellness and Disease Management in the World of Work and the National Occupational Health and Safety Policy. In view of the importance of this programme, Ministry of Employment, Labour Productivity and Skills Development is working with employers and workers to review the programme with a view to renewing it.



## **Disaster Management**

286. Madam Speaker, recent events such as flooding and earth tremors have raised awareness about the need to prepare for natural disasters. A National Disaster Command Center is being developed and it's currently at the design works phase with the project expected to be complete in a year's time. The centre will play a key role as it will allow for timely and crucial decisions to be taken during disaster operations.
287. A team of Search and Rescue Technicians is currently undergoing months of training in various rescue roles, such as light motor vehicle rescue, confined space, high angle and structural collapse rescue techniques. Upon completion of their training the SAR Team will complement the efforts that will be realized through the establishment of the command centre.

## **Arts & Culture**

288. Madam Speaker, Government continues to promote the diverse cultural heritage of our country through various programmes to develop the arts and crafts to a level where the arts and craft producers are able to earn income from their work.
289. The President's Day Competitions remain a key programme in pursuit of this goal. Participation levels in the Competitions have grown from 3,274 in 2008 to 18,971 this year. The number of categories in which artists compete has at the same time increased from 25 to 58 this year. This growth has resulted in the prize money awarded to artists also rising from P1 million to P4.6 million over the same period.
290. To further promote arts and crafts, Government has taken the lead in allocating P10 million to procure art and crafts as well as performance services from local artists.
291. On the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017 Botswana celebrated 51 years of Independence under the theme: "United and Proud". In this respect, I urge Botswana to continue to use their national symbols and colours as an expression of our patriotism.

## **Sport Development**

292. Madam Speaker, our local sports have come of age. In the last year our athletics and karate teams have performed exceptionally well bringing home medals from international competitions. Collectively, Botswana teams won a total of 194 medals in the last financial year, and 141 medals, including 48 gold, have already been won since April of this year.
293. Government has spent over P130 million on sports development this past year, against P37 million received from private sector sponsorship. Here I wish to encourage more private sector investment to at least match Government in the future. To improve performances and meet the welfare needs of athletes, Government continues to motivate athletes by paying appearance fees and performance incentives.
294. Our heavy investment in capacity building of sport administrators and development of sport infrastructure has also enabled us to host major sporting events. You will all have witnessed the recent Netball World Youth Cup 2017 where we hosted 19 countries. Similarly, we have hosted the World Baseball and Softball Conference in October 2017 and will be welcoming International Working Group on Women and the African Union Sport Council Region 5 under 20 Games in 2018.
295. Constituency Sport Tournaments continue to attract sizeable numbers of youths who benefit from both recreation and physical fitness through their participation. In the 2016/17 financial year participation levels averaged 84,000 compared to 28,500 at inception in 2008. This year athletics has been introduced as the fourth sporting code covered by the games after football, netball and volleyball.
296. The Gambling Act was passed in 2012 opening the door for a National Lottery as well as new betting activities. Once operational the lottery will further support the development of sport and recreation and arts and culture, as well as youth empowerment and local charities.

## **Botswana and the World**

297. Madam Speaker, Botswana continues to play a critical and influential role in the promotion of global issues, such as respect for human rights, good governance, democracy, the rule of law, as well as the maintenance of international peace and security through regional and multilateral diplomacy.
298. Despite our developing nation status, Botswana has remained steadfast in articulating her position with regard to the violation of human rights, poor governance and lack of democratic credibility as well as fanning conflicts based on ethnic, racial and religious bias and/or territorial claims. The principal culprits have been named in the past and we will continue to do so in our press releases. The United Nations Security Council has on many occasion failed to provide the required leadership on such issues as some are part of the problem instead of the solution.
299. I wish to reiterate Botswana's strong support for the International Criminal Court (ICC), which is the only permanent criminal international court of last resort that plays a deterrent role in preventing the commission of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. In order to demonstrate our unequivocal support for the work of ICC, Botswana recently undertook a significant step by domesticating the Rome Statute and thus making it part of our national laws.
300. Government further remains committed to ensure that the conduct of our foreign relations contributes to national development and the improvement of the living standards of all Batswana by attracting foreign direct investment and other forms of international support.
301. In terms of promoting international trade, the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) has been extended by 10 years to September 30, 2025 and participating countries on the extended AGOA Preferential Arrangement were expected to formulate National AGOA Response Strategies. To adhere to these requirements, Botswana completed its AGOA National Response Strategy earlier this year.

The Strategy has identified sectors for potential export including the horticulture and agro-processing; handicrafts; jewellery and semi-precious stones; leather and leather products; natural products; meat and meat products as well as textiles and apparel sector.

302. With the limited financial resources at our disposal, the Government of Botswana has, over the past decade, established five diplomatic missions in Nigeria, Brazil, Kuwait, Mozambique and Germany. This has increased Botswana's diplomatic representation abroad to twenty-two, while we maintain diplomatic ties with 140 nations around the world. In order to maximize opportunities for Botswana, my Government plans to progressively open new diplomatic missions. With expanded representation abroad, we have witnessed an increase in such activities as tourism, trade and investment promotion as well as technical assistance in terms of scholarship offers.
303. During the year under review, I undertook state visits to Germany, Sweden, Chile and Malta. I also had the pleasure of hosting a number of Heads of State.
304. Our foreign policy posture is premised on the principles of good neighbourliness and peaceful co-existence. In this regard, we continue to bilaterally and regionally engage immediate neighbouring countries with a view to further strengthen and deepen the existing special bonds of friendship and close collaboration. In this respect, bilateral mechanisms in the form of Joint Permanent Commission on Defence and Security and on Cooperation are hosted annually on alternative basis with Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia respectively.
305. Botswana also continues to effectively contribute to regional efforts aimed at consolidating democracy, peace and security in the SADC region.
306. Madam Speaker, Botswana has since independence remained committed to advancing the objectives of our Continental body, the African Union. Our commitment to advance the continental development agenda has been demonstrated by the following:

- Botswana has consistently honoured her assessed annual financial contribution to the African Union;
- Botswana has always responded to the international appeals for assistance to other African countries in times of natural disasters and other calamities. As would be recalled, Botswana made contribution to Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea when the three countries were affected by the Ebola virus. As a result, Botswana was in 2015 given an Award by the African Union for her positive life-saving contribution during the Ebola virus crisis.
- Despite our own developmental challenges, Botswana has in the spirit of solidarity and brotherhood continued to extend humanitarian assistance to some members of our African Union family whenever they experience natural catastrophes. In the past humanitarian assistance was extended to Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Togo.
- Botswana has also on several occasions extended humanitarian assistance to Zimbabwe, when they were hit by natural disasters such as cholera, floods, famine, and foot and mouth disease.
- Botswana has also supported peace building initiatives, reconstruction and development efforts of fellow African countries. This has included extending technical support and cooperation to a number of countries, namely Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Namibia, Seychelles and South Sudan.
- Botswana played an active role in the resolution of conflicts both at military and political levels under the UN, AU and SADC mandates. These include: sending military contingents or Observers to UN peacekeeping missions in Somalia, Mozambique, Rwanda and Darfur, Sudan and Lesotho; participation in peacemaking leadership role by Former President Masire (Lesotho and DRC) and Former President Mogae (South Sudan).

- In recognition of Botswana's demonstrated commitment to continue contributing to Africa's peace and stability, in April 2016, Botswana was elected a member of the African Union Peace and Security Council for a period of two years.

307. Madam Speaker, our country continues to benefit from the assistance we receive from our international partners. I, therefore, take this opportunity to once more acknowledge and thank all of the countries and international organisations, including private institutions and individuals, who have supported us over the past year.

## **Conclusion**

308. Madam Speaker, our progress as a nation over the years has been rooted in the fact that the goals that unite us have been, and should ever remain, greater than any differences of perspective on how we may best achieve them. Having interacted with citizens of all walks of life across our great country has, in this respect, reinforced my own faith that we as a people remain united in our diversity. I am further comforted by the talent and innovation I have so often encountered, especially among our youth. While we will undoubtedly continue to confront significant challenges, when we place the interests of Botswana first we shall find the strength to overcome all obstacles.

309. I am confident that sooner rather than later, we shall overcome such challenges as unemployment and poverty amongst our affected citizens. As I said at the beginning of this statement we also have in our revised Long-term Vision and 11<sup>th</sup> National Development Plan the signposts for our medium to long-term progress in this regard. But to achieve our vision of a better future by 2036, while overcoming our current challenges, will require greater commitment and productivity from all sectors of society.

310. In today's fast moving world our benchmarks as Botswana must also be global. We have no choice but to compete with the best in the world. This must remain a daily challenge for all of us, both inside and outside Government, for as I said last year, continued overreliance on the state is no longer a sustainable option.

311. Madam Speaker, in accordance with the Constitution, 5 months from now I shall be passing the baton of leadership of our great country into the capable hands of His Honour the Vice President. I am confident that with support of members of this House and the nation as a whole the next administration will continue to build on the legacy of progress that was begun under my predecessors.
312. Let me also take the opportunity to commend you, Madam Speaker, for your calm and astute leadership of this House as well as your initiative of "Taking Parliament to the People". Let me further commend you for your many years of devoted service to our nation.
313. As we continue on our national journey, let us also continue to look to the Lord who makes all things humanly possible. Let us remain united under God's mercy, for in the Book of Isaiah [41:10] God says: - "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will hold on to you with my righteous right hand." May the blessing of the Lord continue to sustain us.
314. I thank you for your attention.

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