



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

WELCOME REMARKS

BY

HONOURABLE D N MOROKA

MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

ON THE OCCASION OF ADDRESSING

THE CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL

PRIVATE ENTERPRISE AND BOCCIM

PUBLIC-PRIVATE DIALOGUE IN BOTSWANA

ON 9TH MAY, 2007 AT

GABORONE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE

**Director of Ceremonies;
Speaker of the National
Assembly, Honourable Patrick Balopi;
My Colleague, the Namibian
Minister of Trade and Industry,
Honourable Ngatjizeko;
Chief Guest and Chairman of
the Centre for International
Private Enterprise, Mr Greg Lebedev;
Chief Host and BOCCIM, Mr Iqbal Ibrahim;
Business Chief Executives;
Captains of Business and Industry
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen;**

1. It gives me great pleasure to have been accorded the opportunity to address you on Public-Private Dialogue in Botswana. It gives me pleasure because, as former President of BOCCIM, an invitation to this occasion simply ignited my passion and nostalgia for wealth creation and socio-economic prosperity which I have always believed can be achieved through a mutually beneficial public-private sector partnership.

2. I, therefore, stand here to gladly share with you our public-private dialogue experience in Botswana. Botswana's public/private sector dialogue was initiated by BOCCIM nearly twenty years ago in 1988 with the first ever conference in Francistown, some 440 kilometres north of Gaborone. The Conference was called, *"The Francistown Private Sector Conference"*, a name it retained until it was renamed, *"The National Business Conference"*, ten years later in 1998.

3. The main objective of the National Business Conference is to bring together Government and the business community to discuss pertinent issues affecting the economy, the development of Botswana in general and the business sector, in particular.

The National Business Conference has become a biennial calendar event at which issues are deliberated, resolutions made and then implemented by Government or the private sector, depending on whether the issues fall within the purview of the public sector or the private sector.

4. Director of Ceremonies, Ladies and Gentlemen, at the inception of the public/private sector dialogue in 1988, the differences between Government and the private sector were huge and characterized by blames and counter-blames from either side of the divide. Through dialogue, BOCCIM and Government began to appreciate each other's view point and gradually managed to narrow their differences.

This resulted in a mutually beneficial partnership premised on constructive engagement and consultations between the private sector and Government where issues, which affect business such as the formulation and review of Government policy and regulatory frameworks, are discussed.

5. Through our public-private dialogue, we have witnessed numerous achievements some of which include:

- The deregulation of the economy in 1990, which resulted in the removal of commercial judgements on licence applications by Government officials or licensing authorities, the consequence of which was to allow market forces to determine entry into and exit from the market place.

- Abolition of foreign exchange controls and free repatriation of capital, profits, dividends and payments to external creditors and shareholders.

- The establishment of the High Level Consultative Council (HLCC), which meets twice a year under the Chairmanship of His Excellency the President of the Republic Botswana. The HLCC deliberates on policy issues that impede the smooth performance of the private sector. It also considers progress reports from HLCC Sectoral Forums, which meet four times a year under the chairmanship of Cabinet Ministers, where operational issues adversely affecting business within the portfolio responsibilities of respective Ministries are deliberated upon.

- The reduction of corporate tax from 35% to 15% and 25%, respectively for manufacturing and non-manufacturing businesses.

- The establishment of the Botswana Export Development and Investment Authority to promote export development and the attraction of investment flows, especially Foreign Direct Investment.

- The establishment of the Botswana Bureau of Standards to promote the competitiveness of Botswana produced goods and services in both local and international markets, as well as to ensure that such goods and services meet the required quality standards.

- The establishment of the Botswana National Productivity Centre to promote Botswana's competitiveness through continuous improvement of productivity and operational efficiency at both the enterprise and national levels.

- The establishment of the Botswana Tourism Board to promote the tourism sector as a new engine of growth and economic diversification.

- The formulation of the Privatisation Policy to guide the privatization process of public enterprises.

- The recent establishment of a high level Business and Economic Advisory Council whose membership comprises representatives of both the public sector and the private sector to formulate a strategy for sustainable economic growth and diversification.
6. In addition, Government has since been appointing and continues to appoint private sector representatives to the Boards and Committees of public enterprises and other public sector organizations. This is intended to accord the private sector the opportunity to contribute to the public sector decision making process.

7. Director of Ceremonies, Ladies and Gentlemen, there is no doubt that through public-private dialogue the Government of Botswana and the private sector have been able to forge a collaborative partnership for socio-economic development. The intensifying global competition requires Governments and private enterprises to dialogue on how they can work together as coherently integrated systems. If they do not, they run the risk of being relegated to mere spectators in a game of wealth creation and socio-economic prosperity.

"Public-private dialogue is, therefore, the key. Neither Government nor private enterprises can get far without it."

8. It is worth noting that there is strong congruence between the objectives of Government and those of the private sector. On one hand, Government wants economic development and social progress.

The private sector, on the other hand, is motivated by profits, which lead to business growth, and ultimately to general growth in the economy.

9. One major outcome of public-private dialogue is that the role of Government and that of the private sector becomes clear. Government strives to create a conducive environment for the private sector while the private sector serves as the engine of growth. The business of Government therefore, is to govern while the business of the private sector is to create wealth for the nation. With this role clarity, each party is held responsible and through dialogue there is mutual feedback.
10. Director of Ceremonies, Ladies and Gentlemen, on that note, I conclude my remarks and wish you fruitful deliberations.
11. I thank you all for your attention.