



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

**STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS
TO THE FIRST MEETING OF THE FIFTH SESSION
OF THE TWELFTH PARLIAMENT**

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY
DR. MOKGWEETSI ERIC KEABETSWE MASISI
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

**6TH NOVEMBER, 2023
GABORONE**

Table of Contents

I. INTRODUCTION	2
II. SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	8
A. General Economic Outlook	8
B. Private Sector Export-Led Growth	10
C. Innovation and Digital Transformation	13
D. Agriculture	18
E. Mining	25
F. The Creative Industry	31
G. Tourism	32
H. Strategic Infrastructure	35
i) Transport and Logistics	35
ii) Water	38
iii) Buildings	42
iv) Energy	43
III. HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT	47
A. Social Protection	48
B. Child Protection and Development	50
C. Human Capital Development	52
D. Youth, Sport and Gender	53
E. Health and Wellness	57
IV SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT	62
A. A Healthy Environment for a Healthy Nation	62
B. Sustainable Management of Natural Resources	63
C. Climate Change: Adaptation and Mitigation	66
D. Sustainable Human Settlements	68
V. GOVERNANCE, PEACE AND SECURITY	70
A. Governance	70
B. Transparency and Accountability	74
C. Public Safety and Security	75
VI. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	77
VII. A CALL TO ACTION: YOUR VOTE MATTERS	80
VIII. CONCLUSION	82

I. INTRODUCTION

1. **Mister Speaker**, today marks another significant moment in our journey as a nation. I have no doubt that we stand together, united and fortified by our national vision to take Botswana to greater heights. Five years ago, when you gave me the baton to continue with the race toward a prosperous Botswana, we began in earnest to traverse uncharted territories.
2. This was not just a journey but a testament to our resilience and unwavering commitment to shaping a legacy that would transcend time. Let us continue to write our story that echoes the heartbeat of our democracy as we march forward to limitless possibilities.
3. I am humbled by the trust that you have placed in my Government and proud of the accomplishments we have achieved so far as a people. We have developed policies that empower Botswana; promulgated several pieces of progressive legislation; expanded natural resources beneficiation and we are making Botswana a destination of choice.
4. Our country is, as a result, developing at a rate poised to provide a solid foundation for our citizens to thrive to achieve *Prosperity for All*. Today's State of the Nation Address is being delivered mid-way into the two-year Second Transitional National

Development Plan (TNDP) which is being implemented this financial year, and will end in 2024/25.

5. As we continue with the implementation of the Transitional National Development Plan, I am delighted to inform the nation that the process of the preparation of the National Development Plan 12 has commenced; and it is following a bottom-up planning approach.
6. The plan will cover a five-year period starting from 2025/26 to 2029/30 financial years. I, therefore, urge all Batswana at the village and district level structures, as well as the private sector and civil society, to participate in the preparation of the Plan, in full commitment to ***leaving no one behind***. To ensure and enhance representation of youth, 30 young people will be attached to the National Planning Commission during the preparation of NDP12.
7. This will be the **first** Plan that is aligned with the electoral cycle to enable the Party that wins the elections in October 2024 to fashion the development plan according to their manifesto. In view of this, we are developing legislation that will streamline our planning and budgeting processes accordingly and further strengthen implementation. This is, our ***Reset Agenda in action. A Re Chencheng!***

8. ***Bagaetsho***, one of the significant reforms ushered in, during the Second Transitional National Development Plan is the Development Manager Model. The DM Model will be used for the efficient and effective implementation of **one hundred and forty-three** (143) projects across the country, with a budget allocation of over **Thirteen Billion Pula** (P13 Billion), mainly for development in rural areas.
9. Other game-changer reforms include, the Artificial Insemination programme with imported bulls and heifers of superior genetics; Temo Letlotlo; Village Connectivity; the acquisition of strategic or high value assets and Government Online Services.
10. These investments include electrification of villages, provision of clean water, roads, schools, hospitals, sanitation infrastructure as well as revival of the agricultural sector, among others. Our approach continues to consolidate agricultural developments, while transforming rural areas by facilitating sectors such as tourism, manufacturing, retail, and other services.
11. As we journey towards “***Achieving Prosperity for All***” by 2036, with less than 13 years left, I implore Batswana in general and all key stakeholders to embrace the ***Mind-Set Change***, and do everything possible to achieve the ideals of our National Vision. Consequently, Government has developed the National

Transformation Strategy for the effective implementation of our long-term Vision.

12. The strategy prioritises Mining, Tourism, Agriculture, Manufacturing, Transport and Logistics, Trade, Sport and Creative Industry, Financial, Knowledge and Technology, Real Estate and Business Services sectors. Their prioritisation is based on potential for high economic growth, competitive advantage, job creation, as well as value chain development, and their positive spill-over effects on the overall economy.
13. **Mister Speaker**, Botswana has become a formidable participant in sport on the global stage. This is mainly due to the commitment of our fellow citizens who have proven to be among the best in the world. I am exceedingly proud of all the teams which participated at the 2023 World Athletics Championships, and remain immensely grateful to our global superstar in athletics, Letsile Tebogo, fondly known as, '*School Boy*'. **Stand up "School boy" so that all Batswana in this House and at home may honour you with a standing ovation.**
14. '*School Boy*' is Botswana's sensation and currently holds the 200m African record; and is the first African to win a silver medal in 100m at the World Championships, and a 200m bronze medal at the 2023 World Athletics Championships. We are where the world's best athletes are - ***Medal Podiums!***

15. ***Batswana Betsho***, let us continue to celebrate our brand ambassadors: Amantle Montsho, Isaac Makwala, Nigel Amos, Tumisang Orebonye and Ross Branch who have raised Botswana's flag in the sporting world and made sport in Botswana interesting and attractive, especially among the youth.
16. A special recognition also goes to the Kgalemang Tumediso Motsete Choir (KTM) which attained a Gold Medal in Folklore with Accompaniment at the World Choir Games in Korea. These accomplishments, demonstrate that there are opportunities for our Setswana Choirs popularly known as Dikhwaere to rise in excellence.
17. Our gratitude further goes to all individuals, teams, and their technical support staff, who distinguish themselves through the excellent work they continuously display as they represent us at continental and international events.
18. ***Fellow citizens***, we have had numerous challenges both at home and globally, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of climate change, geopolitical conflicts, and a high cost of living, but we refuse to be discouraged. Instead, we choose to confront these challenges head on, through adaptation, proactive strategies for resilience and selfless commitment to soldier on for a better Botswana.

19. It would be remiss of me if I did not express our deepest condolences and sympathies to the families of those who lost their lives in tragic road accidents. Safety on our roads continues to be a major concern as seen in the latest spate of injuries and high fatalities. Gender-Based Violence is also a contributor to the loss of lives and must be condemned in the strongest terms possible.
20. **May I invite you to observe a moment of silent for those who lost their lives.**
21. **Mister Speaker,** I am saddened that, due to reckless driving, we continue to witness the destruction of our infrastructure, such as traffic and street lights, which are meant to keep us safe. I urge you all to take care of your property across the country.
22. **Mister Speaker,** I now turn to my presentation, which will be guided by the four pillars of our National Vision 2036, namely: Sustainable Economic Development; Human and Social Development; Sustainable Environment; and Governance, Peace and Security.

II. SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A. General Economic Outlook

23. **Mister Speaker**, the global economy continues to recover at a slower pace than expected due to the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The ongoing war in the Middle East has the potential to slow down the recovery even further. As such, Government continues to monitor the global economic situation and update the nation accordingly.
24. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects global growth of 3.0 percent in 2023, compared to a slightly higher growth of 3.5 percent in 2022. This slowdown is expected to be mostly driven by weak economic performance, especially in major trading economies such as the China, United States of America, the United Kingdom, and Europe. On the other hand, growth in advanced economies is estimated at 1.5 percent in 2023 from 2.6 percent in 2022.
25. Emerging markets and developing economies are estimated to grow by 4.0 percent in 2023, compared to 4.1 percent in 2022, while the sub-Saharan Africa region is expected to record a growth of 3.3 percent in 2023 compared to 4.0 percent in the previous year.
26. On the domestic front **Mister Speaker**, the economy is expected to mirror global economic performance. In this regard, the economy

is expected to slow down to 3.8 percent in 2023, compared to 5.8 percent in 2022. This slow growth is attributed to the weak demand for rough diamonds. I, therefore, call for more prudent resource mobilisation and harnessing, so that every thebe at our disposal takes us an extra mile.

27. Growth in 2023 is expected to be driven by the non-mining sector, underpinned by various factors such as Government interventions aimed at accelerating economic transformation and building economic resilience.
28. The annual average growth rate falls short of the 6 percent required to attain a high-income status as espoused by the National Vision 2036. It is for this reason that we are intensifying our efforts to transform the economy, and sustainable economic development remains central to Government's development agenda.
29. On the cost of living, the average inflation recorded in 2022 was 12.2 percent. This was largely driven by external factors such as the increase in international oil prices and supply chain disruptions experienced during the first half of the year.
30. In response, the Bank of Botswana raised the Monetary Policy Rate and has maintained it at 2.65 percent since August 2022. Inflation has since tapered, reaching 3.2 percent by September 2023, and is expected to modestly remain within the price stability range of 3 to 6 percent in the short to medium term.

B. Private Sector Export-Led Growth

31. **Mister Speaker**, we are resolute in building a resilient export-led, innovative and knowledge-based economy with access to a skilled and internationally competitive workforce, leading-edge technology and infrastructure.
32. The growth of a diversified export-led economy remains key to building a prosperous society through the creation of value chain opportunities across all sectors, for employment and improved competitiveness.
33. Expansion of value chains is expected to contribute to the foreign exchange earnings and Government budget and, in the process, enable us to provide public goods and services, including infrastructure development, health, education, water and sanitation.
34. The Provisional Balance of Payment figures estimate a surplus of **P4.5 Billion** in 2022, compared to a deficit of **P2.9 Billion** in 2021. We welcome this significant growth of **P7.4 Billion**, which has led to the increase in our foreign reserves; the reserves we need for payment of goods and services across our borders. The surplus is, in part, due to a favourable trade performance owing to a substantial increase in export earnings.

35. The total export commodities are largely from the mineral sector, particularly diamonds, copper-nickel, and silver, all of which accounted for 92 percent of total exports contribution. That notwithstanding, the import bill still remains high, and presents an opportunity to grow local industries.
36. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows in 2022/23 were approximately **P3.2 billion** during the current financial year, while Domestic Investment and Expansions stood at approximately **Four Hundred and Forty-Four Million Pula** (P444Million).
37. Mining and Services sectors contributed the most to domestic investment, as well as to FDI. The total number of jobs created through the FDI, Domestic Investment and Expansions stood at **four thousand, two hundred and twenty-nine** (4,229) during the 2022/23 financial year.
38. **Mister Speaker**, the development of capital markets remains a priority as evidenced by the recent promulgation of the new Retirement Funds law, amongst others. The law requires Pension Funds to invest at least 50 percent of their portfolios locally This will not only deepen the domestic capital market, but will also grow the financial sector.
39. Government launched the 2023/24 Borrowing Strategy and Auction Calendar in June 2023, to raise public awareness and

enhance transparency on public debt management. The launch of the Strategy is part of the endeavour to develop the local currency bond market. It is a reform that is aimed at building investor relations which is important for the development of capital markets.

40. As part of the continuing efforts to improve the transmission and effectiveness of monetary policy operations, commercial banks were, with effect from April 2023, allowed to individually and independently determine their own Prime Lending Rates.
41. It is envisaged that this will engender competitive loan pricing in the market, and reduce the cost of borrowing for the benefit of consumers. This is part of the on-going monetary reforms designed to enhance the effectiveness of tools and instruments for the management of banking liquidity and efficiency of interbank markets.
42. The Banking Act was amended in 2023 to, among others, grant the Bank of Botswana powers to implement a risk-based supervision framework and in the process safeguard deposits for Batswana in the event of any potential bank distress. The amendment also introduces tiered banking which gives Batswana an opportunity to play a role in the banking sector and apply for banking licenses. These reforms will go a long way in building confidence and trust in our banking system.

C. Innovation and Digital Transformation

43. **Mister Speaker**, digitalisation of the public sector is critical for service delivery in a knowledge-based economy. A total of one hundred and seventy (170) online services have been developed and are being rolled out to the public in a phased approach. The process commences with onboarding of citizens by self-registration and walk-ins to selected Government service centres. An additional one hundred and thirty (130) services are targeted for completion by September 2024.
44. Citizens will be able to apply online for National Identification cards (Omang), passports, social benefit grants, drivers' licenses, livestock sales clearance, motor vehicle clearance, application for firearms and vehicle registration, amongst others.
45. Fifteen citizen youth owned companies, at a total value of **Sixty Million Pula** (P60 Million) in 2022, **One Hundred Million Pula** (P100 Million) in 2023, and expecting yet another **One Hundred Million Pula** (P100 Million) in 2024, have been contracted for the development of e-services; and this has created high-tech jobs. I am pleased that the micro enterprises in the informal sector are now able to participate more efficiently and productively using the digital platforms.

46. **Bagaetsho**, our commitment to digitalisation has to date resulted in the implementation of citizen-centric digital services, creating a seamless experience for consumers. These are mostly offered by the private sector. The efficacy from Information Technology and Communications, will manifest in the following ways:

i. ***E-Health Strategy (2020–2024)***, which aims to transform the health sector to be patient-centric, through:

- a) an electronic medical records system which has been piloted in 10 clinics with a view to rolling it out by March 2024; and
- b) an online portal called ***Tsogojwame*** for health promotion, which was developed by the Botswana Institute for Technology, Research and Innovation (BITRI).

ii. ***E-education*** which entails the following:

- a) the provision of ICT devices to every teacher and learner at primary, junior, and senior secondary school levels, and will be rolled out to tertiary institutions by the end of this financial year;

- b) delivery of mobile ICT laboratories to primary schools, which has commenced, and will be rolled out to all primary schools from next financial year;
- c) the development of Education Management Information System, with 8 modules, to be delivered in phases; with the Learning Management Module, for online teaching and learning, expected to be operational by mid-2024; and
- d) the remaining modules which are expected to facilitate interface between parents, schools and education authorities will be developed during the 2024/25 financial year.

iii. ***E-mobility programme*** is currently ongoing and its main focus is on training of technicians to give them proficiency for attending to the mechanical, electrical and technical requirements of the *E-vehicle*. So far, a total of 60 technicians have been trained. This will ensure that Botswana is properly positioned to assemble electric vehicles including electric boats.

iv. ***E-commerce*** technologies provide opportunities in areas such as indigenous foods, indigenous herbs and cosmetics, basketry, systems and software development. The

development and greater uptake of some of the technologies will assist us to penetrate the global market.

v. ***Kaekapakae*** CEDA online services launched on 22nd September 2023.

47. **Mister Speaker**, I recently had the opportunity to launch the SmartBots Village Connectivity project, which will fast track digital access to Botswana. It will promote and nurture democracy and good governance.
48. Since 2021, a total of **One Thousand One Hundred and Thirty-Eight** (1,138) public facilities in **One Hundred and Forty-Four** (144) villages have been connected to high speed free internet. The project covers Dikgotla, health facilities, schools and other essential government facilities. Just last week there were over **five hundred thousand** (500,000) people connected to the system. ***This is Access and Inclusion!***
49. As we drive towards a Knowledge Driven Economy, not only should we create an inclusive digital space, but we must also facilitate all parts of our country to participate in the realisation of a Knowledge Economy.
50. The SmartBots Village Connectivity is the first phase in the implementation of this objective. The second objective, which will be implemented during the National Development Plan 12, is to

connect all the productive parts of the country; being farming and tourism areas.

51. We have now established the Botswana Education and Research Network (BoTSREN) that allows us to access technical and educational resources for research and innovation within Botswana and around the world. As a result of BoTSREN we have established links with ***Ubuntunet*** alliance that interconnects national research networks within the region.
52. In the past five years, Botswana has made significant progress in innovation as evidenced by the 2023 World Intellectual Property Organisation's ranking which placed her at 85th out of one hundred and thirty-two (132) countries, compared to a 106th in 2021. The current ranking translates to third place in Africa. To drive innovation, Botswana has prioritised the registration and ownership of patents by Botswana.
53. As of June 2023, a total of 5 patents were registered and two of these were granted in the mining and agricultural sectors. This is a positive development in transforming towards a knowledge-based economy. Three of these patents are: a) a system for sorting diamonds owned by BIUST; b) a method for crushing glass waste owned by Mr OS Molefhe, a Motswana; c) a method of converting mobile money of one financial institution to a money vendor owned by Mr Thatayaone and another Motswana.

54. **Mister Speaker,** we are witnessing the development and emergence of technologies that include Botswana Satellite One, known as BOTSAT1. The satellite ground station was developed by Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST), which I launched in November 2022 alongside Mr. Festus Gontebanye Mogae, the Chancellor of Botswana International University of Science and Technology. The station has started receiving data from other orbiting satellites in space such as; weather, water bodies and vegetation.
55. The second phase of the project referred to as, BOTSAT CubeSAT, will be launched by August 2024. The satellite will improve access to information for agriculture, tourism, mining, surface water monitoring, human settlements and town planning and communications. These projects demonstrate that our national transformation agenda pulsates with vitality, innovation and relentless commitment to achieving prosperity through Knowledge-Based Economy. It is the intention of my Government to seek partnerships with other nation-states so that we can assist with collecting data for them as well treating it for use.

D. Agriculture

56. **Mister Speaker,** it is indisputable that no nation can stand dignified if it cannot feed itself. Our aspirations continue to be for

a sustainable, technology driven and commercially viable agricultural sector, aimed at attaining food security.

57. In the context of the need for the country to feed itself, let it be noted that the decision to restrict the importation of selected vegetables and fruits in 2022 is bearing fruit. The intervention has resulted in the decline of the fresh produce import bill from **Six Hundred and Thirty-Four Million Pula** (P634 million) in 2018 to **One Hundred and Eighty-Two Million** (P182 million) in 2023.
58. This has reduced the import bill by **Four Hundred and Fifty-Two Million Pula** (P452 million), which is 71 percent reduction. We achieved this, while simultaneously increasing our national capacity to produce the food we need daily at both household and national levels. This demonstrates the positive impact of the import restrictions on the country's import bill.
59. The success of the horticultural sector was further facilitated by Government's initiative of providing an Impact Accelerator Facility to the tune of **Seventy Million Pula** (P70 million) under the Transitional National Development Plan. This allowed for a 50 percent grant to farmers and 50 percent contribution on their part.

60. To date, four hundred and sixty-one (461) farmers across the country have benefited from the initiative. The scheme enabled farmers to equip their boreholes with solar energy, and provided them with reservoirs and shade netting, amongst others.
61. That notwithstanding, **Mister Speaker**, these notable gains are characterised by a painful transition of under-supply, low quality and increased cost. We must appreciate that these are serious issues we have to contend with, if we are to be self-reliant and achieve food security.
62. As part of developing value chains, Government will facilitate the establishment of a horticulture market in collaboration with the private sector. The horticulture market will begin operations by April 2024. The market will enhance self-reliance, access, competitiveness and price stability, the result of which will be the promotion of wider citizen participation in the agro-business and associated value chains.
63. To further grow the agricultural sector, Government has accelerated plans to liberalise the beef industry for its growth and vibrancy. In July 2023, Parliament passed the Meat Industry Regulatory Authority Act which provides for the establishment of the Authority in the next financial year. The entity will promote resilience of the livestock and meat sector by creating a conducive business environment, which at the same time ensures protection of Batswana and consumers of our meat. This notwithstanding,

Government has taken the decision to extend the life export dispensation by twelve months from December 2023 to end in December 2024.

64. Government is making strides towards improving the local production of milk and beef through alternative breeding systems such as artificial insemination. In this regard, Government will continue to rehabilitate the existing Artificial Insemination Centres across the country. It will also increase them by six new ones and this will be done by September 2024. The six Artificial Insemination Centres are: Mahalapye Rural Training Centre; Impala; Setata in Boteti District; Nxaraga; Chobe and Kgalagadi South. In addition, a citrus project is progressing well in Selibe Phikwe. The first harvest is expected early next year which I will lead.
65. These breeding systems are availed to Batswana at subsidised prices, to ensure inclusiveness and high uptake. For the financial year 2022/23, a total of **one thousand seven hundred and fifty** (1,750) dairy cattle female sexed semen has been purchased and **one thousand** (1,000) of them have been sold to dairy farmers. The remaining 750 female sexed semen are yet to be sold. Additionally, CEDA has developed a new Artificial Insemination (AI) product for funding.
66. In respect of conventional semen, five hundred (500) straws were purchased, out of which one hundred (100) have already been sold to dairy farmers. In the current financial year, one hundred and sixty-two (162) breeding live beef cattle were imported, out of

which one hundred and forty-one (141) were bulls and 21 heifers. These were bought to further improve the country's genetic quality and ultimately increase national herd.

67. A total of **two thousand four hundred and one** (2,401) Brown Swiss, Red Holstein and Holstein breeds sexed semen were purchased in 2023/24 financial year in Switzerland and Germany. Clearly, Government is elevating Botswana to the pinnacle of prosperity and unlocking the boundless potential of its people in the livestock sector.
68. **Mister Speaker**, construction of the Tsabong world class multispecies abattoir at a cost of **One Hundred and Sixty-Three Million** (P163 Million), which was expected to be completed by April 2023, will now be operationalised by April 2024. The delay in the timely completion of the facility was largely caused by global supply chain constraints.
69. The establishment of the abattoir is a demonstration of our commitment as Government to grow the small stock industry and other species exponentially. I implore Botswana, as I have done previously, to increase livestock production. The strategic interventions introduced by Government include the following:
 - a) the provision of quality breeding stock from Government multiplication farms, and training farmers in good animal husbandry;

- b) identification of thirteen Government ranches which will be subdivided into 57 small stock ranches to be availed to farmers before April 2024 or earlier;
 - c) continuing to incrementally and systematically invest in the small stock research and quality improvement at Lobu centre of excellence.
 - d) upgrading the Ramatlabama Artificial Insemination lab to include small stock semen and embryo production by 2024/25.
 - e) Special efforts are being made to deal with regrettable shortage of ear tags caused by procurement challenges and litigation. That, notwithstanding, we expect the delivery of a batch of ear tags middle of November this year.
70. As part of our efforts to transform Lobu farm into a smart farm and a centre of excellence for small stock leveraging on 4th Industrial Revolution technologies, we expect to introduce drones for animal handling and control, medical deliveries to outposts around the farm, predator control, surveillance and farm security, by end of 2023. Furthermore, to address challenges of water scarcity, we have installed one hundred (100) hydro panels which generate six hundred (600) litres of potable water on a daily basis. We will be replicating this process in other small stock farms.

71. **Mister Speaker**, I am pleased to inform this august house that the construction of 12 grain storage silos in Pandamatenga will be completed by soon, and will bring the total silo grain storage capacity to **ninety thousand** (90,000) metric tonnes from **thirty thousand** (30,000) metric tonnes.
72. This will raise the capacity for strategic grain reserves and enhance national food security, as well as optimise the utility of the Pandamatenga Special Economic Zone. With this development, total national storage capacity for grains will reach **one hundred and forty-five thousand** (145,000) metric tonnes.
73. **Mister Speaker**, the ISPAAD Programme has come to an end. It has been replaced by **Temo Letlotlo** programme which will effect during the 2023/24 ploughing season. **Temo Letlotlo** is a performance output-based programme whose aim is to sustainably improve food security in the country.
74. The Programme has two components being, household food security and national food security. The household security component will assist microscale farmers with 100 percent subsidy and it targets the farming population with no wage or monthly income of up to **Two Thousand Five Hundred Pula** (P2,500). The expectation is that these farmers will be capacitated through input supplies to grow enough crops to meet their household food security needs.

75. On the other hand, the national food security component targets small, medium and large scale individual farmers, as well as groups and clusters. These farmers will be provided with the seasonal loans at prime rate through the National Development Bank. This component will produce grain on a commercial basis marketed through Botswana Agricultural Marketing Board and other channels to meet national food security needs and ultimately export the surplus.
76. Incentives under this Programme include a 50 percent subsidy of a set limit of **One Hundred and Fifty Thousand Pula** (P150,000) for fencing and **Five Hundred Thousand Pula** (P500,000) for tractor and implements. Additionally, the extension farmer ratio for the provision of technical advice and guidance will be improved. **Mister Speaker, our commitment is to see the future of Botswana defined by wealth.**

E. Mining

77. **Mister Speaker**, the minerals sector is a mature and primary sector, which has been a principal source of revenue for sustainable growth and value chain development and beneficiation for Botswana.

78. In September 2023, Government reached a new Sales Agreement with De Beers Group which will run for the next 10 years. In addition, the mining licences for Debswana mines were renewed and will run for a further 25 years from 2029 until 2054.
79. A groundbreaking outcome of the Agreement is the increase of Botswana Government's entitlement, through the Okavango Diamond Company, in the Debswana production, from 25 percent to 50 percent by year 10. This will fast track the beneficiation for cutting, polishing and manufacturing of jewellery, locally, thereby, ensuring provenance and branding of our diamonds.
80. In addition, the Agreement will result in Botswana receiving **One Billion Pula** (P1 Billion) each year for 10 years, which will be deposited into the Diamond Development Fund, and will accumulate **to Ten Billion Pula** (P10 Billion). The Fund will among others, support the tourism/hospitality and agricultural sectors, as well as Research and Development. The increase in Government's entitlement out of Debswana's production will create additional opportunities for Botswana.
81. The Kimberley Process Secretariat will begin operations in Gaborone in January 2024. The appointment of the Executive Secretary will be approved by the Kimberley Process Plenary in November 2023. The hosting of the Kimberley Process Secretariat

is a clear indication of the confidence that the international community has in our governance processes.

82. Meanwhile, Jwaneng Mine has embarked on an Underground Development Project which aims at sustaining diamond revenues beyond the life of Cut 9 open pit mining. The project will develop a modern underground mine with early works expected in the first half of 2024.
83. The project has started rolling out the underground skills development strategic plan which includes sending Batswana mining graduates to underground training centres in and outside the country. The Orapa Cut 3 Project, whose main objective is to extend life of the mine post Cut 2 has been approved to progress from pre-feasibility to full feasibility stage.
84. **Mister Speaker**, since the inception of the Debswana Citizen Economic Empowerment Programme in 2019, a total of **eleven thousand two hundred and thirty-three** (11, 233) direct and value chain jobs have been created. So far, **Seventeen Billion Pula** (P17 Billion) against a target of **Twenty Billion Pula** (P20 Billion) by the end of 2024, has been spent on fuel, lubricants, drilling, crushing, repairs and maintenance of equipment.
85. The other positive spin off is that Botswana will no longer import PVC pipes as Flo-Tek in Ramotswa will be producing them. We will no longer import flocculent as plant will be set up in Jwaneng and Orapa, Tyre pyrolysis factory will be set up in Jwaneng. The two

projects will create **two thousand four hundred** (2400) jobs at inception.

86. Sixty-four percent of Debswana's suppliers are citizens who have access to finance through its partnership with local banks. As a result of the arrangement, **One Billion Two Hundred Million Pula** (P1.2 Billion) has been advanced to finance citizen-owned companies with Debswana. This coupled with the National Development Budget, is testimony that **our diamonds are truly for development, they do not just sparkle but catalyse our development.**
87. Morupule Coal Mine has as of September 2023, supported six hundred and forty jobs from their *citizen spend* of Three Hundred and Forty-Two Million Pula. Since inception in January 2022, the citizen spend stands at **Four Hundred and ninety-one** (P491) **Million Pula.**
88. Lucara Botswana's underground mining development at Karowe Mine, the first of its kind in Botswana, is in progress. The open cast mine operation is expected to transition to underground mining in \$683 Million 2026, at an estimated cost of **Three Billion Pula** (P3 Billion); most of which is Foreign Direct Investment.
89. The Tshukudu Metals Motheo Copper Project in Gantsi, started mining in March 2022 followed by the production of copper concentrates in April 2023.

90. Tshukudu Metals Botswana has secured the extension of their mining lease in September 2023, and will in 2024 embark on the expansion of the mining project, including the upgrading of the ore processing plant capacity from 3.2 million tonnes of ore to 5.2 million tonnes of ore per annum. The expansion project is estimated to cost **One Billion and Two Hundred Million Pula** (P1.2 Billion) and will create more job opportunities.
91. Currently, Tshukudu Metals Motheo Copper Project has a total of **one thousand five hundred** (1,500) employees and contractors, 97 percent of whom are Batswana. The project has an initiative to empower communities through training and upskilling, and has thus facilitated employment of one hundred and sixty (160) persons from communities around the mine, particularly Gantsi and the surroundings areas.
92. In another development, Khoemacau Copper Mine which was commissioned at BOSETO in June 2021, reached full capacity and production in December 2022.
93. **Mister Speaker**, there is a budding, albeit huge coal mining project in the Mmamabula area comprising Jindal and Mookane Coal Mine. The companies are expected to produce 4.7 metric tonnes and 2 metric tonnes of coal per annum as well as electricity respectively. These are modularized and scalable even for possible exports.

94. Once completed, these projects whose construction has begun, are expected to create a combined minimum of **one thousand five hundred** (1,500) permanent jobs and other economic activities in the area. The project is expected to contribute to energy security, as well as generate export revenue for Botswana.
95. In the past two years, we have seen the establishment of diamond cutting and polishing companies increasing from 23 to 46 in the country. This has increased employment in the sector from **two thousand two hundred and seven** (2 207) to **four thousand two hundred and thirty-nine** (4,239), as at September 2023. This is a growth of almost 93 percent. Citizen participation in the *upstream, mid and downstream* diamond industry is still Government's priority.
96. One success to note and celebrate is a local jewellery manufacturing company, which exported its first ever diamond jewellery consignment in March 2023, to the United States of America, under the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act facility. Our strategy is to increasingly expand diamond jewellery consignments to more markets around the world.
97. The Giyani Metals are finalising the preliminary economic assessment of the manganese project. It is expected that they will submit a mining license application by December 2023. The

estimated life of mine for this asset is 57 years. This will be a huge input into the country's E-mobility aspirations.

98. Government is reviewing the Mines and Minerals Act to ensure, amongst others, increased participation of citizens in the minerals economy as well as safeguard the industry for sustainability.
99. **Mister Speaker**, allow me to state before this house that, in March 2023, Government made a pronouncement to the effect of purchasing a 24 percent stake in HB Antwerp. I am happy to announce that due process of detailed, legal and commercial due diligence is now ongoing to finalise the deal.

F. The Creative Industry

100. **Mister Speaker**, the commercialisation of the creative industry presents a huge opportunity for Batswana creatives to generate employment and wealth, especially for the youth. Accordingly, the National Arts Council has undertaken extensive consultations in order to formulate a strategy that will transform the local creative industry and protect our cultural heritage.
101. Moreover, the Council has started its operations by issuing grants to winning proposals in various categories of arts and crafts. This has resulted in the engagement of 19 Youth Production Companies in the Industry. During the 2022/23 financial year, **Fifteen Million Pula** (P15 Million) was spent on local Content

Acquisition, as a way to continue creating economic activity in the Film and Television Industry.

102. Consequently, 27 programme series sets have been acquired thereby, creating employment for two hundred and twenty (220) people within the creative industry value chain, such as production teams and actors. More local content will be acquired in the financial year 2023/24 to be played on Btv 3, the readiness of which is at 85 percent.
103. In a related development, Botswana will hold its inaugural International Film Festival from 20th to 24th November 2023. The festival is a platform for networking with filmmakers, distributors, streaming platforms, financiers, writers and all other supporting industries. This will among others, unlock value chains in the sector, enhance distribution platforms and commercialise creative Intellectual Properties.

G. Tourism

104. **Mister Speaker**, Government has made yet another milestone in the tourism industry, with the completion of the National Tourism Strategy and its 10-year Master Plan of 2023 to 2033. This is an important spatial planning framework for tourism development that delineate the country into eight (8) Tourism Development Areas intended to spread tourism activities beyond traditional destinations.

105. These initiatives will also facilitate our tourism offerings through exploitation of our rich historical culture and heritage. The most notable one is the Kasane-Kazungula re-development, which will transform the Chobe area into a high value tourism destination.
106. We stand steadfast to facilitate a series of annual events to stimulate domestic and inbound travel as part of diversifying our tourism offering. These include amongst others: Toyota Gazoo Desert race, Makgadikgadi Epic, Xere Annual Festival, Dithubaruba, Domboshaba Cultural Event, the Nama, Dikgafela, Khawa Dune Challenge and Kazungula marathon.
107. These events have begun attracting international audiences and participants. It is expected that over time, private business will assume full responsibility over these as part of enabling our private sector-led economy. **Mister Speaker**, as part of a deliberate and intentional economic diversification strategy, Botswana is on an over-drive mode to establish herself as the destination of choice for hosting Meetings, Incentives, Conferencing and Exhibitions (MICE).
108. As a result, numerous events bringing thousands of international participants have been hosted across the country in keeping with our commitment. The benefits of hosting these events include a diversity of spin-offs for several sectors embracing the hotel and hospitality, retail and transport, amongst others.

109. Accordingly, the development of a MICE strategy has been concluded and will guide the management of these events for optimal impact. Part of implementing the strategy will include the establishment of a MICE Coordinating Structure, which will facilitate and coordinate all MICE related activities in the country.
110. I now take this opportunity to implore Batswana and the tourism industry to take ownership of this Strategy; that will help us improve our public and private facilities, including refinement of standards and our hosting skills.
111. Opportunities for hosting events of international standards continue to be created, particularly in the value creating space such as, marketing, rapporteuring, protocoling, fee-based tours, to mention few. Therefore, the responsibility lies with each one of us to play our part in welcoming guests in our customary Setswana hospitality.
112. Let us change our hospitality mind-set to be more positive and deliver memorable experiences to our visitors because we all stand to benefit economically, socially, and culturally, through hosting events. ***Bagaetsho***, here are opportunities for you to enterprise and benefit from the MICE, ***A re amogeleng baeng ka setho sa rona...!***

H. Strategic Infrastructure

113. **Mister Speaker**, we continue to invest significantly, in strategic infrastructure to support growth and competitiveness of our country, given its strategic geographic location at the center of Southern Africa. To accelerate our investment agenda, we have adopted a new approach known as the Development Manager Model. This is expected to expedite timely delivery of quality projects and reduce financial and economic risk to Government.
114. Amongst the projects covered under the Development Manager Model, are the construction of roads, schools, hospitals and clinics across the length and breadth of this country. The financing of these projects will be sourced from the Domestic Development Fund.

i) Transport and Logistics

115. **Mister Speaker**, substantial investments in transport infrastructure are being made to connect communities and production areas, as well as link Botswana with countries in the region, through air transport, rail link and the road network. To realise benefits, we must consciously accept responsibility to preserve our investment in existing infrastructure through continual maintenance, thus maximising our return on such investment.

116. The three (3) interchanges along Western Bypass in Gaborone have been completed and opened to traffic in April 2023. As a result, there is already a noticeable improvement in traffic flow in and out of the capital city, and we will continue investing in these types of projects to improve evacuation routes in and out of major centres, especially in times of emergencies.
117. **Mister Speaker,** the construction of the following road projects is ongoing namely: Tshesebe-Mosojane-Masunga road (51.2km), together with access roads to Masukwane, Kgari, Pole, Mulambakwena, Mapoka and Letsholathebe villages. These are expected to be completed in December 2023.
118. In addition, the construction of Mandunyane – Shashemooke – Borolong – Chadibe – Mathangwane-Makobo-Natale road (84km) has commenced and is expected to be completed in June 2025.
119. The following roads will be reconstructed: Francistown – Nata (200km); Nata – Pandamantenga road (64km); Nata - Gweta (100km); The Maun-Sehithwa – Mohembo (149km); Mogoditshane-Gabane-Mankgodi (27km) and Palapye - Martin's Drift road (111km). Works on all of these roads will commence during the course of this financial year, and will be implemented through the Development Manager model.
120. As we reconstruct and maintain our roads, we have committed to develop new link roads. The following roads will be designed and constructed: Goodhope-Kgoro-Gathwane (14 km); the new access roads totaling 58km in the Goodhope District and covering

Rakhuna-Ngwatsau-Sheepfarm-Malokaganyane road link (21km), the Dinatshana-Pitsane-Potlokwe-A1 link (6km), the Dinatshana-Bethele-Kgoro (10km) link; and the access roads to Gamajaalela (7km), Sekokwane (3km), Mogwalale (2.5km), Mosi (7 km) and Phitshane Molopo Border (1.5km). These are expected to commence in November this year.

121. Furthermore, plans are underway to seek private sector participation in dualing the remainder of the Ramatlabama-Ramokgwebana (A1) road. Expression of interest will be floated before the end of the current financial year.
122. The following new roads will be constructed through the Development Manager model: Modipane-Mabalane (24km); Molepolole Bypass (28km); Tloaneng-Mankgodi (12km); Mmathethe-Bray-Werda (125km); three (3) Grade Separated Interchanges at Molapo Crossing, Block 8 Traffic circle and Airport Junction.
123. The construction of Mmokolodi Kgotla access road (6km); Mmadinare-Robelega (40km); Manyana-Moshupa (18km) and Motopi-Makalamabedi (30km). These projects are expected to commence during this current financial year.
124. In order to preserve some of the national strategic roads, the following roads will undergo periodic maintenance in the form of Asphalt overlaying; Jwaneng – Sekoma (82km); Mahalapye – Radisele road (40Km) and Machaneng – Ramokgonami road

(60km). These projects are expected to commence this financial year and to be completed in the next financial year.

ii) Water

125. **Mister Speaker**, we are making significant investments in strategic water supply and sanitation projects throughout the country, especially in rural areas. The following are some of the strategic projects that were completed at the end of the Eleventh National Development Plan, while others are being implemented through the Transitional National Development Plan:

- (i) The 4 water treatment plants at Mahalapye, Palapye, Gumare and Shakawe were completed during the period between 2020 and 2022. These provide strategic sources from which the neighbouring villages continue to be connected;
- (ii) The Water Supplies Scheme for North East and Tutume District Water Supply Scheme, covering 52 villages was completed in 2022, while the Lobatse/Mogojogojo Water Supply Scheme was completed in 2021. The scheme improved the water supply in Goodhope. The Goodhope Water Supply Scheme will be completed before the end of the financial year;

- (iii) The construction of the pipeline and pump station connecting 18 villages within the Tswapong South cluster was completed in July 2022. The reinforcement of bulk water supply project is underway to improve water to Tswapong Villages and to provide for the water distribution network in Mahalapye Flowertown in the next financial year;
- (iv) The Selebi Phikwe-Serule Water Supply Project' which is intended to benefit Serule, Mmadinare, Damochojenaa, Gojwane, Moreomabele and Topisi and Serule, was completed in May 2023;
- (v) The construction of the Lobatse Water Master Plan Project, which is intended to improve water supply to areas along the Gaborone - Lobatse corridor is complete and undergoing commissioning;
- (vi) The Gaborone Water Supply Master Plan Project with its 3 components comprising Mmamashia to Foresthill Pipeline and Reservoir, Lobatse Water Supply and Mmamashia to Gaborone North, is at final stage of completion with a record breaking of 92 Million litres reservoir;
- (vii) The North-South Water Carrier 2.2, which includes the construction of a second pipeline from Palapye to Mmamashia, will be completed by June 2024. Upon the

completion of the project, the water security for the Eastern part of the country will be achieved;

- (viii) The Mmamashia Water Treatment Plant Expansion is on-going and is expected to be completed by the end of this financial year. At completion, the Mmamashia Water Treatment Plant will be the largest in the SADC region with a capacity of 220 mega litres;
- (ix) The Gamononyane-Molepolole water pipeline construction is at commissioning stage. The project will improve water supply in Molepolole, Lentsweletau, Kopong, Metsimotlhabe, Thebephatshwa, and surrounding villages. The construction of the water pipeline as well as the associated infrastructure to Kopong-Lentsweletau cluster is expected to be completed this financial year;
- (x) The Boteti Southern and Central Cluster Villages Water Supply Scheme is on-going and is expected to be completed by May 2024.
- (xi) The Maun Water Supply and Sanitation project, which is meant to improve water supply and sanitation services for Maun and surrounding villages, is expected to be completed in April 2024. The water infrastructure from the project is being commissioned and in use for early benefit;

- (xii) The Moshupa and Kanye Sanitation projects are at commissioning stage and customers are being connected to the two sanitation schemes; and
- (xiii) Finally, the Kasane water treatment plant is complete and undergoing commissioning.
- (xiv) Government is in the process of addressing water shortages in Kgalagadi North. The re-scoping of the project to draw water from Phuduhudu wellfield instead of Ncojane is under way. The project will be awarded during next financial year.

126. Although the treatment plants have been commissioned and water has reached the villages, supply may not reach all homesteads as expected due to distribution network deficiencies which, among others, include aged infrastructure. This will require network rehabilitation and expansion in our villages. ***Re timola lenyora..!***

127. **Mister Speaker,** there have been significant reforms in the land sector over the past few years. As a result of these reforms many Batswana have established enterprises in *masimo* and other areas which are outside the traditional potable water works areas.

128. As a result, Government has taken a decision to allow provision of potable water to enterprises and industries outside water works areas at own cost.

129. **Mister Speaker,** I am aware that consumers are complaining about the Water Utilities Corporation billing system. The Corporation has since put in place, and tested, a system that provides for smart metres. These will be rolled out countrywide effective from April 2024.

iii) Buildings

130. **Mister Speaker,** in pursuit of enhancing the provision of universal health services, we have built new hospitals and clinics and have also upgraded a significant number of primary hospitals to meet health care needs of Batswana. The improvements include adding maternity wards, housing for health personnel, upgrading of facilities and equipment.

131. A number of clinics are at various stages of completion following an intensive programme of health infrastructure development. Makgophana, Toteng, Ngarange, Dibete, Kauxwi and Sepopa clinics will be operational by 2024/25.

132. Upgrading of more hospitals and clinics will be delivered during the Transitional National Development Plan, including the

completion of the Moshupa hospital, and new hospitals in Kanye, Kasane, Palapye, Lerala, Shoshong, Letlhakane and Rasesa.

133. **Mister Speaker**, among the projects that will be constructed under the Transitional National Development Plan are a number of new education facilities to improve access education at all levels. In this regard, new primary schools, junior secondary and senior secondary schools will be constructed countrywide. There are also plans for the construction of Government offices and maintenance of existing Government facilities.

134. Our applied research efforts to develop innovative ways on the use of local natural resources is expected to result in significant reduction in building costs by availing locally produced materials. As of now, the research has yielded the following building products:

- a) the emergence of products such as Portland Cement Clinker bricks;
- b) Synthesis of Glass-ceramics from BCL copper slag; and
- c) the Kalahari Sand Brick whose manufacturing uses Morupule-B power station fly ash as one of the ingredients, and will be rolled out to Nata, Khuis, Werda, Gasita, Motopi and Sehithwa.

iv) Energy

135. **Mister Speaker**, the development of energy infrastructure is a critical factor in the achievement of energy security. Government

remains committed to the 30 percent green energy contribution to the energy mix by 2030, although we still have to rely on fossil fuel, while we transition to renewable energy sources. Moreover, Government is promoting the participation of Independent Power Producers to diversify electricity supply.

136. Of the several Power Purchase Agreements which were signed last year between the Botswana Power Corporation and three private sector developers, two medium sized Independent Power Producers of solar power plants in Bobonong (3 Megawatts) and Shakawe (1 Megawatt) were commissioned in October 2023.
137. In addition, a Power Purchase Agreement has been signed this year with a private investor to construct a 50 Megawatts Photovoltaic plant at Mmadinare and financial close is expected before the end of November 2023. The roof top solar power installation provides an opportunity for households to participate as Independent Power Producers through the incorporation of solar panels in their building structures, and ultimately save on their electricity bills and sell to the grid.
138. **Mister Speaker**, Government has entered into a 30-year strategic agreement with an Independent Power Producer, Jindal Energy Botswana for 300 Megawatts Power Plant, with scope to expand to 600 Megawatts. The agreement entails opening of a new coal mine and power station in Mmamabula. The ground-breaking ceremony was conducted on 6th October 2023.

139. This is one of the largest single foreign direct investment in Botswana, estimated at over **Twenty-Eight Billion Pula** (P28 Billion), covering development of the mine, power plant and associated infrastructure. During the construction phase, it is expected that **five thousand** (5,000) jobs will be created, followed by **one thousand** (1,000) permanent jobs during operations.
140. It should be noted that **Jindal Energy** power plant will use technology that reduces carbon emissions. The project is anticipated to be delivered by December 2028 with a possible early completion date. The power produced will be for both local and export consumption.
141. Other power plants will be developed by Mookane Coal Mine, also located in Mmamabula, with a downstream charring facility to produce 8 Megawatts from coal, as well as Tlou Energy, at Sandveld, for the production of 10 Megawatts coal-bed methane electricity. These are expected to commence operation in the 2024/25 financial year. **Mister Speaker, these are the game changer initiatives promised in our 2019 election manifesto.**
142. Government continues to provide electricity transmission and distribution infrastructure across the country through the implementation of the Rural Village Electrification programme. So

far, **four hundred and fifty-seven** (457) out of the **five hundred and sixty-five** (565) gazetted villages have been electrified, translating to approximately 81 percent. Presently, electricity access stands at 70.2 percent against a target of 100 percent by 2030 for households.

143. In February 2022, the National Electricity Standard Connection programme fee was revised from **Five Thousand Pula** (P5,000.00) to **Two Thousand Five Hundred Pula** (P2,500.00) to cater for low income households. To further increase the uptake, the *readymade box* is also availed for free to houses which are not wired. So far **eleven thousand and eight hundred and forty-one** (11,841) households have benefitted from this provision since its inception in February 2022.
144. Government is reviewing electricity connection fees for low income household to explore removal of any charge to increase household access to electricity. We are also looking at increasing solar uptake for farm lands and settlements to improve livelihoods and quality of life.
145. **Mister Speaker**, the North West Transmission Grid Connection Phase 2 Project is an extension of Phase 1 that was successfully completed in 2021. The Project will connect the North West region and Chobe region to the Botswana Power Corporation main transmission grid. The Phase 2 Project promises not only to provide reliable power supply, but also to catalyse economic growth and support critical regional development initiatives.

146. It represents a significant step towards ensuring sustainable and prosperous communities, especially for the Chobe region that has a huge potential in agriculture and tourism. The Project is estimated to be completed in December 2026, and will create over five hundred (500) jobs during the construction phase.
147. During the 2023/24 financial year, Government will be connecting seven villages in the Kgatleng District and nine in Goodhope District to the national grid. All the villages have previously depended on cross - border electricity supply. The intention is to accelerate the implementation of this programme before the end of the next Plan period; 12th National Development Plan. In addition, a 570 KM transmission line between Thamaga and Tsabong will be built in the coming financial year.

III. HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

148. **Mister Speaker**, a nation's development process and profile depends not only on the production of goods, but also on the nurturing and enhancement of human capabilities, creativity and talents, that are, in turn, the driving force of social transformation in society. It takes the provision of quality education and training, quality health, as well as equitable access to economic resources and opportunities, to drive holistic socio-economic development.

A. Social Protection

149. As a Government, we are committed to achieving a dignified life for all citizens through the provision of social protection programmes and economic empowerment opportunities under the National Framework for Social Protection. Accordingly, the implementation and monitoring of the Economic Inclusion Act of 2022 will be intensified across all sectors of the economy, to protect our citizens. The necessary structures are being established to facilitate compliance, promote inclusive participation, provision of funding, and skills development for Targeted Citizens
150. So far, there are in place 29 social welfare and economic programmes which aim to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality and mitigate the vulnerabilities of the citizens, by availing options for earning a decent living. Community development based programmes such as, cooperatives, Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) and Local Economic Development are examples of such programmes.
151. Government has invested over **Two Billion and Eighty Hundred and-Fifty Million Pula** (P2.85 billion) in the Constituency Community Programme to fund **four thousand nine hundred and twenty-nine** (4,929) projects across all 57 constituencies since its inception five years ago. These projects have employed a cumulative total of **nineteen thousand six hundred and eighty-two** (19,682) Batswana. These include public

infrastructure projects such as classrooms, recreation and internal roads.

152. This programme will continue to be implemented for all constituencies including the new ones, but will be restricted to internal roads. Particular attention will be given to ensuring that local resources including equipment are mobilised for greater Batswana participation. We will continue monitoring and evaluating the projects to ensure timely and quality delivery. This is part of our broad strategy to fight youth unemployment.
153. The reformed Ipelegeng Programme is being implemented using the new Skills Development Model, which combines training with production, to train artisans (Trade B) while they work on community development projects. So far, one hundred and twenty-six (126) beneficiaries have been accredited by the Construction Industry Trust Fund in construction trades such as bricklaying, plastering, carpentry, plumbing, electrical, painting, tiling and paving.
154. These accredited artisans have completed a few projects. There is an ongoing training of **eight hundred and fifty-one** (851) beneficiaries; and another **two thousand five hundred** (2,500) will be enrolled before the end of this financial year.

155. We have declared 2023/24 a drought year as we expect a severe food deficit. As a response to this situation, Government has put in place drought mitigation measures which include the 30 percent subsidy for selected vaccines, feeds for livestock and non-traditional sectors such as dairy, piggery, aquaculture and poultry.
156. Consistent with Government's commitment of ensuring access to affordable and decent housing for all, a total of two hundred and ninety-two (292) of the planned three hundred and forty-four (344) units for the current financial year have been delivered. The remaining 52 units are expected to be completed and handed over to beneficiaries by the end of financial year.
157. To this end, I am thankful to all stakeholders especially the private sector and civil society for augmenting Government's efforts and ensuring that the needy people within our society are accorded the dignity they deserve through the provision of shelter.

B. Child Protection and Development

158. **Mister Speaker**, our commitment is to continue to nurture and protect our children so that they achieve holistic development. In this context Government is paying particular attention to the well-being of adolescents and young people. We recognise that young people face unique challenges that hinder their development,

including limited access to quality education, healthcare and nutrition.

159. They also encounter barriers to their safety and well-being, such as violence, discrimination, and a lack of supportive environment. Furthermore, issues related to employment, skills, and empowerment often affect their transition into adulthood and hinder their participation in shaping their future.
160. To this end, in October this year, we launched a commitment known as the “National Commitment for ***Adolescents and Young People’s Wellbeing*** in Botswana” to be integrated in our national planning, implementation and monitoring. This Commitment is meant to support their transitioning to adulthood and address the peculiar challenges they face.
161. Government is also providing Early Childhood Education as a human right and public good. To date, **seven hundred and fourteen** (714) out of **seven hundred and sixty-six** (766) schools are offering the Reception class programme involving **twenty-nine thousand, five hundred and sixty** (29,560) learners.
162. The supplementary feeding programme provides food assistance to approximately **three hundred and ninety-three thousand four hundred and fifty-eight** (393,458) children in public primary schools and also to **three hundred and ten thousand**

four hundred and eleven (310, 411) vulnerable children, pregnant and lactating mothers and Tuberculosis patients. The government has spent a total of P3.6 billion on this programme from 2018 to date.

C. Human Capital Development

163. **Mister Speaker**, investing in the development of our people in terms of building their knowledge and skills capabilities, remains a priority for the government, in collaboration with development partners. In this regard, government encourages the private sector to utilise the Human Resource Development Fund and upskill their employees to improve service delivery, productivity and innovation.
164. During the past 5 years, employers have on average, upskilled around **thirty thousand** (30,000) employees each year through this Fund. Employees in major sectors of the economy such as mining, retail, finance and health, among others, have actively participated in the workplace learning.
165. Government is reviewing the Human Resource Development Council Act as well as the Human Resource Development Fund's legal and administrative instruments. This is meant to ease the utilisation of the Fund in facilitating skills development.

166. Furthermore, an enhanced Labour Market Information System is being developed to provide insights on labour supply and demand, skills gaps, industrial trends and employment opportunities. The project is expected to be completed in October 2024.
167. **Mister Speaker**, in line with the National Human Resource Development Strategy, Botswana Examinations Council has been transformed. Its mandate has been expanded to cover PrePrimary Education as well as Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector. Accordingly, the Council will determine assessment standards, as well supervise the setting, moderation and administration of assessment products.

D. Youth, Sport and Gender

i. Youth Development and Empowerment

168. Government continues to procure in favour of youth businesses in compliance with the Affirmative Action Framework. In the past two financial years, **two thousand six hundred and eighty-one** (2,681) youth owned businesses have benefitted from such preferential procurement to the total of approximately **Sixty-Six Million Pula** (P66 Million).

169. Government continues to enhance the potential of young people to utilise opportunities and better their livelihoods. From 2018 to date, **seventeen thousand two hundred forty-seven** (17,247) young people have undergone employability training in the quest to improve their job search skills.
170. Some of these trainings were conducted online, in accordance with the ongoing digital connectivity initiatives and with the support of development partners. This enables training to reach a wide number of young people in areas far from urban centres.
171. We have hosted Forbes Africa Under 30 Summit twice, and we will be hosting it again in 2024. Forbes continues to be a great opportunity to communicate globally the promotion of Botswana as a host country for entrepreneurship engagement. The summit with its global audience of 100 million followers, aims to harness the power of entrepreneurship on the continent and this will define the frontier of the 21st century.
172. The Summit provides networking opportunities for the young Botswana and the rest of Africa entrepreneurs that interacted with their peers as well as business leaders from across the globe - individually and collectively.
173. **Mister Speaker**, the Youth Development Fund continues to be utilised to fund youth **start-ups** across multiple industries and sectors. Between 2021 and 2023 approximately **One Hundred**

and Fifty-Seven Million Pula (P157 Million) was disbursed in support of youth projects. This created a total of two hundred and sixty-four jobs in the corresponding years.

174. Since its inception, the Fund has disbursed **One Billion, One Hundred Million Pula**, (P1.1 Billion) and in the process creating about **twenty-two thousand eight hundred and twenty** (22,820) jobs. However, the repayment of loans is low. For the sustainability of the Fund, as well as for equity, I urge recipients of loans to timely repay their loans as this is a revolving Fund.
175. **Mister Speaker**, we are concerned by the scourge of excessive use of habit-forming substances by our youthful population. The social and health impact of this scourge poses a threat too high to be ignored. It results in deviant behaviours, manifested- by erosion of social values and acts of criminality.
176. The Drug Enforcement Agency is partnering with organizations in the youth and empowerment space to effectively address issues of substance abuse. In particular, the intervention is focused on prevention, personal development, skills training and job readiness, which will essentially give the youth a sense of purpose.
177. It is regrettable that while this substance abuse largely affects the youth, we have adults and parents who perpetrate and perpetuate this situation for personal and selfish gain.

Bagaetsho, a re tseyeng boikarabelo re le batsadi ka go ikgalemela le go kaela bana ba rona tsela ya tshiamo. Bongwanaka ditagi ga di na bokamoso, tswang mo go tsone.

ii. Sport and Recreation

178. The completion of ongoing ten (10) community stadia will significantly contribute to grassroots sport development and formation of sport academies at community level.

iii. Gender Equality

179. **Mister Speaker**, the empowerment of women and gender equality remains central to our national development agenda. Since I assumed office, we have made tremendous inroads towards ensuring participation of women in the public sector leadership positions. By 2023, for example, 50 percent of Permanent Secretaries are women; **first time ever in our history!** I want to also encourage women to compete for leadership positions at various political levels.
180. As a Government we have also reached out to the international community for support in our endeavour to ensure women are not *left behind* in our development. Thus, in partnership with UN-WOMEN we have embarked on Accelerating Women-Owned Micro-Enterprises. The overarching goal of the Programme is to

provide technical skills and close gaps in business management amongst women entrepreneurs.

181. Between 2021 and 2023, over five hundred (500) women in business have been trained in Letlhakeng, Okavango and Goodhope Districts. The training has so far yielded the desired results with testimonies of women having expanded and diversified their businesses. The Programme will continue in the next financial year and will be expanded to other parts of the country.
182. ***Batswana betsho***, as I have said before, I am concerned about the trend of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) which is mostly directed to women and children by men, who are expected to protect and love them. I urge men in this country to take the lead in ending violence meted out against women and children. Let us learn to amicably resolve our differences with our loved ones.
183. The building of Police Stations or child friendly centre as established in several parts of this country cannot reduce the GBV incidences. To address these issues, we need our culture; our values; and faithfulness before God.... ***Re tlhokana le Poifo Modimo...!***

E. Health and Wellness

184. **Mister Speaker**, to deal with the emerging issues and ensure that Botswana is better prepared for outbreaks of any epidemics and pandemic, Government has established the Botswana Public Health Institute.

185. The Institute is mandated to coordinate preparedness, response to and recovery from outbreaks using the One-Health approach, which recognises the interrelatedness of people, plants, animals and their environment.
186. Some of the Institute's successes include the recent effective response to malaria and measles outbreaks in Botswana and the training of more than 70 emergency response personnel. These are already helping other countries train their teams, as well as respond to disease outbreaks.
187. Botswana continues to do well in the fight against HIV/AIDS and has surpassed all the UNAIDS targets. Nonetheless, there remains a lot to be done to realise zero new infections and end AIDS as a public health threat by the year 2030.
188. According to the fifth Botswana AIDS Impact Survey Report launched in August 2023, adolescent girls and young women aged 15 to 24 years are most at risk of acquiring HIV, accounting for about 25 percent of new HIV infections.
189. Amongst the primary risk factors driving the incidence of HIV/AIDS is intergenerational sexual relations. As previously reported, men in this country remain hesitant to test for HIV/AIDS. If we are not careful to avoid sexual behaviours that expose us to HIV infection, and if we do not test to know our status, we will surely lose the hard earned gains we have made so far.

190. ***Bagaetsho***, we cannot afford to be complacent; we have a real opportunity to eliminate the scourge of HIV/AIDS. ***Mindset Change*** is needed as clearly the war is not over.
191. Non-Communicable Diseases such as, diabetes, high blood pressure and cancer remain a menace. I will therefore continue to urge you to adopt healthy lifestyles and to encourage men in particular to present themselves early at health facilities. ***Prevention is better than cure. Walk ten thousand steps a day and eat healthy. A re jeng merogo le maungo batho betsho. Botsogo ke jwa gago! Your health is your responsibility.***
192. **Mister Speaker**, Mental health condition is neither a sign of weakness nor a choice by those afflicted by the condition. As much as we as a society embrace people with Non-Communicable Diseases, people with mental health conditions should be treated likewise: we need to protect them, embrace them, understand their needs and stop the stigma.
193. The approval of the Mental Health Bill in August 2023 by our Parliament is therefore testament of our resolve to protect the rights of people with mental health condition and improve their treatment and services. Let me also encourage people with challenges of depression and anxiety to seek help from Counsellors, Psychologists, Social workers and spiritual leaders for assistance.

194. **Mister Speaker,** like other countries across the globe, Botswana has been experiencing a shortage of medicinal supplies for some time. However, the availability of medicines, particularly, lifesaving medicines, has improved over the past months from 35 percent in January 2023 to 65 percent in September 2023.
195. The challenges, however, still exist with sourcing certain classes of medicines particularly cancer drugs and eye care products, which remain lower than 50 percent. We have decided to procure these drugs through bilateral arrangements with our global friends and development partners.
196. ***Batho Betsho,*** the situation of drug shortage is exacerbated by the pervasive incidents of misappropriation within the health sector by certain individuals in complicity with organized criminals. It is heart-wrenching that some of these stolen medicines are illegally exported to criminals outside the country to the detriment of the lives of fellow citizens. This is unacceptable and unbecoming. ***Batswana betsho, where is our patriotism!***
197. **Mister Speaker,** Government has prioritised access to healthcare through a revitalised primary health care system as a strategy to improve health outcomes. This will ensure effective health promotion, disease prevention, early diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and compassionate services.

198. This will decongest secondary and tertiary level facilities and provide care that ***leaves no one behind***. This is the essence of universal health care coverage. Alongside this development, the current District Health Management Teams will be aligned with the District administrative boundaries, by April 2024.
199. **Mister Speaker**, we are in the process of optimising operational systems for the delivery of a defined essential health package, which will cover a wide spectrum of public health informed services by April 2024. We will outline the types and classifications of health packages that will be delivered at different levels of health facilities.
200. Sir Ketumile Masire Teaching Hospital will be at the apex of our optimised specialised health service delivery as a tertiary and quarternary hospital as well as our premier teaching and research centre.
201. To date, the hospital is offering broad specialised radiology services; renal services; critical care; neonatal intensive care, paediatric and adult intensive care services; medical and radiation oncology services. The provision of radiation oncology services has significantly improved access to life saving treatment for many Batswana who otherwise had to wait many months to get treatment from other health care providers, locally and externally, at very high cost.

202. Sir Ketumile Masire Teaching Hospital will also provide specialised services that are mostly available outside the country such as paediatric nephrology, paediatric neurology, rheumatology, endocrinology, and pulmonology.
203. In September 2023, highly specialised spinal operations took place at Sir Ketumile Masire Teaching Hospital as a first step in the provision of complex surgical procedures. Eight spine operations were successfully conducted on patients in collaboration with an American company, CTL AMEDICA, which is seeking partnership with Botswana Government to manufacture artificial spinal parts.
- More opportunities, jobs, research, knowledge economy, transfer of skills, value chains, export led economy!***

IV SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

204. **Mister Speaker**, Botswana is resolute in her pursuit of environmental sustainability. This is underpinned by four broad priority areas; namely, a Healthy Environment for Healthy Nation; Sustainable Management of Natural and Cultural Resources; Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation, as well as Integrated Development for Sustainable Human Settlements.

A. A Healthy Environment for a Healthy Nation

205. **Mister Speaker**, following the adoption of the Integrated Waste Management Policy of 2021, a Value Chain Roadmap was

developed in 2023 to operationalize the Policy. The Roadmap is meant to unlock economic benefits from municipal solid waste and electronic waste, which will open opportunities for enterprising ideas around recycling waste and generating income streams. The private sector is therefore, pivotal in designing products for reuse and repair, using renewable and recycled materials.

206. We are already realizing the benefits of these initiatives through private sector investment. For example, I recently launched a waste paper recycling factory in Mogoditshane. The facility and the existing ones create value chains, job opportunities, and new markets.
207. In June this year, Government installed automated water quality monitoring equipment along the Chobe and Okavango rivers for continuous monitoring of water quality to enable quick and speedy response to any pollution threat.

B. Sustainable Management of Natural Resources

208. **Mister Speaker**, sustainable utilisation of natural resources remains a cornerstone of our Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Management Strategy. Botswana is host to a diversity of wildlife species including elephants, lions, leopards, among others.
209. According to the 2022 Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (**KAZA**) wide elephant survey, the estimated

elephant population within the region is **two hundred and twenty-seven thousand and nine hundred** (227,900). Out of this number, the Botswana's elephant population is approximately **one hundred and thirty-one thousand nine hundred and nine** (131,909), which is about 58 percent.

210. That notwithstanding, we will continue to work with other nations within the Kavango – Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area on the management of wildlife. Government has therefore, pledged to donate **eight thousand** (8000) elephants to Angola.
211. With such a large population of elephants, there will always be a high likelihood of incidences of human-wildlife conflict. It is concerning that a total of **eleven thousand three hundred and ten** (11,310) incidents were reported in 2022, while **nine thousand, four hundred and ninety-seven** (9,497) incidences were reported between January and September 2023.
212. As part of our efforts to reduce human-wildlife conflicts and increase community benefits from sustainable wildlife utilisation, the 2023 hunting quota introduced a new category that allows inclusion of leopards and elephants within agricultural extension areas beginning with the Serowe District. Elephants are among the 'problem animal' quotas for the 2023 hunting season. Additional species will be added to these '*problem animal*' quotas during the 2024 hunting season.

213. Furthermore, Government continues to construct elephant-proof fences in hotspot areas. This includes two hundred and twenty-five (225) km of non-lethal electric fence along the Makgadikgadi National Park boundary. The Tuli Block Backline fence reconstruction, which was done in collaboration with the private sector in the Bobirwa district, was completed in January 2023 and has significantly reduced human - elephant conflict incidences.
214. Moreover, the government continues to assist communities in elephant range areas by electrifying cluster fields for crop protection through the Conservation Trust Fund. Matopi, Moroka, and Matsiloje cluster fields in the North East, as well as Mokubilo cluster fields in Boteti and Nxaraga in the North West have been fenced.
215. In addition to these fencing initiatives, Government has carried out country-wide consultations on human-wildlife conflicts. Batswana are resolute that we should develop alternative methods of compensation; and as a Government of the people we have listened and are considering interventions that will be completed by end of the current financial year.
216. In pursuit of promoting human-wildlife co-existence and conserving the elephant population to realise the full economic potential of the ecosystem, consumptive utilisation continues. The hunting quotas will be increased to the maximum allowable

by Convention on International Trade on Endangered Species (CITES) during the 2024 hunting season for the benefit of communities. During the 2023 hunting season revenue accrued to Community Based Organisations for the hunting quota in community areas amounted to approximately **Twenty-Seven Million Pula** (P27 million), which will be used for the upliftment of rural livelihoods.

217. Despite these benefits to our communities from the consumptive utilisation of wildlife, pressure from far afield to resist the importation of hunting trophies from Botswana and other countries continues to mount. This pressure has also been echoed during various conference of parties of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora.

218. As a responsible Government, we are making efforts to have the global community understand and embrace our vision. Accordingly, the government has embarked on a campaign to address authorities and other key stakeholders in those countries on the value of sustainable hunting to the livelihoods of communities that live alongside wildlife resources.

C. Climate Change: Adaptation and Mitigation

219. **Mister Speaker**, in an effort to counter the adverse impact of climate change, several measures have been put in place. These include:

- i. reviewing the 2015 Climate Change pledge or Nationally Determined Contributions Framework made and submitted as was then required ahead of the adoption of the Paris Climate Change Agreement; and
- ii. utilising Green Climate Fund (GCF) to update the 2004 Botswana Technology Needs Assessment Report in order to align with the emerging green technologies that have penetrated the market. The study is ongoing and is expected to be completed by December this year.

220. On the other hand, collaborating with both local and international strategic stakeholders continues to bear fruit; and in this regard:

- i. a study “Detailing Gender and Climate Change Vulnerability Hotspot Mapping for Decision Support in Botswana” launched in April, 2023 is ongoing. The study focuses on the locations of vulnerability, its extent and impact on people, particularly on women; and
- ii. awareness raising on climate change issues has been extended to Members of Parliament in view of their oversight role.

221. Furthermore, in an effort to increase Botswana's participation in the climate change finance space, the National Development Bank is undergoing accreditation with the Climate Change Adaptation Fund of Global Climate Facility. This is in addition to already existing support from other development partners such as the Global Environmental Fund, amongst others.
222. Currently, 16 projects in 10 districts were funded at approximately **Thirty-Two Million Pula** (P32 Million) to address issues of climate change, especially desertification. These were funded through the National Environmental Fund.

D. Sustainable Human Settlements

223. **Mister Speaker**, our urban and rural settlements ought to fulfil their social, economic and ecological function in order to meet the challenges and opportunities of present and future sustainable growth. To achieve this, the National Spatial Plan will continue to guide establishment of settlements and built-up areas as well as allocation of land uses.
224. **Mister Speaker**, it will be remiss of me if I do not talk about wild fires that engulfed the larger part of the country this year. Our people has lost property, grazing areas and livestock. Government will continue to engage communities on the identification of strategies that will minimize the situation.

225. In this regard, the process for preparation of plans for Gaborone City Region, Serowe-Palapye-Mahalapye Region, amongst others, has started and will be completed by March 2025. **In addition, the Development Control Code of 2013 is being reviewed to reduce restriction on land development.**
226. Regarding residential land allocations countrywide, a total of **fifty-seven thousand eight hundred and eighty** (57,880) residential plots were allocated to eligible Batswana by the end of June 2023. An additional **seventy-two thousand and ninety-five** (72,095) residential plots across the country have been surveyed and will be allocated in various areas. This represent an increase of over 800% in the rate of land allocation.
227. This arrangement will continue while a more comprehensive and sustainable programme is being put in place through the National Spatial Plan implementation; and for that we recommit ourselves to the facilitation of access to land by citizens.
228. **Mister Speaker**, the Government has since independence used every available opportunity to reform our land tenure systems. The reform includes the acquisition of freehold land for village expansions, township developments and provisions of grazing land to communities.
229. The North East District is one of the districts which has experienced shortage of land due to the existence of free hold farms especially in the hands of the Tati Company

Limited. Government has made a decision to acquire the remaining land belonging to the company, measuring about 45,000 hectares. The decision demonstrates our commitment to avail land to Batswana for socio-economic development and attainment of the aspirations of Vision 2036, ***Achieving Prosperity for All.***

V. GOVERNANCE, PEACE AND SECURITY

230. **Mister Speaker**, Botswana's sustainable existence is anchored on the principles of democracy, development, self-reliance, unity and ***botho***. These are the tenets of our socio-economic development.

A. Governance

231. **Mister Speaker**, our commitment is to provide for and facilitate intergovernmental relations and create a framework that ensures legitimacy, accountability, and transparency of institutional structures at both central and local government. This includes improving state, civil society and trade union relations.
232. **Mister Speaker**, On the 17th December 2021, I appointed a Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Review of the Constitution of Botswana in accordance with section 2 of the Commissions of Inquiry Act (Cap. 05:02). This was a first

wholesome inquiry into the review of the Constitution of Botswana.

233. The Commission held meetings in all the 57 constituencies where the people of Botswana submitted their views. After considering the submissions, the Commission submitted a Report to the Government and thereafter, the Constitutional Review Report was immediately made public.

234. Government has considered the recommendations of the Commission and a Government White Paper is now ready for submission to this November 2023 sitting of Parliament.

235. **Mister Speaker,** we are also a responsive government and through extensive consultations across the country, we received feedback from the public on the need to improve service delivery. To this extent, in 2022, all 22 Sub-Districts were upgraded to fully fledged districts to achieve greater efficiencies and effectiveness in delivering services to the people. The decentralisation process will gradually cover all public services and transform the local governance system to be people-centric.

236. **Mister Speaker,** Bogosi is a critical community and governance structure that is intended to unlock and leverage community leadership and strengthen social cohesion. In order to further strengthen efficiencies in the Bogosi institution, Government has taken a decision to review the Bogosi Act of 2008. This will enhance operational alignment and robust governance in the

Bogosi structures. The Bill is expected to be presented during the July 2024 Session of Parliament.

237. **Mister Speaker,** as part of improving and engendering the requisite efficiency in the public sector, and in line with the Reset and Reclaim Agenda, Government is committed to rationalization of State Owned Enterprises. This is a major Public Sector reform initiative.
238. In an endeavour to improve corporate governance among State Owned Enterprises, a Corporate Governance Code, Ownership Policy, Guidelines for Appointment of Board Members and Guidelines for Establishment of New Parastatals have been developed and are expected to be in operation in the next financial year.
239. In the process of attaining decent work programmes, Government has embarked on a social dialogue comprising collaboration with Trade Unions, the International Labour Organisation and the Employer. This entails the review of the Public Service Act, as well as the review and consolidation of the Employment Act, Trade Disputes Act, Trade Unions and Employers Organisations Act.
240. The review process covers the salient issues relating to: occupational health; social protection; dispute resolution; collective bargaining, both in the private and public sectors; and work relations between employers and employees in the

workplace. The review exercise takes into account international best practices and standards.

241. It is anticipated that the review of all these legislations will be completed by the end of this financial year. The delay is attributed to our resolve to be a consultative and inclusive Government as espoused in the Botswana Democratic Party Manifesto of 2019.
242. Mister Speaker, I am happy to announce that the Government representative, the Labour movement and representatives of business community have under tripartite arrangement concluded on the issue of minimum wage. The tripartite have considered factors of inflation, the buying power and other economic factors in their conclusions. As is required by law, they have submitted recommendations to the Minister of Labour and Home Affairs for consideration and finality. The intention is to review the new minimum wages before the end of this financial year.
243. As you may recall, **Mister Speaker**, Botswana acceded to the African Peer Review Mechanism in 2019. This is a voluntary self-monitoring process on governance issues adopted by the African Union Member States. By joining the African Peer Review Mechanism, Botswana is committed to conducting a self-assessment to determine her compliance with both the African and international commitments on governance issues.

244. To accelerate the process, Government has established a National Governing Council which will spearhead the African Peer Review Mechanism process in Botswana, particularly the national review process. I am pleased to announce that the National Governing Council will be launched this month.

B. Transparency and Accountability

245. **Mister Speaker**, Government remains committed to good governance, transparency and accountability. The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index of 2022 scored Botswana at 6.0 from 5.5 in 2021 and being ranked number 35 out of one hundred and eighty (180) countries and as the 3rd least corrupt country in Africa, after Seychelles and Cape Verde, respectively.

246. Good governance is an antidote to corruption. We are thus working hard as a Government to enhance our systems by accentuating ethical conduct in order to promote, facilitate and strengthen good governance in the country.

247. In this regard, the Whistleblowing Act of 2016 is being reviewed to address certain gaps in the legislation in line with international best practice. The primary aim is to bring the Act in alignment with global standards and improve the overall disclosure, reporting, and investigation procedures.

C. Public Safety and Security

248. **Mister Speaker**, I want to start by expressing my profound gratitude to men and women in law enforcement who work tirelessly to make Botswana safe. We are witnessing improvement in the general safety of our country because of their dedication.
249. New law enforcement technologies, such as safer city, specialised equipment, vehicles and technologies have been deployed to augment conventional crime-fighting efforts and keep the police ahead of crime.
250. It is, however, regrettable, that the country has experienced a wave of violent, intrusive and gruesome crimes in recent years resulting in the need for more urgent interventions. As I indicated in the last SONA, the Botswana Police Service recruited **one thousand** (1,000) trainees who completed their training in March 2023.
251. An additional cohort of **one thousand** (1,000) recruits is currently undergoing training and is expected to graduate in April 2024. This increase, in human resources will provide for the introduction of City Policing Units in Gaborone and Francistown, fully fledged Kgomo-Khumo policing, 28 police station across the station.

252. **Mister Speaker**, while acknowledging the effectiveness of technology, and other sophisticated interventions, we cannot ignore the positive impact of working with community leadership structures. The successful intervention in fighting cattle rustling in the Bobirwa area, could not have been achieved without the support of *mephato*. Similar interventions will be implemented in villages along the border.

253. **Mister Speaker**, to continue to protect our territorial integrity and security, Government has taken a decision to acquire land along our borders.

254. To further enhance public safety and security, we have embarked on an exercise to amend several laws which among others, include:

a) the Penal Code to the effect of:

- i. increasing penalties for offences against morality such as rape, defilement and abduction, amongst others;
- ii. reviewing bail conditions to strike a balance between the rights of the accused, the victim and the witness. This is to address the widespread public concern and outcry that accused persons are granted bail with relative ease; and

- b) Anti-Human Trafficking Act** to remove the fines and ensure the accused are incarcerated for offences covering extreme abuse of human rights.

VI. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

255. **Mister Speaker**, diplomatic relations between Botswana, the region and the international community have strengthened since 2019. This has opened doors for us to seek technical assistance, capacity building, and seek opportunities for our citizens in terms of employment and foreign direct investment.
256. To date, a total 100 Batswana are employed by regional and international organisations such as the Southern African Development Community and the World Bank to mention just a few. By the 31st July 2023, Batswana filled 10 out of 28 positions at the African Union (AU) this includes senior positions such as Director of strategy, more opportunities especially for managerial positions remain available for Batswana.
257. **Mister Speaker**, Botswana enjoys strong diplomatic relations and political influence at regional and international level. It is because of these warm relations that we have been able to co-fund the cross border Kazungula Bridge with Zambia through the assistance of Japan. To further deepen our political influence globally, I have approved the establishment of 34 new diplomatic relations on a non-resident basis.

258. Our reputation in leadership and governance, made it possible for me to be appointed Chairperson of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries and I have also been appointed Champion of Sustainable Urbanisation in the SADC region.
259. Multilateralism provides the platform not only to work with others, but also to confront the systematic forces that create unequal societies and systems which characterize our world today.
260. In our global engagements, we have hosted a number of Heads of State and Government on Working Visits to Botswana, including those of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Switzerland, Zimbabwe, Niger and Angola, during which we identified and agreed on pursuing strategic areas of cooperation in mining, agriculture and agro-processing, energy and water, oil and gas, transport, the environment, amongst others.
261. Botswana attaches great importance to regional and international peace and security. As a country, we remain actively engaged in advancing the regional agenda that promotes peace and stability in the SADC region.
262. Our current participation in the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), and Military Observers engagement in the Democratic Republic of Congo bears testimony to this. The SAMIM was recently extended up to July 2024. Once again, we thank our men and women in uniform for their commitment to protect our country and

the region. I also thank Botswana for their willingness to avail national resources to help a friendly nation indeed. ***Re dira Setswana sa rona se se reng, matlo go sha mabapi...!***

263. At the African Union (AU) level, a number of critical decisions were adopted in February 2023 during the Assembly of the AU Heads of State and Government, including the election of Botswana as the Second Vice Chair of the Bureau and the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement which Botswana ratified in February 2023. The AU has also been granted a permanent membership of the G20.
264. Our participation at the 78th United Nations General Assembly provided the opportunity to articulate Botswana's principled positions on global issues and to reaffirm our commitment as Chair of the Group of Land Locked Least Developed Countries. I am happy to announce that our chairmanship was extended to the end of 2024 which means that Botswana will lead the negotiations and drafting of the Outcome Document for LLDC3 Conference to be held in Kigali, Rwanda in June 2024.
265. In an effort to roll out of our National Transformation Strategy, Botswana is now a member of the International Council in Government Administration (ICA). This makes Botswana the first country to join the ICA and the first in Africa to host the annual conference in August 2024. More than One Hundred Botswana are working in Regional and International Organisations such as South African Custom Union, South African Development

Community and the United Nations Systems. I have been elected the Champion for Sustainable Development in SADC region by UN Habitat in Kenya on your behalf. I have also been elected as Chairperson of Game Changers under the auspices of African Union.

266. **Mister Speaker**, let me also inform the nation that whilst at the General Assembly, Her Excellency Mrs. Neo Jane Masisi, First Lady of the Republic of Botswana was appointed the UNAIDS Champion for the Empowerment and Engagement of Adolescent Girls and Young Women.

VII. A CALL TO ACTION: YOUR VOTE MATTERS

267. **My fellow citizens**, let me take a pause and remind you that, in 2022, Parliament took a decision to increase the number of constituencies from 57 to 61. Following this, a Delimitation Commission was constituted to ensure the full participation of Batswana.
268. The Independent Electoral Commission proceeded in terms of the Electoral Act to divide each constituency into Polling Districts and thus established **six hundred and nine** (609) Polling districts from the previous **four hundred and ninety** (490).
269. This has resulted in **two thousand eight hundred and eight** (2,808) local polling stations and 43 polling stations outside the

country. This will create, convenience for the voters, address voter apathy and enhance participatory democracy.

270. **Mister Speaker**, this is the last SONA before the next General Elections. As we all know, the Constitution of the Republic of Botswana provides for the holding of general elections every five (5) years and as is the norm, all the relevant institutions of Government are preparing to adhere to the obligation placed on them by Batswana with the utmost level of professionalism and integrity.
271. In this regard, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) will undertake a General Voter Registration exercise from 13th November to 8th December 2023. The tagline for the voter registration is ***"Towards 2024 and beyond...Register to Vote", "A re yeng 2024.... Ikwadise o Tlhophe"***.
272. I therefore, take this opportunity to encourage all Batswana who are 18 years and above, and have a valid Omang, to present themselves at their polling stations to register for the 2024 General Elections before registration closes on the 8th December 2023.
273. It is also imperative for me as President of the Republic of Botswana to implore Batswana who have registered to also turn up to vote on election day. This is your constitutional and democratic right, the right to decide in whom you can entrust the onerous task of governing this Republic. ***Batswana betsho, diragatsang tshwanelo ya lona, le ikwadise gore le tle le tlhophe. Tlhopho ya gago ke yone lentswe la gago!***

274. I wish to urge Batswana, all political parties, their supporters, and all who will be standing as candidates to conduct themselves peacefully and within the confines of the law during the election period.
275. **Batswana Betsho!** Let us remember that we may differ in terms of the ideas we have for the future of this nation as reflected in our various political party manifestos, but what defines us better as a nation, is our value system which is anchored on ***Botho***, not those differences. We are known for the peaceful manner and decorum in which we conduct our affairs, as well as our unity in diversity. **Keep your Omang safe, renew it in good time.**
276. We are a democratic nation, governed by democratic principles, and consultation is central to how we conduct our affairs. In this regard, we will always endeavor to ensure that our development planning, policy-making and legislative processes are participatory and inclusive of every Motswana; for indeed, an active citizenry will invariably lead to a more open, dynamic and robust democracy.

VIII. CONCLUSION

277. **Mister Speaker**, as I conclude, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the hard working citizens of this country who have contributed immensely to the socio-economic development of this county.

278. It is your steadfast resilience, your dedication and your belief in the power of national unity that has propelled us to greater heights. Let us all remember the men and women who continue to serve this country with dedication and distinction.
279. We must persevere in our journey ahead as we strive towards a more promising tomorrow. Hand in hand, let us construct a resilient nation, one that exudes strength and prosperity, a nation we can whole heartedly call home.
280. I implore each one of us to consistently prioritise Botswana and Batswana in all our endeavours as we walk towards the realisation of our Vision 2036. Finally, as we are aware, ***Magosi a rona a boloditse letsema***. Let me, therefore, reiterate their message and encourage you to use this opportunity to till the soil.

A re chencheng! A he hetjoge! Ati shandukeni!

A Pula ya masubelele e re nele...!

Modimo O le segofatse....O le babalele.....

I Thank You, Mister Speaker.