

**CLOSING SPEECH BY**  
**THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY,**  
**MRS PELONOMI VENSON,**  
**AT THE OFFICIAL CLOSING**  
**OF**  
**THE FORUM ON FURTHER LIBERALISATION OF THE**  
**TELECOMMUNICATION MARKET IN BOTSWANA HELD AT THE**  
**GABORONE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE**  
**FROM 31 JAN TO 2 FEB 2005.**

**Director of Ceremonies**

**H.E. Ambassador Joseph Huggins**

**Distinguished Delegates**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

**Bagaetsho,**

**I am greatly honoured to have been given this opportunity to officiate at the closing ceremony of this important forum. I hasten to thank you for your invaluable contributions to the deliberations of this forum. Let me apologise for not having been able to be with you from the beginning of the forum due to other pressing official commitments.**

**I am informed that the forum went smoothly and you made quite useful contributions and that the deliberations have gone well during the past three days. Furthermore, I am informed that the level of interest and interaction was exceptionally high. I can therefore deduce that stakeholders did understand the purpose and objectives of this consultative forum and that you all came prepared in order to make the forum the resounding success it has proved to be.**

**It was important that we bring together experts, professionals, civil society and individuals from different disciplines to create the desired level of interaction that has prevailed throughout the three days. I assure you that your views have been captured and will be taken on board in crafting comprehensive and practical recommendations on liberalisation.**

**My Ministry is confident that the product of this consultative forum and other interventions that have taken place earlier, will emerge as a well-thought and researched liberalisation plan of the Botswana telecommunications market.**

#### **Distinguished Delegates**

**The Botswana Telecommunications Authority (BTA) has, right from inception of the Liberalisation Study, involved different stakeholders at different levels depending on the depth, detail and nature of input required at such stages. These stakeholders include my Ministry, which has been consulted on every stage of the**

**consultative process. The main reason for such involvement was to create a product that we would all want to own and identify with.**

### **Distinguished Delegates**

**As indicated by various speakers and presenters during the forum, my Ministry is developing a national ICT Policy, which seeks to harness the power of this technology to create new development opportunities for our businesses and citizens.**

**These opportunities will however be exploited only by those countries that move quickly to remove impediments to the growth of the ICT industry. Liberalisation of the telecommunications sector is therefore a key vehicle through which the goals set out in the ICT policy can be reached.**

**In recognition of this, the Government attaches a very high priority to market liberalization and I therefore encourage the BTA to keep up the momentum with the assurance of my unwavering support. It is indeed my hope that we reach a position to publish our liberalisation road map by the middle of 2005.**

## **Distinguished Delegates**

**The government finds itself in the unenviable position of owning a service provider, whilst at the same time having to make tough decisions about the future of the industry as a whole. I am however confident that whatever path is chosen will be in the best interests of all Batswana, and also unlock the economic potential of our nation.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Let me again thank all of you for your enthusiastic participation during the stakeholders' forum. This is not the end of the consultative process. Your views will always be welcome during and beyond the implementation phase of the Liberalisation Plan.**

**With those few words, ladies and gentlemen, it is now my singular honour and privilege to declare the Botswana stakeholders' forum on further liberalisation of the telecommunications market officially closed.**

**Pula \*\*\*\* Pula \*\*\*\* Pula**