

# **BOTSWANA TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY**



**Press Release: 6 OCTOBER 2004**

The Botswana Telecommunications Authority (BTA) Executive Chairman Mr. C. M. Lekaukau accompanied by two BTA senior officials attended the 44<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO) Annual Council Meeting in Colombo, Sri Lanka from 20 – 24 September 2004. The CTO Council Meeting was preceded by a two-day CTO Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) Business Development Forum from 20 – 22 September 2004.

2. The CTO Business Forum was officially opened by the Sri Lanka Prime Minister Hon. Mahinda Rajapakse. In his keynote address to the Forum, the Prime Minister expressed his appreciation to the CTO and its members for accepting his country's invitation to host the CTO Council and Forum meetings as this was the first time Sri Lanka has hosted the Council meeting since becoming a member of the CTO. Like other developing countries, the Prime Minister said, Sri Lanka has realized that convergence of telecommunications and

the Information Communication Technologies (ICT) has become a reality as this has the potential to reduce the imbalances between developing and developed countries as well as between urban and rural areas what is commonly called Digital Divide. It is against this background that the Government of Sri Lanka has recognized that ICT should be one of its main priority areas for socio-economic development.

3. The Business Forum also had the opportunity to be addressed by Hon. C. Galea, Minister for Competitiveness and Communications of Malta through a video recorded medium as he could not be available due to an emergency meeting he had to attend in the United States. Hon C. Galea expressed hope that the CTO together with its development partners, notably the private sector and technical experts will review the critical issues upon which further development of ICT's depend, more importantly how new technologies and business models can accelerate universal access with a view to bridging the digital divide. Hon Galea also praised the then CTO Council Chairman Mr. C. M. Lekaukau for being instrumental not only in overseeing the effective constitutional changes that have taken place recently at the CTO but also for the rapid telecommunications developments that materialised in Botswana.

4. The CTO Forum had several roundtable discussions on ICT's policy development and regulatory issues. Among the key issues presented at the Forum were: National Health Strategies through a project on telemedicine in Kenya and the Role of the Information

Society in Bangladesh; ICTs in the Pacific: The Challenges Faced by Small Island States; Cross-Boarder Initiatives for Regulatory Capacity Development; and Overcoming the Challenges of Skills Shortage for Effective Regulatory Capacity in a Rapidly Changing Industry.

5. The CTO Development and Industry Partners also presented papers which covered among other issues the Financing of Rural Access; Satellite and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP): Opportunity or Threat; the Role of Rapid Growth of Mobile in ICT's Development in Africa; Broadband Wireless and Agriculture: Applications and Potential; and Enabling the Roll-out of ICT applications.

6. As for the CTO Council Meeting, several papers were presented for approval or noting by Council Members. Among the papers presented were the CTO Member Charter; Field Representation; Programme Development Strategy and Plans; the CTO Road Map for National ICT Planning; and the Creation of an ICT Professionals Database.

7. Ministers from other countries who attended the CTO Forum and Council Meeting were Honourable T. Msibi – Minister of Public Services and Information of Swaziland; and Hon. D. M. Jayarathne – Minister of Telecommunications, Port and Up Country Development of Sri Lanka.

8. CTO Council elected Mr. A. de Bono, the General Manager International Affairs for the Maltacom group as the new Chairman of the CTO Council taking over from Mr. C. M. Lekaukau who did not offer himself for re-appointment after serving two terms. The Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka and the Uganda Communications Commission were elected first and second vice chairperson, respectively. The Botswana Telecommunications Authority (BTA) and the Telecommunications Services of Trinidad and Tobago were elected representatives of the Development and Industry Partners, respectively.

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