

SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY,

HONOURABLE NEO MOROKA, MP

AT THE

**OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE
BOTSWANA TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY FORUM
ON FURTHER LIBERALISATION OF THE
TELECOMMUNICATIONS MARKET IN BOTSWANA**

GRAND PALM - GABORONE, BOTSWANA

31 JANUARY 2005

Director of Ceremonies

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Good morning. It is my privilege and honour to welcome you on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Botswana, to this important forum on further liberalisation of the telecommunications market in Botswana.
2. Allow me, Director of Ceremonies, to congratulate the Botswana Telecommunications Authority (BTA) for convening this gathering to generate ideas on further liberalisation of the telecommunications market in Botswana and to increase public awareness about the Authority's mandate.
3. I am pleased to note that the forum has attracted a wide cross-section of representation from relevant stakeholders in the Information and Communications Sector as well as other industries. Liberalisation of the telecommunications market is one of the most welcome developments. It is one of the reforms which encourage more free flow of

services and goods, more efficiency, reduction of costs and more potential for exports and Economic Growth and hence leading to economic diversification. I would, therefore, like to urge all the participants to use this forum strategically for our national benefit.

4. My Ministry, as some of you may be aware, has drafted a Competition Policy to help in ways of making our suppliers of goods and services more competitive at the market place. This draft Policy was put together after intensive consultations with all the stakeholders, nationally and regionally. The draft policy is currently being finalised by Government and when this is done, we will have a Competition Policy in Botswana to give certainty and clarity and direction to industry on more ways of being competitive while at the same time adhering to fair business practices.
5. I encourage you that over the next three days you should be open and frank in your discussions and come up with workable strategies which will take us some steps further

in liberalisation of the industry which is an essential service provider to the rest of the industries world-wide.

6. Further liberalisation will go a long way in creating a competitive telecommunications sector. This can assist Botswana to maintain her place in the Global economy since some of the barriers to economic growth can be tackled nationally, through improved information and communications technologies.
7. I am pleased to learn that the BTA has been working towards enhanced growth of our Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) sector through a process of managed liberalisation, which they did very diligently.
8. We all know Governments have a responsibility to create a conducive environment through development of national policies and regulatory frameworks. It is in this respect that the Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology is currently developing an ICT Policy dubbed "Maitlamo", which is expected to minimise constraints

currently impeding accelerated growth in the information and communication sector. The proposed policy should ultimately enable the ICTs sector to promote businesses of all forms in our economy and promote job creation as well as address the national economic challenges.

9. We are expecting new initiatives emanating from the ICT Policy that will support among others, our Government, the Regulator, Telecommunications Service Providers, consumers as well as the private sector organisations. I believe you will hear more about this policy, which is in the making, during the forum.

10. The Government is placing particular focus on initiatives that would help Botswana achieve her Millennium Development Goals and the World Summit on the Information Society Action Plan targets. It is my hope that during discussions at this forum, a common understanding will be reached in the use of ICTs. Just three weeks ago, we celebrated the World Digital Solidarity Day. We demonstrated the benefits that can be brought about by the new technologies.

11. My Colleague, the Honourable Minister of Education while in Gaborone, was able to communicate with the people of Seronga Village in his constituency through video conferencing. This was indeed, a thrilling moment for people in the rural village to experience. The advantages, opportunities and benefits that the information and communications technologies can bring in education, commercial, medical and government activities are too numerous to mention. Certainly, they must be utilised.
12. The advent of ICTs has brought with it numerous opportunities to our life style and every aspect of our activities is undergoing profound change. Such change is transforming our global society into what is being called the Information Society. The challenge for us is to have skills in information handling, which are also required in most jobs in modern economies, for efficiency and effectiveness.
13. The prevailing situation in today's world imposes on Botswana the need to understand our present position with regard to technological mobilisation challenge to avoid

being marginalised in the global village, especially in global trade. The greatest threat facing us today is the scientific and digital divide separating Botswana from advanced economies and the rich urban from the rural poor.

14. As you are aware, my constituency belongs to the rural poor, and I too have a keen interest in bridging scientific and digital divide between Kgalagadi South and Gaborone. In this regard, I want us to join hands in tackling the injustice of the digital divide which we are not responsible for and to recognise that access to information and communication technologies is a fundamental human right. However, we face a big challenge in bridging this gap in a country like ours, which is big in size and sparsely populated; as the costs involved are inevitably enormous.
15. I am pleased to inform you that this year Botswana will host the second World Information Technology Forum (WITFOR) from the 31st August to 2nd September in Gaborone. WITFOR 2005 will be an opportunity for Botswana to demonstrate its ability in representing the developing countries' dreams of keeping pace with ongoing

technological transformations, and it will showcase what Botswana can offer.

16. We have been working very hard to ensure that we attract high-level participation to the forum. However, Government looks forward to this industry and others to continue assisting it with resources to make this forum a success and therefore generous donations are expected and will be solicited for accordingly.

17. I am convinced that you will be able to work together to make this forum on liberalisation a success and come up with unique and long term sustainable strategies for further liberalisation of the telecommunications market, which can present opportunities for all its stakeholders. I wish you good deliberations for the next three days.

18. With these few remarks Director of Ceremonies, it is now my Singular Honour, to declare this forum officially opened.

PULA **** PULA **** PULA