

**SPEECH BY C. M. LEKAUKAU, BTA CHIEF EXECUTIVE
AT THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF
THE BTA/MISA MEDIA WORKSHOP HELD ON 31
MARCH 2005, GABORONE SUN HOTEL AT 8:30 AM.**

I am happy to welcome you to this historic workshop which BTA hopes will help to lay a foundation for a long partnership that is so vital in this era of information society. I am happy that you found time among your ever-busy schedules of frequent deadlines to come and have an appreciation of issues surrounding the telecommunications industry.

Allow me to acknowledge here today the presence of Mr. Vincent Maher, Head of the New Media Laboratory in the Department of Journalism and Media studies at Rhodes University in South Africa and Mr. Mike Robertson, Chief Executive Officer of Media Division also in South Africa. Gentlemen welcome to the BTA/MISA Media Workshop. I know you were called at short notice, nevertheless you obliged. I have been told that you are going to make presentations on **The role of Media in Development** and **The role of media in ICT Development** respectively. With the wealth of experience that you both have in your respective areas, I have no doubt that your presentations will enrich the proceedings of this workshop.

I similarly wish to acknowledge the presence of the MISA stakeholders from all over Botswana particularly those from rural areas. Your inclusion in this workshop will give diverse perspectives as they prevail in your parts of the country. I hope that views of

your urban colleagues will not dominate yours because if there are any areas where ICTs are still to make a serious impact, it is in your areas – the non-urban areas. BTA is as much interested in serving those areas as it is in serving the urban areas, if not more. As such your contributions will be highly appreciated.

It is only proper that I appreciate from the onset the amount of support the media fraternity has offered the Botswana Telecommunications Authority since its inception. From our humble beginnings in 1997, we have had a very difficult job of pioneering and propagating the concept of telecommunications regulation at a time when the concept was relatively new to the entire world. It was therefore very difficult to make all stakeholders understand the complex issues inherent in information communications technologies generally and telecommunications regulation specifically, however this obtains world over particularly in developing countries. Be that it may, the media did a good job in helping our course thus far and for that we are deeply indebted.

I believe that by now you have seen the objectives of the workshop as we have been in close liaison with MISA National Director and his staff during the preparations and you yourselves had the benefit of a briefing in your recent breakfast meeting. However, let me attempt to put it into context for you. There is a lot happening in the ICT world today that you our local media may not be aware of and consequently there may well be a 'missing link' in our society. The National ICT Policy, dubbed Maitlamo, is at an advanced stage;, the re-merging of the Botswana Telecommunications Authority Board and the National Broadcasting

Board should take place in a not too distant future; in August this year Botswana will be hosting the World Information Technology Forum (WITFOR 2005), and Heads of States are to meet in Tunis this year for a second round of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and hopefully a final declaration may be signed.

All the above issues are just an example of the amount activities taking place in the ICT arena that society should be constantly kept abreast of. Needless to say that information has become the major commodity on which global trade is based. However, there is a lot that goes on almost every week owing to the dynamism of the ICT technology. I urge you to use the BTA website and other relevant ones like that of the ITU and the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation etc.

Through the WSIS process the world reconfirmed and emphasized the media's role as an important partner in building the information society. The world made a commitment to carry the media along on a daily basis and not just use it to report ICT events. It is in keeping with this approach that the BTA saw the need to engage the media to enable it to cover ICT issues from an informed position.

With the foregoing in mind, BTA organised this workshop as the first step in a series of events that it intends to undertake, in a bid to teach Botswana about the subject of telecommunications regulation and how it is intended to benefit them and others as consumers of telecommunications services after a successful forum on further liberalisation which was held in February this year. We

realise that for us to effectively achieve this task, it is important that the media's role as a partner in the information society is properly recognised and enhanced. It is our hope that this workshop will help to highlight the difficulties and suggest interventions that will allow for a partnership to blossom.

I now wish to spend just a few minutes to let you in on some of the current and future plans the BTA is engaged in. Last July the Authority commissioned two consultancies; A study on strategies for further liberalisation of the telecommunications market in Botswana and a study on the development of a cost model and pricing framework for the telecommunications sector in Botswana.

The study on further liberalisation of the telecommunications market in Botswana was intended to come up with recommendations that would promote competition in all market segments in order to ensure consumer choice and efficient provision of services. This study has since been completed after the draft report was publicly discussed in the workshop that was held at the Gaborone International Convention centre in February. BTA is now studying the recommendations of the report.

The study on costing model and pricing framework is intended to develop an appropriate costing model and incentive based pricing framework founded on a price cap scheme so as to establish relevant costs as borne by the operators in Botswana. This draft report of the study, that is a lot more technical, is still undergoing consultations with the major stakeholders who are the operators.

Last year the Authority also started work to install an Automated Frequency Spectrum Management and Monitoring System (AFMMS). Phase I of this project included the supply and installation of equipment to ten monitoring sites at Mochudi, Molepolole, Jwaneng (Mokhomba), Radisele, Tati Siding, Shashe Mooke, Matshelagabedi, Maun, Shorobe and Tlokweng. This phase is now complete and operational.

Phase two of the project, which includes the installation of six additional remote monitoring sites has already commenced. The complete AFMMS is expected to be in place by the end of the year. I believe you will get to know more about the benefits of this system during the course of this workshop.

Recently we awarded a tender for Development of Telecom Specifications & Type approval Procedures to a local consulting company, Business On-Line, in conjunction with InterConnect Communications (ICC) of the UK.

The purpose of the study is to carry out a complete technical audit of the telecommunications equipment in use in Botswana, to establish whether the equipment complies with the relevant ITU technical specifications or not, as non compliance with ITU specifications has the potential of causing damage to the public network. This also helps to ensure that consumers do not buy sub-standard equipment. This study is expected to run for 9 months after which a technical audit will then be carried out and type approval procedures drawn up to help in preventing the importation

of equipment, including terminal equipment, which do not comply with the relevant standards of other internationally recognized standardization bodies such as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI) etc.

To date BTA has issued one fixed licence to Botswana Telecommunications Corporation and two mobile licences to Mascom Wireless (Pty) Ltd and Orange Botswana (Pty) Ltd. In addition the Authority has licensed twenty-one (21) Internet Service Providers, eleven (11) Data Network Service Provider and eleven (11) Private Data Networks. The results of the Further Liberalisation Report may cause BTA to license more service providers or even licence new products in the sector.

BTA intends to intensify efforts to ensure improved customer service by all telecommunications service providers. To this end, the authority is working on modalities to address customer complaints. The authority is in the process of establishing a database of complaints as well as forms for lodging complaints, tracking progress in addressing complaints, and reporting back to complainants the outcome of such complaints. Already BTA has completed consumer and stakeholder satisfaction survey. The results of the survey are still being analyzed.

I can only implore you to come up with resolutions that will ensure that both of us optimally play their role in ensuring that Batswana do not miss the information society bandwagon.

With those very few remarks, it is my pleasure and privilege to declare this media workshop officially open and wish you fruitful deliberations.

P U L A