



Republic of Botswana

OFFICIAL OPENING REMARKS

BY

**HONOURABLE ASSISTANT MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY
ADVOCATE SADIQUE KEBONANG**

A

**THE FOURTH NATIONAL COMPETITION CONFERENCE FOR
STAKEHOLDERS**

HELD AT

GABORONE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE

26th March, 2015



**Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Trade and Industry-
Mme Peggy Serame**

Permanent Secretaries here present.

Chairman of the Competition Commission

The CEO of the Competition Authority

**Chief Executive Officer of Bramer Life Insurance - Ms.
Regina Sikalesele-Vaka**

CEO's of public bodies and their representatives

Competition Commissioners

Captains of industry and their representatives

Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen

Welcome

Director of Ceremonies, I am grateful to be here today on the occasion of the Fourth National Competition Conference.

1. I wish to acknowledge the various sectors represented at this conference, particularly the business community who are the primary stakeholders of the Competition Authority.

Key stakeholders and competition

2. I am particularly delighted that this conference has brought together the business community, economists, labour unions, legal practitioners, academics, technocrats, all who play a key role on competition law and policy in Botswana. This gathering has without doubt brought together key influencers that can make fair competition a reality in the Botswana market.
3. This is the fourth competition conference since the inception of the Competition Authority in 2011. I am informed that these annual competition conferences provide an opportunity for competition stakeholders to engage on issues of mutual concern as well as provide platform to raise and deepen awareness on competition issues.

4. Director of Ceremonies, It is my hope that with each annual competition conference, there is a significant addition to the culture of competition in Botswana. We need to build and sustain a healthy culture of competition because it is a starting point for innovation and competitiveness.

This year's Theme

5. Director of Ceremonies, the theme for this year's conference is '***Competition and the supply chain***'. This theme is particularly relevant given today's market realities where a market cannot function and deliver without a fair supply chain from input supplies to consumption.
6. Ladies and Gentlemen, you will agree with me that there could not have been a more fitting theme to this conference, given our supply challenges in Botswana. Businesses in the various sectors are integrated from **production, supplies, transport, wholesale and retail.**

7. It is important to understand the massive contributions that each sector brings to the supply chain, not just producers and suppliers but countless value adding businesses along the chain.
8. As the Ministry of Trade and Industry, our mandate is to create jobs for thousands of unemployed Batswana and to create wealth for this nation. In pursuance of this mandate, we go all out to facilitate an enabling environment by putting in place all the policy frameworks such as the **Competition Act**, and we even go further by providing technical and financial support through various agencies.
9. **Director of Ceremonies**, My government, and indeed my ministry, are fully aware that this nation will never be globally competitive unless we produce excellent products and services for both the local and global markets. It is our belief that the starting point for global competitiveness is not just access to markets but fair competition between the enterprises in the various stages of the supply chain.

10. **Ladies and Gentlemen**, the National Competition Policy of 2006, and the Competition Act, is premised on the view that fair competition will lead to lower prices, wider choices to the consumers and innovation or quality products and services. Fair competition will also assist us to provide room for growth and development of the SME sector and thus create the jobs we highly seek. It should therefore be made clear that the Government of Botswana is the architect and champion of fair competition; and for a good cause.

Procurement

11. I am delighted to learn that during this gathering, in one of the panel discussions, panellists would discuss procurement of goods and services and the extent to which procurement can be made competitive. Procurement is often at the centre of implementation of major public development programmes.

12. My ministry has come up with Economic Diversification Drive (EDD), an initiative that is geared towards stimulating local manufacturing industries by ensuring that public institutions spend part of their procurement budget to purchase goods and services produced locally.
13. I believe the discussion on competition and procurement will contribute to the wider discussion on how procurement processes be made more open, fair and beneficial to all.

Chain Stores

14. **Ladies and Gentlemen,** I have further observed from your programme that in one of the panel discussions, this conference would discuss the more topical issue of chain stores and their impact on the Botswana market of today. I have often heard very divergent views on the role of chain stores in our economy. **Have chain stores swallowed small businesses? Are chain stores the necessary transition into the emerging global market that cannot be avoided?**

15. I have no doubt in my mind that these questions and many other pertinent questions shall be dispassionately threshed out today, not as academic postulations but through an elaborate discourse to proffer helpful pointers in view of the grave economic realities that confront our nation today.
16. Without pre-empting the discussions that will ensue, I may just state that government expects a mutually beneficial co-existence between chain stores and the SME sector.

Impact of interventions

17. **Director of Ceremonies**, coming to the core mandate of the Authority, I am informed that over 60 restrictive business practices investigations have been undertaken and a number of these cases are still to come before the adjudication body, the Competition Commission.

Conclusions

18. I therefore as I conclude, wish to assure all of you that my ministry remains steadfast in its support to the work of the Competition Commission and the Authority.

19. Let me also implore all of us here today to keep the two institutions on their toes and ensure they deliver on their mandate and even according to your expectations.
20. **Director of Ceremonies, Ladies and Gentlemen,** I now have the pleasure to declare the Fourth National Competition Conference officially open. I wish you fruitful deliberations.

Pula! Pula! Pula! Pula! Pula!