



BUSINESSBOTSWANA

STATEMENT

NEO NWAKO, BB PRESIDENT

Date: Thursday, 23rd May 2024

Venue: BB showgrounds, Gerald Estate

Director of Ceremonies

- a) **Hon. Fidelis Molao**, Minister of Agriculture and Member of Parliament for Shashe West Constituency
- b) **His Worship**, Hon Godisang Radisigo, Mayor of the City of Francistown
- c) **Ms Chabongwa Matseka**, City of Francistown District Commissioner
- d) **Mr. Norman Moleele**, Business Botswana CEO
- e) **Senior government officials here present**
- f) **Captains of Industry**
- g) **Exhibitors**
- h) **Members of the media**

Distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen,

Good morning to you all!

- 1) It is my sincere delight to welcome you to the **28th Northern trade fair**, and my 1st as the president of Business Botswana. Distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen, your presence here today underscores your high regard for Trade and investment and your commitment to advancing wealth and economic growth in Botswana.
- 2) Hosting the fair in Francistown is strategic as the Northern region is endowed with abundant natural resources, a skilled workforce, and strategic geographic positioning, making it a prime destination for investment and economic development.
- 3) Our Vision at Business Botswana is to build a diverse, vibrant, and robust private sector. Therefore, the Northern Trade Fair provides for dynamic engagements, and interactions amongst businesses particularly SMEs to connect, network,

collaborate on business enhancements, and seize unparalleled opportunities in today's globalized economy.

- 4) Globally, Small, and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) contribute significantly to their economic growth, and likewise in Botswana, it contributes to at least **14%** of our GDP as of 2022 (*source LEA*). We must, therefore, build structures that support their growth. Leveraging on today's platform, I implore YOU, my members and the entire private sector to review incentives that will improve access to capital for SMEs. The government is a few steps ahead of us through the creation of programmes such as *Chema Chema*, and others.

Ladies and gentlemen, of the 2500 businesses we represent, 85% are SMEs, and therefore its growth and capacitation remain a key priority. This is a testament to our deliberate efforts through the various programmes we have including the ***Support to the Economic Diversification Project***. Funded by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the project is aimed at fostering economic diversification. Director of Ceremonies, since its launch, we have conducted countrywide capacitation programmes for over 300 businesses in the horticulture, business development, and tourism sectors. This training was conducted in partnership with the Botswana Horticulture Council (BoHoCo), and The Hospitality and Tourism Association of Botswana (HATAB).

- 5) Distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen, it would a remiss of me not to inform you that the development of our new 5-year strategic plan is almost complete, and aimed at fostering long-term economic development. This blueprint will be geared towards nurturing an inward-looking, and stakeholder-

centric organization that will drive economic growth in Botswana, with a strong emphasis on *evidence-based policy research, technology adoption, cohesive partnerships, and robust value-added services*. The Northern Trade Fair, convened here today, serves as evidence of our progress toward realizing this vision. Ladies and gentlemen, we have at least over **120** exhibitors participating this year, from across all sectors of the economy.

- 6) With newly crafted vision and mission statements, and for each strategic thrust, we will be steadfast in our advocacy for a private sector that not only plays a leading role but also significantly contributes to the country's GDP by creating opportunities that propel economic growth and job creation. Your diverse exhibitions at events like these reaffirm our collective pursuit of a private sector-led economy.
- 7) Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to further attest that Business Botswana will enhance its capacity-building programmes to be internationally aligned to equip enterprises with the necessary skills to thrive in an ever-evolving business and technological landscape and leverage innovation for profitability. I, therefore urge you to take advantage of these services to drive your businesses forward. Allow me, Director of Ceremonies to add that membership affiliation is paramount for organizations and individual enterprises alike, as it unlocks access to these invaluable benefits and enables us, to actively advocate for policies that will drive a private sector-led development model for our economy.
- 8) After all, a thriving business environment depends on how we engage the government, as policymakers, they get direction from us, the private sector on

the business environment we want. Therefore, please continue supporting us, to grow and facilitate businesses even beyond the Botswana borders.

9) *Now back to today's theme*

Director of Ceremonies, Distinguished guests, this year's theme "***Sustainable Innovation: Building a greener tomorrow,***" highlights our commitment to harnessing the untapped potential of this vibrant and dynamic region while prioritizing environmental sustainability. It is imperative to recognize that in the pursuit of profit, we must not neglect our responsibility to care for the environment, which is rapidly deteriorating due to business activities. Therefore, our current objective is to foster business ideas that are environmentally friendly and contribute positively to our shared future. We look forward to hearing from our guest speaker, the Honourable Minister on innovations, and sustainable solutions the government is implementing, particularly under the Ministry of Agriculture.

10) Ladies, and gentlemen, allow me to reiterate our dedication to advocating for a business-friendly environment that will foster sustainable and lasting relationships amongst all stakeholders both locally, and nationally. We will continue partnering with the Francistown leadership to amplify economic growth in the region.

11) Before I close, I would like to urge and encourage you to support and contribute to the 17th National Business Conference (NBC), happening from the 25th – 28th of August 2024, at Adansonia Hotel, Francistown. The Conference brings together **500** *senior government officials, business leaders, development partners, NGOs, and Civil Societies* to discuss ideas to make Botswana

internationally competitive. The conference will therefore explore practical reforms to accelerate Botswana's transformation toward a high-income economy. *His Excellency, the President*, will officiate under the theme ***“Invigorating Economic Transformation Through the Private Sector.”*** The theme aims to ignite innovative actions to accelerate economic transformation through private sector participation.

Given this, ladies and gentlemen, we request your support through the ***registration of delegates, sponsorships, and technical support*** to deliver a successful conference. Additionally, the conference contributes to the *Meetings, Incentives, Conference, and Events* (MICE) strategy to propel Francistown as a City to live, work, stay, and most importantly, invest in.

12) In closing, I would like to once again urge all our guests, exhibitors, and the public to embrace the plethora of opportunities presented by the fair to extensively engage, connect and broaden your business endeavour. May this trade fair be a fruitful and enriching experience for everyone involved.

13) Thank you.