

REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

OFFICIAL OPENING SPEECH

DELIVERED BY

MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, WILDLIFE AND TOURISM

HONOURABLE ONKOKAME KITSO MOKAILA

AT THE LAUNCH OF THE "FUTURE OKAVANGO PROJECT"

11TH OCTOBER 2011, MAUN

Director of Ceremonies

Kgosi Kealetile Moremi

Member of Parliament for Maun/Okavango

Permanent Secretary, MEWT

North West Council Chairman

District Commissioner

Director of Okavango Research Institute

OKACOM Commissioners

Directors and CEOs of different organizations

Representatives of German Development Agency (GIZ)

Representatives of Civil Society Organisations

Ladies and Gentlemen

Dumelang!

 Director of Ceremonies it is always a pleasure to be at an event that brings me close to the **Okavango Delta**.
For me this district offers an opportunity to experience the scenic beauty of our land; to dialogue with experts on topics that prepare us to better understand the dynamics of the unique Okavango Delta; and to be part of the Delta community where people hold with passion, the natural wealth of their land.

- 2. Director of Ceremonies, the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism has the mandate to coordinate environmental management activities across the economy. This we do through objectives that relate to improved environmental management now and in the future; the creation of an enabling environment for sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems; and establishing mechanisms that will encourage Batswana to meaningfully derive benefits from the use of natural resources.
- 3. To this effect, ladies and gentlemen, as partner organisations across all sectors conceive new programmes, we take particular interest in them with a view to determining how such initiatives will enhance, enrich, complement and help my Ministry to achieve its

strategic objectives. Programmes planned for the Okavango Delta usually do not escape such examination. It is in this respect that as overseers and custodians of the environment, we have extensive partnerships within the economy and beyond.

- 4. Director of Ceremonies, when I received the invitation to officiate at this event, being to launch **The Future Okavango Project** (TFO), I could not help thinking how this new programme would contribute towards my Ministry's earlier investment to integrate planning in the Okavango Delta, through the **Okavango Delta Management Plan (ODMP).**
- 5. Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to be egocentric and help us reflect on the key principles that guided the ODMP process. These are, ecosystem approach, participatory planning, capacity building, data management, socio-economic considerations, alignment to RAMSAR planning guidelines and trans-boundary planning. Out of these planning principles several sectoral plans, strategies and

guidelines emerged through the ODMP to address management issues within thematic areas that cover land, water, livestock, settlement, research, data, training, waste, biodiversity, fisheries and tourism. I consider these principles as still relevant for the TFO as well.

- 6. The long term sustainability and assurance of the flow of the Okavango resources require generation of information and knowledge so that all planning decisions are based on science, facts and not to forget local knowledge. This is where projects like The Future Okavango can play a meaningful role. I am informed that The Future Okavango Project intends to support the sustainable land use and sustainable natural resource management through scientific knowledge.
- 7. The Future Okavango Project approach will thus analyze the inter-linkages between human actions on the natural ecosystem services. This will be achieved through specific research activities and the

development of management tools and decision support systems for the **Okavango River Basin**. In this regard, the promotion of information sharing through the development and implementation of the **Okavango Basin Information System (OBIS)**, complemented by hydrological modeling of the Okavango River Basin, is most desirable.

- 8. Other project activities include analysis of aspects such as Integrated Land and Water Resources Management (IWLRM), climate change impact assessment; analysis of water resources and development of adaptive ILWRM strategies; analysis of governance and poverty reduction strategies within the basin with a view to uplifting livelihoods of the people of the basin from abject poverty.
- 9. Let us also note that the Okavango River Basin is a shared resource between **Angola**, **Namibia** and **Botswana**. The three countries entered into an Agreement on the management of the water resources of the Okavango River Basin in 1994. The resultant

Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission (OKACOM) recognises the importance of information exchange, joint management and comprehensive management of the basin resources, that is, beyond just water.

- 10. Director of Ceremonies, Botswana continues to take keen interest on the performance of the **OKACOM**. This is due to our position downstream. The noble initiative of promoting shared management of natural resources in the Okavango Basin has allowed Member States to achieve some level of progress in realizing economic benefits from the resources of the basin.
- 11. In Botswana, the Okavango Delta is the main economic driver of the **Ngamiland District** through tourism. The tourism industry is based on the intriguing biodiversity and the pristine wilderness the Delta provides. Tourism, as a land use is predominantly a non-consumptive industry and for Botswana it is dependent on the natural resource flows from the upstream. This continuous flow of stocks can only be

sustained through collaborative management. It is also common knowledge that the Delta is important as a source of water, fish, veldt products and it supports agricultural activities.

- 12. Director of ceremonies, I am informed that within the auspices of OKACOM, a baseline scientific assessment of the status of the resources and management of the Okavango River Basin has been conducted, through a GEF-supported Trans-boundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA). The TDA therefore sets an information base for The Future Okavango Project.
- 13. Ladies and gentlemen, I am further informed that within the framework of the TDA various research institutions within the basin had already started collaborating in research on the Okavango basin. These institutions are, Agostino Neto University, The Namibia Polytechnic and our very own University of Botswana Okavango Research Institute. The network established through this process has been useful in facilitating the spirit of regional cooperation as espoused within the SADC protocol on shared water

resources. Based on this collaboration I want to urge the TFO project to build on past research initiatives in order to achieve optimal returns on investments.

- 14. I am pleased to learn that the TDA has informed the development of a **Strategic Action Programme** (SAP) by OKACOM. The SAP is a collection of projects and interventions designed to fill gaps identified in the TDA and to address management of trans-boundary issues. Therefore the TFO will further research on and analyze the effectiveness of SAP elements and thereby capture lessons that can assist the member states to realize maximum benefits from implementing the SAP.
- 15. Ladies and gentlemen, before I conclude I would like to recognize the support of the **German Government** in funding the work that the TFO will be doing in the **Okavango River Basin** (ORB). This is a clear demonstration of commitment by the German Government in the management of the resources of the ORB and SADC as a whole. I note that the German Government also supported the development of the **Okavango Delta Management Plan, the KAZA**

Trans Frontier Conservation Area and **river basin organizations** within the SADC region. This is a notable contribution and it goes a long way in assisting countries like Botswana to achieve their ecosystem management targets and obligations.

- Director of Ceremonies, I would like to conclude by 16. stating the importance of capacity building within our planning cadres in research, policy analysis and natural resources management. On this note I want to challenge the TFO and ORI, to invest in training programmes during the course of this project. This will capacity within relevant enhance government institutions in the district and the Okavango basin, in order to effectively implement the recommendations and integrate them into district and national development planning processes. I also want to assure TFO team, of the Botswana Government's the commitment to the successful implementation of the project.
- 17. On this note ladies and gentlemen I declare the TFO launching workshop officially opened.

PULA!! PULA!! PULA!!