

SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT AND
LEADER OF THE BOTSWANA DEMOCRATIC PARTY,
LIEUTENANT GENERAL SERETSE KHAMA IAN KHAMA AT
THE 51ST NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE BDP

Your Honour the Vice President

Party Chairman

Members of the Central Committee

Fellow Democrats

Distinguished Guests

1. Fellow Democrats, it is always an honour and joy to meet with you to deliberate on issues. The past year and several months have been full of challenges. The depression that has hit the world and seen bigger economies crumble and historically vibrant ones getting down-graded did not leave us unscathed.

2. We have had to cut down and slow down our development projects and limit our expenditure to our recurrent and contractual obligations as well as projects and activities. For this, we chose Morupule expansion with the sole purpose to be self sufficient in our domestic power supply. We have maintained our Tertiary Funding at more or

less the same P2bn with the clear aim to produce the trained human resource that our economy needs. We chose the expansion of both Sir Seretse Khama International Airport and the Maun Airport to facilitate growth in our travel and tourism sector. It remains my hope that these selected areas amongst others will help our country maintain a steady economic growth and open up greater opportunities for our youth.

3. Alongside these projects, we had to keep in mind those expenditure items that benefit the majority of our population who are unable to fend for themselves. We have maintained all subsidies on social services such as health, old age pensions, support for orphans and needy children and the poor to make sure that the weaker in our society are protected and given a chance to provide for themselves.
4. What I have just outlined makes the core of what our development activities have become. I must take this opportunity to explain other developments that you may have heard about. Let me start with the cattle issue in the Ngamiland District. For many years we have not been able to fully exploit the farming wealth on cattle in that area because of the foot and mouth disease out breaks. The

drought last year has made the situation worse. I am concerned about the welfare of people in that part of the country and that is why I have given instructions to our Minister of Agriculture to continue to search for alternate markets to sell our beef and to find markets that will buy cattle and beef from Ngamiland.....(MOA to provide paragraph)

5. Ngamiland and its people hold a special place in the economy of our country. The wealth in flora and fauna that is the mainstay of our tourism is under their keep. It is important therefore that as we help them maintain their traditional lifestyles in the rearing of cattle we do not lose sight of the value of the environment to our economy. It is a delicate balance and one that must be nurtured through consultation and wisdom in the decisions we take.
6. Our customary land ownership was designed so that all that reside in any area would have uninterrupted access and use of land they occupy. The law still assumes this. It is common practice that a Motswana will have a homestead, masimo and moraka. Some may even apply for a business plot for which they would pay an annual lease. It is also within our law NOT to allocate tribal land to non-citizens.

7. All this has changed. Some of our own are selling the plots allocated to them for traditional use and then they return to the Land Board to apply for more land which they sell, in fact some Batswana are actively selling off tribal land. I am concerned about this and I agree that we need to find a solution to ensure that what remains is shared out in the manner our laws had intended. (MOLH to provide a paragraph)
8. We have had serious setbacks in the construction of the Morupule power plant and we have failed to meet our target on self sufficiency in power-generation. We therefore continue to rely on our neighbours who also have to supply their own domestic demands. (MMEWR to provide page)
9. Some have said that the Executive was hesitant to investigate corruption. This cannot be further from the truth. The manner in which we combat corruption remains noticeable to the world outside. The placing of the Commonwealth Centre on Corruption in Botswana is no accident. It comes as the result of stringent comparison with other countries and their anti-corruption programmes with Botswana out-classing most.

10. In order to respond to the decline in the pass rate of students at all levels in public schools I have taken personal interest in ensuring that I am promptly informed of all developments within the Ministry of Education and Skills Development. The one thing that remains clear in my mind is that we cannot expect to see the pass rate improve if we do not work as a team made up of communities, parents, teachers, government and the pupils themselves. Government has been working on issues that teachers have complained about; in addition to 500 houses bought during 2012\13 another P997m has been allocated to the ministry to build and buy houses as well as upgrade school premises. This is not enough but it is what the economy can afford in these difficult times. It is my wish to see the discussion on levels of operation resolved soon.

11. But as government takes these steps to improve the working conditions of teachers it is our expectation that teaching will improve and that all teachers will deliver to the best of their ability. We should not forget parents in this equation. They too have a responsibility in contributing to guiding their children and helping them to learn. Students too have a responsibility to study but this can only happen if all

adults around the student make the environment conducive to learning. My government and I will continue to do our best but we will need you on board to succeed.

12. On skills development, it is the aim of my government to make sure that we produce graduates that are ready for the demands of the world of work. To achieve this we are expanding capacity in the Brigades to enroll more students for vocational training. At the same time, we are re-tooling those graduates qualified in skills that may not be in demand by placing them in courses most required by the economy. In addition to this we have more than doubled intake at BOCODOL to help those that require to upgrade their academic points. The Back to School programme has been introduced to give our young people an opportunity to improve their chances in the job market.

13. We have been concerned about the level of commitment to work among the youth and to respond to this, under the Youth Empowerment Scheme, we have introduced bootcamps whose purpose to arm young people with life-long skills and to help build stronger character. Our media has been awash with false allegations about the bootcamps and I can attest to the value of the kind of

training they are exposed to. It can only help them become stronger people.

14. It is our intention that the bootcamps become an exit point for most of our training programmes to prepare youth for employment.

15. Working with countries with whom we have bilateral relations, we have been asked to provide qualified people to work in those countries. Namibia will recruit Setswana teachers from Botswana, several have been interviewed and await appointment. Fresh graduates will have an opportunity to gain experience as they get posted to new democracies such as Malawi, Liberia and South Sudan. This will put Botswana in a good position in the South-South collaboration that the continent has sought for a very long time. The programme will help build confidence that Africa is capable of producing world class human capital.