

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**DATE:** Wednesday, 19th September 2018

**VENUE:** Fairgrounds Holdings ( The Pavillion Hall)

**TIME:** 0800hrs – 1200hrs

WELCOME REMARKS BY:

**BB PRESIDENT, Mr Gobusamang Keebine**

Director of Ceremonies,

* **Business Botswana Vice Presidents-** Mr Odirile Merafhe and Mr Humprey Nawa
* **Our guest of honour-** Botswana Trade Commission CEO, Mr Mphoeng Tamasiga
* **Special Economic Zones Authority,** Director- Investor Attraction and Monitoring, MrJoel D. Ramaphoi
* **Business Botswana Council and HLCC Coordinators here present**
* **Business Botswana Acting Chief Executive Officer**- Mr Norman Moleele
* **Distinguished members,**
* **Media here present**

Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning to you all!

1. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you all to the Business Botswana’s 45th Annual General Meeting (AGM). Please give me the opportunity to extend a special welcome to our guest speaker this morning, The CEO of Botswana Trade Commission, Mr Mphoeng Tamasiga. And also, the Special Economic Zones Authority (SEZA) Director- Investor Attraction and Monitoring, Mr Joel Ramaphoi. As Business Botswana we are forever thankful to the support stakeholders continues to give to Business Botswana. Your presence here today signifies the importance you attach to the private sector and its role in the development of our economy. I thank you very much for agreeing to join us today.
2. To members, I must say it pleases me to see that yet again, your attendance at this AGM has significantly improved from the last AGM. To the media houses represented here, I am grateful to the support you have accorded Business Botswana.
3. I wish to start off my address to you dear members by tendering an apology for the late delivery of the necessary documentation to allow you to make the necessary comments at this Annual General Meeting. It was due to circumstances beyond our control that you have only just received these.
4. Distinguished members, Ladies and gentlemen, it has been rather a short year for us, as you know we took over the Business Botswana leadership only almost a year ago. We inherited an organisation that was in financial distress. To get the organisation back on track, required that we had to have “***All Hands on Deck.”*** I indicated that we were going to go back to basics! We literally had to work alongside the Secretariat in an effort to enhance the visibility of the organisation in various ways.
5. You will recall that at the last year’s AGM, you were informed that the organisation had less than 350 paying members, we had made a loss and an adverse opinion had been given on the 2016 Audited Financial Statements, and there more negative about Business Botswana than positive.
6. Today, I am excited standing here this morning because on reflection, we have achieved much more milestones in this short period of time that we normally do in a full 12 months period. I can however say that, despite the many challenges, the year was still marked with a lot of activities and achievements for Business Botswana. In particular, throughout the year, focus was on the following areas:
* Improve membership and financial turnaround of Business Botswana: I am happy to inform you that although the 2017 Audited Financial Statements also reflect an adverse audit opinion, the results of the tireless work will show itself in the 2018 Financial Statements. Just to give you a sample of what I am referring to, whereas in 2017 we had just around 350 paying members, as at 31st August 2018, we have more than 720 members who have paid their subscriptions and we are hoping to have more by year end. This has translated into an addition revenue of close to P 1 Million as compared to the same period in 2017.
* Embark on vigorous publicity and image rebuilding of Business Botswana: As part of this process, I visited our members and other stakeholders in the following regions but not limited to; Lobatse, Letlhakane, Ghanzi, Selibe Phikwe, Kanye, Francistown and Maun. I also addressed the media through various channels including electronic and print interviews. Furthermore, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2018-2023 Strategic Plan was development and endorsed by members. The new BB Strategic Plan is inclusive of local and national priorities and economic landscape. Business Botswana (BB) couldn’t be as effective without UNDP’s support and tremendously thank you for the continued support and partnership.

Ladies and gentlemen, Business Botswana continues to represent its members’ interests in the various initiatives to ensure pro-business policies, regulations and programmes as well as provide support to Small, Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and private sector association. And this include; approval by the African Development Bank (AfDB) of a Technical Assistance project for Support to Economic Diversification which will be dubbed Private Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2.

* Improve stakeholder engagement: we met several international delegations. Amongst these was China, whom we signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) to strengthen trade relations between the two countries. Furthermore, in May 2018, we hosted Ambassadors and High Commissioners’ session to share with them our mandate and to also appeal to you to link us with Chambers of Commerce in their respective countries.

We also had an opportunity to host the Minister of Investment, Trade and Industry (MITI), to engage businesses in a deep and frank exchange of views on how to promote business reforms and investment in Botswana.

* On an advocacy level, we saw more reason to advocate and lobby government to reduce regulations and come up with policies that protect the economic interests of the private sector. We also had to look at more options for diversification not only for purposes of attracting foreign direct investment, but to create partnerships that could enable us to expand our opportunities for diversification.
* On a regional scale, Business Botswana continues to partner with regional players, Business Botswana is secretariat to the SADC Private Sector Forum (SPSF), a unified voice of business in the region. The role of SPSF is to ease the doing business in the region. We continue to partner with development partners, in particular, the role of the International labour Organisation (ILO) is imperative. The ILO has assisted BB on many fronts including, the review of the organisational structure.

Our relationship with government continues to be strong. During the year Business Botswana raised a number of issues through the High Level Consultative Council (HLCC). We believe that working in partnership with our government has brought about a lot of positive results that are worthy of praise. Our sector coordinators have been outstanding and they continue to collate sector concerns and issues for discussion at the HLCC. For example, the issue pertaining to the issuance of work and resident permits which has been a challenge to businesses, Government has included Business Botswana various sector based boards created to evaluate such. These boards deals with issuance of permits in accordance with the Immigration Act. Business Botswana played and continues to have a significant role in ensuring that private sector requests for experienced and skilled labour is not frustrated.

1. Distinguished members, Ladies and gentlemen, we intend to embark on a countrywide consultation to assess the effectiveness of the Local Level Consultative Council (LLCC), with the intention of better coordination of private sector members for the effectiveness of our engagement with the Local Authorities as well as strengthening communication between the HLCC and the LLCC.
2. I would also like to pay a special tribute to His Excellency the President of Botswana Mokgweetsi Masisi and his government for the unwavering support they accorded me since I assumed presidency. It has been humbling to witness the type of recognition and prominence our government continues to give Business Botswana.
3. Ladies and gentlemen, I have talked about Business Botswana’s achievements but I am sure you will agree with me that the work of Business Botswana is really done by the Secretariat whereas my role is just to provide the leadership and give strategic guidance with the assistance of the Board of Governance. I therefore want to give credit to the Acting Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Norman Moleele and his team at the Secretariat for diligently executing the mandate of Business Botswana with limited resources and giving me pride to be associated with this organisation.
4. Distinguished members, even though we have attained milestones, we could have achieved more, if our financial position was strong. This has attributed to amongst others;
5. With the competitive market, it is proofing difficult to retain staff
6. serving members effectively and efficiently. We plead with the businesses to subscribe to Business Botswana, as our efforts benefit all businesses *(including non-members)*
7. Nationwide visibility and improvement of BB image- It is our wish to host countrywide awareness campaigns to share the mandate of Business Botswana
8. To effectively support and develop the Small, Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
9. Refurbishment of the office
10. Ladies and gentlemen, we will continue to come up with ways to overcome these challenges, and the focus is to plea with yourselves *(members)* to affiliate with us and this will enable us to; Reassure yourselves that OUR organisation still lives and that WE are a part of it; To further, reinvigorate interest in BB and its activities; Refresh the organisation’s bouquet of training programmes by introducing in demand and sector based courses; and Renew the important role the private sector continues to play in the economic development.
11. Before I conclude, we recently held a successful National Business Conference (NBC), themed ***“Breaking to a High Income Botswana – the role of the Private sector in Charting the Path.”*** The support received was overwhelming and we are forever grateful of the unwavering support from members and other stakeholders.
12. Distinguished members, ladies and gentlemen, mine was just to welcome you. I invite you to get a full update of how your organisation fared in 2017 by reading through the two documents presented to you today; the Annual Report and the Strategic Plan 2018-2023 which is yet to be launched.
13. Let me once again thank you for coming and indeed for your attention. I would therefore take this opportunity to welcome to the podium our guest of Honour, BOTC CEO, Mr Mphoeng Tamasiga to unpack today’s theme *“Seizing growth and investment opportunities in expanding markets.”*