

**Republic of Botswana**

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**OFFICIAL OPENING REMARKS**

**BY**

**THE MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY**

**HON. VINCENT T. SERETSE**

**AT THE OCCASION OF INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION NETWORK (ICN) AGENCY WORKSHOP**

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**Time:** 0830 hours

**Date:** 10TH MARCH, 2016

**Venue:** PHAKALANE GOLF ESTATE, GABORONE

 

# Director of Ceremonies,

Chairperson and Members of ICN Agency Effectiveness Working Group,

Heads of Missions,

The Chairperson of the Competition Commission Dr Onkemetse Tshosa,

Members of Competition Commission,

CEO of Competition Authority Rre Thula Kaira and other Heads of Competition Authorities,

Heads of Government Ministries and Departments,

Heads of Parastatals and Captains of Industry,

Staff of the Competition Authority,

Members of the Press,

Distinguished Delegates,

Good morning.

1. It is my pleasure and honour to welcome you this morning, marking the official opening of the International Competition Network (ICN) workshop attended by participants and delegates from over 60 competition agencies around the world. To our distinguished delegates, Botswana “**Our Pride, Your Destination”** is a land surrounded country rich in tourist attraction places which one cannot regret to visit.
2. Ladies and Gentlemen, just a nutshell of the investment climate of Botswana, we have no exchange controls, duty free importation of machinery used in production, lowest corporate tax rate in the region (15% for manufacturing/financial services), 22% for all other activities and 25% on maximum personal income tax rate to name but few. On the Global Competitiveness report we are placed at position 71 out of 140 comparator countries and on the Doing Business rankings we are ranked position 72 from position 74.
3. Director of Ceremonies, I am delighted that the International Competition Network (ICN), which is an association of competition authorities in the world, has seen it fit to bring such an outstanding workshop to Botswana. I am informed that the key theme of the workshop is; **“How to make Competition Authorities more effective”**. I hope the deliberations for the two days will resonate well and live to the theme of the workshop.
4. Ladies and Gentlemen, having perused through the programme of today’s events, I have noted that there will be dedicated set of sessions and panel discussions which will give insights and also have the potential to contribute to the theory building in our competition policy and economic field. This diverse mix is good for learning and lifelong professional networking. I note that this workshop would delve into key areas that underpin the effectiveness of a competition agency such as ethics, prioritisation of operations, tools and procedures of investigations, human resources and knowledge management. I am hopeful that small and developing competition authorities will take advantage of this gathering to create useful networks and will assist in achieving their objectives.
5. Ladies and Gentlemen, as Government of Botswana, we are eager to see well-functioning public institutions. As such our competition agency should add value to our economic growth and development by effectively handling cases of anti-competition and proactively influencing laws, policies and conduct that affect fair competition in the market place. We sincerely believe that effective implementation of competition policy would assist to open business opportunities and create wealth for our country and contribute to the growth of our countries’ economy. My understanding of such workshops, as the most distinctive conduct in competition law being prone to error –making, will hopefully improve through your valuable inputs and interactions.
6. Director of Ceremonies, the Competition Policy is a key part of our national strategy to diversify and increase value chains and enhance consumer welfare in the country. Botswana adopted a comprehensive National Competition Policy in 2006, which was envisaged to be one of the dependable platforms to make our economy robust and competitive through effective market interventions.
7. The Competition Authority in Botswana was established in April 2011 and immediately engaged in widespread advocacy on the new law. This was followed by business premise searches or 'dawn raids' within a year of its establishment, of various suspected players in the medical aid and motor vehicle panel beating industries. Assessment of mergers and acquisitions has resulted in capital injection in the economy in excess of P1 billion since 2012, creating desirable local production and supply synergies with SMMEs. Thus continuing improving the business environment and customer satisfaction is very important. My Ministry is reviewing the Competition Act to provide for a more effective enforcement and adjudication process.
8. I wish to assure you that the Government of Botswana is desirous of ensuring that there is equally sound corporate governance, transparency and accountability in the management and operations of the competition agencies. For this reason, the Government recently signed a Shareholder Compact with our Competition Authority and Competition Commission to ensure that we have clear lines of engagement, responsibilities and expectations that are pragmatic and auditable. I reckon this is part of the agency effectiveness.
9. Ladies and Gentlemen, before I conclude, let me take this opportunity to extend my appreciation to the Chairperson of the Competition Commission and his board members for having answered to the call of the International Competition Network when the decision to bring this workshop to Gaborone was made. To all the distinguished delegates, I thank you for having graced this auspicious occasion.
10. Director of Ceremonies, Distinguished delegates, once again I welcome you and wishing all a fruitful deliberations for the two (2) days and a wonderful stay in the city of Gaborone. It is now my singular honor and privilege to declare the ICN workshop official opened.

**I THANK YOU!!!**