

Welcome Remarks
At the Opening Ceremony of the BDMA PITSO
Botswana an Emerging Diamond Centre: Diversification and
Opportunities

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Hon. Minister, Members of the Diplomatic Corp, CEO of DTC London,
Captains of the Industry, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning,

1. It is my singular pleasure to welcome you all to the Third Diamond Pitso (Town Hall Meeting) to be held in Gaborone. This year's Pitso as is customary is co-organised and hosted by the Government of Botswana through the Ministry of Minerals, Energy and Water Resources (MMEWR) and the Botswana Diamond Manufacturers' Association (BDMA).
2. The theme, "Botswana, An emerging Diamond Centre: Diversification and Opportunities" is potent and loaded. It is a celebration and salute of an emergent phenomenon in the history of the Diamond Industry, where a country in the South, has dared to challenge tradition and custom, by wisely exploiting the philosophy of leverage and legacy, to build and develop a sustainable downstream industry from its predominant mining and rough export advantage.
3. An economy, intensely seeking to diversify, has boldly sought to bring opportunities through its considerable wealth in **natural** rough diamonds (underscore **natural**), a commodity in great demand. We as members of the BDMA, as well as, I believe, our partners, the De Beers Group through the Diamond Trading Company, truly support these efforts.
4. The Chinese in their ancient and patient knowledge have observed that **"The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The next best time is NOW!"** Others may observe that this has been long in coming. True, but the

important thing for us is that it is happening now. As they say next door “**Ke Nako**”. **It is time.**

5. The key objective of this Potso therefore, is to underscore the very noble and commendable efforts of the Government of Botswana in diversifying its economy both within and away from diamonds specifically, and the mining industry in general. The relocation of the DTC International to Gaborone is a clear vote of confidence on the future of Botswana as an international diamond centre. Right there, an example of a long, enduring, fruitful and mutually beneficial partnership. It is happening NOW, and that is what is important.
6. Today I trust that we shall learn of progress made so far in the relocation, which no doubt is a daunting task in itself. I believe we will also have an opportunity to interact, network and exchange valuable information and ideas on how to diversify Botswana’s economy as the diamond industry and mutual economic opportunities for all stakeholders. To that effect we have I believe you will agree with me, a very strong panel of presenters and speakers who will share with us today. We will hear from the Hon. Minister of Minerals Energy and Water Resources Dr. PHK Kedikilwe, CEO of Diamond Trading Company, Ms Varda Shine, The Diamond Hub Coordinator Mr Jacob Thamage, The Chairman of the BDMA Mr. Mervin Lifshitz, and other stakeholders from BOCCIM, Transport and Communications, and HATAB.
7. Ladies and Gentlemen, my job is not to give a lengthy speech, but rather to give you a warm welcome. I trust that you all have received a copy of the programme of proceedings of today and that as much as possible we will use the time productively and judiciously. I appeal for your highest participation as this is meant to be an interactive event. I invite and encourage you to ask questions to all the speakers and presenters.

8. Finally, please allow me to wish you a productive and informative Pitso. You are once more warmly welcome. The Honorable Minister invites you all for lunch Ladies and gentlemen, at the conclusion of our proceedings here today. Thank you and enjoy the day!