**Welcome Remarks by Mr Martin Mokgware, Chief Executive, Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority (BOCRA) at Breakfast Meeting for Broadcasters held at Avani Hotel in Gaborone, on 26th September 2019**

Director of Ceremonies

Broadcasters

Distinguished Guests

BOCRA Management and staff

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

I have the pleasure and honour to welcome you to yet another consultative forum that offers us the opportunity to continue interrogating issues affecting the broadcasting sector. The Communications Regulatory Authority Act (CRA Act) mandates us, as BOCRA, to make regulatory decisions in an open, transparent and objective manner. To stay true to this mandate, we have prioritised “Stakeholder Consultation” as one of our Strategic Pillars. Today’s forum confirms our commitment to regulating the communications sector in close consultation with our key stakeholders.

The main subject of public discourse trending today is undoubtably national elections. BOCRA has done a fair amount of preparatory work for the elections already. You would recall the one-week training on Election coverage that we held a while back with the objective of facilitating you, broadcasters, to be better prepared for the duty of election coverage. It is common course that His Excellency the President Dr Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi has issued a writ of Elections. Therefore, as per our definition, we are in an Election Period and the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters During Elections is in force.

Director of Ceremonies, election period lends itself as perhaps the busiest period for the broadcast sector. Notwithstanding, the availability of variety of the communication mediums such as social media, print media, billboards, leaflets, telecommunication loudspeakers etc, broadcasting is still, without doubt, the most dominant medium for spreading political messages for obvious reasons. Broadcasting is interactive, instant, accessible, has wider reach and requires no specialised qualifications on the side of the public. You just call and say your views even when you are not sure of the topic under discussion. We therefore hold your contribution to the electoral process in high esteem.

I must applaud you for the amount of political coverage we have heard and seen so far. The media is awash with interviews, debates, candidate forums, news coverage, party-political advertising and party-political notices. This is exactly what the democratic process requires to be as meaningful as is desirable. We urge you, the broadcasters, to continue playing your role of informing the public adequately and encourage you to invite political entities to use your platforms to deliver their messages.

We have indicated in the previous forums that we will intensify our monitoring activities during this period. To this end, we have implemented our broadcasting monitoring system, the details of which you will get to hear later. We have also collaborated with our partners to ensure continuous monitoring of the broadcast election content. I would like to emphasise that the primary purpose for intensifying our monitoring activities is not to witch-hunt anyone for wrongdoing, but rather to enhance the quality of the broadcast services and bring them to standard comparable to international best practice.

We also want to use this morning’s forum to share with you the final draft of the Advertising Code of Conduct for Broadcasters which I believe you have had a chance to go through. The vacuum created by the lack of a central body that regulates advertising in Botswana, has prompted us to develop this Code to provide guidance to the sector. We believe that as we continue to license more players in the broadcast space, more advertising opportunities will emerge. I urge you to engage meaningfully on the Code to ensure that it creates conducive enabling environment for your business.

Director of Ceremonies, Ladies and Gentlemen, my task right now is to welcome you to this important forum. I took the opportunity to remind us of our important role during this critical season in the national affairs. Let me end my remarks here and wish you fruitful deliberations.

I thank you for your attention.