**Welcome speech by Mr Martin Mokgware, Chief Executive of Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority on the occasion of the World Radio Day 2018, 13 February 2018, Pylon Park, Airport Junction, Gaborone**

Director of Ceremonies

Hon. Onkokame Kitso Mokaila MP, Minister of Transport and Communications

Mr. Kabelo Ebineng, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Transport and Communications

Mr Geoff Ramsey, Coordinator of Government Information Services

Mboki Chilisa, Chairman of MISA Botswana and Members of your Board

Abram Motsokono, Ag. Director MISA Botswana

Station Managers of broadcasters and members of your crews

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning!

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you this morning as we commemorate the 2018 edition of the World Radio Day. In the past years, this day has been commemorated by different players in their own little corner, hence depriving it of the eminence it deserved. This year, BOCRA has worked with all concerned stakeholders to have one commemoration for greater impact. Going forward, I urge all of you to make the necessary preparations, including budgetary provisions to ensure that future commemorations of this day attain greater visibility and results.

The contribution of radio broadcasting to information dissemination, education and entertainment is immeasurable. It is for this reason that we gather here today to celebrate the impact of this powerful medium of communication. Radio is unique in that it gives just about everyone, regardless of their background, the opportunity to participate. Hence, I hold the view that everyone is a stakeholder to this amazing medium. Those of us who listen to respective radio stations are accustomed to hearing voices of certain individuals who never fail to participate in certain programmes. To those individuals I extend a special welcome.

As Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority (BOCRA), we regulate broadcasting to ensure there is availability, quality and diversity of services. Over and above these aspects, we also monitor the performance of broadcasters with respect to levels of investment, quantity, quality and standards of services. A day like this brings to us the emphasis of purpose of our existence. We trust that the various speakers will ably address the elements of this year’s theme.

As we commemorate this day, we should also pause as a sector, and reflect on the state of our development. Batswana in other parts of the country are awaiting arrival of commercial radio and even non-commercial radio. To this extent, as BOCRA we have embarked on a study to review the current status of radio broadcasting, assessing the opportunities that exist for radio and the constraints that impede the growth of radio broadcasting. At the end of this study, we would like to take informed and targeted actions to grow this sector. I can confirm to you that very soon, we will be coming to you for consultations with respect to our findings and the proposed way forward.

Technology is advancing rapidly, making it cheaper and efficient to roll out radio services. Some of you would know that most first world countries have launched Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB), which gives opportunities for broadcasting of many channels and other enhancements to the traditional radio broadcasting. We would like to encourage you to explore these technologies and leverage on the opportunities they offer to expand your service offering. As BOCRA we are indeed ready to listen to your requests and see how they can be accommodated within the existing frameworks in line with our mandate for providing a conducive environment for sector growth.

Let me take this opportunity to place emphasis on local content. It is important to realise that it is only through local content that we can directly measure the participation of our citizens in broadcasting. As BOCRA we have set minimum quotas for local content broadcasting. It is encouraged that broadcasters put in place concerted measures to exceed these to ensure that broadcast is relevant, entertaining and empowers citizens economically. Last year, BOCRA collaborated with relevant stakeholders to create a local content strategy and it is impressed upon everybody to play their part. All broadcasters, commercial and government owned should forge synergies with local content developers to ensure that radio is relevant to Batswana. Quality of your services, both signal distribution and sound quality should be your major priority and BOCRA will continuously monitor all the broadcasters within its purview to ensure compliance.

Director of Ceremonies, my task in your progamme today is to welcome all stakeholders and I have used this opportunity to share some few thoughts from the regulatory perspective. Allow me to end my assignment by once again extending a hearty and warm welcome to all of you and wish this commemoration all the success that God can grant.

I welcome you and thank you for your attention.