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**WELCOME REMARKS BY MR. MARTIN MOKGWARE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF BOCRA, AT THE UASF STAKEHOLDER BREAKFAST MEETING HELD AT THE TRAVEL LODGE GABORONE, ON 26 MARCH 2018.**

Director of Ceremonies

Members of the UASF Board of Trustees

Heads and Representatives of the UASF Levy Contributors

Fellow Members of Staff of the UASF Secretariat-BOCRA

Ladies and Gentlemen; good morning.

Distinguished guests and Fund partners, I am pleased to welcome you to the first gathering of the Universal Access and Service Fund (UASF) contributors and the Board of Trustees since the Fund was established in 2014. Today’s breakfast meeting is particularly a great honour for me personally as it also provides me with the opportunity to meet with major industry players under one roof since my appointment as Chief Executive of Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority (BOCRA) some months ago.

Director of Ceremonies, while this gathering is the first of its kind, I wish to stress the importance of stakeholder consultation, which by its nature ensures inclusive decision-making guided by contributions from different entities. The Fund regards consultation, collaboration and continuous engagement as key to achievement of its goals.

This meeting is for you stakeholders and the UASF Board of Trustees, and it marks the beginning of a closer and more active interaction between the two parties - the UASF and its valued partners, being yourselves. UASF acknowledges that this platform of interaction is long overdue.

The Fund is much more established now as evidenced by increased operations and activities. Projects have started and are ongoing even though most of them are yet to be completed. To this end, it is only appropriate to take the first of the many steps ahead to say to our partners that *‘we started the long journey together, developed the 3-year strategy together and we continue to receive your contributions and support. We want to ensure that we continue to walk in step all the way. We are here to ensure that we continue to walk in tandem and do not lose one another’.*

As a relatively young Fund, we are still far from reaching our goals, and we can only manage by seamless collaboration that will serve as a catalyst for promoting socio-economic well-being of our people.

Ladies and gentlemen, I assure you that following this ‘meet and greet’ session, the UASF will schedule regular interactions of this nature to apprise one another and share ideas on how best to go forward. Soon the 3-year strategy will be coming to an end, and we urge you to put together your thoughts for the new strategy. We urge you to start building blocks for the new pathway that we will chart together as partners.

Director of Ceremonies, ladies and gentlemen, mine was just to welcome you, but I overstepped my mandate a bit to amplify and reiterate that with you as partners, we will turn around our otherwise backward and not-so-affluent areas into places with equal access and opportunities brought about by accessible, affordable and available ICTs. *Let us continue walking together.*

Thank you for honouring our invitation, and once again, welcome to the meeting and appreciate where your Fund is at this point in time.

Enjoy the rest of the morning. I thank you for your attention.

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