

**Address by Mr Martin Mokgware, Chief Executive of Botswana Communications Regulatory authority (BOCRA) on the occasion of the official opening of the SADC Roaming Cost Model Forum, 27 June 2018, Travel Lodge, Gaborone.**

Director of Ceremonies

Dear Delegates from the SADC Region

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me welcome you all to Botswana and to the meeting between the Regulators and Mobile Network Operators regarding the development of the SADC Roaming Cost Model. BOCRA is honored to host you and would like to thank CRASA for the opportunity to host this critical meeting. I am aware that as regulators we have been meeting with our consultant, MARPIJ, since Monday and that the policymakers will join us from tomorrow. Welcome and feel at home, after all Botswana as the seat of SADC, is your second home.

I need to reiterate the commitment of the Government of Botswana and BOCRA to both the social and economic development of the SADC region. I am well aware that the reduction of roaming pricing in the region would allow for increased cross border trade for the benefit of all member states. It is in this regard that BOCRA commited to co-hosting the CRASA Roaming Task Team meetings with Mozambique.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Globalization makes regional integration a necessity particularly for us small economies. As developing nations, we cannot expect to compete seriously on a global stage as stand-alones. It was in recognition of this stark reality that the SADC ICT Ministers meeting of 21 November 2014 in Mangochi, Malawi, directed National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs), in the Region, to intervene and regulate both the wholesale and retail roaming tariffs over a three-years glide path. By then, the retail-roaming tariffs were to be regulated using the Roam Like at Home (RLAH) principle.

The process of driving SADC towards affordable roaming prices is a priority to every ICT Minister in the region. It is against this background that I believe that SADC Governments, regulators and mobile operators, as critical stakeholders and decision makers, are all committed to achieving the vision of affordable communication services in the region. It is the people in this room who will facilitate for SADC Citizens to afford communications roaming charges, whether on travel, or for trade or financial transactions. We are going to be part of that Vision. Our mutual responsibility and our greatest contribution is to develop this SADC Roaming Cost Model. It is this meeting that will, at last, deliver the greatest wish of our policymakers.

Director of Ceremonies, allow me to remind this Forum that Phase I of the SHAR involved Liberalisation, Transparency, Information and Data Collection. Credit is due to all the Mobile Network Operators for their support to the initiative by successfully implementing Phase I. Most operators have put in place measures to notify roaming customers of applicable charges whenever roaming is activated. The information is also made available on the MNO websites**.** This phase also included an increase in the roaming footprint especially for the prepaid customers. To these goals, the region has achieved significant success.

Regarding the second phase of the project, the region introduced price regulation to roaming. Unfortunately, implementation of this phase has been very slow. The region managed, under the Roam Like at Home notion, to reciprocally reduce roaming price by 33% and above in at least eight SADC Member States. However, in considering the concerns of our mobile operators regarding the risk of implementation of the Year 2 and 3 Glide path that could result in below cost call scenarios, market distortion (arbitrage) and SIM boxing, the region agreed to develop a Cost model under **Phase III** of the project. The cost model is expected to assist with understanding the cost of provision of roaming services in the region and in the end ensure that our mobile service providers do provide the services at above cost.

I will encourage you to use this opportunity to engage the consultant to ensure that the cost model is robust and takes into account all the cost elements for roaming.

It is my sincere believe that this Forum will meet your expectations and wish all fruitful deliberations. It will be remise of me to conclude these remarks without reminding you of how eagerly our ICT Ministers are waiting for conclusion of this project and for it to start delivering positive outcomes. Its success is dependent upon all of us here playing our part to ensure the realization of an integrated region with common interests. Our cooperation is very critical to the continued success of this exercise. I look forward to report, next week, to my principals attesting to the success of this meeting.

I thank you for your attention. Have a fruitful day.