**Welcome speech by Mr Martin Mokgware- BOCRA Chief Executive, at the World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC 19) Preparatory Meeting held on the 10th of July 2018; Spectrum House**

* Director of Ceremonies
* Representatives of the Ministry of Transport and Communications
* Industry Stakeholders
* Security Agencies here present
* Distinguished Guests
* Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great honour that I extend warm greetings to you all this morning as we mark the official opening of the World Radiocommunication Conference 2019 (WRC-19) national preparatory meeting for Botswana. I do sincerely hope that this venue will offer the much-needed warmth given the spate of cold temperatures that we have experienced over the past few days. More importantly, I trust that the venue will offer the conducive working environment necessary for frank discussions on the critical subject of radiocommunication.

Director of Ceremonies, the WRC brings together the global communications industry every four years to review and, if necessary, revise the Radio Regulations that are used to govern the use of radio frequency spectrum. I cannot overemphasise the importance of the Radio Regulations as an international treaty that governs the use of Radio Frequency Spectrum. Needless to mention that Botswana is a signatory.

It is generally accepted that communications infrastructure and services are indispensable ingredients for socio-economic and cultural development. Communications facilities and services are not just a consequence of economic growth, but a critical catalyst for the overall development process.

I am conscious that I am speaking to the subject matter experts but allow me to restate a few things concerning the World Radiocommunication Conference. The terms of reference of the WRC as provided for under the constitution of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) are to:

* Change Radio Regulations and any associated frequency plans;
* Address any radiocommunication matters that have worldwide effects;
* Instruct the Radio Regulations Board and the Radiocommunication Bureau, and review their activities; and
* Decide what areas the Radiocommunication Assembly and its study groups should look at in preparation for future WRCs.

I mention these terms of reference to remind you of the importance of the process we are gathered for this morning. As experts in the field, you know better than I do, the national, regional and international debates around competing interests for the finite resource we call Spectrum. You, the industry, are in a better position to articulate our needs for spectrum as a country and ensure that those needs are considered at WRC level where binding international decisions are made.

As we gather to deliberate on our national position, it is important that all stakeholders including the policy maker, the regulator and industry players, engage to craft a position that will advance our national agenda, protect our investments, and stimulate Sustainable Economic Development in line with our Vision 2036 ideals.

It is generally believed that innovative ideas follow young populations. In line with this belief, Africa is considered one of the fastest growing markets for communications services. As a continent, Botswana included, we have missed out on many international development opportunities that have lifted and defined nations. As Africa is targeted as the next growth for communications services, we should not just be takers of technologies developed elsewhere, but should aim to develop and take on the world with our own technologies.

In our discussion of spectrum issues, we should think outside the box and seek to secure spectrum for our own needs. We have young and educated minds that need the platform to take on the world. For us to positively influence the decisions made at the WRC, national preparation such as this, one should be the foundation upon which to anchor our dreams. We should take to the region, a solid position that espouses our aspirations as a nation.

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to highlight that the communications industry worldwide has experienced tremendous growth over the past ten years. The number of mobile subscribers is estimated 4.5 billion. As the world embraces Internet of Things, Machine to Machine communications and the 4th Industrial revolution, it is critical that we plan and manage the radio frequency spectrum better for all these innovations to be sustainable.

Finally, let me conclude my welcome remarks by reiterating that your contribution to this Forum will be highly appreciated.

I thank you for the courtesy of your kind attention

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