

ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER FOR BASIC EDUCATION

HONOURABLE BAGALATIA ARONE

**AT THE 13TH CONFERENCE OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICA
ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT (SAAEA)**

20TH MAY, 2019

AT

**GABORONE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE
(GICC), GABORONE, BOTSWANA**

HONOURABLE MINISTERS

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MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS HERE PRESENT

YOUR WORSHIP THE MAYOR OF GABORONE

PERMANENT SECRETARY IN THE MINISTRY OF BASIC
EDUCATION AND YOUR DEPUTIES

BOARD CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOTSWANA EXAMINATIONS
COUNCIL AND BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

CHAIRMAN OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICA ASSOCIATION OF
EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

OTHER PERMANENT SECRETARIES HERE PRESENT

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE BOTSWANA EXAMINATIONS
COUNCIL

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS OF EXAMINATION BOARDS OF
SOUTHERN AFRICA

OTHER CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS HERE PRESENT

HEADS OF GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS HERE PRESENT

MANAGEMENT OF THE BOTSWANA EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS AND SPONSORS OF THE
CONFERENCE

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF THE MEDIA

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

1. Allow me to express my deepest gratitude to the organisers of this conference and indeed the members of the Southern Africa Association of Educational Assessment (SAAEA) for the invitation to officiate at this august research conference. International gatherings like this one provide a rare opportunity for key players in the education sector to pause, reflect, and consciously ponder on educational issues and challenges from different perspectives. They also allow conference participants to interact freely, as they attempt to understand how different countries, respond to the fast paced dynamics in education. From these conferences participants learn from one another how countries leverage on their strengths, address their weaknesses, harness opportunities and manage threats that come their way as they implement their respective mandates. You cannot imagine how delighted we are as a country to have our own Botswana Examinations Council host this year's conference.

It is our hope that the large representation of the different sectors of our education system is a reflection of the benefit we will derive as a country and also as a region.

2. Director of Ceremonies, My Ministry has been kept well informed about this conference. In fact, Botswana Examinations Council, as the agency of the Ministry of Basic Education, did a fantastic job of arranging weekly briefings for the Minister and willingly included some of our officers in the Local Organising Committee. His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Botswana, Dr. Mokgweetsi Eric Masisi also developed a keen interest in this conference and has also been regularly briefed on the preparations. As an educationist himself, he has offered counsel and suggestions throughout the preparations for this conference. The subject of Educational Assessment is very close to his heart. His Excellency wishes you a very successful conference, not only in terms of the number of participants and papers presented, but also in terms of practical and implementable solutions proposed for Botswana and the region as a whole. In addition, he will also want you to enjoy Botswana, its people and culture, and to come back to the country.

Interestingly, the Minister and the Assistant Minister of Basic Education, are also educationists and former teachers. It is therefore not surprising that there has been so much interest in this conference at the Ministry of Basic Education, government and even highest office in the land.

3. Through the briefings provided by the BEC, I was able to note that participants to the conference were coming from the SADC region and largely from the SAAEA member institutions. I learnt further that other experts such as curriculum developers, researchers, assessors and teachers were invited and some are here today. I was particularly pleased to learn also that there would be participants from other parts of Africa and the commonwealth. This composition provides a very rich environment for a healthy dialogue on pertinent and complex issues of assessment and their relationship to curricula and its delivery. Bringing such a diverse group of experts to one place is highly commendable and the BEC and SAAEA ought to be congratulated. I know that you have already been welcomed, but let me once again on behalf of His Excellency the President and indeed on my own behalf, welcome you to

Botswana. Enjoy your short stay in this small but bustling city.

4. Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, "Quality Assessment in an Era of Educational Reforms" is not only timely, but has obvious relevance to us as a country, region, continent and indeed the world over. Transforming into knowledge-based societies, which many of our countries aspire for, depends to a very large extent on the capacity of our education systems to deliver learners equipped with 21st century skills. The existence of such skills can only be verified through effective assessment. Assessment should also be viewed as a tool of accountability of any education system to the nation. It is through effective assessment that the quality of an education system can be accurately measured and established. Last but not least, feedback obtained through assessment can be used for the purpose of quality improvement. It is only a system that creates a judicious balance between curriculum, learning and assessment that can lead to positive national transformation. It is my hope that as you deliberate on these complex issues over the next

three days, you come up with solutions and suggestions that we may implement to improve our education systems.

5. Director of Ceremonies, as I stated earlier in my address, we consider assessment to be an integral part of the quality agenda of any educational system. It is therefore part of a broad strategy to achieve especially the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 that seeks to ensure “inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. At continental level, assessment forms part of the Africa Agenda 2063 - the “Africa we Want”, whose Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) sets out to establish a “qualitative system of education and training to provide the African continent with efficient human resources adapted to African core values...” Closer home and fitting very neatly into the above global and continental framework is the SADC Protocol on Education and Training that promotes cooperation among member states to ensure that policies and programmes that support equitable and quality education are harmonised and standardised. Given all these, SAAEA could not have chosen a more appropriate conference theme.

6. Director of Ceremonies, I could go on and on about how relevant this Conference theme and its sub-themes are to the education agenda. I am however fully aware that educationists have other interests. In fact in the process of developing a wholesome human being out of a child, we know that sport, learning about nature, and historical sightseeing are important; they refresh the mind and prepare it for learning more and more. I am therefore aware that at the end of the day when all that is education and assessment has been said and done, you would want to unwind and see if Gaborone can offer anything more. Better still, maybe at the end the Conference you may want to widen your Botswana experience beyond education. If you are one such individual, let me assure you that Gaborone, and indeed Botswana has a lot to offer. Botswana Tourism Organisation is ready to guide you to experience Botswana in many other ways.

7. Director of Ceremonies, I am also informed that our local and international partners have generously contributed to the cost of running this conference. I wish, on behalf of the Botswana Examinations Council, indeed SAAEA and indeed

the Ministry of Basic Education, to express our sincere gratitude to all of you for the support.

8. Ladies and Gentlemen enjoy the Conference, and leave Gaborone with an unforgettable experience of the country.

9. Director of Ceremonies, with those remarks, it now by distinct pleasure and privilege to officially declare the 13th SAAEA Conference opened. I wish you successful deliberations over the next few days.

Pula!! Pula!!