



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

**SPEECH**

**BY**

**HIS HONOUR**

**THE VICE PRESIDENT**

**LT. GEN. MOMPATI S. MERAFHE, MP**

**AT THE LAUNCH OF CALL FOR NOMINATIONS  
FOR THE 2010 DRIVERS OF CHANGE AWARDS  
GABORONE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION  
CENTRE**

**GABORONE, BOTSWANA**

**30 MARCH, 2010**

Your Excellencies, Heads of Mission and Representatives of Regional and International Organisations;

Representatives of Civil Society Organizations;

Representatives of the Business Community;

Executive Director of the Southern Africa Trust;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. It is a great pleasure and privilege for me to have been invited to perform the official launch of "call for nominations for 2010 Drivers of Change awards".
2. I wish to extend a very warm welcome to all of you present this evening.
3. To those coming from other parts of our region, I hope you have enjoyed the warmth and generous hospitality of our people and I dare say, with all the humility at my command, the beautiful city of Gaborone
4. Before I go any further, allow me to express my profound gratitude to the Southern Africa Trust and *Mail & Guardian* newspaper for giving me this opportunity to officially launch the call for nominations for the 2010 Drivers of Change Awards.
5. I am very happy to be doing this, because in their fifth year, the Drivers of Change Awards have become the premier annual regional awards for innovative and effective initiatives in anti-poverty work in Southern Africa.
6. I have been informed that the Drivers of Change Awards are presented in partnership with the *Mail & Guardian's* Investing in the Future Awards.
7. This partnership is a sterling example of how two organisations can successfully come together with a common purpose of raising voices of the poor in public policy development.
8. I am sure that many of you are familiar with these awards.

9. These are not Hollywood-type awards that we watch on television for best actor or best actress that normally go to well known celebrities.
10. Instead, the Drivers of Change Awards recognize the less known but outstanding civil society groups, businesses, government agencies and individuals in Southern Africa who promote the development and implementation of innovative public policies.
11. They also promote strategies that work to make a real difference in the lives of the most vulnerable people in our region.
12. It is regrettable to note that, up to now Botswana has not submitted any nominations for these awards.
13. This is surprising because Botswana has done a lot to eradicate poverty.

Ladies and gentlemen,

14. As a region, we should therefore, redouble our efforts together with our strategic partners in coming up with programmes that are aimed at reducing poverty.
15. In this regard, I am pleased to inform you that my government has come up with intervention strategies to eradicate poverty.
16. Note I say **eradicate** poverty not **reduce** it, because as a government, we believe that no amount of poverty is tolerable.
17. I am mindful of the fact that we are still far from reaching the Millennium Development Goals as far as fighting poverty is concerned but we need to work hard in order to improve the quality of life of our people.
18. With 100 million people in our region living in abject poverty, there is every moral, social, economic, and political imperative for us to take action.
19. As for food insecurity, our actions should pay more substantive focus on subsistence farmers who need government assistance the most.

20. We need to invest more in subsistence farming as it usually results in poverty reduction and economic growth.
21. Even though agricultural production is central to the development of our region, it has not yet achieved the levels of production necessary to ensure food security for some households.
22. However our situation is not all doom and gloom as we have witnessed some encouraging signs in the region.
23. For example, we have seen subsidy programmes work in other countries, such as Malawi, to transform the food security situation.
24. I am very happy that the President of Malawi, Dr Bingu wa Mutharika, received the 2009 Drivers of Change Award in the government category for his excellent achievements in ensuring food security in his country.

Director of Ceremonies,

25. It is encouraging to learn that the Southern Africa Trust, in cooperation with the SADC secretariat, is doing excellent work to create vibrant platforms for inclusive dialogue that allow civil society that represent the poor to participate in regional poverty focused policy development.
26. Poverty is such a complex issue that no single agent or approach can combat it.
27. That is why we need multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approaches, including strong partnerships between governments, businesses, and civic organisations.
28. I recall a recent meeting I had with a team from Southern Africa Trust to discuss the newly launched Business for Development (B4D) Pathfinder
29. Initiatives such as this one should be encouraged and supported as they embrace inclusive business as a key strategy to overcome poverty.

Director of Ceremonies,

30. The Drivers of Change Awards are one way to recognize and profile excellent examples of how businesses can maximise both their profits and the social benefits of their core business.
31. So I encourage businesses that are doing such innovative projects to be nominated for the Drivers of Change Awards.
32. In this way, all the social partners in our region from the public, private, and civic sectors will begin to change the way that we do things for a better future.
33. With these few remarks, I am pleased to declare nominations for the 2010 Drivers of Change Awards officially opened.

I thank you for your attention.