Republic of Botswana

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY SPEECH FOR HEAD 2000 FOR BOTH RECURRENT AND DEVELOPMENT BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2026/2027

PRESENTED BY
HONOURABLE WYNTER BOIPUSO MMOLOTSI, MP
MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM

9th March 2026

A. INTRODUCTION

1. **Mr. Chairman**, I have the honour of laying before this Honourable House the Recurrent and Development Budget for the Ministry of Environment and Tourism for the 2026/2027 Financial Year.

2. Over the past year, the Ministry has continued to advance Botswana's vision of sustainable development by strengthening environmental stewardship and enhancing the competitiveness of our tourism sector. Our efforts have focused on protecting ecosystems, promoting responsible resource use, and positioning tourism as a driver of inclusive growth and employment creation. These initiatives are carried out through a coordinated framework that is delivered through the Ministry departments, partners, and our parastatal Botswana Tourism Organisation.

3. In presenting this budget proposal, I will provide an overview of Ministry's performance and notable achievements during the 2025/2026 Financial Year, with emphasis on programmes and projects that safeguard the environment and expand opportunities in tourism. I will also draw attention to key challenges that limited full delivery of our objectives and outline how this budget seeks to address these bottlenecks in the year ahead.

B. 2025/2026 BUDGET PERFORMANCE

4. **Mr. Chairman,** the Ministry's recurrent budget for the 2025/2026 financial year was approved at **Nine Hundred and Fifty-Six Million, Six Hundred and Ninety-One Thousand, Seven Hundred and Forty Pula** (BWP 956,691,740), while the development budget stood at **Three Hundred and**

Fifty-One Million, Six Hundred and Sixty-Eight Thousand, Two Hundred and Eighty Pula (BWP 351,668,280), earmarked for the implementation of twenty-four (24) projects.

5. As at 28th February 2026, the total recurrent expenditure stood at **Seven Hundred and Forty-Six Million, Three Hundred and Eighty-One Thousand, One Hundred and Thirty-Nine Pula (BWP 746,381,139),** indicative of a **78 percent** utilisation of the budget. The bulk of this expenditure was directed towards personnel emoluments (at BWP 481, 724, 470), compensation for damages caused by wildlife (at BWP 21,340,679) and the Botswana Tourism Organisation (BTO) subvention (at BWP 68,362,650.00), as well as both internal and external travel.

6. **Mr. Chairman,** by the same date, development expenditure amounted to **Two hundred and Forty Million, Four Hundred and Ten Thousand, Seven Hundred and Three Pula** (BWP240,410,703) reflecting a **68 percent** utilization rate. The underperformance was largely attributed to procurement delays, deferral and suspension of some projects due to financial constraints experienced in the current financial year.

7. **Mr. Chairman,** the total revenue collected as at the end of February 2026 amounted to **One Hundred and Sixty-One Million, Five Hundred and Ninety-Nine Thousand, Three Hundred and Seventy-Six Pula** (BWP171,599,376) or **99 percent** of the estimated collection. Other revenue collected under the three special funds amounts to Four Hundred and Eight **Million, Two Hundred Thousand, Three Hundred and Fifty-Five Pula** (BWP408,200,355). This was collected from the plastic levy,

royalties from concessions, special elephant hunting quotas, export of wildlife trophies and levies collected by the tourism industry.

C. ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION

Forest and Range Resources Management

8. **Mr. Chairman,** Agroforestry remains a cornerstone of our afforestation and reforestation efforts, strengthening food security and community livelihoods. Through the Agroforestry Strategy, agroforestry projects have been established in Kisa, Kuke, Mmathubudukwane, Matsiloje, Mabule, and Mogobane, including initiatives tailored for persons with disabilities. Agroforestry projects were also established around Gaborone City, with 110 fruit trees planted across Block 8, Block 10, Notwane, Government premises and Village wards.

9. Through the Wealth Creation Programme, the Ministry continues to support income-generating activities such as backyard nurseries, landscaping, fire-beater manufacturing, Phane harvesting, and thatching grass collection. In 2024/25, these projects generated **Five Hundred and Seventy-Two Thousand, Two Hundred and Twenty-Three Pula** (BWP 572,233), while in 2025/26 revenue stands at **Five Hundred and Twenty-Seven Thousand, Five Hundred and Eighteen Pula** (BWP 527,518). Notably, self-funded backyard nurseries exceeded their target, generating **One Million, Two Hundred and Ninety-Seven Thousand, One Hundred and Fifty-Two Pula** (BWP 1,297,152) in 2024/25. In the current financial year, revenue stands at **Six Hundred and Sixty-Six Thousand, Five Hundred and Thirty Pula** (BWP 666,530). These figures demonstrate the

viability of tree-based livelihoods, despite challenges posed by market fluctuations and restrictions on travel which limited extension services.

National Tree Planting Programme

10. The National Tree Planting Programme **Mr. Chairman** seeks to reverse indiscriminate tree cutting and mitigate against the effects of climate change. As at January 2026, **Ninety-One Thousand, One Hundred and Thirty-three (91,133)** trees were planted in 2025/26 against a target of **One Hundred and Twenty-Four Thousand, Five Hundred (124,500).** The Ministry will continuously forge partnerships to upscale the programme with the aim to curb the effects of climate change in the country.

Management of Alien Invasive Species

11. **Mr. Chairman,** the Ministry continues the implementation of the Integrated Prosopis Management Strategy to eradicate invasive Prosopis (mesquite) in Boteti, Northwest, Kweneng, and Mabutsane Districts. As at December 2025, **6,122 hectares** has been cleared in collaboration with District Councils through the Ikageng Programme. Furthermore, in partnership with the University of Botswana, a national survey of Prosopis species is underway in Kgalagadi District and is scheduled for completion by March 2026.

12. The implementation of the National Land Degradation Assessment Monitoring System Project, which commenced in September 2020 and funded jointly by the Government and the Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), was successfully

completed in December 2025. Through this project, a Geographic Information System (GIS) laboratory was built and a Land Restoration Strategy was developed, enabling Botswana to monitor degradation trends and guide restoration measures.

Management of Wildland Fires

13. **Mr. Chairman,** protection of forest and rangeland resources from wildland fires remains a priority. In 2024/25, there were **Two Thousand and Eighty-Nine** (2,089) fire incidents which decreased to **Seven Hundred and Seventy-Four** (774) incidents in 2025/26. The Ministry will continue to implement wildland fire management strategy through prescribed burning to reduce fuel load, intensified public education, use of technology such as Wild Land Fire Management Systems and Fire Danger Index as well as deployment of seasonal fire teams, supported by Ikageng Public Works Programme workers.

Utilization of Veldt Products

14. **Mr. Chairman,** the Ministry continues to ensure sustainable harvesting and utilisation of forest products through the issuance of veld products permits. During the 2025/2026 financial year, by January 2026, **Ten Thousand, One Hundred and Seventy-Four** (10,174) permits had been issued compared to **Three Thousand, Eight Hundred and Seventy-Four** (3,874) in January 2025, reflecting growing demand. Revenue from forest products reached **Ninety-Seven Million, Five Hundred and Thirty Thousand, Nine Hundred Pula** (BWP 97,530,900) in January 2026 compared to

Eleven Million, Two Hundred and Ninety-One Thousand, and Sixty-One Pula (BWP 11,291,061) generated in January 2025.

15. Challenges in the sustainable utilisation of forest resources in Botswana still persist, these include illegal harvesting, influx of foreigners at sites, competing land uses as harvesters usually camp in pastoral areas, and increased exportation of raw forest resources like Phane. To counter this **Mr. Chairman**, the Ministry conducts patrols and spot checks in collaboration with law enforcement agencies.

Environmental Monitoring

16. **Mr. Chairman,** to safeguard clean and safe environments, the Ministry has strengthened monitoring systems. Automated water quality stations in the Limpopo River Basin provide real-time data, while upcoming maintenance of stations in the Okavango and Chobe Rivers, scheduled for the beginning of the financial year will ensure monitoring continuity and to inform decision making.

17. The Air Quality Monitoring Network Communication System was successfully installed in May 2025 in Gaborone at the Department of Environmental Protection Head Quarters. The project cost **Five Million, One Hundred and Thirty-One Thousand, Three Hundred and Thirty-Eight Pula** (BWP5,131,338), to harmonise existing stations and enable real-time data collection. While financial constraints during the reporting period delayed the establishment of additional monitoring stations, I am pleased to assure the House that these installations will be undertaken in the forthcoming financial year, extending coverage in Gaborone, Lobatse,

Tlokweng, Francistown, Kasane, and Selibe-Phikwe. Despite these temporary setbacks, I am encouraged to report that Botswana's air quality remains generally good—an outcome that reflects both the resilience of our current monitoring infrastructure and the effectiveness of our environmental safeguards.

18. **Mr. Chairman,** the Ministry through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded initiative, is implementing a Cross Cutting Capacity Development Project in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) through which the State of Environment & Outlook Report (SOER) was developed (ed. 2025). The report provides a credible, evidence-based foundation for national planning. The Report evaluates how Botswana is faring in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals and relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements, while assessing key thematic areas including biodiversity, climate change, waste management, water resources and environmental governance.

19. The SOER and its documentary were launched on the 4th November 2025 and 28th January 2026 in Gaborone to communicate key findings, raise awareness and visibility of environmental issues, support evidence-based decision-making and, create a long-term communication and advocacy tool.

20. **Mr. Chairman,** the Ministry is in the processes of mobilising funding to the tune of **Four Million, Five Hundred and Forty-Three Thousand, Eight Hundred and Forty-Eight US Dollars** (**USD 4,543,848)** from the Global Environment Facility under GEF-8 to undertake a project intended to restore the ecosystem integrity in the Bobirwa-Tswapong region to sustain

livelihoods and effectively respond to climate change, human-wildlife conflict and biodiversity management requirements. In addition, Botswana successfully hosted the Second Global Environment Facility Ninth Replenishment meeting in Kasane in October 2025 during which policy and programming directions for GEF-9 were discussed.

21. From the 2nd -5th of November 2025, Botswana in conjunction with the African Union Commission hosted the First Africa Biodiversity Summit which brought together **1,194** delegates consisting of African political leadership, international cooperating partners, philanthropists, communities, civil society, academia and the media to deliberate on a united and sustained response to the challenge of biodiversity loss. The main outcome of the summit was the establishment of a dedicated financial mechanism for Africa's biodiversity which is aimed at bridging the gap between conservation and economic development.

Weather and Climate

22. **Mr. Chairman,** collaboration with regional and international partners continues to strengthen our technical capacity. Through the Southern African Science Service Centre for Climate Change and Adaptive Land Management (SASSCAL), the meteorological observational network was upgraded in April 2025, significantly improving the accuracy and reliability of weather and climate information.

23. **Mr. Chairman,** the World Bank is supporting the Ministry with an amount of **USD 250,000** for developing a National Carbon Market Framework to be completed in June 2026. The Framework will assist in harnessing the value

of our forests, grasslands, and wetlands to position Botswana as a credible participant in the global carbon economy. The Global Centre for Climate Mobility assisted the Ministry with funds amounting to **USD 250,000** to develop the National Climate Mobility Report which was completed in June 2025. The report serves as a guide to Botswana's adaptation and development efforts, prioritising climate literacy, establishment of resilience hubs, strengthening of early warning systems, and reinforcement of social protection systems for vulnerable populations.

24. **Mr. Chairman,** with support from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Botswana continues to implement initiatives aimed at reducing the national consumption of ozone-depleting substances while strengthening the regulatory framework governing their control. Four key projects are under implementation and these are: The Institutional Strengthening Project, the Kigali Implementation Plan Preparatory Project, the Hydro-Chloro-Fluoro-Carbon (HCFC) Phase-Out Management Plan (Stage II), and the Kigali Implementation Plan technical preparations. These initiatives which were implemented throughout the 2025/2026 financial year were funded at **Three Hundred and Seventy-Five Thousand, and Eighty-Five US Dollars (USD 375,085),** and covers advanced enforcement strategies, stakeholder engagement, technician training, procurement of Refrigeration and Air Conditioning training equipment and awareness campaigns at Jwaneng, Orapa and Morupule mines.

Wildlife Resource Management

25. **Mr. Chairman,** Botswana continues to stand as a global leader in wildlife conservation, anchored by strong government commitment, sound policies, active community involvement, and strategic partnerships. In 2025, hunting quotas generated **Sixty-Seven Million, Two Hundred and Seventy-Nine Thousand, Six Hundred and Sixty-Six Pula (BWP 67,279,666)** for local communities, representing a **fifty-seven** (57) **percent** increase from 2024 which stood at **Forty-Two Million, Eight Hundred and Sixty-Three Thousand, Four Hundred and Twenty-Three Pula** (BWP 42, 863,423). This remarkable growth was largely driven by a sustainable increase in hunting quotas. The growth also reflects the tangible economic benefits that sustainable wildlife management delivers to our people, while reinforcing Botswana's reputation for balancing conservation with community empowerment.

26. **Mr. Chairman,** Human-wildlife conflict continues to challenge livelihoods, though cases have declined from **Six Thousand, Three Hundred and Twenty-Five** (6,325) in 2024 to **Six Thousand, One Hundred and Fifty-Five** (6,155) in 2025. Compensation payments rose from **Twenty-Three Million, Eight Hundred and Ninety-Two Thousand, One Hundred and Fifteen Pula** (BWP23,892,115) in 2024 to **Twenty-Eight Million, Six Hundred and Sixty-Five Thousand Pula** (BWP 28,665,000) in 2025, partly due to backlogs of unpaid cases in 2024. To mitigate these conflicts and safeguard communities, the Ministry has advanced key several measures such as the completion of a 140-kilometre non-lethal electric fence along the

southern boundary of the **Makgadikgadi/Nxai Pan National Park; the ongoing preventative** maintenance of game-proof fences nationwide; and the implementation of the National Human-Wildlife Conflict Strategy and Action Plan (2025–2030).

27. **Mr. Chairman,** the Ministry in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme under the Biodiversity Finance Initiative (UNDP–BIOFIN), has developed a Resource Mobilisation Strategy and Partnership Plan for Protected Areas at a cost of **USD 100,000.** This strategy, launched in Kasane in October 2025 on the sideline of the GEF 9 replenishment meeting, is designed to enhance private sector participation in the financing of protected areas.

28. Furthermore, to modernize visitor services and improve operational efficiency across our Protected Areas, with the support of the UNDP–BIOFIN Project, worth **USD 200,000,** the Ministry is developing an online booking, payment, and revenue collection system which is currently at prototype stage. Once fully operational, this system will deliver a seamless and transparent experience for visitors, significantly reducing revenue leakages and minimizing cash handling, thereby reinforcing both accountability and sustainability in the management of our protected areas.

29. **Mr. Chairman,** through the Trans Frontier Conservation Area programme, Botswana has been allocated **Two Million, Five Hundred Thousand Euros (Euro 2.5 million)** by the European Union for the development of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (KTP) which is a shared conservation area with the Republic of South Africa. The funds will be used to maintain the

fence, infrastructure, provide potable water and for wildlife and implement sustainable livelihoods plans for the communities living adjacent to Park. The project is anticipated to commence by end of March 2026 and is expected to last three years.

30. Furthermore, funding of **Six Hundred and Fifty Thousand Euros** (EUR 650,000) from the Federal Republic of Germany (Tranche 2 of COVID-19 relief financing) will support SMME development in the Okavango District, commencing by end of March 2026. The initiative will facilitate value chain development in the wildlife-based economy, with the critical impact of creating sustainable jobs and diversified income opportunities for local communities through stronger linkages between conservation and SMMEs, thereby driving inclusive economic growth.

31. **Mr. Chairman,** in an effort to improve the welfare of wildlife officers, the Ministry has prioritised the refurbishment and maintenance of facilities in protected areas at an estimated budget of **Twenty-Six Million Pula** (BWP26,000,000). The process, which involves renovating both residential and workspaces, providing solar systems and internet services is ongoing to cover completion of works in Old Xade, Matswere and Khutse Gates.

32. **Mr. Chairman**, the process of re-arming of the Anti-poaching Unit has stalled due to budgetary constraints. As indicated in my 2025 Committee of Supply submission, strengthening and rearming of the Unit would require substantial resources. The project has therefore been prioritised to commence in the 2026/2027 financial year. The envisaged impact is to

capacitate anti-poaching personnel to effectively protect wildlife resources against armed poachers.

Research and Development

33. **Mr. Chairman**, the Ministry continues to play a vital role in regulating and facilitating research and wildlife filming activities across our protected areas, wildlife management zones, forest reserves, cultural heritage sites, and national monuments. As at January 2026, **105** out of **218** research applications and **43** out of **98** filming permits were approved. These permits are more than administrative instruments; they enable scientific inquiry, promote conservation, filming and showcase Botswana's cultural and natural heritage to the world, while also contributing to the national economy.

D. TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

34. **Mr. Chairman,** tourism remains one of Botswana's most strategic sectors central to our diversification agenda and a vital pillar of inclusive growth. It is a sector that not only showcases our pristine wilderness and cultural heritage to the world, but also creates jobs, generates foreign exchange, and uplifts communities.

35. The Ministry continues to implement the National Tourism Strategy and its 10-year Master Plan for 2023 to 2033. The strategy approach is built on a spatial planning framework of eight Tourism Development Areas (TDAs) and is based on four pillars being; Improving the Enabling Environment; Strengthening Destination Marketing and Branding; Investment in Product Development and Diversification, and; Strengthening Infrastructure and

Support Services. The Ministry in partnership with all stakeholders will intensify the roll out of the NTSMP with the aim to grow the tourism sector.

Product Diversification and Citizen Participation

36. **Mr. Chairman,** as part of diversifying Botswana's tourism product and reducing its reliance on the luxury wildlife market, **the City Tourism Initiative** was launched in Gaborone on the fourth September 2025 and in Francistown on the 24th January 2026. Through this initiative the economic potential of our cities will be unleashed as our cities have a story to tell, showcase our culture to be experienced by both domestic and international tourists. The initiative is further expected to increase tourist visits to our heritage, monuments and attractions that offer lifestyle and urban experience.

37. As government promotes private sector led economy, we implore stakeholders to partner with government to develop and package our urban experiences alongside the heritage and cultural products. Building on this momentum, plans are underway to extend City Tourism initiative to Maun, Kasane, Lobatse, and Selebi Phikwe during the 2026/27 financial year, ensuring that every urban center contributes meaningfully to diversification, employment creation, and improved livelihoods.

38. **Mr. Chairman**, in fulfilment of citizen inclusion in the tourism sector, the Ministry continues to strive to make tourism investment land available in Chobe, Gaborone and Okavango Districts. In Chobe, the development of land parcels under the Kasane/Kazungula Redevelopment Project (KKRP) will introduce new hotels and recreational facilities, expand room and space

capacity while stimulating the local economy of Kasane and enhancing the Chobe tourism offering. In Gaborone, the Block 7 Tourism Precinct presents an opportunity to integrate urban regeneration with tourism in our capital city, creating vibrant mixed-use spaces that combine hospitality, retail, cultural attractions, and heritage.

39. That notwithstanding, in the Okavango District, the Ministry has completed the Mohembo Bridge Infill Tourism Layout. In the current financial year, the Ministry completed an investment feasibility study for the six (6) Priority tourism sites which confirmed that the sites could be financially viable, releasing **130 hectors** of land for investment. In addition to the feasibility study, the Ministry in conjunction with Tawana Land Board, is currently assessing 15 remaining properties affected by Mohembo Bridge Tourism Layout. The compensation for relocation, estimated at **One Million, Four Hundred and Thirty-Three Thousand, Two Hundred and Twenty-Three Pula** (**BWP1,433,223),** is expected to be completed in the 2026/27 financial year.

40. Together, these projects exemplify our commitment to diversification, citizen empowerment, and positioning Botswana as a competitive and inclusive tourism destination.

41. **Mr. Chairman,** access to land by citizens in prime tourism areas remains a key priority as their presence in high-value segments of the industry is still limited and must be strengthened. Processes are underway to allocate land to citizens for the development of three tourism sites: Tsoe Lodge Site in Makgadikgadi National Park, Umvuvu Lodge Site in NG 12 and one (1)

concession area in NG 42. In addition, a citizen owned Trust has been allocated a lodge site in the Moremi Game Reserve.

42. **Mr. Chairman,** engagements with concession holders whose leases are due for renewal are ongoing, with Government requiring for at least **Twenty-Five (25) percent** shareholding to be transferred to citizens in exchange for longer leases. This deliberate policy ensures that Batswana gain a stronger foothold in high-value tourism which is in line with **Presidential Directive, Cab 14 (A) of 2019.**

Monuments and Heritage

43. **Mr. Chairman,** the completion of permanent exhibitions at the Botswana National Museum in Gaborone and the Kgosi Sechele I Museum in Molepolole scheduled for completion and opening by second quarter of 2026. These exhibitions will significantly enrich our cultural tourism product, offering visitors authentic experiences that celebrate Botswana's heritage while strengthening our diversification agenda and enhancing revenue generation.

44. Furthermore, Botswana is advancing the listing of the Gcwihaba Caves as our third World Heritage Site with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), after Tsodilo Hills and the Okavango Delta. Preliminary assessments by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) confirm the site's potential Outstanding Universal Value. This listing will elevate Botswana's global recognition and attract more visitors.

45. **Mr. Chairman,** with the support of the French Embassy, the Ministry has partnered with the University of Toulouse to establish an innovative scientific

programme researching the origins of early hominins in Botswana's caves. The success of this project, will position Botswana at the heart of the Cradle of Humankind narrative, elevating our global archaeological profile and attract more visitors. This initiative is expected to generate employment through guided tours, hospitality services, and supporting infrastructure. The project is scheduled to be completed in September 2027.

Marketing and Promotion

46. **Mr. Chairman,** marketing is the cornerstone of tourism, the force that ensures our products reach the world and our sector continues to thrive. The Ministry will continue to leverage travel fairs, new airline routes, local events, and international conferences to strengthen Botswana's visibility and reaffirm our commitment to global partners. Restructured visa regimes will further ease access and enhance competitiveness. Recent collaborations with global influencers such as **IShowSpeed** and **Wodemaya** attracted over three million streams worldwide, demonstrating the transformative potential of digital marketing.

47. The Ministry attended the JAGD & HUND hunting show in Germany and the Dallas Safari Club hunting show in the USA during the months of January and February 2026. On the basis of that experience, BTO will now start participating at major international hunting fairs to market consumptive component of tourism with the aim to promote and grow this sector.

Tourism Pitso

48. **Mr. Chairman**, I am pleased to report that, after more than a decade, the Ministry successfully convened the Tourism Pitso from the 22nd to 23rd January 2026 in Francistown under the theme: **"Tourism as a Catalyst for Economic Transformation and Sustainable Growth through Partnerships".** The event was officiated by His Honor the Vice President. The revival of this critical forum reaffirmed the Pitso's stature as a national platform for structured dialogue on the future of tourism. Its primary objective was to foster inclusive engagement among Government, industry stakeholders, local communities, academia, and development partners, thereby creating a unified space to deliberate on systemic challenges such as lease renewals, inclusivity, skills development, and climate resilience. The forum was attended by **1,360** participants.

Sector Performance, Investment, and Employment Creation

49. **Mr. Chairman,** licensing activities have continued to grow, with **Two Hundred and Twenty-Three** (223) new enterprises registered in 2025/26 compared to **Two Hundred and Six** (206) in 2024/25, of which **One Hundred and Ninety-Eight** (198) were citizen-owned. This reflects strong local participation in the tourism sector. However, capital investment declined from **Fived Hundred and Forty-Six Million Pula** (BWP546,000,000) to **One Hundred and Seventy-Three Million Pula** BWP173,000,000), largely due to fewer high-end lodge projects. While citizens dominate overall ownership, their penetration into premium tourism

remains limited, underscoring the need for targeted empowerment initiatives to strengthen their role in high-value segments.

50. Employment creation remains central to our agenda and in 2025/26, 416 jobs were created against a target of **One Thousand** (1,000) jobs. Looking ahead, the sector aims to generate **Five Thousand** (5,000) additional jobs by 2030 through the implementation of the National Tourism Strategy and Master Plan, ensuring that tourism continues to deliver sustained livelihoods, dignity, and empowerment for our people.

51. **Mr. Chairman,** our latest Visitor Expenditure Surveys confirm that Botswana has successfully attracted higher-value tourists, with average spending per person per night rising from **One Thousand, Two Hundred and Thirty-Seven Pula** (BWP1,237) in 2019 to **One Thousand, Six Hundred and Fifty-Nine Pula** (BWP1,659) in 2023, before moderating to **One Thousand, Four Hundred and Fifty Pula** (BWP1,450) in 2024—all above pre-COVID levels. The average length of stay has, however, declined from **6.3** nights in 2019 to **4.7** nights in 2024, reducing overall economic impact. This trend highlights the need for deliberate interventions to extend itineraries and retain value locally.

Community Based Natural Resource Management

52. **Mr. Chairman,** the Ministry is facilitating joint ventures between Community Trusts and investors to advance cultural and geographical tourism diversification in the Kgalagadi Region. Flagship projects include the Phuduhudu Cultural Village, the Khuis Tourism Park, and development of a lodge in Khawa, all of which will showcase indigenous knowledge, crafts, and

traditions while empowering local communities and ensuring equitable wealth distribution.

53. Furthermore, the Ministry has successfully facilitated partnerships between citizen investors and communities for lodge developments under the Okavango Jakotsha Community Trust (representing Etsha 1–13, Jao, and Ikoga) and the Khwai Development Trust. These initiatives demonstrate tangible progress in citizen economic empowerment, generating jobs, resource-use fees, taxable earnings, and catalysing skills transfer in hospitality, conservation, and digital marketing.

E. STRENGTHENING LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

54. **Mr. Chairman,** the Ministry continues to reform its legislative framework to modernize Botswana's natural resource governance framework and also improve the ease of doing business. Two landmark legislative reforms were made in the current financial year. Firstly, three old statutes (Agricultural Resources Conservation Act of 1974, the Forest Act of 1968, Herbage Preservation Act of 1977) were consolidated to develop the Forest and Range Resources Act of 2025. The Act was approved by Parliament in August 2025 and its Regulations are scheduled for completion during 2026/2027 financial year.

55. Secondly the Community-Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) Act of 2025 was approved by Parliament in August 2025. The Act establishes the new Department and it decentralizes authority, strengthens coordination, and secures greater benefits for Community-Based Organisations while safeguarding environmental protection. The

Regulations of the new Act are scheduled for completion during 2026/2027 financial year.

56. **Mr. Chairman,** the Ministry has also commenced the review of the Tourism Act of 2009. This review is necessary to streamline processes, reduce bureaucratic delays, and modernise the regulatory framework so that our tourism industry remains competitive in an ever-evolving global market. The specific objectives are to create a more enabling environment that encourages investment, strengthens citizen participation, and ensures that growth in the sector is both sustainable and inclusive. These legislative reforms collectively will strengthen our capacity to manage resources sustainably and unlock tourism as a pillar of growth.

57. **Mr. Chairman,** it is with great pride that I inform you that the Ministry through the Department of Meteorological Services has, for the third consecutive time, been re-certified to BOS ISO 9001:2015, meeting the mandatory requirements of International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and Civil Aviation Authority of Botswana (CAAB). This achievement underscores our commitment to delivering accurate, high-quality meteorological services that support aviation safety and efficiency.

F. RESOURCE MOBILISATION AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

58. **Mr. Chairman,** the Ministry is committed to exploring innovative financial mechanisms to fund environmental management and biodiversity conservation. In this regard, we are working with the UNDP through the BIOFIN Project and Project Finance for Permanence to establish an independent Conservation Trust Fund to address the growing conservation

finance gap by securing long term sustainable financing. A resource and partnership strategy is also being developed to leverage public, private and philanthropic funding.

59. **Mr. Chairman,** let me take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to all our partners, both local and international, whose unwavering support continues to strengthen our efforts in protecting the environment and advancing sustainable development. Through your financial contributions, technical expertise, and collaborative spirit, we have been able to mobilize resources, build capacity, and deliver impactful programmes that benefit our people and safeguard our natural heritage. Your partnership is not only a cornerstone of our progress but also a testament to the shared commitment to a greener, more resilient Botswana.

G. BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR THE 2026/27 FINANCIAL YEAR

60. **Mr. Chairman**, the Ministry proposes a total budget allocation of **One Billion, Ninety-Six Million, Eighty-Three Thousand, Three Hundred and Sixty-Three Pula** (BWP1,096,083,363) to finance both the recurrent and development budget. This amount indicates a **16 percent** decrease from the 2025/2026 budget allocation.

61. The recurrent budget allocation has a majority share of **84 percent,** totaling **Nine Hundred and Seventeen Million, Four Hundred and Twenty Thousand, Nine Hundred and Thirty Pula,** (BWP 917,420, 930), while the development budget accounts for **16 percent** equivalent to **One Hundred and Seventy-Eight Million, Six Hundred and Sixty-**

Two Thousand, Four Hundred and Thirty-Three Pula (BWP178,662,433), which is earmarked mainly for ongoing projects.

62. The largest share of Recurrent Budget is proposed to be allocated to the Department of Wildlife and National Parks at a sum of **Three Hundred and Seventy-Nine Million, Two Hundred and Seventy-Seven Thousand, Two Hundred and Fifty Pula** (BWP 379,277,250), **or 41 percent** of the overall Recurrent Budget.

63. The second largest share will go to the Ministry Headquarters at **Two Hundred and Sixteen Million, Nine Hundred and Fifteen Thousand, Eight Hundred and Twenty Pula** (BWP 216 915 820), or **24 percent** of the overall Recurrent Budget. The budget is inclusive of **Eighty-Six Million, Five Hundred and Ninety-two Thousand, Six Hundred and Ninety Pula** (BWP 86 592 690) as a provision for the subvention to the Botswana Tourism Organisation. The rest of the Departments will share the remaining **35 percent** of the recurrent budget.

64. **Mr. Chairman,** I request approval of a total development budget of **One Hundred and Seventy-Eight Million, Six Hundred and Sixty-Two Thousand, Four Hundred and Thirty-Three Pula** (BWP178,662,433) for the 2026/2027 financial year. These funds are intended to support twenty projects spanning the five programmes detailed as follows:

    a) The infrastructure development programme, which mainly covers the Kasane/Kazungula Redevelopment Project, will require the largest allocation of **Eighty-Five Million, Eight Hundred and**

Forty Thousand, Three Hundred and Thirty Pula (BWP 85,840,330) to ensure completion of ongoing works;

b) **Mr. Chairman,** Conservation and protection initiatives targeting wildlife species, their habitats, and the mitigation of Human-Wildlife Conflict will require the second-largest allocation of **Forty-Four Million, and Sixty Thousand Pula** (BWP 44,060,000);

c) Broadening the tourism base will need **Nineteen Million, Nine Hundred and Fifteen Thousand, Seven Hundred and Thirty-Four Pula** (BWP 19,915,734), representing the third-largest portion of the budget;

d) **Mr. Chairman,** Projects aimed at environmental protection and safeguarding natural resources will be supported with **Eighteen Million, Eight Hundred and Thirteen Thousand, One Hundred and Fifty-Seven Pula** (BWP 18,813,157);

e) Finally, **Ten Million, Thirty-Three Thousand, Two Hundred and Twelve Pula** (BWP 10,033,212) is designated for digitisation of data and services to meet international standards and strengthen systems and platforms for improved revenue collection.

H. CONCLUSION

65. **Mr. Chairman,** this concludes my presentation of the 2026/2027 Recurrent and Development budget proposals for the Ministry of Environment and Tourism.

66. I, therefore, move that the sum of **One Billion, Ninety-Six Million, Eighty-Three Thousand, Three Hundred and Sixty-Three Pula** (BWP1,096,083,363) for Organization 2000 made up of **Nine Hundred and Seventeen Million, Four Hundred and Twenty Thousand, Nine Hundred and Thirty Pula,** (BWP 917,420, 930) under the recurrent budget and **One Hundred and Seventy-Eight Million, Six Hundred and Sixty-Two Thousand, Four Hundred and Thirty-Three Pula** (P178,662,433) under the development budget, be approved and stand part of the Estimates for the financial year 2026/2027.

67. I thank you, **Mr. Chairman.**