Speech by

Mr Herman Spitz, Head of Operations (EU-Botswana Cooperation)

at the opening of the Joint EU-ARIPO-AU workshop on geographical indications and origin based marketing.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my pleasure to speak on behalf of the EU at the opening of this workshop on origin marketing and geographical indications.

• Today many agricultural products from Africa are sold into commodity markets at basic prices. In commodity chains, the value addition tends to accrue to the upstream operators – the distributors and retailers who can use corporate branding to sell. There is no specific link between the producers and the consumers.

• But we are seeing a substantial shift in consumer demand both in local and in international markets. Consumers want to know about the product, about the people who have produced it, and where it has come from.

• This trend can have benefits at all levels of the value chain, if you have the means to harness it. And origin marketing is one of the most effective ways.

• In the coffee sector, Ethiopian coffees are now sold on world markets under the names of the coffee producing regions of Harrar, Yirgacheffe and Sidamo – and yield twice the price for producers.

• Morocco, Cameroon and Mozambique are among other African countries where geographical indications are used to promote regional products such as oils, peppers, honey and fisheries products.

• Closer to home, South Africa has for over 10 years been marketing wines by their origin (e.g. Stellenbosch and Paarl) and has recently taken the step of protecting Rooibos Tea
against international usurpation. You may hear more on that story as the workshop will be addressed by one of the South Africa’s leading experts on protection of geographical indications, who was closely involved in the defence of Rooibos (Dr Dirk Troskie, of Western Cape Government).

- Geographical Indications and origin marketing provide a means for you to add value to your products on the basis of your existing practices and geographical location: the value is already there, it just needs to be exploited! I hope to see as a result of this workshop a renewed interest and determination to promote Botswana and its agricultural products in local and international markets.

- In 2012 the Directorate General of Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission and the African Regional Intellectual Property Office signed the Stone Town Memorandum of Understanding, at the ARIPO Council in Zanzibar. Our shared aim was to assist with the development of a GI framework law as mandated by the Accra ARIPO Council in 2011.

- Last November more progress was made at ARIPO’s council meeting in Kampala, where steps were further taken towards the introduction of a GI framework law for all ARIPO countries including Botswana.

- However, a law without the means for implementation is not likely to progress far. That is why this national workshop is so important.

- You, the participants, have been invited from the administration and from the private sector to come together to learn about GIs and origin-based marketing. You will also be able to contribute your own ideas and vision of how best to identify, promote and protect uniquely Botswana products access value-added markets.

- I hope that you find today’s workshop useful and that through your increased understanding of GIs and origin-based marketing you are able to derive more value from your products, in national, regional and international trade, and encourage the marketing of specialities and famous products across borders.