



**EUROPEAN UNION**

DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA AND SADC

Gaborone, 30 June 2014

**Official Opening Speech for the Cultural Exchange Programme  
between Botswana, France and Germany by the Head of European  
Union Delegation to Botswana and SADC,**

**Ambassador Gerard McGovern**

**BOCODOL Headquarters (Gaborone)**

It is my honour and privilege to have been given the opportunity to officiate at this collaborative effort involving the Republic of Botswana and institutions from two Member States of the European Union, namely France and Germany. A special welcome to the students and mentors from Adere Occupational Therapy from France and Ergo Therapy from Germany. The occasion today is yet again an example of how Botswana is striving to nurture its youth and hence the future of the country. And I believe that developing institutional linkages such as these enriches everybody involved – so thank you for giving this opportunity to our young Europeans.

As some of you may know, the European Union has been involved with supporting education in Botswana for over 20 years. Whereas in the past we helped to build schools and colleges our focus is now on assisting the Botswana government in planning and implementing its ambitious reform programme for the education sector so as to modernize it and improve the delivery of education services. More than 85 % of our current development cooperation programme with Botswana (current programme is over 1.5 billion Pula) has been allocated to human resource development. And I am pleased to say that the European Union will continue to support this common priority over the next few years

From our collaboration in the Education sector, we are very much aware that human resources development is crucial for Botswana in its transition from a resource-based economy to a skills and knowledge-based one. We are hosted today by the Botswana College of Open and Distance Learning. This institution, which over time, has been growing in stature has an important contribution to make to skills and knowledge

transfer. It is said that knowledge facilitates thinking which in turn facilitates foresight – and foresight is necessary to make decisions in life. I hope that this international collaborative effort will ultimately help all of the participants with better decision-making.

Director of Ceremonies, ladies and gentlemen I suppose we could say that this project being launched today is something of an experiment bringing open and distance learning and conventional education or training together. It is interesting to note how these two systems have evolved. Initially the conventional system depended on the presence of a teacher for teaching and learning to take place, while ODL depended on media to facilitate teaching and learning. With the massive technological developments in the world today, the distinction between ODL and the conventional system is blurring and the two systems are coming closer together with each standing to benefit from the other. There are however pressing challenges for both systems, key amongst them being the need for better IT skills on the part of students and teachers. I will be interested to see how this project takes up that challenge.

Looking forward, I do hope that we will see more institutional linkages and exchanges between Botswana and Europe in education and other sectors. I see scope for staff and student exchange programmes, collaborative research and publishing among the institutions and why not showcasing how ODL and conventional education can enhance each other. Your ability to engage the young people from BOCODOL in collaborating with their peers in Europe through social media like yammer, demonstrates the existence of the yet to be explored potential for students and staff collaboration in teaching and learning facilitation.

I note that you will have workshops on leadership, environmental sustainability, healthy living including the issue of Drug and Alcohol Abuse. I think that it will be enriching for all of you to share your experiences and to bring your own cultural perspectives to the various topics. I would strongly recommend to the participants that you take this programme very seriously setting measureable goals for this unique learning and sharing experience. Of course you should also enjoy the experience and I understand that our French

and German visitors will have an opportunity to visit Maun and the Okavango Delta – a very unique World Heritage site!

Once again thank you for inviting me to this occasion. I wish you fruitful deliberations during the course of the workshops.

With these few remarks, ladies and gentlemen, I declare this skills and cultural exchange programme officially open.

**Thank you.**

