**Welcome Speech by Dr. Daniel Tau – Executive Director at the 12th BOCODOL Graduation Ceremony Held at**

**Fairground Holdings, 18th November 2016**

**Theme: “Flexible Lifelong Learning: Empowering the Nation”.”**

* **Minister of Tertiary Education Research, Science and Technology**
* **Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology**
* **BOCODOL Board Chairperson and Members of your Governing Board**
* **Vice Chancellor, Zimbabwe Open University**
* **Chief Executive Officer, Regional Psycho-social Support Initiative (REPSSI)**
* **Chief Executives of Sister Institutions**
* **Management and Staff of BOCODOL**
* **Members of the Platform Party**
* **Members of the Business Community**
* **Graduands and Your Families**
* **Members of the Forth Estate**
* **Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

**It is my once again singular honour and privilege to welcome you to the 2017 Graduation Ceremony of BOCODOL. BOCODOL profoundly appreciates your presence at this 13th Graduation. This is a historic ceremony as this is the last graduation under the BOCODOL brand following the passing of the Botswana Open University Bill. The Act is only awaiting the signature of the His Excellency the President. To the BOCODOL Board, leadership and staff this is a great milestone given the journey traversed over the years. To many the transformation into an Open University was far-fetched and probably an unlikely occurrence but due to our vision and our trust in the Almighty Lord we never despaired. I know you are all aware of the developments regarding the transformation.**

**Ladies and gentlemen, I think it is proper and always important as dictated by protocol to observe it to the letter. It is therefore a privilege and an honour for me to welcome the Honourable Minister of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology, Dr. Alfred Madigele who today is also our Guest Speaker on this august occasion. Honourable Minister you are most welcome. It is also befitting me to extend a word of welcome to the corporate leadership of the institution, being the Board Chairperson and his Board members. The transformation that I mentioned earlier has always been spear headed by these wonderful ladies and gentlemen. This is really a Board with vision as well as commitment. Indeed they have achieved their goal, BOU is here. Not much could have been achieved if there had not been a supportive and committed Board. Through the Board Chairperson Mr. Abel Modungwa, we as the BOCODOL community wish to extend our profound appreciation for able and transformational leadership.**

**Director of Ceremonies it is also my singular and collective honour to convey our deep appreciation towards our collaborative partner from Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) for their continued support to us. ZOU has taught us how to walk and we are now able to walk on our own. It is ZOU’s support and strategic support that BOCODOL introduced and sustained its first tertiary programmes. ZOU has always quality assured and accredited the BOCODOL academic performance.**

**Director of Ceremonies BOCODOL in its growth embraced other partners within and without the country. One of these strategic partners is the Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSSI) which is represented by the Director of at this graduation. Through this collaboration BOCODOL introduced and graduated learners in a certificate programme called; “Community Based Work with Children and Youth”, which is meant to address a gap in the skills building for people working with children and the youth, especially in peri-urban and rural settings. We as BOCODOL are really humbled by this wonderful contribution which we as BOCODOL continue to make to the national educational landscape.**

**Let me also welcome all the dignitaries that have graced this occasion. To us this is evidence of the support you provide us and this will never at any time elude our recognition. We thank you and your presence means so much to us and hope that we shall benefit from one another through these interactions. Bagaetsho it is equally critical that I welcome the bridegrooms and grooms who are to express WOW moment. As learners they have had to endure various challenges to reach where they are today. Please feel free and enjoy yourselves, mindful that your enjoyment does not bring sadness to the next person. Your spouses, relatives and whoever is accompanying you should similarly feel most welcome. BOCODOL is a conducive place to study and to be at all times in line with its motive of lifelong learning.**

**Ladies and gentlemen I find myself forced to briefly share with you the journey that Botswana College of Distance and Open that has travelled and continues to travel. BOCODOL was established as a result of the Education Commission Review of 1993 dubbed the Kedikilwe Commission. The result of the Commission was the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE 1994) which recommended the upgrading of the Distance Education Division of Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE) to a parastatal institution dedicated to distance education. In 1998 BOCODOL was established through an Act of Parliament. Among others BOCODOL’s mandate was to increase access on a nation-wide scale for improved quality of life as well as to expand the scope of programmes beyond Open Schooling. I am proud to say that the institution has without doubt attained its mandate and will continue to do so. From its inception in 2000 to date BOCODOL has had a total cumulative enrolment of ---------- in Open Schooling relative to 2081 in 2000 and ------- Tertiary programmes. The College had only two programmes being Junior Certificate (JC) and Botswana General Certificate for Secondary Education (BGCSE). Currently the College boasts of more than twenty three tertiary education programmes including three post graduate programmes at Master’s level.**

**Honourable Guest Speaker, the theme for this graduation is “Flexible Lifelong; Empowering the Nation”. I have no doubt that BOCODOL has empowered this nation through its flexible and lifelong learning. BOCODOL has not restrictive regulations as to who should and can study with it. Throughout the years OCODOL has maintained its flexibility and lifelong approach as shown by its three pervious strategic plans captured below;**

* **2009 – 2012 The institution of Choice for Life-Long Learning**
* **2012 – 2016 The institution of Choice for Flexible, Life-Long**

**Learning**

* **2016 – 2020 Inspired Excellence & Empowered Learners for**

**Life-Long Learning**

**The Director of Ceremonies, the College has had learners as old as 65 years doing Junior Certificate level of study and these people actually improving their quality of life. Over the years BOCODOL has had graduates who had studied from Prison. One of such inmates was actually the overall best learner in the Diploma in Business Management at the 2010 graduation ceremony. This is clear testimony that BOCODOL promotes access to education and also upholds flexible and lifelong learning.**

**Director of Ceremonies, BOCODOL has ensured the lifelong learning through the diversification of its programmes. BOCODOL is one if not the only institution that in the country which caters for all levels of education in line with the NATIONAL HRDS PATHWAYS. BOCODOL provides education for Early Childhood Development to the point of Professional Development levels. Through such offerings BOCODOL affords individuals opportunities to realise their potential.**

**Director of Ceremonies, still within the diversification milestone, our academic disciplines thus far reflect a spread across, Business, Education, Social Sciences and Science and Technology. The programmes on offer across these disciplines are: Early Childhood Education and Development, Primary Education, Educational Leadership, Public Administration, Educational Research, Business Management, Business Leadership and Change Management, Entrepreneurship, Human Resources Management, Community Based Work with Children and Youth, and Distance Education for Practitioners to mention but a few. Accompanying this discipline diversity has been an increase in programmes on offer to 40 in 2016 against the 2 we had in 2000 as I did mention earlier.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen, BOCODOL in its endeavour to promote accessibility to education and its other services introduced and promotes the use of online services. This is in line with the College’s core values of learner-centredness and innovation. The learner centredness approach influenced the institution to take advantage of the technological developments around us. BOCODOL introduced the online application and registration to enable learners to access the College services from anywhere they are provided there is internet connectivity. Though this affected the College enrolment numbers due to technological phobia some people had, there is a marked improvement in the uptake of technology. Through such online services BOCODOL has immensely contributed to human development in the technologically inclined globe. Recently BOCODOL upgraded the ITS system all in the name of improved service delivery for the benefit of the learner.**

**Additionally, online services that BOCODOL makes available to its students and staff include, the use of Google Apps (email, cloud storage, document management), Online Conferencing services such as Skype, Internet and web based services such as website and social media (Facebook, You Tube, Linked-In etc ). The College Library services also continue to embrace the use of technology such as online library catalogue, Digital Repository and e-Journals to facilitate research for students and staff.**

**Director of Ceremonies, with the online services as described, BOCODOL is now able to effectively facilitate technology mediated teaching and learning and reach clients beyond the borders of Botswana like in Lesotho, Namibia, Zambia, Mozambique to mention a few. We here at BOCODOL provide learners in some of our programmes issued with tablets with all the learning material uploaded onto it. To a great extent this is a major cost saving considering the cost of printing. Through this technology BOCODOL is able to have a tutor facilitate a tutorial simultaneously in several places through smartboard technology.**

**Director of Ceremonies, before I conclude I wish to highlight the challenges that the College has faced in its trajectory. The major challenge, especially during the period leading to the transformation of, has been the financial constraints. The College has had to find its way in an under resourced institution, at times even sacrificing very critical projects or tasks. One which had created aversion among staff was the delayed legislative framework for Universities and Tertiary Institutions then and later the Botswana Open University Act. It is our conviction that this is now history as we know the status. But the delay in having the Act signed again has brought some confusion as staff is eager to have the institution fully transformed with no uncertainties. There is in addition an overwhelming demand for more and diversified programmes by the public, which has proved quite challenging due to the limited resources. However, BOCODOL leadership through its intuition was able to navigate through the storm.**

**Lastly one other challenge was and still to some continues to be , which is the negative perceptions regarding efficacy of ODL. There ae those people who still do not consider ODL as the best option for self-development. Internationally, including regionally millions of people are develoing themselves through ODL methodologies. The belief that qualifications acquired through Distance Learning mode are of low regard is to be shunned and abhorred as it is completely a stagnant opinion which is totally against development. Here in BOCODOL we have well over, fifty people who have improved their academic qualifications while in the employ of the institution and not having to leave for full time study. Let us be progressive in our thinking and do that which is assisting us to change for the better as a people.**

**Director of Ceremonies, before I conclude, allow me time to share with you that us here in BOCODOL were certain that we shall deliver the University especially give the support we were receiving from the Government of the day. I therefore with to extend profound gratitude to the Botswana Government especially the President who right from the onset showed confidence in us by issuing a Presidential Decree that BOCODOL transform into an Open University in 2011. Since then as a BOCODOL we did all in our power to prepare for the transformation and we are very contented that the University is here today. I wish to extend unreserved gratitude to the BOCODO staff for their endurance, patience and commitment to the process of the transformation which called for exactly that under the circumstances.**

**Honourable Minister, the learners graduating today will tell you their study was not a bed of roses as a number of them are workers and had to allocate time for study, family and leisure in addition to their permanent employment. But here they are today, they have made it. This is due to discipline, commitment, sacrifice and many other reasons we can think of. I therefore wish to request all of us applaud these graduands for this great achievement individually. Due to this qualification their profiles and CVs have changed and this may mean better opportunities for them. Graduands congratulations and let this not be the end of your personal development. We shall be looking forward to your coming back to pursue a programme you may have identified by now. Now go out into the world and make a recognizable contribution to its development through your better qualification, in your small way.**

**I salute family members and friends, who have provided inspiration and support to the graduands. With this class of 2017, BOCODOL has increased the population of life-long learning graduates in Botswana who should be ambassadors for Open and Distance learning.**

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, yare go e latswa bobe e tswe bololo. Let me conclude by wishing you all a wonderful stay in BOCODOL.**

**With those remarks Honourable Minister, BOCODOL Board Chairperson and his Committee, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, you are once again most welcome to this 13th graduation ceremony of BOCODOL.**

**THANK YOU**