**Remarks by Dr Theophilus Mooko, Permanent Secretary of the MoTE at the Commencement Ceremony of the Botswana Open University**

**8th December 2017**

* Outgoing Chairperson
* Chief Executive
* Management and Staff of BOU
* Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to participate in the Botswana Open University commencement ceremony this morning. My Minister is unable to participate in the ceremony because of other pressing commitments outside Botswana, hence my presence to take part on his behalf.

The commencement of the Botswana Open University is a significant event in the history of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in Botswana. The event marks the official end of the operations of the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL), which has been the main provider of ODL in our country. The end comes not because BOCODOL has failed to live-up to expectations, but because BOCODOL has, through its successful operations, demonstrated the great potential that ODL has for this country. In 1998, when BOCODOL was instituted, the Ministry responsible for Education was concerned about the limitations of the then provided ODL. This time, my Ministry, which has oversight on ODL in general, is happy that BOCODOL has been able to perform beyond expectations. In recognition of this, Government concluded that the scope of ODL operations deserved expansion. The only plausible way to do so was to upgrade the well performing BOCODOL into an Open University. It is our conviction that the Botswana Open University will cost-effectively broaden the education base of this country and allow our people the opportunity to learn on an on-going basis. We needed to widen opportunities for Batswana to learn to the highest level whilst continuing with other activities. This in our view, would enable Batswana who chose to enrol with ODL to integrate theory into their work timeously. On the other hand, they would be able to interrogate theory based on their practical work situations, and hopefully expand the frontiers of knowledge.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you as former BOCODOL employees, for all the appreciable work you have done. It is my hope that you will continue to discharge your duties well under the new institution. We expect the university to significantly increase access to tertiary education in particular. It is also our expectation that the outcomes at open-schooling level will continue to improve for the better.

We also expect the University to expand the scope of programmes in order to cater for the diverse needs and interests of the various sectors of the economy as well as the increasing population of our country. Botswana aims to be a knowledge economy by 2036 and this can only be realised through accelerate human capital development, pursued through a strategy that combines the use of conventional education and Open and Distance Learning. The Open University will thus be expected to claim its space in the education system by delivering high quality programmes and services.

I want to urge the university to henceforth aim for recruitment of Senior Academics, who are an absolute necessity for cultivation of the required university culture as well as the introduction of a diversified menu of under-graduate and post-graduate degrees.

Having briefly pronounced our key expectations, I wish to once again state how happy we are at the commencement of the Botswana Open University. The Ministry will do its utmost to support the growth of the university. We hope you will equally apply yourselves to the new requirements and standards expected of a university.

Finally, it is my singular honour to declare BOU’s operations officially commenced.

Thank you.