



## **KEY NOTE SPEECH OF THE THIRD DIALOGUE & SENSITIZATION MEETING WITH THE REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES (RECs)**

**By MD Ghulam Kibria**

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On behalf of the Botswana Government, in particular, the Ministry of Agriculture, I welcome you all to this beautiful city of Gaborone, which is the capital of Botswana.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, please allow me to extend my honour and gratitude to AU-IBAR, the SADC Secretariat and also to my fellow colleagues from MoA for the excellent arrangements for this meeting. I am truly grateful.

I am also impressed by the strong commitment you have accorded to this meeting as demonstrated by the number of delegates who made it to this important meeting which further buttresses the true testament to the importance of this meeting.

Distinguished delegates let me remind you that fisheries is a very crucial sector that will go a long way in contributing to food and

nutrition security and livelihoods of many African countries especially rural communities. It is further critical to note that the global population is estimated to increase to about 10 billion by 2050, thus tremendously increasing the demand gap for animal protein, which leaves aquaculture as the most viable sector to close this gap.

It is also important to note that while aquaculture production is growing exponentially, the capture fisheries sector is facing various challenges and its production is now in a declining state; hence, a need for us promote sustainable use practices.

Facilitator, I am told interventions on the management of our fisheries and aquaculture are guided mainly by two documents, viz; Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Aquaculture and Fisheries in Africa (PFRS) and the Africa Blue Economy Strategy (ABES). These two blue print policy documents facilitate the transformation of Africa's fisheries and aquaculture sectors for food, livelihoods and wealth creation. Specifically Mr. Chair, the PFRS is aimed at creating a conducive and enabling environment for the fisheries and aquaculture sectors to create equitable, social and economic development in Africa whereas the ABES is envisioned to promote an inclusive and sustainable blue economy that significantly contributes to Africa's transformation and growth.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am also told this initiative is carried out under the auspices of African Fisheries Reform Mechanism (AFRM)

and the REC's are the main drivers on regional integration between regions. REC's also play a critical role in the implementation of FISHGov2 project.

In view of the foregoing, I am informed that the main objective of this meeting is "to appraise RECs on the progress made so far as part of an established mechanism for regular dialogue on emerging issues of the FISHGov2 activities as well as reiterate their role in supporting project implementation and foster understanding on the critical role of the RECs in supporting project implementation".

Distinguished guests, specifically the objectives of the dialogue meeting are to;

1. Apprise the RECs on the progress of implementation of project, including lessons, challenges and emerging issues
2. To provide a feedback on status of implementation of recommendations on the previous immediate dialogue meeting
3. To provide a feedback on status of implementation of recommendations on the previous project steering committee meeting
4. To share information on status of the project and RECs and highlight the areas of collaboration to generate synergies and complementarities
5. To review and evaluate the mechanism for collaboration with the RECs on the project

Lastly, but not least, let me take this opportunity to inform you that aquaculture in Botswana is still at its infancy. However, the Government of Botswana is now aware of the potential that this industry holds for improving the livelihoods of Botswana and contributing to the national economy in terms of food and nutrition security, income generation and wealth creation. As a country we are in advanced stage to have our approved Aquaculture Strategy (2021-2026) as well as 5 years mobilization strategy which costing 139 Million BWP (10.3 Million US\$) to implement this aquaculture strategy. In addition to that we also have our finalized aquatic animal health strategy while we requested to FAO to do our aquaculture policy. In this regard, we are anticipated Botswana Aquaculture Policy will be in place by 2024.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me inform you that my government's realization of the importance of the aquaculture sub-sector cannot be emphasized as it can be demonstrated by the transfer of the aquaculture function from the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources Conservation and Tourism to the Ministry of Agriculture effective 1<sup>st</sup> October 2017. This, distinguished delegates was to align its mandate of food and nutrition security with the rightful ministry in order for the sector to realize its growth.

Ladies and gentlemen as I conclude my remarks let me take this opportunity to invite you to this beautiful city of Gaborone. Take all the liberty at your free time to explore around. There are various

modern shopping centres that are scattered around the city that provide various shopping alternatives including a variety of restaurants. We also have a lot of talented individuals in Botswana who create Botswana cultural artefacts, clothes and other crafts of high quality, please feel free to get Botswana souvenirs and support local craft businesses.

With these few remarks, I declare The Third Dialogue & Sensitization Meeting with the Regional Economic Communities (RECS) officially opened and wish you fruitful deliberations in the next couple of days.

**PULA!!!!!!**