

**POINTS FOR THE BRIEFING OF THE PRESS ON THE OPENING OF THE
SERETSE KHAMA STADIUM FOLLOWING A REGRASSING EXERCISE:
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MAY 2010**

On Wednesday 11th November 2009, we converged here to mark the commencement of a regrassing process in respect of the Sir Seretse Khama Stadium. This closely followed on the successful regrassing of the University of Botswana Stadium; all these on a directive from government for us to deliver quality playing surfaces in respect of the two pitches for the period leading to the 2010 World Cup to be hosted by South Africa; just in case Botswana was fortunate enough to attract any or the World Cup bound countries for pre-competition training sessions in the country. We converge here again this afternoon to witness the conclusion of the exercise, at least in so far as the playability of the two surfaces is concerned. As it is common knowledge, the University of Botswana Stadium was opened for use, albeit hurriedly, in June last year. The Stadium has since been under a composite maintenance programme managed by ourselves, for which contract runs up to the end of June 2010. Just to be sure that we honour the government directive; we have requested the management of the UB Stadium to suspend activities on the pitch for the months of May and the first part of June 2010 so that, should government need the pitch, it would be delivered as close to the desired standards as possible. In recognition of the shortage of playing pitches in the country; especially with the continued unavailability of the National Stadium and the delayed completion of other related projects, we have taken position to avail the Sir Seretse Khama Stadium for events that it could handle. The Stadium is delivered with a clear understanding that it would also be under controlled use to allow it to settle to the levels desired. The pitch will remain under our maintenance for the period up to mid-August 2010. The administrative management of the SSKB Stadium will continue to be under the BDF, a similar arrangement to the one with UB. We will soon be contacting government to indicate the end of our mandate in respect of the two stadiums, with the view to pulling out at the end of the respective maintenance periods.

As it would be recalled, the Botswana Government, through the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture availed an amount of P1.6m to the Botswana National Sports Council to re-grass the two stadiums. We have had to go beyond this amount to be able to deliver what we have now delivered, as that fell far short of the minimum costs. We estimate the current costs to be in the region of P3m, but should be able to come up with a more accurate amount at the end of our involvement, once we have met all the remaining costs pertaining to the projects.

We are happy that the two projects we were entrusted with have been delivered. We avail ourselves for any such future assignments.

As it is now common knowledge, government is at an advanced stage in upgrading the National Stadium and the construction of stadiums in Lobatse and Francistown. On behalf of the sporting fraternity, we thank Government for these recent developments, all of which should demonstrate its commitment to the development and advancement of sport in the country. With almost all the major projects in this country running behind schedule, it cannot be said with certainty when all these facilities would be delivered. We however remain confident that come 2011, all these facilities would be available.

As we thank government for these developments, we appeal for more. Botswana needs at least one grand stadium, if we entertain hopes of ever hosting a major event like the Africa Cup of Nations in Football and the All Africa Games. More than anything else, Botswana needs more playing surfaces of quality. However, all these cannot be provided by government alone. We appeal to the corporate sector to come into the picture in this respect. Not so long ago, Gaborone United had to negotiate an electric pole/mast during practice sessions. Black Peril, when they used to be at the GSS Grounds, had to do with University students and other passers-by who would cut through their ground even during practice sessions. Tatic Sporting Club in Francistown have to be jumping over an ever flowing stream that cuts through their pitch, Extension Gunners in Lobatse have to be content with a pitch that was disfigured by the development of a Kgotla in the vicinity. Our be Mobile Premier League champions elect, Township

Rollers, have to sweat it out through some heavy sand at the National Youth Centre. These situations do not augur very well for our equivalents of Manchester United, Real Madrid, Bayern Munich, Kaizer Chiefs, etc. As government works hard for national projects, we appeal to the private sector to pick on some of these clubs as a partner. We further appeal to some of our philanthropists to also consider partnerships in this respect.

In the same regard, we thank both the University and the Botswana Defence Force for their contribution to sport in this country through their various facilities. We particularly thank them for availing the two stadiums for regrassing, and for their patience during this exercise. We trust that they would pick up the maintenance of these stadiums after our departure, and even effect the development of other necessary auxiliary facilities like effective floodlighting and facilities meant for other sporting disciplines. We leave maintenance equipment valued in the excess of P600 000.00 to be shared between the two facilities and, to some extent, the National Stadium, whenever it is going to be available.

We thank other organisations and members of the corporate sector for developing facilities and availing them to sport, both at community and national level. We urge others to emulate these gestures as part of their contribution to national development and pride.

As it should be common knowledge, the regrassing of the UB Stadium was done by Evergreen while SSKB was done by the TopTurf Group of Companies. Both companies are based in South Africa, and had a stake in the World Cup 2010 stadiums. In all these projects, we had Resource Planning and Management (RPM) as our project managers.

In November last year, at the commencement of the exercise to regrass the SSKB Stadium, I recognized the fact that there would be temptation to compare our surfaces to what is seen on TV in European stadiums every week. I still do recognise that temptation, for it is only human to do so. However, I urge those who go with the temptation to compare the amount of monies spent in resurfacing those grounds with the amount availed to us for this project. Information available to

us points to the fact that to get your Wembley Stadium kind of surface, you need no less than P4m. One Stadium in South Africa, after failing the FIFA test, had to be re-surfaced to the amount in the excess of R5m. We did not have this amount for the two stadiums.

We thank everybody who stood by our side in these projects. We thank the Botswana Football Association for their understanding and patience during this period. Most of all we thank the football lovers for sustaining this long wait, and the press for their support and patriotism throughout the process. *Le ka moso.*

In conclusion, I wish to take questions, if any, from the members of the press or from the audience in general. I regret to advise that, in as much as I alluded to the National Stadium and other ongoing government projects in general; I will not take any specific questions in respect of those facilities for the simple reason that, for now, the projects are entirely handled by government. I will also not take any questions on the 2010 World Cup; also for the reasons that there is a forum that is charged with that responsibility, least to mention that the task team charged with that headed by the Minister recently held a press briefing on that subject matter. I will take questions on the UB and SSKB stadiums and questions related to facilities in the country in general.

I thank you.