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PRESS RELEASE - GOVERNMENT DECLARES DROUGHT; PROVIDES FOR 2016-17 RELIEF MEASURES

H.E. the President, Lt. General Dr. Seretse Khama Ian Khama has declared 2015/16 a drought year. The declaration follows consideration of Drought Assessment Tour Exercise, which was conducted from 1st to 26th of February and 4th -13th of May 2016. The exercise confirmed that, notwithstanding the late rains in February-March 2016, rainfall was poorly distributed and below normal in most parts of the country. The exercise further confirmed that the livelihoods of a significant number of rural households remain vulnerable and will thus be in need of Government assistance in the coming months.

It is in view of the above findings, that His Excellency the President has declared the whole country drought stricken and that the following relief and special assistance measures shall be implemented effective from the 1st July, 2016 until 30 June, 2017, save for the livestock feed subsidy, which should terminate on 31st December, 2016:

1. Government, through the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning shall invoke the Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS) to provide assistance to farmers who secured their loans from the Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA) and the National Development Bank (NDB). This assistance will be extended to those who have paid up their contributions towards the ACGS insurance scheme.

2. Government, through the Ministry of Agriculture shall provide a 25% livestock feed subsidy effective 1st July, 2016 until 31st December, 2016, on the following items through the Botswana Agricultural Marketing Board (BAMB), which should furthermore not incur VAT payment:

- (i) 50kg Di-Calcium Phosphate or composite feed
- (ii) 50kg Drought Pellets
- (iii) 30kg Bran
- (iv) 50kg Course Salt
- (v) 25kg Lucerne/Lab Lab/Maize/Sorghum Stalk bales

3. Government, through the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism shall intensify the construction and maintenance of firebreaks around protected areas;

4. Budget allocations for Destitution programme shall be raised by 10% to strengthen safety nets to cater for the anticipated increase of beneficiaries due to drought;

5. The Special dispensation for the Okavango Sub District to support the needy households shall be continued;

6. Provision will be made for a double ration at health facilities and second meal at primary schools in the ten (10) rural districts under the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development's Supplementary Feeding Programme;

7. Government, through the Ministry of Health shall continue the Direct Feeding Programme;

8. The above measures shall commence with immediate effect.