

BOTSWANA COMPETITION AUTHORITY COMMEMORATES WORLD COMPETITION DAY

The Competition Authority of Botswana joined other competition agencies and civil society organisations on December 5th in commemorating World Competition Day under the theme 'Competition Issues in Public Procurement'. To observe the day, the Authority hosted a panel discussion based on the theme.

The panellists comprised the CEO of the Competition Authority, Mr. Thula Kaira, and the Director for Policy and Advocacy at the Botswana Confederation of Commerce, Industry and Manpower (BOCCIM), Mr. Dichaba Molobe.

In his remarks at the panel discussion, Mr. Molobe said the private sector is of the view that there is need to redesign the public procurement system so that the specifications are concise and clear, and tender requirements do not place a heavy burden on bidders.

He observed that placing the burden on bidders such as the costs of certifying documents, and submitting samples and reports leads to price escalation as bidders factor the costs in their bids. Molobe further decried the lengthy time lapse between the assessment and award of tenders which he said could take up to a year, as well as the delay in paying suppliers. “We need to ensure that the procurement system is efficient”, he said.

For his part, Mr. Kaira described tenderpreneurship as an important aspect of any economy, noting that the largest buyer is government. He said tenders must always be designed in a manner that promotes competition, and if not so designed, open up room for corruption.

Mr. Kaira said in order to deal with all the facets of public procurement, the Competition Authority saw the need to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime (DCEC) and the Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Board (PPADB).

He implored the private sector to play a role in promoting competition, and decried excessive pricing by the sector when it comes to public procurement “when its business to business prices are competitive and when its private to public the prices are inflated” Kaira noted.

On 5th December, 1980, the United Nations adopted the international standard for competition laws called the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices, commonly known as the United Nations Set of Principles and Rules on Competition. The set has guided a large number of developing countries in developing and enacting their competition laws.

To mark the 30th anniversary of the set, a proposal was made to observe 5th December as the World Competition Day by the International Network of Civil Society on Competition, which is an

international coalition of civil society organisations, competition practitioners, researchers and legislators hosted by Consumer Unity and Trust International, CUTS.