

REMARKS BY
THE HON. MINISTER
OF
TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE
DURING
THE JOINT MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE
MEETING
FOR
THE TRANS KALAHARI RAILWAY PROJECT

HELD AT
MAUN
ON
15.08.2025

1. Co-chair, distinguished colleagues, it is my singular honour to welcome you to Maun, one of our country's most treasured tourist destinations. I hope you will have the opportunity to enjoy the natural beauty that surrounds us.
2. Co-chair, we gather here to receive progress updates on the development of the envisaged Trans Kalahari rail project - an ambitious undertaking that will link our two beautiful countries, Namibia and Botswana, and by extension, connect our economies more firmly into the continental and global trade system. We have already approved the Inception Report from the feasibility study Consultant, and today we look forward to further insights.
3. Comrade Co- chair, the TKR promises more than a railway line. It promises faster, more efficient trade. It promises new jobs and new skills. It promises to advance our goals of economic diversification, poverty reduction, and inclusive growth.

4. Rail infrastructure is the backbone of integrated markets. With the Africa Continental Free Trade Area Agreement now a reality, we must ensure that goods - particularly bulk commodities - can move across the continent efficiently. Not only goods, through the Africa Continental Free Trade Area Agreement, people, ideas, and investments will also move into regions that have too often been left behind. Africa is calling.
5. As we continue the feasibility work, I urge us to think outside the box. We know that many large railway projects struggle to meet traditional commercial bankability tests. We also know that coal, one of TKR's potential cargoes, faces environmental challenges in today's markets. This means we must explore innovative financing, blending public, private, and development capital to bring TKR to life.
6. And above all, we must remember this: TKR is a development project first, and a transport project second. The history of great railway lines - from North America's transcontinental to the Orient Express - shows that they do more than carry freight; they create entirely new geographies of opportunity.

7. This is where the concept of planning gain comes in. Planning gain is the additional economic and social value generated when infrastructure is planned in tandem with land use, housing, industry, and services. In practice, this means using the TKR corridor to plan for new towns, industrial clusters, agro-processing hubs, and service centres. It means deliberately creating zones where business can thrive, where families can settle, where young people can find work close to home.

8. In our context, planning gain could mean the realization of Kalahari City. A vibrant, strategically located city along the corridor that can anchor development, attract investment, and become a symbol of what Botswana and Namibia can achieve when we dream boldly and act decisively.

9. Funding such a transformative project will require creativity as well as commitment. We must explore models that capture part of the value created by planning gain — for example, land value uplift around new towns and industrial hubs — and reinvest it into the project.

10. We must also be prepared to reshape the way our railways are organised and governed. New infrastructure of this scale cannot be delivered and sustained under outdated structures. We will need modern railway organisations supported by up-to-date legal frameworks — frameworks that enable deregulation, separate infrastructure management from train operations, allow open access for qualified operators, and promote competition where it drives efficiency. A fully integrated regional approach is essential so that the TKR becomes part of a seamless network, not an isolated line. We must also acknowledge that Botswana Railways, like many national railways, faces management and operational challenges that must be resolved to give investors and partners confidence. Strong governance, clear accountability, and professional management will be as critical to TKR's success as steel and sleepers.

11. We can imagine a future where the TKR corridor sustains a combined population of over 250,000 people in thriving, well-planned communities. A future where the railway is the spine of a new economic

zone, integrating agriculture, mining, manufacturing, logistics, and tourism.

12. This is our opportunity to write history — to create an asset whose impact will be felt for generations. The feasibility study must therefore look beyond engineering drawings and cargo forecasts. It must integrate spatial planning, development policy, and investment attraction strategies so that every kilometre of track contributes to the long-term prosperity of our nations.

13. TKR is too important to fail. If the feasibility numbers do not immediately convince financiers, we must not fold our arms. We must innovate, adapt, and build the partnerships that will make it happen.

14. In closing, it is important to recognise the natural synergies between the Trans Kalahari Railway project and the existing Trans Kalahari Corridor, which links South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia by road. Both initiatives share the same strategic objective — to connect our countries to global markets through fast, efficient, and reliable transport. By

aligning the two projects, we can create a fully integrated multimodal corridor that combines rail, road, and border infrastructure, offering traders and investors a seamless logistics platform. Merging our planning and governance structures will avoid duplication, optimise resources, and strengthen our case for international financing. Together, the railway and the road can form a single economic spine across Southern Africa, multiplying the benefits for every community along the route.

15. I now look forward to hearing the progress report from our officials, continuing our joint work to turn this vision into reality.

16. I thank you.