

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION: TAUTONA LODGE

1. **Mr. Speaker**, I would like to provide a **short statement on Tautona Lodge**, a Government facility that has resulted in a variety of questions from Honourable Members concerning issues and reasons for its acquisition. I wish to point out that while I understand the angst of Honorable Members regarding Government's accountability on the Directorate of Intelligence and Security (DIS), it is proving a challenge that while my Ministry is in the middle of conducting a review of the organization which would otherwise provide comprehensive answers to the different specific questions arising from members, members themselves want certain specific answers on the spot.

2. Honorable members will know that this question was asked in this House under the previous administration and that a number of answers were provided following questions from among other people the current Leader of Opposition, Honorable Dumelang Saleshando. In fact, I believe the first time this question was asked in this House, it was asked by Honorable Saleshando in 2021 and I believe the controversy over the acquisition of the lodge arose following answers provided by the then Presidential Affairs Minister Kabo Morwaeng. Honorable Members will note that when the question about Tautona Lodge was first asked, Mr. Morwaeng indicated that, and I quote;

“The acquisition of the facility followed Government procurement procedure as prescribed by the PPADB Regulation 61 which provides for

direct appointment. The primary consideration for acquisition of the facility was its location, which provides a vast serviced land i.e. electricity connection, access road to primary road, water and waste water services including proximity to a hospital and an airport.”

Mr. Morwaeng at that time further indicated that Tautona Lodge would mainly be utilized for training by government departments, including being a center for hosting research on sand-veldt environment, particularly wildlife, cattle rearing and agriculture.

3. **Mr. Speaker**, it is clear from the history of the question that (a) Government’s reasons for acquiring Tautona Lodge and (b) the association of the Lodge with the Directorate of Intelligence and Security (DIS) and (c) the circumstances of the procurement of the lodge were a source of great concern leading to suspicions and allegations of impropriety. **Mr. Speaker**, given this history and these suspicions, it is very clear that this question cannot be addressed in a piecemeal fashion and certainly not without a comprehensive review of all the associated circumstances, including its association with the DIS and whether public funds were misappropriated in the acquisition of the lodge, which I believe is the crux of the matter.

4. **Mr. Speaker**, if there is available evidence associating the acquisition of Tautona Lodge with the DIS, my Ministry naturally seeks to understand the rationale behind the reasons, particularly whether such reasons necessarily bear-out the fulfilment of the Intelligence and Security Service mandate as

established by the ISS Act (2007). As a Government we take seriously the need for that kind of accountability when and where it is required, and an impression should never be created that where all the facts are established, my Ministry would hesitate to identify impropriety and ensure accountability.

4. **Mr. Speaker**, I believe that when the DIS has fully briefed my Ministry it will become easy to answer the questions of Honorable Members and address all their pressing concerns. As indicated, my Ministry will then establish whether, where it concerns national security, the reasons provided would vindicate the DIS' mandate and whether or not there is operational or strategic basis in intelligence practices and processes to have acquired Tautona Lodge. If there were other strategic reasons why Government acquired Tautona Lodge other than for the DIS, those reasons will be put to this House as discovered and where any serious public policy misalignment is identified, this Government will take all the necessary steps to align the usage of the facility to its relevant objectives.

5. **Mr. Speaker**, I wish to assure this Honorable House that if and when my Ministry's review of issues related to Tautona Lodge discovers serious impropriety, such findings will inform Government's next cause of action.

6. **Mr. Speaker**, at this point the information I am going to provide this Honorable House is going to be based on answers provided to this House by the previous administration. As indicated, this summary of answers is not based on our own reviews and briefs as all the necessary inquiries are still ongoing and not yet concluded.

7. **Mr. Speaker**, according to the available information at this point, Tautona Lodge was acquired by the Government of Botswana (GOB) following a Public Procurement and Assets Disposal Board (PPADB) approval of the direct acquisition of 100% of the shares. The PPADB approved this acquisition on 7th May 2021 and the Government of Botswana was registered as the sole shareholder of Tautona Lodge on 18th May 2021 as shown by records at the Intellectual Property Authority (CIPA).

8. **Mr. Speaker**, available information further shows that the land in which Tautona Lodge sits is a farm that was purchased by Government at a total sum of fifty-eight million two hundred and forty thousand (P 58 240 000.00) including Value Added Tax, as a final settlement amount for procurement. This information was provided by the former Minister in this parliament as indicated.

9. **Mr. Speaker**, as I have previously indicated to this House, in addition to the Lodge, the facility had diverse animal species. These include:

Lions (2)

Elands (70)

Wildebeest (40)

Waterbuck (15)

Ostrich (20)

Kudu (15)

Giraffe (65)

Zebra (50)

Ant bear (10)

Honey Badger (6)

1 Warthog (30)

Black back jackal (10)

Brown hyena (5)

Impala (200)

Gemsbok - kukama (25)

Red hartebeest - kgama (15)

Duiker (15)

(ii) The facility offers hospitality services, which include hotel and catering as well as conferencing, Game Drive, Bush Walk and Sand Dance, Restaurant and Campsite with boma, among others.

(iii) The Lodge has a staff complement of 39 members. These include senior positions of Operations Manager, Human Resource Manager, Finance Officer and Stores and Supplies Officer. Others are in Front Desk, House Keeping, maintenance, Grounds Personnel, Driver and Kitchen.

10. **Mr. Speaker**, in conclusion the information I have provided above is based on information previously provided to this Honorable House by the previous administration. My Ministry is in the process of conducting reviews with the view to establish the relevant facts so that at the right time, this Honorable House is fully apprised as to all the issues concerning Tautona Lodge.

11. Further to this, Honorable Members as previously communicated to this House by Honourable minister for State President Moeti Mohwasa a request for the DIS to address Honourable members at a General Assembly has been put before this House. I advise the House to make this possible so that we all may have the answers to all the questions we have about the institution.

12. **Mr. Speaker**, I have also anticipated that further questions will arise following my statement requiring specific answers. I however am not in a position to provide full answers until the review process is concluded. We are currently in conversation with all the relevant Accounting Officers and will certainly note all your questions and will most certainly provide comprehensive answers.

I thank you **Mr. Speaker**.