Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness Workshop for Southern Africa

Arebbusch Lodge, Windhoek, Namibia

08-11 November 2010

The workshop facilitators, colleagues from Southern Africa region, ladies and gentlemen, it is indeed a great honour for me to officially welcome you to this very important capacity-building workshop on Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness Programme of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands for the Southern Africa region. I trust that you had a safe and hassle free journey from your respective countries to Namibia and that you have enjoyed your stay in Namibia so far.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you may know wetlands are very important ecosystems that provide essential ecosystem services on which humans depend for their daily survival. As for Namibia, wetlands are very important and precious as Namibia is the most arid country south of the Sahara. As much as wetlands provide essential ecosystem services, they are facing increasing degradation due to competing and increasing human needs. Most of the wetland degradation is as the result of lack of awareness, education and information on the value of wetlands to our own development.

We are all responsible for advocating for sound and wise use of wetlands and associated resources. However we expect more from you as the national focal persons for the Ramsar Convention's Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness Programme at national level to take the lead in the fight against wetland degradation. I know that many of you are facing challenges in addressing the wetland conservation through communications, education, participation and awareness.

On the other hand, it is pleasing to note that workshops such as this one we are starting with today are being conducted to build capacity of the national focal persons to enhance their knowledge and skills in order to be effective in their work. I strongly believe that

on-going capacity building is necessary if we want to address the challenges facing wetlands globally. There are advances being made in terms of information technology and communication and I believe that through on-going capacity building, we can make use of such innovations to advance our course of wetland conservations.

In conclusion, I wish you all the best and trust that the four-day workshop will be a success and that you will enjoy the Namibian hospitality.

Thank you.

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