

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM



**STATEMENT BY Hon. POHAMBBA SHIFETA, MP
Deputy Minister of Environment and Tourism**

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE NAMLEISURE CARD

30 May 2013

Tourism Expo - Windhoek, Namibia

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen, members of the media.

It gives me great pleasure to be part of the launch of this exciting new product. Let me first and foremost take this opportunity to congratulate NWR for this initiative, and thank the Acting Managing Director, Ms Hengari, for her presentation.

Namibia's National Parks are the foundation of Namibia's conservation success story, and fundamental to Namibia's sustainable growth and tourism development. Retaining Namibia's competitive advantages in this field, and our ability to continue to pioneer innovative and successful conservation initiatives depends on a large extent on ensuring that Namibians share a common appreciation of these assets, and embrace them as their own – and a common heritage. At the same time, Namibia's close relationship with the SADC community, particularly in the fields of trans-boundary conservation initiatives are internationally recognized as forward looking and exemplary examples of good conservation practices.

Every citizen and resident of our beautiful country has a role to play, whether directly or indirectly, in both the tourism industry, and the conservation of our pristine environment. It is only through having a first-hand appreciation of Namibia's natural treasures, that we can expect our fellow country men and women to develop a shared pride and passion for conservation.

Namibia's protected areas offer ideal opportunities for relaxation and leisure, and quality family time – a time to relax and replenish. Yet, we are all aware of the challenges related to the cost of travelling, and of balancing our personal budgets to cover essential living expenses, whilst still allowing for some small

luxuries. The NamLeisure Card has just made this a whole lot easier, helping to enhance the physical and emotional well-being of our people.

The mandate of our Ministry to ensure that our protected areas and our natural assets are sustainably managed and protected is a costly exercise. It is therefore with great appreciation that I commend and gratefully acknowledge NWR for dedicating a portion of the proceeds of this initiative towards park management programs and projects, and to the NWR Enviro-Kidz program.

Stimulating domestic and regional tourism has long been a subject receiving close attention in my Ministry and NTB. In the Tourism sector it is widely acknowledged that countries with healthy domestic tourism numbers are less susceptible to the impact of unpredictable global events.

I am confident that this initiative will encourage and assist Namibian and SADC residents to become more regular travellers, and to reap the benefits from recreational travel. I strongly encourage all my fellow Namibians to embrace this initiative, and to become proud members of the NamLeisure family.

Once again, I extend my congratulations and appreciation to NWR, and wish them every success.