

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM



STATEMENT BY HON. POHAMBA SHIFETA, MP DEPUTY MINISTER

AT THE SIXTH ANNUAL MET FIELD AWARDS CEREMONY

**30 APRIL 2013
18h30**

**AREBBUSCH LODGE
WINDHOEK**

Director of Ceremonies,

Directors and Deputy Directors for the Ministry of Environment and Tourism

All officials of the MET present

Heads of other Government departments, NGOs and the private sector

All invited guests

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me a great pleasure and honour to be with you at this event. The Annual Field Staff Award Ceremony has become the highlight of our staff calendar year. It is an occasion where we come together to celebrate the work of our finest, friendliest, bravest and most diligent staff members.

The year 2012, which is our year of review for this award ceremony, has been filled with many achievements. We have worked to make considerable progress towards achieving national development goals as well as Millennium Development goals. I commend all the staff members of the Ministry for their discipline and commitment to nation building through wildlife conservation, protected area management and tourism development.

Namibia has established an impressive system of Protected Areas, managed by the State via the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. The national protected area network, specifically National Parks covers seventeen percent of the country, and while the century old Etosha National Park and Namib-Naukluft Park are deservedly regarded as the

flagships of Namibia's conservation success, all the country's protected areas have something unique to offer.

The Government continues to maintain and manage protected areas that even species such as black rhino that seemed destined for extinction are on the increase. Wildlife migration corridors are being reopened. This maintenance and management of protected areas is conducted in accordance with activities such as water provision to game, wildlife crime prevention, inspections and law enforcement, human wildlife conflict management, infrastructure development, rural community involvement and participation in wildlife management, mainly by our field staff on the ground.

During the period under review, we continued to constantly refine and expand our protected area network, placing great emphasis on local community involvement and ensuring that benefits are shared and that they spur both local development and conservation success. In this regard, the Ministry finalized the National Policy on Filming and Photography in Protected Areas during 2012, which has now been approved by Cabinet. This policy will ensure that filming and photography in protected areas complies with the environmental and economic regulatory framework and that filming and photography promotes the economy of the country due to the country's rich wildlife and scenic resources.

Despite the successes in wildlife conservation and benefit thereof, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism recognizes that living with wildlife often carries a cost, with increased wildlife populations and expanded

ranges into communal and freehold farming areas, frequent conflicts between people and wild animals, particularly elephants and predators are being experienced. This has resulted in livestock and crop losses, damage to water installations and, in some instances loss of human lives.

The Government also recognizes that such conflicts have always existed where people and wildlife live together and will continue to do so in the future. This means that it will not be possible to eradicate all conflict, but that conflict has to be managed in the most effective and efficient ways possible.

In this regard, the Ministry has been committed to plans of implementing and putting mitigation measures in place, in order to reduce the conflict and assist affected communities and farmers in this regard. The implementation of these mitigation measures allows the Ministry to manage human-wildlife conflict in a way that recognizes the rights and development needs of local communities while at the same time recognizing the need to promote biodiversity conservation. Some of the winners this evening have their work related to human wildlife conflict mitigation measures.

Similarly, efforts and funding has been put in wildlife crime prevention and law enforcement, in order to protect our wildlife from poaching.

Namibia has also gained a worldwide reputation for its innovative approaches of linking conservation to poverty alleviation through its communal area conservancy program and pro-poor tourism initiatives. Our Communal Conservancy has since the passing of legislation in 1996,

grown from a small pilot project to one of the country's major development programmes.

The conservation success in communal lands has also unlocked enormous tourism development opportunities. These are poised to provide substantial employment and livelihood benefits to rural communities. During the period under review, nine more conservancies has been registered bringing the total number of conservancies to Seventy nine (79), benefiting more than two hundred and forty thousand (240 000) rural communities.

Overall, about forty one (41) percent of Namibia is currently under sustainable natural resource management. This consists of State Protected Areas, communal area conservancies, State and community forests, tourism concession areas, game farms and private reserves.

Clearly, Namibia is a nation committed to sustainable development and biodiversity conservation, while actively seeking to ensure that environmental conservation benefits rural communities.

As the guardians of our State protected areas, and as the officials tasked with the conservation of our biodiversity while working with stakeholders in wildlife management, you have great responsibility in ensuring that our precious resources are conserved.

The Ministry of Environment is committed to improving working and living standards for all staff, and last year we have made much progress towards these goals. Staff housing, new offices and equipment has been provided

in various parks and regional offices. Support projects and programmes are also to be thanked for working with us to develop plans and provide funding for improvements.

We have improved our internal systems to cut through red tape, improve service delivery while promoting accountability and transparency.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I congratulate those who receive the awards tonight for setting an example for others to follow. I also encourage staff to nominate their colleagues for next year's awards, and to work harder so that they too can stand proud in the spotlight next year.

Finally, I thank you all for your presence here tonight.