



Ministry of Environment and Tourism

**HONOURABLE POHAMBA SHIFETA, MP**

**MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM**

**NEW YEAR ADDRESS AT MET STAFF MEETING**

**05 FEBRUARY 2020**

**WINDHOEK**

**KHOMAS REGION**

**Director of ceremonies**

**Cde. Bernadette Jagger: Deputy Minister of Environment and Tourism**

**Mr. Teofilus Nghitila: Executive Director**

**Representatives of affiliated Public Enterprises here present**

**Officials of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism**

**Members of the Media**

**Invited guests**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

Good Morning!

I am happy that this platform allows us to exchange new year greetings and expectations after the holiday season.

A new year is a milestone which offers us an opportunity to retrospect and set new targets both in our professional and personal capacities.

I am therefore delighted to see many of you here in good health, shape and looking rejuvenated and refreshed in 2020.

Last year we saw colleagues leaving the Ministry in search of greener pastures and other sadly passed on.

I call upon all of us to observe a moment of silence in remembrance of our colleagues who passed on last year.

**30- 60- seconds...**

Thank you..

Having done that, let me take this opportunity to welcome all our new staff members for joining this Bravo team and congratulate those promoted to new positions within the Ministry, I wish all of you well in your new positions with new duties.

I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to the entire MET Bravo team for your continued contributions towards the achievement of our broader mandate which is derived from article 95 (I) of the National Constitution and stipulates as follows:

*“maintenance of ecosystems, essential ecological processes and biological diversity of Namibia and Utilisation of living natural resources on a sustainable basis for the benefit of all Namibians, both present and future; in particular shall provide measures against the dumping or recycling of foreign nuclear and toxic waste on Namibia territory”.*

This is a huge responsibility which we have all undertaken to fulfill upon signing of our employment contracts.

A lot has been achieved under this mandate, this includes the development of an enabling policy and legislative framework for environmental protection, natural resources management and sustainable utilisation.

The Environmental Management Act 2007 (Act 7 of 2007) and its regulations is one of such instruments we use to protect our environment from harmful human activities.

This piece of legislation lists activities that have potential to damage the environment and these activities may not be conducted without an

environmental clearance certificate or an environmental management plan.

Even though we have seen an increase in applications for environmental clearance, compliance to the Environmental Management Act is still a major challenge as we continue to see some activities being conducted without environmental clearance certificates.

### **Director of ceremonies...**

The launch of the online application system for environmental clearance certificate was one of the highlights of 2019.

As a Ministry we finally entered the age of digital transformation with the launch of this online application system.

I am pleased that this has made the environmental clearance application process more rigorous, efficient, transparent and client-friendly.

I call on all Departments and Directorates to follow this example and ensure the digitization of all public services provided by this Ministry during the upcoming financial year, especially wildlife utilization related permits and gambling licenses.

Even though the online system has improved the ease of the application process for environmental clearance, there remains a number of challenges linked to the Environmental Management Act that we need to address.

We have all seen the illegal sand mining and timber harvesting that has been taking place while the state of the majority of waste disposal sites around the country continues to be deplorable.

We need to strengthen monitoring and enforcement of compliance with this Act and to work with the Namibian Police and Office of the Prosecutor General to ensure that offenders in terms of the Act are prosecuted. Furthermore, we need cooperation from all state organs to enforce compliance. All competent authorities should understand that, MET doesn't prevent development of any sort but MET has Constitutional mandate to prevent any violation of our environmental law in the whole Namibia.

I'm glad that as a Ministry we carry out our mandate as per Art. 95(l) of our Namibian Constitution without fear, favour or prejudice. And we should continue to do so.

In terms of waste management, the National Clean Up Campaign of 2019 was a resounding success and is something we need to build on to make it bigger and better.

We will continue to strengthen awareness to change the behaviour and mind-set of our citizens when it comes to preventing littering.

We will furthermore continue to work with Local Authorities and regional councils to ensure that standards of waste management at waste disposal sites and general waste management infrastructure are improved across the country.

The mobilization of resources through external partners has become particularly important given the difficult economic and financial situation. It is encouraging that we have been able to continue mobilizing resources from all sources for new projects linked to different aspects of environmental management.

Two new Green Climate Fund projects were launched with funding of US\$10 million each (N\$300 million) and the Global Environment Facility funded the Namibia Integrated Landscape Approach for Enhancing Livelihoods and Environmental Governance to Eradicate Poverty (NILALEG) Project worth US\$10.8 (N\$160 million) are examples of successful resource mobilisation.

Considerable impact has been made from projects implemented at this Ministry with support from the Green Climate Fund, Global Environment Facility, GIZ and KfW in particular.

I was privileged to be part of the ceremony in June of last year in which 19 grants worth over N\$86 million were handed over to communal conservancies for them to invest in climate resilient infrastructure.

This was undertaken through the CBNRM Empower to Adapt project that is being implemented through the Environmental Investment Fund with funding from the Green Climate Fund.

We need to continue in this vein and ensure that all of our projects impact positively on people's lives, particularly those in the rural areas.

### **Ladies and gentlemen**

Our national parks remain one of the key tourism draw cards in Namibia. These parks have the potential to bring in maximum yields for the country as they offer regular sightings of many species such as elephants, rhinos, lion, leopard, zebra, giraffe, wildebeest, roan, sable, buffalo and many other species can be seen every day.

We therefore need to position our parks in attractive manner by ensuring that our park infrastructure is up to the highest possible standard.

Last year we constructed and inaugurated new world class park stations for the Bwabwata National Park and the Tsau //Khaeb (Sperrgebiet) National Park with support from the German Government through KfW. We are seeing a huge improvement in the management of these parks with this infrastructure provided, along with other parks like Khaudum, Nkasa Rupara and Mudumu National Parks where such infrastructure has already been provided.

Park Management Plans or Business plans along with the Tourism Development Plans for Bwabwata, Nkasa Rupara, Mudumu, Khaudum and Tsau //Khaeb (Sperrgebiet) National Parks were been reviewed and finalized in 2019.

Our focus for the year 2020 in terms of park infrastructure development, park management planning as well as tourism development will be on the coastal parks of Skeleton Coast, Cape Cross, Dorob and Namib Naukluft Park.

We need to develop and facilitate concession opportunities in all of our national parks so that these parks serve as engines of economic growth as well as flagship areas for conservation.

Serious attention will also be given to the upgrading of the boundary fence for Etosha National Park using our own staff members and volunteers.

This project will actually be launched on the 22 February 2020. More focus will also be given to the maintenance of the Etosha National Parks tourism roads. We do this to ensure that visitors to our parks, visit such parks in comfort and enjoy the wonders that our parks can offer.

The Friends of Parks Programme will also be shortly launched. This is a programme which encourages donors, the private sector and other stakeholders to get involved and support the development and management of Namibia's national parks in the spirit of good will and through a coordinated and structured approach.

I commend the staff members of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, more particularly those in the Directorate of Wildlife and National Parks and the Department of Natural Resource Management at large, for the effective and efficient management of our National Parks despite the challenges that we face, including insufficient funding for protected area management as well as the crippling drought of last year.

**Director of proceedings,**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Wildlife protection and law enforcement remained one of our core functions in 2019. The year 2019 was characterized by a high number of cases, arrests and rhino and pangolin poaching or trafficking. The number of arrests is significantly higher than in the previous years, which also had a lower percentage of arrests related to rhino, elephant and pangolin. Arrests and seizures related to rhino have remained relatively stable, while a high number of pre-emptive arrests continued to stop poachers before they killed animals.

Arrests and seizures related to both elephant and pangolin have increased, with pangolin cases showing the most alarming rise.

In 2019, forty five (45) rhinos were poached, compared to seventy four (74) in 2018, fifty five (55) in 2017, sixty one (61) in 2016 and ninety seven (97) in 2015. Two (2) rhinos have been poached to date this year. As for elephants, twelve (12) were poached in 2019, twenty seven (27) in 2018, fifty (50) in 2017, one hundred and one (101) in 2016 and forty nine (49) in 2015. No elephant has recorded poached this year.

For all these illegal hunting activities and illegal possession of game products, eighty seven (87) cases were opened in 2019 with two hundred and one (201) people arrested, compared to one hundred and fifteen (115) cases in 2018 with one hundred and thirty eight (138) people arrested, seventy six (76) cases in 2017 with one hundred and twenty three (123) people arrested, one hundred and thirty five (135) cases in 2016 with eighty two (82) people arrested, and ninety one (91) cases in 2015 with ninety six (96) people arrested. Twenty six (26) firearms were seized while twenty seven (27) vehicles were impounded.

Of the two hundred and one (201) people arrested in 2019, one hundred and eighty-two (182) people are Namibians, nine (9) are Zambians, seven (7) are Angolans, two (2) are French and one (1) Mozambican.

A range of capacity building for our wildlife management staff was undertaken in Namibia during 2019. This included training for financial

investigations and lifestyle audits; intelligence and international exchanges to facilitate information sharing among various partners; building of capacity and trust among the law enforcement agencies; providing incentives to communities from wildlife; and of course support to the men and women on the ground in terms of their daily patrols, surveillance and detection.

Many of the recent successes in fighting wildlife crime in Namibia are the result of improved patrols and rapid, proactive responses to incidents. This is enabled through flexible funding from government and specific organizations.

Ongoing funding of this nature is vital to ensure continued success. In a country with diverse socio-economic development challenges, government resources to fight wildlife crime are limited, making external support indispensable.

The Rooikat Trust, a task oriented Namibian entity, provides substantial support to investigation units, including the Blue Rhino Task Team. This is enabled through primary support from the Wildcat Foundation, supplemented by the funds from the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs of the United States of America.

Numerous other funding, including the Game Product Trust Fund, the Global Environment Facility, the German Government through KfW and GIZ, the United States Agency for International Development, WWF and the Namibian business community support the fight against wildlife crime in a variety of ways.

This includes infrastructure development, crime prevention, community support and other assistance. We thank them profoundly for this assistance.

I want to congratulate the staff members of the Ministry, the Namibian Police Force, the Namibian Defence Force, Customs, Prosecutor General's office, Ministry of Justice, the communities, the civil society, farmers, private sector, international donors and everyone involved in the fight against wildlife crime for the success we are seeing in this fight.

Let me specifically address our soldiers, police officers, wardens and all our personnel in parks and other conservation areas with duties to protect our icon species. Your duties are very demanding but yet tempting sometimes. Focused on your duties, Be patriotic enough to say no to temptations and greediness. The nation looks upon you as the saviors of these iconic species. Retire from such duties with pride and with good history instead of being incarcerated for having succumbed to temptations and hereby erased your good history.

I have no doubt that many of you are patriotic and carry out your duties as evident from the successes in our anti poaching activities. Without you patriotic members of anti poaching team, today we would have no such iconic species left in the country. Don't be demoralized by those few of your colleagues you succumbed to temptations and by such ill deeds tainted all of us and reputations of our state organs.

I see these as a lesson for our future plan an strategies to stop poaching in Namibia.

Director of proceedings,

Human wildlife conflict remained a challenge in 2019. This conflict has become more frequent and severe over recent decades as a result of human population growth, wildlife population growth, unplanned agricultural activities, and expansion of agricultural and industrial activities which together have led to increased human encroachment on previously wild and uninhabited areas.

Competition for the available natural habitats and resources has increased. Moreover, the effects of climate change are exacerbating these conflicts.

The situation was even worsened by the drought in most part of the country in 2019.

A variety of approaches has been implemented in order to manage the conflict efficiently and effectively, in line with the strategies set out in the Revised National Policy on Human Wildlife Conflict Management.

These include prevention strategies which endeavor to avoid the conflict from occurring in the first place and take action towards addressing its root causes, and protection strategies that are implemented when the conflict is certain to happen or has already occurred, as well as mitigation strategies that attempt to reduce the level of impact and lessen the problem.

We will continue to implement the policy and put in place mitigation, preventative and protective measures so that we manage human wildlife conflict in a way that recognizes the rights and development needs of local communities and farmers while at the same time recognizing the need to promote biodiversity conservation.

Director of proceedings,

Last year November in Karas region, on the occasion of launching the National Policy on Prospecting and mining in Protected areas, we launched, at the same time, the Namib Horses Management Plan. Today I m glad to announce that we have more than 15 foals. There are currently 86 Wild horses moving from 73 last year. The population status is 40 stations, 31 mares and 15 foals. These horses are doing well with the strategies we have put in place through the management plan.

I would like to comment our staff in the Directorate of Wildlife and Parks Management for prompt action and efficient management of the situation concerning our horses. These horses were almost facing a state of extinction but you have worked tirelessly, especially our staff on ground in the Namib Naukluft park.

Director of proceedings

Ladies and gentlemen

Our conservancies continue to do us proud despite the governance and administrative challenges with some of them. We now have eighty six conservancies in the country and last year I gave a directive that conservancies should invest financial resources that they generate from the use of wildlife and tourism development into capital or developmental projects.

We have seen progress in this regard as many conservancies have invested their resources into rural electrification, water supply to communities, human wildlife conflict mitigation measures, school development, support to health facilities, support to drought relief programme and many other projects.

We commend the conservancies for this achievement and urge them to do more.

This year the financial management directives that we have put in place for management of finances will be implemented fully and all conservancies are expected to comply.

Let me also thank our regional staff members and the NGO support staff who work tirelessly in supporting the conservancies in the administration and management of their affairs.

Tourism is one of the major contributors to our economy, our 2018 Statistical Report launched recently indicate that there has been a 3.9% increase of tourist arrivals from 2017 to 2018. I urge that the annual statistical reports should be released earlier before August if they are to make meaningful impact to the development of the sector.

I have alluded earlier that Namibia has a lot to offer based on its unique nature. I want to call upon the sector be innovative and diversify our tourism product offering to be able to attract more tourists to the country. It is crucial that together with our stakeholders we identify the bottlenecks in tourism and seek amicable solutions to address them. Examples of such challenges include crimes against tourists, customer service, poor infrastructure, bureaucracies in obtaining travel documents amongst others.

Last but not least, we come around to the critically important issues of governance, administration and Human Resources. With regards to our Public Enterprises, let me take this opportunity to remind you of the need to comply with some of the key provisions of the Public Enterprises Governance Act, the specific enabling Act and Companies Act.

**In terms of administration and human resource issues**, we made good progress on our commitment to settle outstanding overtime and subsistence and travel claims dating back over the previous 5 years. This includes the settlement of backpay owed to those that were upgraded from workhands to rangers. I assure you that we will do our best to settle any remaining claims during the upcoming financial year.

In closing ladies and gentlemen and colleagues and while still on issues of human resources,

Let us step up our commitment and dedication to our work in 2020. The issue of late coming to work and staff being absent from office without the knowledge and authorization of your supervisor are still common in this Ministry and will no longer be tolerated. I am herewith calling on all

managers to ensure that their staff are in office on time and that they are punctual to meetings and serve clients in a timely manner. Failure to adhere to this should result in disciplinary measures as appropriate.

To all of us let honest and transparency be part of our daily menu. Corrupt activities are bad for the nation and cannot be tolerated in the system.

Lastly let us not be discouraged by the difficult economic and financial climate we are facing. Necessity is the mother of invention and invention and innovation are known to thrive during times of hardship. Let us use this as an opportunity to work together to discover and implement new and better ways of doing things. This will leave this Ministry in an even better place and ensure that we play our rightful role in improving the lives of the Namibian people.

I thank you