

Director of Ceremonies

Local Authorities Leaders present

CEO of Namibia Tourism Board, Mr. Digu //Naobeb

Fellow colleagues from Millennium Challenge Account

Distinguished partners in the Tourism industry

Distinguished guest, members of the media, ladies and gentleman

I am delighted to be part of this historical event in Namibia' Tourism journey and equally excited about the Tourism Routes development in the Northern part of Namibia. The route concept is a unique marketing tool especially for the off-roads or rural tourism activities, hence a sustainable tourism practice. My office therefore wholeheartedly embraces and supports this initiative and equally extends its gratitude to the Millennium Challenge Account for the generous financial support in realizing this project.

Ladies and gentlemen

Having given you the overall figures, it is noteworthy to realize the importance of the self-drive market coming to Namibia. These are usually adventure seekers, wanting to explore destinations at their own pace. According to the Tourist Exit Survey 2013, 47% of tourists travel with private cars and 6% rent cars whilst visiting Namibia. These figures are basis to have triggered a well-coordinated tool, such as the Development of the Tourism Routes, to display and create awareness of tourism facilities around a specific area for the self-drive market. Tourism

trends in Namibia lately show that South Africa is the biggest self-drive market for Namibia and there is still room to encourage other markets to do self-drive in Namibia. Therefore the idea of establishing functional and sustainable tourism routes in Namibia will equally create economic opportunities for rural tourism/ conservancies that are in most cases disadvantaged to market share.

My office is informed that the routes, I am about to Launch, already have association committees established, chairperson and route-coordinators are appointed and they have started recruiting route members. I believe this is a step forward in sustaining these routes and I want to encourage in particular, the Car Rental Association of Namibia, Tour Operators Association of Namibia and Hospitality Association of Namibia to render their support and enter into partnership agreements, in drawing more and more tourists to these routes.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my distinguished honor to declare the ***Arid Eden Route, Omulunga Palm Route and Four Rivers Route*** now OFFICIALLY OPEN.

Lastly, I urge all Namibians as the backbone for sustainable Tourism in Namibia, to explore these routes and support our own tourism products for this sector to go to greater heights. Once again, these routes are now declared open.

I THANK YOU,