



Republic of Namibia

**Welcoming Remarks by the
Honourable Pohamba Shifeta**

Deputy Minister of Environment and Tourism, MP

**ON THE OCCASION OF
THE LAUNCHING OF NAMIBIA'S THREE NATIONAL ACTION PLANS
AND STRATEGIES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RIO
CONVENTIONS AND OUR STRATEGY AS UNCCD COP 11 PRESIDENT**

18.30, Wednesday 29th October, Hilton Hotel

WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

Director of Ceremonies

Honourable Uahekua Herunga, Minister of Environment and Tourism and President of the UNCCD COP 11

His Excellency Musinga Bandora, United Nations Resident Representative;

His Excellency Raul Fuentes Milani, Ambassador of the European Union;

His Excellency Onno Huckmann, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany;

Ministers and Deputy Ministers present;

Honourable Members of Parliament;

Distinguished invited Guests;

Officials from various Ministries

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is my illustrious privilege to welcome you with the following words of Sir David Attenborough an English Broadcaster and Naturalist; ***“The future of life on earth depends on our ability to take action. Many individuals are doing what they can, but real success can only come if there's a change in our societies and our economics and in our politics. I've been lucky in my lifetime to see some of the greatest spectacles that the natural world has to offer. Surely we have a responsibility to leave for future generations a planet that is healthy, habitable by all species”***

We are delighted to have you here to participate and share in ***‘the Launching of Namibia’s Strategic Action Plans of the three Rio Conventions, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the UNCCD COP11 Presidency Concise Strategy and Action Plan.***

Your presence this evening demonstrates the significance importance you attach to biodiversity conservation, land degradation and climate change issues. In fact, these are environmental challenges facing all of us today.

Namibia signed each of the Rio Conventions in 1992 and ratification was completed by 1997 for the Conventions on Biodiversity and Desertification, and by 1995 in the case of climate change.

Director of ceremonies

I would like to take this opportunity to set the scene for our gathering here this evening by briefly taking you a step back in time to see where we have come from and how we have got to where we are this evening.

Just two years into our independence, Namibia took its place alongside 171 other Nations at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 to take part in global discussions on how best we could go about moving towards sustainable development.

This Summit gave birth to the global plan of action for sustainable development referred to as Agenda 21, as well as three Rio Conventions on Biodiversity, Climate Change and Desertification – each of which seek to contribute to sustainable development by tackling critical environmental challenges.

Given our fragile but valuable environment, independent Namibia immediately recognized the importance of these Conventions as instruments for conserving our natural resources and integrating environmental concerns into our national development agendas.

Ladies and gentlemen

The Ministry of Environment and Tourism is committed to actively raising the issue of synergies, mainstreaming and collaboration amongst all stakeholders. We want all Namibians and Institutions regardless of any challenges, to collectively achieve our National and Sustainable Development Goals. Our mission, as prescribed by the Government is to provide enabling framework through development of policies, strategies and plans in support of our national development objectives.

Today we are taking our mission to yet another level, mainly, to focus on: “Synergies for the implementation of the three United Nations environmental Conventions, known as the Rio Conventions”

Distinguished invited guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Namibia’s implementation of these Conventions has been a two way street – on the one hand our unique approach to environmental management has informed the work of the Conventions, while on the other hand we have learned from the best practices and innovations of our international partners. For this reason, we are well-respected on the international stage, a fact confirmed by us having the honour to host COP11 of the UNCCD here in Windhoek last year.

Although we must be mindful of the threats to our biodiversity and natural resources, we can also be proud of our achievements...

- The need for the sustainable utilization of our natural resources is anchored in our Constitution as well as Vision 2030 and our national development plans;
- Over 44% of Namibia is now under some form of formal conservation status;
- We are home to thriving populations of wildlife – including many of the world’s endangered and threatened species;
- Our farming systems are among the most natural in the world providing organic meat, dairy and other food products; and
- Our stocks of fish species continue to recover after the pre-independence years of plunder.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These are indeed reasons to celebrate, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you in this room for your contribution to this state of affairs. As we count down the days for our next Presidential and National Elections, we encourage you to be challenged, excited and inspired for more good results on developmental issues in this country.

I know many of you in this room have contributed directly to the strategies we are launching here tonight, and I urge for your further commitment and support in the implementation of these strategies.

The Ministry of Environment and Tourism stands ready to coordinate and support you all in this endeavor. With these many remarks, allow me to welcome you all. Please feel cheered and enjoy the rest of the night with us.

I thank you.