

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

**Hon. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah
Minister of Environment and Tourism**

**On the Occasion of the Official Inauguration of the Namibia
Protected Landscape Conservations Areas Initiative
(NAM-PLACE) Project.**

Safari Court, Windhoek

15 November 2011

Director of Ceremonies

Resident Representative, UNDP

The Permanent Secretary – MET

Members of the prospective Landscape Conservation Areas

Traditional Authorities Present

Conservancy Representatives

Representatives of the Private Sector

Staff members from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism

Esteemed members of the media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today, I am glad to launch the Namibia Protected Landscape Conservation Areas Initiative, to be shortly known as the NAM-PLACE Project. The project is hosted under the Directorate of Environmental Affairs, MET in-house management arm for the Global Environment Facility funded projects. NAM-PLACE project will ensure that: 1. Protected Landscape Conservation Areas are established, 2. land uses in areas adjacent to existing Protected Areas is compatible with biodiversity conservation objectives, 3. corridors are established to sustain the viability of wildlife populations”.

The NAMPLACE project is designed to lift conservation barriers and advocates for the establishment of a large scale network of protected landscapes in-order to address eminent threats to habitat and species loss

at a landscape level, thereby ensuring greater responsiveness to variability and seasonality aspects that are inevitable due to climate change. The project intends to bring an additional 15,550 km² of land under protected landscapes management arrangements, designed to conserve biodiversity at a larger scale, rather than individual patches of land units. The project has five demonstration sites where this will be demonstrated and attained. These are the 1) Mudumu Landscape in the north-east; 2) the Greater Waterberg; 3) the Windhoek Green Belt landscapes in central Namibia; and 4) the Greater Sossusvlei-Namib; and 5) the Greater Fish River Canyon landscapes in the south of the country. These are chosen to represent and contribute to the vegetation gaps as identified in our current protection status.

Director of ceremonies

NAM-PLACE Project is funded by the Global Environment Facility through the United Nations Development Programme for an amount of US\$4.5 million. Over the past six years, the relationship and partnership between the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, GEF and UNDP has grown from strength to strength. To date, a number of projects and initiatives such as the Strengthening the Protected Areas Network Project, simply known as SPAN project, the Country Pilot Partnership Programme for Integrated Sustainable Land Management or simply CPP

the Africa Adaptation Programme and many others have been realized through this mutual beneficial partnership.

Namibia has over the years become a world leader in pursuing conservation initiatives. Remarkable achievements have taken place in the conservation of Namibia's biodiversity and safeguarding ecological integrity of our ecosystems. To date, our country boasts 20 state-run protected areas that represent nearly 17% of the total land area. Most of these parks are world renowned for their uniqueness as tourism destinations and for their species richness. Complementing the Namibian Government in the conservation of the country's rich biodiversity are communal conservancies and private land set. To date, Namibia has 65 registered conservancies covering over 17% of the country while the private land used for conservation represents slightly over 6% of the country land surface. A growing demand to create more conservancies across the country is an indication of the Ministry's Community-Based Natural Resource Management programme's successes. Therefore Government, communities and private sector, in total have close to half of the country, an astonishing 42% earmarked for conservation. This is a remarkable achievement noting that the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recommends that each country must set aside at least 15% of its total area for conservation purposes. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism, supported by a number of

national and international partners, are well aware that setting land aside for conservation without putting appropriate measures to manage effectively will not safeguard our biodiversity. It is against this background that the Ministry is consciously and continuously exploring new ways to improve management effectiveness through new initiatives especially those that provide positive incentives to conserve biodiversity.

The success on both communal and freehold land can be attributed to incentives derived from the use of natural resources for economic, social and environmental benefits.

Director of Ceremonies,

Ladies and gentlemen

The sustainable use of natural resources is based on article 95 (1) of our national Constitution. The 1996 amendments to our nature ordinance that caters for the establishment of conservancies have brought much needed income to the local communities. As we are all aware, local communities suffer most the cost of living with wildlife. So far, Namibia has proven that even the endangered species such as rhinos can thrive outside formal protected areas. This is a direct incentive provided for wildlife management and facilitated by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. Over the past years the Ministry has introduced wildlife to communal conservancies and to private farmers through the Rhino

Custodianship Programme and the Wildlife Breeding Stock Loan Scheme. Between 1999 and 2011, over 8,000 heads of wild animals have been translocated to communal conservancies. Although other benefits cannot be fully quantified, we know that the mere fact that the Ministry is putting in place firm policies programmes and measures to improve the management of our national biodiversity, for the current and future generations, is a long-term benefit.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Tourism in Namibia has become an important industry that is projected to grow further. Today, tourism is the third largest contributor to the Growth Domestic Products. However, it is acknowledged that tourism in Namibia is nature-based. It is therefore important that we look after the nature that supports this lucrative industry. It is also important to note that tourism is identified as one the leading sector under the Government's Targeted Intervention Program for Employment and Economic Growth or TIPEEG as it is famously known. TIPEEG is envisioned by the Namibian government to create employment opportunities through sectors and industries that have most potential to generate employment as a national effort to fight poverty among our society.

Despite all these achievements, we still have some vegetation types that are not represented in our national parks. The Government also recognizes that opportunities to proclaim more state protected areas or national parks are minimal due to demand for land by other equally important land uses. Furthermore, predictions indicate that some parks are likely to get drier and others wetter due to the effects of climate change. More space would therefore be needed for some species particularly the species that require vast areas to survive. Some species are likely to seek new home ranges due to climate change. In order for the country to prepare itself to these changes, new proactive initiatives to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change are needed. The present project will serve as a vehicle to this approach. Together, with our partners, especially the Global Environment Facility, we have been busy looking at international best practices and experiences to see how best to increase our conservation initiatives. As our policy states, it is our mission to continue to improve our conservation management tool box to see how best we can address climate changes but also generally improve our conservation efforts, in a manner that responds to our status and current situation.

Ladies and gentleman

A few weeks ago, our country was devastated by the fire that caused severe ecological and economic losses in Etosha National Park and other

areas including private owned land. The fires were reported to have started on a neighbouring farm. If we had a platform for communication in place, warnings about the fire could have been issued to all neighbours for them to prepare themselves and join hands to fight these types of hazards. We are also increasingly becoming aware of the increase in wildlife crime in the region, particularly rhino. It is therefore important that neighbours, in terms of residents, landscapes, land users, communities, organizations, collaborate among themselves for the betterment of Namibian people through the protection of these valuable species.

Director of Ceremonies,

I would like to see continued support from our partners. However, the implementation and execution of these programmes/projects should be premised on country drivenness and ownership. I would like to see strong national ownership, mutual and trusting relationships between donors and beneficiary, involvement and engagement of the local and national communities and adaptive management principles and practices that are based on results and impacts. I also recognize that projects do come and go. It is against this that the Ministry of Environment and Tourism commits itself to making financial provisions within our national budget

to ensure sustainability and to also use the GEF resources as catalytic as possible. I am now fully informed that GEF resources are only to be used to catalyze development and our Ministerial inputs (managerial, financial and technical) is to ensure that this is realized in the best manner possible for Namibia. Equally, the staff of the Ministry will jointly implement and oversee the operationalisation of the planned activities together with the specific project staff assigned to this project.

Director of ceremonies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism in particular cannot attain maximum biodiversity conservation in isolation. We know that ecological systems are not necessarily aligned with the boundaries of our national parks. You and I, may look on the map and point out where the park borders are, however, elephants, rhinos, ants, birds in the Mudumu National Park or vultures in the Namib Naukluft Park do not know where the park borders are. Since wild animals do not know where these borders are, it is therefore essential to manage wildlife and associated ecological systems at a landscape level. As a result, there is a need to create communication platforms between national parks and neighboring land users and partners to complement the wildlife corridors and habitats, which knows no boundaries.

Against that background, the first task of NAM-PLACE is to set up transparent, accountable and monitored communication platforms, explore common opportunities to improve networking between parks, conservancies, communities, private land owners and among key role-players in-order to ensure environmental sustainability for Namibia. As the theme for COP 17 states: working together saving tomorrow today. Let's emulate from this spirit. Finally, as the inception meeting of NAM-PLACE is taking place today at this same venue, I wish you success in your deliberations. Your initial meeting is very important as you have to make sure to cross-check what is put in the document and the reality on the ground.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, it is now my greatest honour to officially inaugurate the NAM-PLACE, Namibia's Protected Landscape Conservation Areas Initiative Project.

I thank you.