

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

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

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 2011 CELEBRATION
AT KATIMA MULILO, CAPRIVI REGION**

01 JUNE 2011

Programme Director

Honourable Lawrence Sampofu, Governor of the Caprivi region

Hon Councillors present

Ms Kari Egge, UNDP Resident Representative for Namibia

Mr Joseph Hailwa, Director of Forestry (MAWF)

Representatives of Community Forests and Conservancies

Representatives of the Private Sector and NGOs

Learners/Teachers

Distinguished Invited Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today we are meeting to honour an important day in the activities of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET). Commemorated every year on 5 June, since 1972, World Environment Day (WED) is a principal vehicle through which the United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment.

The United Nations declared 2011 the International Year of Forests and MET in collaboration with various partners has held events related to environmental protection, biodiversity conservation, all aimed at raising awareness on those issues. WED2011, in support of the UN International Year of Forests, is aimed to be the biggest and most widely celebrated global day for positive action for the environment.

The theme for the World Environment Day this year is “**Forest: nature at your service**”. This theme underscores the variety of life-sustaining services that forests provide and echoes an urgent call to human to take action in protecting these resources and move towards a **green economy**.

Programme Director

In Namibia, the period from May to June each year is dedicated to environmental awareness raising activities. For this environmental awareness period, a plethora of events are organized every year in collaboration with different stakeholders including communities. The inclusion is aimed to give a chance to all role players to contribute towards environmental protection and biodiversity conservation.

In an effort to deepen awareness on environmental issues, we celebrated the wetlands day on the 2nd February at Divundu, Mukwe Constituency, Kavango Region, and we recent held the 2nd successful National Biodiversity Action Day at Omauni village in the Okongo constituency Ohangwena region. At Omauni, we learnt how rural communities if given the stewardship of natural resources they depend on, can make wise and informed decisions on the sustainable use and management of their resources. Later this month, on 17th June, we will commemorate the World Day to Combat Desertification (WDCD) at Ongongo village in the Opuwo constituency Kunene region, under the theme “Forests Keep Drylands Working”

Programme Director

The decision to mark World Environment Day 2011 here in Katima Mulilo was partly influenced by the theme of the year e.i. International Year of Forests. As we know, Caprivi is a tropical forests area of Namibia, with a terrain mostly made up of swamps, floodplains, wetlands and woodland. The Caprivi region is home to a number of successful community forests who are determined towards a sustainable use of forests resources. The decision is also to convey the message to communities who work hard to restore the dignity of our forests through community forests and communal conservancy’s programmes that make our rural areas more inhabitable.

In addition, 2011 marks 40th Anniversary of the Ramsar Convention on wetlands. Over the past 40 years, 160 countries have become party to the Convention, and 1,911 Wetlands of International Importance, which cover over 186 million hectares. Caprivi area is referred to as Namibia’s wetland paradise encompassing the largest wetland area with conservation status in this country such as Kwando-Linyanti-Chobe system, Zambezi river system, the famous kavango Delta, floodplains alongside the river systems as well as swamps/marshes such as the Linyanti swamp.

Wetlands (both permanent and temporary) are more than just a muddy swamp – many economists looking at the ecosystem services they deliver put their value higher than for any other ecosystem. Yet wetlands continue to be destroyed to make way for inland and coastal developments and degraded through poor water allocation decisions, pollution, and excessive water extraction.

Through the Ramsar Convention, we have been encouraging sustainable management and wise use of wetlands at the river basin level. This is important considering the global reality that many wetlands and their river basins cross national boundaries and require transboundary initiatives for effective management. The hosting of this event in this region thus offers us the opportunity to harness political will at regional, local and community levels to raise the intensity of the importance for sustaining the health of the wetlands that supply essential services to the people.

Programme Director

We have as one of our priorities, the imperative to contribute to building a better Africa and a better world. To do that, we should amongst other things, tackle the challenges of **climate change** and chart an economic path that is both fair and equitable. Climate change is one of the greatest sustainable development challenges of our time. Solutions to deal with this challenge require a concerted international and national effort. Caprivi is one of the regions in Namibia annually affected by unpredicted weather partner in the world.

To this end, we sought to play a meaningful and constructive role in the COP16 Climate Change Summit in Cancun in December last year. We wished to achieve an international agreement that would give equal attention to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation to the effects of climate change. The world had an obligation to balance both climate and development imperatives. We wanted to secure the Convention principles of “equity” and “common but differentiated responsibilities”. Though this outcome was not realized, COP16 to certain extent has brought discussions on climate change on track and the world population is looking forward to a balanced agreement in Durban at COP17 later this year.

However, our commitment to tackle climate change does not rest only on the achievement and implementation of international agreements. Our commitment must be borne out by what we do at home. Namibia as an arid country and natural resource dependent economy, is extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Increased variability of rainfall and hotter temperatures are expected, which will have a major impact on the country’s biodiversity in terms of species distribution, composition and migration. A recent world funded study by the office of the Prime Minister (Namibia) on climate change forecasts the following effects for Namibia;

- More frequent flooding of a greater magnitude in Namibia’s northern rivers;

- Reduced inflows into Etosha pan (Ramsar site)
- Loss of species in many areas – particularly the Succulent Karoo with local extinctions by 2050
- Shift in Namibia’s main vegetation types from grassy savannah to desert and arid shrubland by 2080

We have a greater responsibility to ensure that our policies, programmes and activities contribute to emission reduction and respond to the impact of climate change on our country and region. There is a great opportunity in the development of industries that combat the negative effects of climate change. Namibia needs to develop strong capacity in green technologies and industries. Through our actions, we need to respond to the notion that there is a trade-off to be made between faster economic growth and the preservation of our environment.

With this, we must be able to show that faster economic growth (and employment creation) can be achieved alongside the sustainable management of our natural resources. Our commitment to this goal must be evident in our policies and programmes.

Programme Director

Biodiversity conservation and management has been well mainstreamed into Namibia’s development framework. This was achieved by integrating the objectives and targets of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) with those of NDP2 and NDP3 and the MET’s Strategic Plan (2007-2012). There are additional opportunities during the current draft National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP2) to mainstream emerging issues such as the green economy, access and benefit-sharing, climate change risk, the economics of ecosystem services and the links of biodiversity and poverty alleviation into the national development framework.

The key guiding principle for Namibia has been that biodiversity conservation and sustainable management will not work without improving the livelihoods of communities. Thus national parks, covering some 17% of the national land mass are being managed and promoted as “engines” of economic growth and rural development. Namibia’s world-renowned Community-based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Programme has seen 64 communal conservancies and 15 community forests come on-stream since legislation paved the way for their

establishment in 1996 and 2001 respectively. Management authority has been devolved to the lowest possible level in these areas. An increasing number of privately-managed game reserves, as well as the long-established freehold wildlife management units are the additional components for conservation.

Namibia has also been able to craft a highly-progressive policy and legal framework for the conservation and management of biodiversity. The wide-ranging Environmental Management Act of 2007 provides the foundation for the wise management of the country's fragile environment and the sustainable use of its natural resources. It also provides the legal basis for the assessment and control of activities across all sectors which may have harmful effects on the environment.

Other examples of targeted legislation include the Biosafety Act of 2006, National Policy on Human Wildlife Conflict Management (2009), Aquaculture Act (2002), Coastal Zone Management White Paper (2010) and the formation of the Interim Bioprospecting Committee in 2008, which regulates access to Namibia's biological and genetic resources. In spite of these achievements, there are a number of factors that are and threaten to be the drivers of biodiversity loss in Namibia, including – unsustainable water uses, climate change, uncontrolled mining and prospecting, population growth and increased consumption, unsustainable land management practices, alien invasive species, irresponsible tourism and recreation activities and the human wildlife conflict. However, within our national programmes and in a cooperative manner, we will be able to face those challenges. We all must have the will to balance development and conservation.

Programme Director

In the midst of the Global Economic Crisis, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) called for a “**Global Green New Deal**”. In light of this, as well as the recent introduction of the **Targeted Intervention Programme for Employment and Economic Growth (TIPEEG)** in Namibia, it is clear that new and improved economic models are needed to achieve sustainable development goals. We believe that by stimulating investment in green industries, we will be able to contribute to the creation of decent and permanent work.

Transition to a green economy presents many opportunities for a changeover to a greener approach to economic and social development, by instigating the sustainable use of biodiversity and equitable sharing of its benefits thereby creating jobs, contributing to GDP, creating new economic opportunities for the poor and marginalized communities, and preventing the degradation of natural resources.

The green economy should seek to address the interdependence between economic growth, social protection and the preservation of natural ecosystems. According to this, governments are encouraged to support a greener economy that creates green jobs, promotes sustainable and inclusive growth, and advances the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). I am pleased to note that Namibia too is responding to this call with the initiation of stakeholder consultations on the Green Economy Policy.

We are in particular pursuing investments in projects and industries in the fields of nature-based tourism, trade in wildlife and forests resources (Biotrade), aquaculture development, waste services and ecosystems rehabilitation programmes. The national call to achieve high economic growth and create 104,000 jobs over the next three years will be greatly enhanced by our efforts in stimulating investments in green industries such as nature-based tourism and Biotrade.

Programme Director

Ecosystem failure will seriously compromise our ability to address our social and economic priorities. Natural resources are national economic assets, and our economy depends heavily on energy and mineral resources, biodiversity, agriculture, forestry, fishing and tourism.

In short, we have no option but to manage our natural resources in a sustainable way.

We have no choice but to be eco-friendly.

We have no choice but to develop a green economy.

So I urge you to Save Our Environment by Making a Difference Today!

At this stage, a special thanks to all members of our communities involved in conservation, be it in conservancies or community forests. I thank the traditional leaders who continue to take care of our biodiversity. I thank the regional council for

the involvement on matters of environment protection. I thank the organisers of this event in particular the staff of MET and all those who work with them.

Let environmental protection and biodiversity conservation be our daily responsibility.

I Thank You