

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM



**OPENING STATEMENT BY Honourable Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah (MP)
Minister of Environment and Tourism**

AT THE TOURISM EXPO

01st JUNE 2010

WINDHOEK, KHOMAS REGION

Director of ceremonies,
Honourable Ministers,
Honourable Deputy Ministers,
Your Excellencies,
Members of diplomatic core,
Chair person and Board members,
Chief Executive Officer and staff of the NTB Namibia Tourism Board (NTB)
Visiting International Tourism Travel Trade Representatives
Members of Tourism family,
Invited guests,
Member's of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me from the onset welcome you to this prestigious occasion organized by NTB. My special warm welcome goes to our business partners and friends from foreign shores. I believe Namibia's warm and profound hospitality will underscore unraveled experience to take home.

World Travel and Tourism Council predicts that world tourism will return to moderate growth next year, after achieving stable levels during 2010. It is further projected that the recovery in developed economies will be gradual as spending in real terms will be mere 1% growth, while business travel spending will decline, by nearly 2%. But Namibia remains optimistic that its tourism will move in positive gear, as we, through NTB, Air Namibia and other role players, including the

visiting foreign operators among others, will put conversion programmes in place to energize the would be travelers to come to Namibia.

We are meeting at an interesting time in the evolution of history of Africa, particularly for SADC region as many routes are directed to the area. With few days remaining to the kick off of the most coveted World Cup 2010 soccer event in South Africa, all eyes are on us. Therefore, for an event such as this, where many overseas operators, corporate business and media alike will converge, Namibia is ready to galvanize the tourism industry's commitment to maximize the opportunities that are out there to boost its image and position herself on the world stage as a boutique tourism destination that offers discerning value. Value for money to purchase goods and services has become very vital, and therefore Namibia views this sentiment as most appropriate to the times we now live in that explain why we are working tirelessly to maintain large pool of biodiversity ranging from flora, fauna, landscape, culture among others, which without doubt epitomizes Namibia as being one of the few remaining remnants in the world to offer such natural pristine heritage share with the world shamelessly.

Although this event offers positive spinoffs, as never before, tourism business will be won or lost on the basis of value for money, as WC 2010 has been used to hike prices. In this context, the tourism industry needs to re-double its efforts to ensure that the quality product and services on offer matches the price being sought to avoid Namibia being priced out of the market. I am happy to note that, to curb unrealistic prices, the Namibia Tourism Board is steering the initiative together with Air Namibia to encourage Namibian operators to reduce their

prices to part take in the last minute deal through “open season initiative” from 1 June till 31 July 2010 as a way to drive tourist flow to Namibia. This is to avert possible job losses or temporary closure of business. I, therefore, encourage you all to support this noble course. I am reliably informed that Air Namibia will also offer discounted fare prices during this period, and as ministers responsible for tourism such a move gives me a peace of mind.

Director of Ceremonies,

You will concur with me that with the Namibia dollar strengthening against the US dollar, British sterling pound and EURO which creates perception in the minds of would be travelers as being too expensive, the industry will need to focus its efforts on this issue in order to maintain and grow its share of the international market. Also, we are already seeing longer term initiatives from some of the major players in the hospitality industry, for example NWR, which aim to address the pricing issues by reducing rates at some of the resorts and freeze increment that may be necessary due to inflation. Other companies like Wilderness Safaris are extending their reduced rates for SADC and Namibian market. In the same vein, the government is working on mechanisms to diversify the tourism offering. Some of the programmes we are currently working on include promotion of cultural and community based tourism and expansion of conservation areas to preserve biodiversity to support eco-tourism. Soon the entire coast of Namibia will be a protected area. A number of themed routes will be put together to highlight different aspects of Namibian life and heritage, as these are important features for tourism. The Cape to Namibia Tourism route is an existing living

proof to that fact. I strongly believe, that these new initiatives will offer sustainable tourism products be it community-based or private. My position is based on the fact that, teaming up with overseas travel companies, who are willing to make firm commitment in supporting this sector is possible when we continually introduce new products in the market.

Director of ceremonies,

In the tourism sector, we believe that unbundling the democratization and equity is effected through tourism as it encourages and increased cultural exchange, which however has still not reached a satisfactory level in Namibia. Also tourism offers a chance of poverty reduction, but it has not yet sufficiently made that impact. Therefore, economic development and diversification of tourism requires planning within the wider framework which will be the priority project of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, for government's intervention through policy, such as the Tourism Policy adopted last year. And before the end of the year we will have a clear understanding on where the tourism Industry will be by 2030 and how we will reach there.

Director of Ceremonies,

Even though all has been said and done, one must also consider the demand side to inspire the travelers to decide coming to Namibia. For this part, tourism in Namibia must step up its marketing campaign in all our key overseas markets and at home, whilst looking to expand its horizon to other continents to mitigate risk

should some markets collapse. It is evident that Namibia Tourism Board, in its infancy years focused mainly on building consumer and travel trade confidence through awareness creation interventions and that was done successfully. However at this stage the force to capture business that new tourism upturn brings is required, this explains why the current Board of NTB and the CEO are driving that course of action. Using WC 2010 platform, and now that the convergence is on Southern Africa, I am convinced the time is right to stimulate consumer and travel trade interest with strong programmes of promotional campaigns and brand positioning.

As part of this drive to rebrand the corporate identity and Namibia destination brand for it to differentiate itself from the competitors, itself is noble and augurs professionalism. To that end, Namibia Tourism Board has taken a bolder decision to have a corporate brand that will give out a clear message as to what is Namibia and that is the brand to be launched tonight. At the same time, the NTB's Strategic Business Plan that is aimed at refocusing its activities through re-organization and alignment to encapsulate some of the areas I have highlighted, will be made public at this event.

Director of ceremonies,

I am informed we have about 90 international visitors from all regions of the world, hosted by NTB and Air Namibia, as part of the WC2010 initiative to sell Namibia. I urge Namibia tourism business operators to engage them and seal deals. Equally, I am convinced this is the time for Namibia to show its strength as

a tourist destination by choice. To our, visitors, I invite you to take time off from your intensive business meetings to see some local sights and sample the world renowned friendly hospitality of Namibia with an endless smile, which will compel you to sell Namibia and encourage you with your family to visit us again as tourist.

I am informed some of you have already gone out of Windhoek, but those who have not done so, don't miss this golden opportunity.

Once again, I want to thank all of you for having found time to be with us today. Let all of you be the marketing managers for Namibia as a tourist destination.

THANK YOU ALL