

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM



STATEMENT BY HON. NETUMBO NANDI-NDAITWAH, MP MINISTER
REGARDING NAMIBIA'S COMMUNAL CONSERVANCY
TOURISM SECTOR NOMINATION FOR TOP INTERNATIONAL
AWARD ON 24-26 MAY 2010, BEIJING, CHINA

DATE: 19 APRIL 2010

Windhoek, Namibia



Esteemed members of the media,

On the 4th February 2010, the **World Travel and Tourism Council** announced the finalists for the **2010 Tourism for Tomorrow Awards**. Out of more than 160 applications from over 45 countries, **Namibia's Communal Conservancy Tourism Sector** was chosen as one of three finalists in the Community Benefit category and will compete with Tourindia of India and Whale Watch Kaikoura Limited of New Zealand.

Since the time of independence and more so after 1996 when the Nature Conservation Ordinance was amended, Namibia has done more to give rural Namibians a stake in the tourism industry. Being selected as a Finalist is global recognition of Namibia's achievements in the field of conservation, resource utilization and real empowerment of those men and women who labor tirelessly to build our natural resource base. The community based natural resource management programme which devolves rights for the consumptive and non consumptive use and management of wildlife and natural resources to the local communities is an enviable best practice and Namibia is one of the few countries in the world that have gone this route.

It was not by sheer luck that we have made it to the top. This is a true reward of our dedication and commitment to both conservation and empowerment. Making it to the top three (3) should be perceived in a high light. Namibia was the first African country to incorporate protection of the environment into its constitution. The Government of Namibia has reinforced this by giving its communities the opportunity and rights to manage their wildlife through communal conservancies. Conservancies are now found in almost all regions of Namibia and cover 16.8% of the land area. The conservancy movement works with over 230,000 rural residents of the Nation and has proven to be a valuable approach as a conservation strategy, documented by the substantial increase in wildlife in conservancy areas. It has also proven to be an effective rural development strategy, generating income for local conservancies, bringing new jobs and providing new skills and expertise. Today there are 59 gazetted conservancies with

another 30 being considered. 1 in 8 Namibians resides within a conservancy, or close to 1 in 4 rural area residents. The enabling environment for this increase has come from government's commitment to the devolution of rights over wildlife and resources.

In the process, not only are communities benefiting in ways previously unimaginable, but the national tourism product is being redefined in more equitable and sustainable ways.

Economic value to communities has increased dramatically since the start of the Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme. Following the registration of the first four conservancies in 1998, income and benefits have grown from less than N\$600,000 in 1998 to N\$41.9 million (US\$ 5.7 million) in 2008. Most of this growth has come from tourism.

Members of the media,

Namibia is the only country in Africa where black rhinos are being translocated out of a National Park to communal conservancies. The country has the world's largest population of Black Rhino which is managed through a custodianship programme with farmers. It is also the only country in the world with 100% of its coastline under some form of conservation. In addition, Namibia is moving wildlife from protected areas onto farmland through the Wildlife Breeding Stock Loan scheme which is aimed at assisting upcoming commercial farmers restock their farms with wildlife with the aim of developing viable wildlife-based income streams. Lastly, Namibia's conservation success stories stand out in sharp contrast to many countries where wildlife populations and habitats are rapidly declining.

All of these are contributing to what may well be "***the greatest African wildlife recovery story ever told,***" and Namibia is telling that story.

The successes and benefits of Namibia's Communal Conservancy Tourism Sector are far reaching. Job creation and income generation are just part of the story. With a vested interest in their land, Conservancy members have eliminated poaching and set aside land for exclusive use of wildlife and resulting expanding populations of all wildlife even including animals such as elephant, lion and black rhino. Less tangible social benefits include greater confidence and empowerment, on-the-job training, travel opportunities, improved governance, accountability and transparency at local levels.

Within the Communal Conservancy Tourism Sector, there are now 29 formal joint-venture lodges and campsites mostly owned by the private sector, that work in collaboration with their host communities. In addition, there are 4 joint ventures operating in principle with a signed agreement pending, and another 11 ventures with whom the conservancies are negotiating.

All the joint ventures in the communal conservancies combined represent 789 full-time jobs and over 250 seasonal positions. More than N\$ 145 million has been invested in tourism joint ventures in communal conservancies by the private sector and government since 1998. The number of joint venture lodge agreements has increased by 111% since 2005.

Tourism ventures contribute to livelihoods in the region where they operate in multiple ways, including direct contractual cash payments to conservancies, salaries for employees, staff training, and related benefits such as payments of cash and in-kind contributions (equipment, donated services, etc.) to village development committees, local schools, etc.

These are new or additional activities which give many households access to cash and other benefits that they never had before, and that would not have been possible prior to the passage of Namibia's innovative conservancy legislation in 1996.

The World Tourism and Travel Council's 2010 Tourism for Tomorrow Awards offer the perfect opportunity to spread these important, inspiring messages from Namibia's Communal Conservancy movement to a global audience, as well as at home. This is the most prominent and prestigious international tourism industry award, at times dubbed the Oscars of Tourism, which is given out by the largest travel and tourism industry association.

The award will offer the much needed exposure to Namibia as it is a prominent coverage which will be viewed all over the world. The impact of this free marketing might be felt within the next two years, as people plan their holiday's years in advance. The award also contributes to the recognition of Namibia's efforts in terms of sustainable use of natural resources by communities as an incentive for conservation which is considered an innovative and best practice by many internationally.

The Winner will be announced at the WTTC 2010 Tourism for Tomorrow Awards ceremony scheduled for 26 May 2010 in Beijing, China as part of the 10th Global Travel & Tourism Summit. International leaders in tourism, finance and industry, representing companies, are on the Board of the World Travel and Tourism Council and will be in Beijing for this prestigious event.

Members of the media,

I now have the pleasure of inviting the Namibian nation to join us in this joyous celebration henceforth until the winner is announced. A series of awareness raising activities will be carried out and a delegation from Namibia will be in Beijing during the award ceremony and I wish I could tell you today that we will come back home with the award. Nevertheless, as I have said earlier, making it this far has already made us winners!

Thank you for your time, it is much appreciated!