

Director of Ceremonies

Honourable Dr. Albert Kawana, Minister of Presidential Affairs and AG,

Dr. Kalumbi Shangula, Permanent Secretary of the MET,

Officials of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism,

All Chairpersons and Managers of the Conservancies,

Our NACSO Partners,

Heads of other Government Departments and other NGOs,

Representatives of MET Projects,

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very pleased to see Chairpersons of conservancies and administrators in this meeting. To me this is a great opportunity for all of you to share experience and exchange ideas on the best ways to run conservancies.

The Nature Conservation Ordinance Number 4 of 1975 was amended in 1996 to provide for an economic system of sustainable management and utilization of game in communal areas. The Nature Conservation Amendment Act, Act 5 of 1996, enables rural communities to establish and register conservancies for the purpose of sustainable utilization of wildlife through tourism and trophy hunting.

As you may already know, there are currently fifty nine (59) registered conservancies in Namibia, benefiting thousands of our rural communities through employment, cash

income, social projects and in-kind benefits, in other words, income that conservancies generate can make a significant contribution to rural development and poverty alleviation. This is part of the national Community Based Natural Resources Management programme, which has become one of the major development programme in the rural areas. It has therefore been accepted that conservancies is a conservation tool aimed at promoting the wise and sustainable use of wildlife and other natural resources outside of Protected Areas such as National Parks, while conserving our biodiversity.

I should mention that the Community Based Natural Resources Management is now firmly entrenched in Namibia's National Development Plans and Poverty Reduction Strategies. Moreover, conservancies are explicitly included as part of Namibia's rural development strategies in the National Development Plans for the realization of Vision 2030.

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**Ladies and Gentlemen**

The adoption of wildlife management and tourism as additional forms of land use by rural people and the recovery of wildlife in many conservancies confirms the success of the Government's Community Based Natural Resource Management programme.

I want therefore to remind you, especially the Conservancy Chairpersons and Managers that the primary objective of conservancies is to enable the inhabitants of the specific conservancy to derive benefits from the sustainable management and consumptive and non-consumptive utilization of wildlife and other natural resources in the conservancy.

I therefore urge you as Chairpersons and Managers of Conservancies that in order to achieve this primary objective, conservancy members shall have to commit and adhere to the following principles:

1. Manage the wildlife and natural resources in accordance with acknowledged conservation principles contained in your Wildlife Management Plan drawn up in conjunction with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism,
2. Utilize the wildlife and other natural resources in a sustainable way for the economic and social benefit of the members of your conservancies and in accordance with your constitutions,
3. Retain all income derived from such utilization as allowed by the laws of the Republic of Namibia and use such income for purposes agreed upon by the members of the conservancy, and
4. Distribute the benefits derived from wildlife utilization equitably to members.

Since 1996, the Conservancy Programme has grown from a small pilot project to one of the country's major development programmes. Sound practices are therefore needed for the sustainable utilization of our natural resources on an economically beneficial

basis. Planning, managing, monitoring and evaluation are thus core and key aspects of conservancy management.

A window of opportunity exists for the local communities in this country to benefit from our biodiversity. However, for that to be realized, we must take a collective action to develop the network of wildlife and other natural resources as the driving force for rural development and poverty reduction being one of the central focus point of our Government.

The Ministry of Environment and Tourism will continue to evaluate the implementation of programmes for the success of conservancies and benefits to communities. I encourage the chairpersons to work with the officials of the Ministry in identifying the most appropriate ways of implementing those programmes, to the benefit of all. One such programme is the translocation of valuable species that naturally occurred in these Conservancies for consumptive and non-consumptive utilization when populations of such species are viable.

By translocating valuable species to conservancies, the Ministry is enhancing biodiversity and restoring game populations, and therefore creating a development platform for the generation of long term benefits for the communities, including opportunities for income generated through tourism, live sale of surplus game, trophy hunting and game meat production. At the same time, the reintroduction of wildlife is

beneficial to the environment, restoring biodiversity and contributing to ecosystem stability.

Community involvement in the conservancy programme has been stimulated by significant financial and economic results. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism and its partners analyzed individual conservancy investments in financial and economic cost-benefit analysis models in the past, and found these to have positive financial returns from a project perspective. Very positive financial returns from a community perspective, and positive to very positive returns in terms of net contributions to Gross National Income.

For the past five years, the financial benefits generated by rural communities within the overall national CBNRM programme have increased rapidly and substantially, with a total income from conservancies countrywide increasing from about N\$600, 000 (six hundred thousands) in 1998 when the first four conservancies were registered to over N\$8 million in 2003, N\$15 million in 2005 and reached N\$18 million in 2006. In 2007 N\$39 million was generated by the conservancies while in 2009 more than N\$ 40 million was generated by the conservancy programme.

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Some conservancies may be financially independent as they cover their own expenses, invest in social projects in their communities and pay their members dividends each year. Others are a bit slow to become financially independent, while a few other conservancies have not yet made a significant contribution to conservation and income generation.

The sustainability of some conservancies is therefore a big concern to the Ministry. One of the main aims of the Ministry's CBNRM programme is to enable conservancies to become sustainable financially and institutionally. Regardless of whether it is high or low earning and whether it depends mostly on wildlife and tourism or on livestock and plants, a conservancy will be financially sustainable if its income exceeds its running costs and it has a surplus or profit to use for benefits defined by its members.

A conservancy will be institutionally sustainable if it continues to function with a committee that is representative of the interests of members who are able to hold the committee accountable for decisions taken, use of funds and negotiations with outsiders.

We therefore need to make sure that we make this conservation and poverty reduction programme sustainable for the continued benefits to our rural communities as the concept of conservancies will continue to grow as many communities are interested in this important development concept in their areas. The Ministry is inundated with new applications for conservancies that wish to be registered. From the conservancy's point

of view, I am happy to receive those applications, however, we must know that not all areas are good for conservancies, therefore other ways of rural development has to be looked into. There is a believe that, once you have a conservancy, money will come in from where conservancies have to be self sustaining. We need to work together and assist rural communities on issues of economic and social activities for their benefits and that of our country.

It is the responsibility of all of us to ensure that the Conservancy Programme is developed as a sustainable conservation and tourism development programme from which rural communities can derive equitable social and economic benefits. In carrying out your responsibility, you must at all times observe the principles of accountability, equitability, responsibility, transparency and mutual respect. I have to say, due to lack of performance by some Chairpersons and conservancies committees, the staff of MET and myself, have to spend much of the tax payers time trying to solve conservancy's problems, which could not have happened.

I therefore want to send a strong warning to those conservancies or individuals or groups of individuals in these conservancies, who have that ambition of corruption, mismanagement and maladministration of conservancy funds and resources that they are already on the wrong side of the law and that the Ministry will leave no stone unturned to bring these individuals to order.

A conservancy is not a tool to divide the community members along political, tribal, racial or ethnic lines, but a vehicle towards rural economic emancipation. This government is entrusted by the people of this country to run the country fairly and to the best interest of all. And as we have done so in the past 20 years, we will continue to do so.

I urge you all, as conservancy members to work together with traditional authorities, to commit yourselves to nation building and not indulge yourselves in infightings, some of which could be of tribal nature. We must know that the biggest enemy of nation building and development is tribalism.

We need to work together with vigour and determination to achieve our developmental goals as set out in the National Development Plans and our road map to prosperity, Vision 2030.

As much as good progress is achieved in the conservancy programmes, I have to accept that there is a need for closer interaction between conservancies and MET, while recognizing the good work done by NGO's. Therefore this meeting today is the start of that closer consultation between conservancies and MET.

We all need to know that, the national objectives of empowering our people cannot be achieved by Government alone, I would therefore like to express my gratitude to our

partners, such as NGOs and the private sector for the support they continue to render to conservancies in many parts of the country.

I also appreciate the support we have from MET Projects such as ICEMA and others to make this important programme a success.

In the same vein, let me thank the staff members of the Ministry who continue to facilitate and coordinate the establishment and management of conservancies. This is an achievement for all of us.

Finally, I want to thank the Conservancy chairpersons and the managers, and their entire communities for the excellent initiative in forming the fifty nine (59) Conservancies which are aimed at uplifting the living standards of the people.

Our emphasis now should be to create good governance and management of conservancies, as well as making the conservancy programme sustainable, for the benefits of our people.

It is with these remarks that I now have the honour to declare this meeting for the Conservancy Chairperson's Forum officially open.

**I thank you all.**