



Republic of Namibia

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HON. CALLE SCHLETTWEIN,
MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE KHORIXAS AGRICULTURAL
AND TOURISM EXPO 2014**

MONDAY, 23 JUNE 2014

Director of Ceremonies;
Honourable Ministers;
Honourable Members of Parliament;
Honourable Governors;
Honourable Regional and Local Authority Councillors;
Honourable Traditional and Community Leaders;
Distinguished Invited Guests
Distinguished Exhibitors and Captains of Industry;
Members of the Media;
Ladies and Gentlemen;

Allow me to first of all express my profound gratitude to the Khorixas Town Council for having invited me to be part of this momentous occasion. I am indeed delighted by the opportunity afforded to me to address this Agricultural and Tourism Expo, which is being held for the first time here in Khorixas.

The whole concept of trade fairs or expos is a very important one, in that it not only enhances trade but also orientates us as policy makers and consumers alike on the developments and potentials in the economy. It is from such exposure that we come to know more of who our producers

are and what they produce, what their needs are to be able to grow and prosper, and what other potentials there are in the various sectors to be explored and exploited to the benefit of our citizens. Our people need jobs, they need incomes, food, education, good health and to enjoy other economic and social benefits. Therefore we need to create wealth, and distribute it equitably. The creation of wealth is a shared responsibility of Government and the private sector – whether they are big, medium or small enterprises they are all important to the growth of the economy and the creation of wealth.

Director of Ceremonies; Ladies and Gentlemen

Events of this nature are supportive to the national efforts towards diversification of the economy. Central to this effort are the various policy measures being taken by the Government for Namibia to move away from high reliance on the production and trading of raw materials and also high reliance on imports. Among these is the policy and programme for the development of small and medium enterprises and also the industrial policy and implementation strategy. This time around we have also introduced the *Growth at Home* strategy, which drives home the point that as a country we should industrialise, we should add value to our raw materials and produce high value goods for our own

consumption and for export; and we should develop value chains so that the impact of interventions is maximized. The Ministry of Trade and Industry's programmes such as the construction of industrial parks and sites and premises country-wide, the Equipment Aid Scheme, the Business Support Service Programme and the Export Marketing Assistance Programme for manufacturers and exporters have all been initiated to support manufacturing and value addition activities, specifically by the SME sector.

With these policies and programmes the Government and particularly the Ministry of Trade and Industry wants to facilitate the growth of the SME sector, but also to redirect the overall focus of business activities in the country from general trading to manufacturing and value addition. The business community is therefore encouraged to visit our Ministry headquarters or our Regional Offices and also our Ministry's website to obtain information on the various programmes we have and other services the Ministry offers.

The Kunene Region is endowed with some of the very important raw materials for value addition such as dimension stones, semi-precious stones and hides and skins from animals and game just to mention a few. Large quantities of these materials do not reach the commercial channels

in Namibia for processing; they are either leaving the country in blocs or as livestock-on-hoof or raw hides and skins or are simply wasted in most of the communal areas. Why should we find ourselves in this sad and unconscionable situation when our local jewellery makers and tanneries are struggling to obtain sufficient production inputs in order to operate at full capacity and create more jobs? Tanneries are forced to import hides and skins from as far as Europe and South America. We need to turn this situation around.

I am happy that the Expo's focus is on two growth sectors of our economy namely agriculture and tourism. Agriculture is very important, both for our national food security and for production of tradable goods for the domestic and export markets. The agriculture sector is also the largest employer in our country. Therefore with appropriate policies, programmes and incentives we should be able to feed ourselves, develop industries, create employment and income opportunities, and alleviate poverty among our people. Equally, the tourism sector has similar benefits. We would all agree that the Government has done a lot to facilitate diversification of the tourism industry including mainstreaming the local communities in this development. Today we have conservancies programme across the country which benefits the historically disadvantaged local communities. Namibia's policies and

strategies for nature conservation and environmental management for sustainable development have gained world applause and we should build on this commendable achievement.

In the close proximity important sites are the Petrified Forest, which consists of around 50 tree trunks which are about 250 million years old and the longest trunk measures more than 30 meters. The Petrified Forest was declared a national monument in 1950 and is one of several popular tourist sites.

The Living Museum of the Damara is the first project on Damara Culture in Namibia and worldwide. The Damara people are one of the oldest cultures in Namibia and the Living Museum of the Damara is an attempt to reconstruct this partially lost culture and visitors have the opportunity to learn about these fascinating traditions.

Twyfelfontein contains about 2000 rock engravings and paintings and became Namibia's first UNESCO World Heritage Site. The rock art at Twyfelfontein was created 1000 to 6000 years ago. These spectacular creations of art form part of the cultural heritage of the Damara and San people and depict a variety of large animal species such as elephants, rhinos, giraffes, ostriches, but also images of people and their foot prints.

Some of the pictures, such as the Lion Man, show transformation of people into animals.

There are three geological sites of great touristic value in the vicinity, namely the Organ Pipes, which are masses of perpendicular dolerite pillars exposed on a dry river bank. The Burnt Mountain is located close to the Organ Pipes and was formed during the same period of volcanic activity some 200 million years ago. Lava intruded deposited Karoo Limestone and formed baked shale, which is seen as the dark material referred to as the Burnt Mountain.

The Ugab River Terraces and the Vingerklip, a rock stack standing 30 meters high. These prominent formations are remnants of erosion of the main river terrace, which is best preserved on the northern side of the valley. The Vingerklip and the terraces consist of a conglomerate of calcrete and calcareous sandstone and was formed in two wet periods 20 and 2 million years ago, when the Ugab was a powerful, fast flowing river which cut through the Damara Mountains and softer conglomerates.

All these sites are situated in a grandiose landscape filled with an abundance of large animals like elephant, rhino, lion, giraffe, zebra and many antelope, making it a touristic hotspot in Namibia and a number of

lodges and tourist operators such as the Gondwana group, NWR and several others have set up business in the region. It is therefore important that the Khorixas Town Council and the Kunene Regional government and people protect the touristic sites in this area for they hold great potential for the development of this part of our country.

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In concluding, I want to implore on the exhibitors, traders and visitors that this Expo is a perfect platform for exposure, learning, engaging and forging supportive partnerships. Namibian businesses, government and the public should embrace locally produced products and support local procurement. We should respect and love products of our own labour. But producers should ensure quality and high standards to be competitive. I therefore have no doubt that this Expo will facilitate the necessary interaction among the companies exhibiting here and between them and the consumers - that is both business and individual consumers.

I therefore wish that this Expo be a resounding success and everyone enjoys quality time.

I Thank You All!