



Statement by Hon. Lucia Ipumbu, MP

Minister of Industrialisation and Trade

**On the occasion of Stakeholders Consultations with
Business Community in Oshikoto Region**

Wednesday, 05 May 2020

NANTU Office, Omuthiya

**Director of Ceremonies,
Hon. Penda Ya Ndakolo, Governor of Oshikoto Region,
Madam Inge Zaamwani – Presidential Advisor
Mayor of Town Councils present,
All Honourable Councillors present
Captains of Industry and Business,
Distinguished Invited Guests,
Members of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

Good morning,

It is my distinct pleasure to be in your midst this morning to have this very important conversation with you. Allow me therefore to begin by expressing my deep sense of honour in welcoming you all to this meeting.

Let me also thank the Hon. Governor and everyone in attendance for responding positively to our invitation despite your busy schedules. This is a clear indication that we all value our businesses and indeed we all want to seek collective avenues of navigating through these economic depression which is exacerbated by the COVID – 19 pandemic. I am informed that in our midst we have a wide variety of stakeholders, from across many important sectors including informal traders and SMEs.

**Director of Ceremonies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Ministry of Industrialisation and Trade is committed to deliver on its mandated by managing Namibia's economic regulatory framework, promoting economic growth and development through formulation and implementation of appropriate policies

with the aim to attract both local and foreign investment. The Ministry also strive to increase trade, develop and expand the country's industrial base. All these activities cannot be realised in isolation but through consultative meetings such as this one to devise collective interpositions to yield the desired results. I am therefore here today to engage and discuss with you on matters pertaining to business development and to hear from you on the challenges that are hampering your business operations and survival in Oshikoto region.

Ladies and Gentleman

The Government believe that forging close collaboration between public and private sectors and other stakeholders is key in devising modalities of taking our country out of the economic slump that was further aggravated by the impact of COVID – 19. We believe that a thriving private sector is a necessity for economic growth and development. MIT will thus, continue to prioritize and ensuring that there is a conducive and supportive environment for private business activities to thrive. This growth must therefore result in local beneficiation including consumption of locally made products which will further result into employment creation and market linkages, and promotes economic resilience, diversification and local industrial development.

Let me therefore at this juncture inform you that MIT's "Buy Local, Grow Namibia" campaign which was launched last year October has resulted in securing of a significant market shelve space for our locally made produce. This is very commendable and we continue to call on our retailers to come on board during our second phase of the campaign to be launched soon.

The Ministry also places significant importance to MSMEs development and informal economy operations, as such MIT has over the years assisted local entrepreneurs in several ways such as provision of production equipment through its Equipment Aid Scheme Program, construction of SME parks through its implementation agency Namibia Industrial Development Agency (NIDA) and improved the production and supply capacity, efficiency and competitiveness of local enterprises through its Industrial Upgrading and Modernisation Program (IUMP) and the Empretec programme.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Ministry is also set to implement appropriate policies and programs with a view to enhance businesses growth and targeting mainly our informal sector businesses. MIT is therefore working on a National Informal Economy and Entrepreneurship Development Policy. The policy's objective is to develop the informal economy and its participants into commercially viable and mainstream economy sector, which could contribute to the economic growth of our country and its inhabitant in a sustainable manner.

The policy will further seek to address challenges faced by informal economy including infrastructure, entrepreneurial development, and institutional support. Further, the policy is to be developed into a national business promotion act to help ensure that it is integrated with the Namibia Investment Promotion Act with the main emphasis on sector reservation and ensuring the attraction of viable and complementary foreign investment. This is important, as at times it is very evident that our past efforts of attracting and facilitating foreign direct investment has yielded outcomes that at times substitute and displace Namibians in various sectors such as those prevalent in our informal economy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The impacts of Covid-19 on our local economy, including the loss of income and jobs are clearly visible and have affected largely our businesses productivity and growth. Therefore, this calls for our maximum effort to build our businesses resilience, as per the clarion call by His Excellency the President Dr. Hage G. Geingob to ensure that Covid-19 does not surpass our effort to grow our businesses and threaten our business survival and sustainability.

During the previous Financial Year, the Ministry introduced various initiatives in collaboration with other stakeholders to support entrepreneurs negatively affected by the pandemic, these includes the provision of COVID – 19 grant to businesses that lost income during COVID – 19 lockdown. The grant was done in two phases, COVID – 19 start-up grant (Round 1) and COVID – 19 survival grant (round 2) this resulted in 20 start-up beneficiaries from Oshikoto Region.

The Industrial Upgrading and Modernisation Programme (IUMP) programme resulted into 2 (two) successful applicants benefiting from this region whereby a total of 44 entrepreneurs benefitted under this programme nationally to the tune of N\$ 13 Million Namibian Dollars.

The MIT has also facilitated the local production and distribution of facial masks to vulnerable people such as pensioners, children and people living with disabilities and I am happy to announce that about 52 483 out of 454,894 masks were manufactured and distributed in Oshikoto region for these categories of beneficiaries. This intervention created economic opportunity for local MSMEs in tailoring and sewing sector in this region as well as across the country.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Jewellery and Gemstone is one of the target sector identified as priority sector in our Growth at Home Strategy, aimed at developing industrial value-chain activities based on Namibian resources and raw materials with its abundant resources in precious and semi-precious stone especially in the Tsumeb area of this region. The Ministry has therefore, implemented the Gemstone and Polishing Training and currently 25 trainees are undergoing training at Karibib Gemstone Centre of which 3 trainees are from Oshikoto Region.

The Ministry also introduced the EMPRETEC Namibia programme to ensure that we train targeted beneficiaries on the basic principles of entrepreneurship behaviour in order to increase our very low national entrepreneurial stock and innovation ranking. This programme will still continue to be rolled out for coming financial years.

The Ministry also has an online platform called DIDDESS, which facilitate the issuing of MSMEs certificates. This database is important for us as, in the absence of a national business census; it allows us to use it as an important economic indicator of business trends nationally and regionally. In the case of Oshikoto region, it shows that since inception, we have issued 516 MSMEs certificates and rejected only 16 applications.

The DIDESS database is supplemented with a key platform that is aimed at enhancing doing business in Namibia. The platform called Integrated Client Service Facility (ICSF) was launched in December 2020 and is a one-stop-shop to register your business through one single point instead of spending valuable time going from one mandatory office to another. The ultimate aim is to ensure that the number of days to register a business in Namibia is reduced drastically and thereby improves our competitiveness ranking.

Director of Ceremonies,

MIT is devoted to ensuring that all channels of communication between Government and especially our business people are enhanced so that every citizen can participate in shaping the policy agenda including access to information and timely dissemination of information related to available business support opportunities in the Ministry. MIT further remains ardent to developing a competitive industrial sector in the country by having regulations, policies and strategies in place pertaining to industrial development to encourage the supply chain capacity of local industries and ensuring an increased contribution of the manufacturing sector to the country's GDP. Our policy agenda will further be advanced in conjunction with other national plans and policies such as Harambee Prosperity Plan II, National Development Plans and our overarching vision 2030.

The Ministry will continue to develop industrial infrastructure by ensuring the availability of appropriate industrial premises and related infrastructure to make it easy for economic agents to create and operate industries especially MSMEs. The Growth at Home Strategy has identified sectors that can be prioritized. The agro-processing component which is ideal for this region is a key priority. Lessons from the pandemic are that there is a need to magnify and upscale the local food production capacity and this is one key element that the Ministry will continue to explore together with other stakeholders.

Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating effects has placed a great burden on us and further derailed our plans and prospects. Let us therefore make use of this platform to deliberate on the modalities of our economic recovery post a prolonged recession and the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on

our economy while capitalizing on the opportunities available to relieve us of the burden. Your presence here today is a sign of our collective desire to see a positive change to our economic challenges. I am certain that this platform will allow these pertinent key issues to be discussed thoroughly and good implementable recommendations be advanced.

I thank you all.