



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM

STATEMENT

BY

HON. POHAMBA SHIFETA, MP AND

MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM

ON THE OCCASION OF

**LAUNCH OF THE CONSERVATION RELIEF, RECOVERY AND RESILIENT FACILITY TO RESPOND
TO COVID-19 THREAT TO LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY AND SUCCESS OF THE
COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION PROGRAMME OF NAMIBIA**

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For the past thirty years, Namibia's communal conservancy programme has worked with government to transform wildlife conservation into a viable land-use option for rural communities. Consequently, 86 conservancies today cover more than 166,179 square km (20% of Namibia), encompasses approximately 222,000 community members (9% of Namibia's population) and have seen widespread recoveries of wildlife population.

Underpinning the success of the communal conservancy programme is the simple but revolutionary idea of turning communities into wildlife protectors, thus creating a proud legacy of community game guards in Namibia and building a conservation based economy.

The COVID-19 pandemic is crippling the world's economy, and Namibia is not spared. Tourism, which is the principal economic force in conservancies and pays for the conservation protection costs, is particularly hard hit. Namibia's tourism industry is the hardest hit, with estimated zero tourist arrivals in the country for the next 3-4 months, and that this situation is likely to persist for the entire 2020. The predictions for lost income and massive job losses in this sector are particularly painful in rural areas, where the majority of the population ekes out a subsistence living through wildlife-tourism based enterprises, which has been seriously weakened by the recent six-year drought.

Conservancy income from tourism operations is approximately N\$ 60 million per year, with an additional N\$ 65 million paid in salaries to tourism staff living in conservancies. The jobs of 700 community game guards and rhino rangers, 300 conservancy support staff, and 1175 locally hired tourism staff are in jeopardy, and the 30-year effort to build Namibia's communal conservancy programme is under severe threat.

In our effort to mitigate COVID 19 shocks, the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) has established the Conservation Relief, Recovery and Resilient Facility. This Facility specifically, aims to address the long term impacts associated with COVID 19 on our conservation sustainability of the Community Based Natural Resource Management Programme in Namibia. The Environmental Investment Fund will serve as the Secretariat. The Fund has contributed six million Namibia dollars (N\$6 million) towards the facility.

Thus, far the Namibia Association for CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO), THE World Wildlife Fund has attracted NAD7.5Million. The United Nations Development Programme in Namibia pledged an amount of NAD1,5 million. Nedbank Namibia has pledged an amount of NAD1 million to the cause.

This brings the total basket funding under the Conservation Relief, Recovery and Resilient Facility to NAD16 Million. The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism is also in discussion with other strategic partners interested to address the negative impacts of Covid-19 on our sector.

A Task Team consisting of a number of our partners has been established to guide the strategic areas to be addressed through this funding.

Ladies and Gentleman, with this I have the pleasure to launch the Conservation Relief, Recovery and Resilient Facility with an initial amount of NAD16Mio.

I thank you.