REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

STATEMENT BY HONOURABLE JOHN MUTORWA, MP AND MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, WATER AND FORESTRY (MAWF), DELIVERED AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 9th INTERNATIONAL WATER ASSOCIATION (IWA) WATER REUSE CONFERENCE, 28 OCTOBER 2013, WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA.

- Honourable Minister of Regional and Local Government , Housing and Rural Development, Maj Gen (Ret) Charles Namoloh;
- The Governor of the Khomas Region Hon Laura MCleod-Katjirua;
- Her Worship the Mayor, Councilor Agnes Kafula;
- The Executive Director of the International water Association, Dr Ger Bergkamp;
- The Chair of the IWA Reuse Specialist Group, Dr Valentina Lazarova;
- Regional and Local Government Councillors;
- Conference Sponsors and Delegates.

---

2. On 24 November 1968, I am informed, the Sunday Tribune, in Windhoek, carried a headline that stated: "WINDHOEK DRINKS SEWAGE WATER". The Mayor of Windhoek then, proclaimed that: it was a "Purified World First" and compared the achievement to be equal, in significance, with the first heart transplant, that took

place a year earlier, in 1967, in Cape Town, Republic of South Africa.

2. Although the first heart transplant patient we are told, survived only 17 days, he had been the living proof that: it was in fact possible, to reuse the most vital organ from one body, for the survival of another body. What was initially thought to be impossible, was thus shown to be possible, because a dedicated team of people believed and demonstrated that: it could be done and devoted themselves to the cause. Today, the process has been repeated many times; and I am sure that even in our audience today, there may be people living comfortably on reused hearts.

3. To go back to the initial analogy of the Windhoek Mayor, the "purified world first" that was the Goreangab Reclamation Plant, is still functioning today, 45 years later, as a vital organ in ensuring the water supply to our capital city. However, with the exception of a small town called Beaufort West in South Africa, direct potable reclamation at a commercial scale, is not practised anywhere else; even after it has been proven in Windhoek over 45 years. Do the water professionals know the reason for this?

4. The theme of the 9th International Water Association Reuse Conference, states that: Water Reuse is the Blue Resource of the Future! I have to pose the question, is this like so many Vision Statements that one sees in many enterprises today, just a fancy statement, which nobody really believes in, or, are the water people of the world, part of a dedicated team that believes in the cause of ensuring that the people that we serve, will always have

an adequate supply of safe water for their needs, that would include the total spectrum of needs? People do not only need water to drink, they need water for sanitation, for personal hygiene, for cultivating and processing of food and fodder, for sustaining livestock, for creating jobs, through industry and manufacturing, for mining and mineral extraction, for leisure and sport activities and for beautifying the environment in which they live. Thus: water is life; and life is water!

5. Currently, in a large percentage of cities around the world, all the uses that I have outlined above, are serviced with blue water, from the limited natural water resource base. With the world population increasing at the current rate and the ever improving standard of living in the most populous nations of the World, it begs the question of: how long will the finite water resources, currently at our disposal, really be able to sustain life on the planet earth, as we know it? If Climate change is brought into the mix, it seems apparent that: countries that are currently suffering of water supply shortages, will find it ever more difficult to quench the thirst of their people.

6. There are still some major cities in the world today, that uses water and returns waste water to our water systems in an untreated or insufficiently treated state, thereby further polluting the water resources and diminishing the quantity of blue water resources available to humankind. I again, ask the question, for how long can the planet earth tolerate this abuse?

7. As Minister of Agriculture, Water and Forestry of Namibia, at present, I preside over the water environment, the water sector, of the most arid country in Sub Saharan Africa. The scarce natural water resources at our disposal, are furthermore disparately or unevenly distributed over the huge landmass, that is Namibia – "the Land of the Brave – Contrasting beautiful Namibia." Perennial rivers occur only on the very Northern and very Southern Borders of our country and these rivers are shared with neighbours, on terms, that necessarily do not, or must not, always favour Namibia! To put in into further clear perspective: the closest perennial river to our Capital, Windhoek, is some 750 kilometers away. I am talking about the Kavango River!

8. Where the bulk of our people live in the north central part of our Country, very limited water resources are available. Water is taken from a point, fairly deep into Angola, and distributed by canal and pipelines to serve this huge area, where almost half of our total population lives.

9. Windhoek, the Capital city and seat of Government, is another case in point. It is the largest single concentration of population, approaching 18 % of the total national population of just over 2,1 million; and the only natural water resource available to it, is the Windhoek aquifer, with a sustainable yield of less than 7 % of the City's current demand. For the bulk of supply, the City has to rely on an erratic rainfall, with an average annual precipitation of 360 mm, to fill three dams, built on ephemeral rivers. It needs to be said loud and clear today, that: during the previous rainy season,

these three dams that supply and supplement water supply to Windhoek, received NO INFLOW!

10. Our coastal towns, including the main port city of Walvis Bay, are located on the Atlantic Coast line; with the ocean to the west and the Namib sand sea (desert) to the east. Very limited underground water resources have to sustain these towns, which are very active engines of our economy. The fishing industry located at Walvis Bay and the extended Uranium Mining activities in the Namib Desert, are indispensable parts of the Namibian economy and neither of these can grow and prosper without water. I can, however, report that: one privately built desalination plant is in operation there and the Government of the Republic of Namibia, through the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF), together with NamWater, are currently far advanced, in the process of establishing a second desalination plant.

11. Our country is in the midst of a serious drought situation, at present, where agriculture is paying a heavy toll, in terms of livestock losses and human hardships.

12. Thus far, I have tried to give an overview of what the supply of water in Namibia actually entails. It should thus be obvious to our esteemed delegates, that: simply relying on the natural or blue water resources of our Country, will not and cannot suffice!

13. For the purposes of water supply, the country is divided into zones or areas. Let us consider for a moment the Central Areas of

Namibia, with a total consumption of 30 million cubic metres per annum. The current supply system has a 95th percentile assured yield of 20 million cubic metres. Of its demand of 26 million cubic metres, the City of Windhoek takes up 17 Million cubic metres of the available 20 Mm^3, clearly leaving a shortfall in the supply to the City. This shortfall is made up by a combination of groundwater and reuse. Reuse in Windhoek supplies 7,5 million cubic metres per annum, of which 5,5 million is used for drinking water and 2 Million Cubic metres for landscape irrigation of parks, public gardens and sportsfields. The MAWF, the City of Windhoek and NamWater are working on a scheme to artificially recharge the Windhoek Aquifer, with a blend of reclaimed and surface water. This will enable us to supply in the medium term demand of the Central Areas up to at least 2019.

14. The MAWF has furthermore commissioned a study and has appointed a professional team, to do an Engineering Feasibility study and an Environmental Feasibility Study, into all available options for the augmentation of water supply, not only to the Central Areas of Namibia, but, also, that of the Cuvelai Area in the Central North of the Country. As stated earlier, this populous area is dependent on a single source of supply from the Kunene River, and it is essential that an alternative source should and must be developed! In this exercise, options such as the Ohangwena II aquifer, the Northern karst aquifers and the Kavango River are being investigated.

15. All of these schemes, represent mega investments in Infrastructure to bring water, over vast long distances, to the major population centres. The total water revenues generated in Namibia, cannot sustain this type of capital investment and for this reason, further major Central Government Funding will have to be injected and be allocated. The possibility of reducing the magnitude of such investments, does however exist if the existing resources are used to its optimum potential.

16. I have to congratulate the Conference organisers on their choice of the theme for this Conference. Something that is largely overlooked, is that: the streams of waste water, generated in our towns and Cities, should be viewed as resources rather than waste products! These are resources which might have been brought to the city or town, at great cost and possibly over great distance. It is therefore pure folly to discharge this water and import new water from ever more distant locations.

17. Dear delegates, the answer lies in reuse! In Windhoek, people first think of potable reuse, but that is probably the last resort. Waste water can be treated up to the appropriate standard for every type of reuse, be it: cooling water, industrial washwater, water for construction, water for mining and mineral extraction, water for dust suppression, water for irrigation and landscaping, water for aquifer recharge and lastly for drinking water. In all these cases, we will be replacing blue resource water with grey water, brown water or green water treated specifically to reach the required quality for the application.

18. I am particularly glad to see that this Conference will also specifically discuss issues of governance and regulation, as dealing with these different grades of water, carries a huge risk. It is incumbent on the GRN, through the MAWF, as the overall and ultimate regulator of water in this country, to ensure that water distributed to any customer, is of a standard that does not pose a health threat to the user! Delegates from Namibia and the SADC Region, I want us to pay special attention to these regulatory frameworks, that works in other countries represented here. Let us be willing to learn from each other and not try and reinvent the wheel, every time a need is defined.

19. I can publicly announce today that: as recently as last week, the revised Namibian Water Resources Management Bill, was finally passed in our Parliament. It is now on its way to be signed in to law by our President, the Head of State and Government of the Republic of Namibia. This will facilitate much better regulation in terms of the water environment.

20. I am reliably informed that there are more than 35 Professors and more than 65 PhD's holders, attending the Conference. I am very pleased to learn that Namibia and Windhoek have raised the interest of all our delegates and I urge our local water professionals: let us make optimum use of the amount of knowledge gathered in this place! I also urge our delegates to share freely of their experiences. Knowledge shared is knowledge multiplied! It is incumbent up on each of us, to leave this planet a

better place, than what we found it. If we do not do that, our children's children might find it a hostile destructive environment to live in, where access to good quality drinking water might be a rare privilege only available to few.

21. From books we learn that: it was Benjamin Franklin who said that: **WE WILL NOT KNOW THE VALUE OF WATER, UNTIL THE WELL RUNS DRY.** Somehow I sometimes think that we, humans, insist on learning only from a position of weakness. When the well is dry, that is when we start thinking about the water problem. Let us change that and act now, while there is still time.

22. The Mayor of the City of Windhoek, Her Worship Agnes Kafula , has already opened our capital city to our delegates and have welcomed you. As Minister of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, I want to extend a wider welcome to our delegates to our Country. I am informed that our Organising Committee will expose you to our Namibian hospitality, our delicious Namibian meat and tasty fish. I urge you to give it your all, during deliberations; but to also give it your all during the social program. Our Country is a real treasure, in terms of natural beauty; much of it still unspoilt. I invite you make optimum use of the opportunity to explore Namibia. While we are gathered here today, another major event is taking place in Swakopmund at our Atlantic Coast. Almost 800 delegates are attending the World Adventure Travel Summit, because Namibia is about adventure and nature. Do not miss the opportunity to see the big five, while you are here.

23. I once again, wish to congratulate the Reuse Group of the International Water Association, for selecting Windhoek, as your host city, for this prestigious Conference. There are probably few places on earth, where water reuse is taken as seriously as in Windhoek and I trust that our esteemed delegates might go away, from here, having seen and experienced that reuse and even direct potable reuse, is a viable proposition and an essential part of water supply progressively moving forward.

24. My personal congratulations, Your Worship, to you, and your able team, for not only landing this Conference for Namibia, but for staging a Conference of international standard, that will make Windhoek and Namibia proud. On behalf of the host, the Organisers and each and everyone assembled here, I now declare the Ninth (9^{th}) International Water Association Water Reuse Conference officially opened!

.....

John MUTORWA, MP

MINISTER: MAWF, 28 OCTOBER 2013, WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA.

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, WATER AND FORESTRY
MINISTER'S OFFICE
2013 -10- 2 8
Private Bag 13184, WINDHOEK
REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA