



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM

OFFICE OF THE MINISTER

Tel: (+ 264 61) 284 2335
Fax: (+ 264 61) 232 057

Cnr Robert Mugabe &
Dr Kenneth Kaunda Street
Private Bag 13306
Windhoek
Namibia

ADDRESS BY THE HON. POHAMBA SHIFETA, MP
MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM

Questions by Hon Jan J. van Wyk (UPM) on the 11th of October 2018
regarding clearance certificate issued to the Ministry of Agriculture
Water and Forest, and Namibia Oriental Tobacco Cc



“Stop the poaching of our rhinos”

Questions to be asked

Could the Hon. Minister enlighten this august house, the nation and the residents of the Zambezi Region in particular, as to what the situation is with regard to Liselo Farm?

What measures do your Ministry have or will it implement to stop the illegal cutting down of trees in the areas referred to above as well as other areas in general?

What is the impact of deforestation in the Zambezi Region on the fauna and flora at this stage, about six years after the project has started?

I would like to thank Honorable Van Wyk for seeking clarification on the illegal cutting down of trees in Namibia and for his particular enquiry on the situation in the Liselo area of the Zambezi Region.

At the outset, I would like to inform this august house that the clearance of forest areas, deforestation, afforestation and timber harvesting are activities that are listed in terms of Section 27(2) of the Environmental Management Act, 2007 (Act No. 7 of 2007) and its regulations, and cannot be undertaken without an environmental clearance certificate. Even if these activities are permitted by the Directorate of Forestry, they still require an environmental clearance certificate from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism as per Section 31 of the Environmental Management Act, 2007 (Act No. 7 of 2007). This is imperative to ensure that the environment is protected through the sustainable utilization of natural resources for the maximum social and economic benefit by its citizens.

Honourable Members

With regard to projects in the Liselo area, Zambezi Region, I would like to report to this august house that the Ministry has received applications for environment clearance for

two different projects in this area. The application for Katima Farm and Liselo Irrigation Project was submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF). The second application for a Tobacco and Maize Farm project was submitted by Namibia Oriental Tobacco.

I will now provide some specific information with regard to these two Projects.

The Katima Farm and Liselo Irrigation MAWF Project was issued with an environmental clearance certificate in April 2016 for a period of three years. This Project covers an area of about 1,500- 2,000 hectares, and is divided into three units as per the Green Scheme policy requirements of the MAWF namely, Small Scale farmers, Medium Scale Farming Units and Commercial Farming Units.

With regard to the Tobacco and Maize Farm Project of Namibia Oriental Tobacco, an environmental clearance certificate was issued in December 2014 for a period of three years. The proponent applied for 10,000 hectares of land, of which 9,000 hectares was for irrigation to be cultivated into phases over a number of years.

However the Tobacco and Maize Farm project has never been implemented due to other factors. Therefore, this area has not been cleared. The environmental clearance certificate for this Project expired in December 2017 and has not yet been renewed. Clearing of land has however commenced for the Katima Farm and Liselo Irrigation Project.

Honorable Speaker,

Honorable Members,

When considering applications for environmental clearance such as these, it is important that the Ministry considers the socio-economic potential and benefits of these projects – particularly the need to generate decent employment, enhance local level value addition and to diversify our economic base. This is why the environment is

defined in its broadest sense in the Environmental Management Act to include both the natural and human environment, which includes social and economic factors.

Since the Katima Farm and Liselo Irrigation Project is identified for implementation in a habitat that is largely natural with high value tree species such as Teak, key mitigation measures were set out in an Environmental Management Plan, which was developed for use as a guiding tool during the operational phase of the project.

Among the key mitigation measures for the proponent to implement when clearing the land were to:

- a) Optimize the total size of the irrigation by carefully considering the realistic productive capacity of the soils (use only the area that is needed to produce the target production)
- b) Not clear one contiguous block of vegetation but rather follow the principle of patch dynamics and clear multiple smaller blocks, each divided from the next by a patch of natural bush.
- c) Avoid clearing of the Omuramba Grassland and Pan Habitat, leaving an un-cleared buffer strip of at least 30m around it.
- d) Keep as much of the tall Closed Burkea/Teak Woodland west of the farm as intact as possible.

Officials from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism have subsequently undertaken a number of inspections to the area. These inspections uncovered practices that were taking place contrary to the measures identified in the Environmental Management Plan for the Project. These did include extensive logging, clearing of land taking place outside the boundary of the project area and the export of logs without any local level value addition.

We have taken up this concerns with the proponent, Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry and Traditional Authorities in the area. We have also engaged with the Ministry of Safety and Security not to allow the transportation of logs that do not have

a valid environmental clearance certificate. We plan to further intensify our operations to make sure we curb the illegal harvesting of our timber.

Lastly, I want to assure this august house, and the community at large, that we have put mechanisms in place to control the cutting down and transportation of timber. Furthermore, we have carried out awareness campaigns country wide to sensitize key stakeholders and the nation at large on the Environmental Management Act, and to advise Competent Authorities to follow due procedures in issuing permits and other relevant documents.